

THE LAST WORD / DIE LAASTE WOORD

THE WHITE PAPER/BILL ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES - P Fourie

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INTRODUCTION

This article can be divided in two parts. The first part concerns what the White Paper/Draft Bill has to say on higher education. The second part concerns communication studies. The first part can be approached from many different perspectives. Three obvious perspectives are: underlying assumptions, policy analysis and discourse analysis.

As far as the assumptions are concerned, one could analyse the pedagogical, political, philosophical, economic and social assumptions underlying the White Paper/Draft Bill. This in itself can be done from different perspectives, for example, one may approach it from the perspective of the history of the university as an institution, the perspective of the global transformation of higher education or from the massification of higher education as a direct consequence of post-

modern society and economics. Depending on one's political beliefs, one may even analyse the White Paper/Draft Bill as an ideological document with the sole purpose of replacing nationalist education ideology with that of a new ideology favouring the sentiments and educational philosophy of the present government.

A second approach could be to apply the tools of policy analysis to the White Paper. Again this could be done from different perspectives, for instance, from a normative, pedagogical perspective or economic perspective, or a combination of these. The purpose of such an analysis would be to determine whether the policy recommendations put forward in the White Paper are workable, and to predict the consequences of such recommendations in the short and long-term for higher education in South Africa.

The third perspective and approach is a discourse analysis of the rhetoric of transformation politics contained in the White Paper. This would entail a close reading of the meaning of central concepts in the White Paper, and of how these concepts have become part of the daily discourse in higher education institutions as well as amongst students, politicians, the media and the public. Here I'm referring to concepts such as: transformation, democratisation, access, representation, representativeness, equity, accountability, diversification, institutional restructuring, co-ordinated higher educational system, earmarked funding, distance learning, open learning, resource-

based learning, educational outcome, quality assurance, etc. Each one of these concepts have far-reaching implications for higher education.

The second part of this article concerns the consequences of the White Paper for communication studies in South Africa. Again, this may also be approached from different perspectives.

One may, for example, ask fundamental questions about the nature and status of communication as an academic discipline. In this regard, one could analyse the content of our curricula and discuss the value of the topics and questions we address in university and technikon syllabi.

One may also look at the history of communication studies in South Africa and the impact apartheid has had on it. Related to this, one could undertake a critical analysis of the epistemological, ontological and anthropological assumptions underlying communication studies in South Africa. Such an analysis could lead to serious questions regarding the paradigms we have been using to provide answers and/or neglected to ask certain crucial questions in the field of South African communication studies. It may also lead to serious pedagogical and didactic questions about our teaching and the outcome of our teaching.

Questions such as the following could be addressed: What is the quality of our teaching? What is the relationship between theory and practice in our teaching?

I hope that we will return to these and other perspectives and questions during the two-hour discussion session that follows this paper, or, as I suggest

in my conclusion, in a series of workshops.

Instead of approaching the topic from one or more of the above perspectives, which in the end might just produce a few selected and personal points of view, I have decided to place on the table facts presented to us in three crucial documents: viz. the White Paper(1997)/Draft Bill(1997), the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995) and the Final Report of the Task Group on Communications (1996). Although most of you are already familiar with these documents, this is the first opportunity for us, as lecturers in communication studies, to study them collectively and to exchange views and ideas.

Finally, whatever our theoretical and/or political thoughts about higher education may be, I am of the opinion that it will not change the government's determination to transform higher education in South Africa. We must also remember that, because of social, economic and educational reasons and needs, higher education is undergoing transformation all over the world. South Africa can not escape this change. We may therefore just as well take the bull by the horns.

THE WHITE PAPER / DRAFT BILL

According to the White Paper, and as formulated in the Draft Bill, the overall purpose of transforming higher education in South Africa is to ensure that higher education:

- Meets the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes

- Provides the labour market with high-level competencies
- Is committed to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens
- Create, transmit and evaluate knowledge

The challenges as set out in the White Paper are:

- To create a national higher education system that will be able to meet the moral, social and economic demands of the new South Africa
- To create a critical civil society with a culture of tolerance and debate
- To create teaching and research policies which does not favour academic insularity and closed-system disciplinary approaches
- To take into account the realities of the South African economy through:
 - human resource development, in other words the mobilisation of human talent and potential through the training and provision of personpower for a changing labour market
 - high level skills training
 - acquisition and application of new knowledge.

The above is clear and doesn't need further expansion. It confronts us with economic realities and the need to adapt accordingly in terms of the provision of skilled, but critical manpower, and with the need for higher education

institutions to break with its "ivory tower" tradition. Of course, one can debate the old cliché of calling universities "ivory towers", and the assumption that it is necessary to break down these "towers", along with all the good associated with the university throughout the centuries as a unique, autonomous academic institution.

Furthermore, the White Paper regards the following as fundamental principles that should guide the process of the transformation of higher education:

- equity and redress: the critical identification and re-addressing of present inequalities
- the democratisation of the governance of higher education institutions
- diversity and the development of distinct missions
- quality and quality assurance
- effectiveness and efficiency: higher education should lead to desired outcomes or achieve desired objectives
- academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the pursuit and practice of academic work
- public accountability: decision-making, the spending of public funds, achievement of results in terms of:
 - responsible actions to one or more constituencies
 - reporting on how and how well funds are spend
 - demonstration of results

The key issues here are transformed admission policies, transformed governance, distinct missions, quality assurance and public accountability, including the demonstration of results.

We are aware of the discussions taking place and the setting up of bodies and committees as far as the principles of

- equity and redress; and
- the democratisation of the governance of higher education institutions are concerned.

In this regard I suffice by saying that we should prepare ourselves for, if indeed we are not already involved in, rationalisation in and between institutions; rationalisation of courses offered by and between universities, technikons, and colleges; rationalisation of subsidies and the establishment of new subsidy formulas.

The principles of equity and democratisation (in itself a heavy loaded concept open to various interpretations) go hand-in-hand with the principle of diversity and the development of distinct missions. Although the government acknowledges the need for diversity in higher education it is clear that there should be distinct missions for various institutions. In the future this may be interpreted that, although we may need ten or fifteen departments of communication, each should have its own mission and own field of specialisation and expertise.

Later-on I will return to the principle of public accountability.

A principle that is of urgent importance to us is that of quality and quality assurance.

The White Paper/ Draft Bill provides for the co-ordination of quality assurance in higher education through a Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) which will be established as a permanent committee of the (to be established) Council for Higher Education (CHE), and which will be registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The functions of the Higher Education Quality Committee will include, as far as I can make out, programme accreditation and institutional auditing.

Quality Assurance in higher education is not, as many people tend to believe, something "new South African". It is an international populist movement of the 1990's, which broadly addresses the question of how to retain quality in higher education in an era of massification, previously ensured by restrictive admission policies. The movement led to the establishment in 1991 of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which is based in Hong Kong. Its fourth conference was held in South Africa, in the Kruger National Park in May 1997. The main purpose of the Network is to collect and disseminate information on current and developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement and maintenance of quality in higher education.

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established in terms of the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) in October 1995. The vision towards which the SAQA strives, is reconstructed and re-developed education and training which reflects the objectives of the National Qualifications

Framework (NQF). The objectives of a National Qualifications Framework are to:

- create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
- enhance the quality of education and training;
- accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and thereby
- contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large

In principle I have nothing against the above. However, from practical experience over the past few months, I have been bombarded by individuals and institutions who have only heard of something called the National Qualifications Framework which, according to them, will ensure that universities acknowledge almost every or any qualification towards admission requirement to enter universities. If this is the case the NQF will have far reaching implications for our teaching standards. It is therefore urgent that SAQA clarify this matter. If not, wrong expectations may be created amongst the public, and negative perceptions of SAQA within university communities.

The South African Qualifications Authority has already published regulations for the establishment of twelve National Standards Bodies (NSB), an NSB for each of the twelve broad fields of study that have been identified. One

of these fields is Communication Studies and Languages.

- The National Standards Bodies will perform, amongst others, the following functions:
- define and recommend to SAQA the boundaries of fields and sub-fields
- recognise and/or establish Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) for the different fields
- ensure that the work of Standards Generating Bodies meets the SAQA requirements for the registration of unit standards and qualifications
- recommend the registration of unit standards on the NQF to SAQA
- recommend qualifications to SAQA

As far as the definition and boundaries of fields and sub-fields are concerned it is proposed that the NSBs will:

- determine the purpose of the definition of a field and analyse its contents;
- define the boundaries of discrete fields;
- identify traditional and non-traditional areas of study, occupational categories, technology and environment associated with the field;
- project or forecast the linkage between the field and the national economy; and
- identify discrete sub-fields.

From the fact that the Council for Higher Education's Committee for Higher Education Quality will have to be registered with SAQA, the National Standards Bodies and its Standards Generating Bodies will indeed be very powerful institutions in determining what the very nature of any subject field is to be in the future.

It is, therefore, a matter of urgency that we acquaint ourselves with, and become involved, in the activities of the NSB's and SGB's. I don't think there is a need to see SAQA and its bodies as a threat, enforcing rules and regulations in an autocratic manner on higher education institutions, as some people want to believe. But it is important to become involved in the processes of generating, discussing and revising standards and other matters.

In a recent document published after the NSB Developmental Workshops, June 1997, communication studies and language are grouped together as a field. It sets out to define the principles underlying the field in a very broad, but from an academic perspective unacceptable, way. To begin with, I personally believe that languages and communication studies should be two different fields. As it now stands, it is confusing. Under the heading "Evaluation of the Communications Studies and Languages Field" the following areas are included: media studies, journalism, publishing, language practice (sign language), marketing communication, linguistics, teaching/lecturing. This is followed by a heading "Communication and Information", under which there is, what appears to be, a list of themes of study: visual, tactile, audio, gestural, print, braille, sign language. Then follows a list of the following proposed sub-fields: business communication, information studies, media studies, lan-

guage practice, literacy training, foreign languages, and classics. This is followed by a long list of where to find Standard Generating Bodies. This is a disturbing list in the sense that only under business communication universities and technikons are mentioned as institutions that could function as Standard Generating Bodies. For the rest, it seems as if this NSB will depend on organisations, NGOs, societies, professional bodies and education departments to set the standards. It must be mentioned that the document I refer to here is a developmental and preliminary document and not a report, but emphasises the need for academics to become involved with the NSBs and its SGBs.

In order to qualify for accreditation by SAQA, a unit standard should consist of, apart from technical information, and what is of immediate importance to us as far as the planning of our curricula are concerned, a clear description of:

- a unit title
- a SAQA approval logo
- a unit standard number
- a unit standard level on the NQF
- a credit attached to the unit standard
- the field and sub-field of the unit
- the issue date
- the review date
- purpose of the unit
- learning assumed to be in place before this unit standard is commenced

- specific outcomes to be assessed
- assessment criteria
- accreditation process (including moderation)
- range statements as a general guide for the scope, context, and level being used for the unit
- a notes category which:
 - must include critical cross-field outcomes;
 - should include references to essential embedded knowledge; and
 - may include supplementary information on the unit.

The following are critical outcomes that can be embedded within unit standards:

- to identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
 - to work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community;
 - organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
 - collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
 - communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion
- use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others; and
 - demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

In order to register as a National Qualification, a qualification should, according to SAQA, meet the following requirements:

- represent a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, and which is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning;
- add significant value to the qualifying learner in terms of enrichment of the person; provision of status, recognition, credentials and licensing; enhancement of marketability and employability; opening up of access routes to additional education and training;
- provide benefits to society and the economy through enhancing citizenship; increasing social and economic productivity;
- providing specifically skilled/professional people; transforming and redressing legacies of inequity;
- comply with the objectives of the NQF including the enhancement of learner access, mobility and progression, and the provision of quality education and training;

- have both specific and critical cross-field outcomes which promote life-long learning; and
- be internationally comparable, where applicable.
- an equity plan;
- a capital management plan; and
- a performance improvement plan.

Assessing present units, modules and papers in communication studies against the background of the above criteria, proposed outcomes and requirements could turn out to be an interesting, if not disturbing exercise. Of course questions could be asked about the guidelines for standards, outcomes and definitions of fields, and requirements as presently formulated, but as I have said at the beginning, the purpose of this paper is not to ask question but simply to put the present documents on the table.

Returning to the principles underlying the White Paper, a few remarks should be made about public accountability. The basis for improving public accountability is that of making public funding for institutions conditional on their Councils providing strategic plans and reporting their performance against goals. The provision of goal-oriented public funding is intended to produce more equitable student access, improved teaching, learning and research, increased student progression and graduation rates, and greater responsiveness to social and economic needs. In the White Paper it is proposed that institutions of higher education will be required to prepare a comprehensive strategic plan comprising:

- a distinctive mission statement;
- an academic development plan (including three-year forward projections of student enrolments and graduations by field and level of study);

For our own planning it might not be a bad idea to do the same within academic departments, as this kind of planning within individual departments laid the foundation for the transformation of higher education in Europe.

The last document I want to mention is the Report of the Task Group on Government Communication.

TASK GROUP ON [GOVERNMENT] COMMUNICATIONS

If we read the White Paper and the Draft Bill, the proposal on the auditing of courses, accreditation and rationalization that may result from it, together with the Report of the Task Group on Government Communication, serious questions can be asked about the outcome of present communication courses. It is clear that the Government places a high priority on the role of public communication in society, and it will therefore look to communication departments to educate and train communication professionals. Right at the beginning, the report argues that one of the main reasons for the lack of effective communication between government and its departments, within departments, and with the public, is the widely varying background of communication officials and the poor understanding of the role of communications and its function in government. The report says:

This is a fault discernible both in the old administration and the new. It is reflected in the nature of appointments

made and, as noted above, in the status and training of communication professionals. (Final Report of the Task Group on Communications 1996:12.)

Surely, it can't be expected of university and technikon departments to be agents for the training of government communications officials. Nevertheless, the report urges us to ask a number of questions. Where are the thousands of communications students that have already been educated at South African universities and technikons? What do they know and how do they use their supposed knowledge? Most important, though, what have we taught our students and what will we be teaching our future students? These questions come to mind after almost each of the concerns raised by the Task Group. A few of these concerns are:

- the lack of communication and information policy and the lack of an understanding of the need for such policy, and of how to write, analyse and evaluate it;
- the lack of knowledge about the ownership and control of the media and the impact thereof on public communication and information in society;
- the lack of professionalism in the South African media and the impoverished standard of journalism;
- the lack of an understanding of what the relationship between the media and government should and could be;
- the lack of knowledge about communications infrastructure;

- the lack of knowledge about communications management and budgeting;
- the lack of knowledge of how to develop a culture in which the importance of communication is acknowledged;
- the lack of resources for and an understanding of the importance of community media;
- the lack of knowledge about development communication; and
- the lack of knowledge about telecommunications and globalization.

These concerns relate to a critical understanding of communication and should urge us to take a critical look at our teaching of communication theory and its immediate applicability, whether it be in the domains of media communication, organizational communication, development communication etc., and at the quality of our training in research methodology and techniques.

I think that the concerns expressed in this Report will and can be echoed by the communication profession at large.

The Report ends with 83 recommendations regarding the setting up of a Government Communications & Information System (GCIS), the restructuring of government communications or the so-called Communications 2000 project, the improvement of South Africa's image in the world, information development, access to information and the media environment.

As far as the training of a "stream of highly professional communicators "

(p. 58) is concerned the Task Group recommends:

- the development of new criteria against which both performance and training can be measured;
- an audit and evaluation of existing skills in order to identify problems and build capacity;
- a set of professional employment criteria with the status of policy and professional accreditation; and
- a national training programme with the participation of stakeholders and experts to make recommendations on joint funding of activities.

It is furthermore foreseen that the Communications 2000 project will work with the communications sectors to develop a qualifying course which should contain the appropriate areas of expertise, with special emphasis on the following:

- media liaison;
- marketing;
- public relations;
- research;
- policy education;
- information technology; and
- effective communication.

Finally the report states:

The development of improved capacity and effective affirmative action across the board in the communication profession requires that new partnerships

be established between the various role players. There is great potential for the government to initiate this process and involve the relevant schools of communication in the universities and technikons, specialized bodies such as the IBA, the SABC and the private sector. Both PRISA and AAA, and a number of newspapers already funding training have indicated their willingness to join a collaborative effort with government. (Ibid.:29.)

THE LEGITIMACY OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Apart from the above requirements and concerns about the quality and outcome of communication teaching, and regardless of the present popularity of communication studies amongst students (and thus subsidies for universities), another problem that still confronts communications scholars and studies is the problem of our legitimacy as an academic discipline. (I must mention that communication studies went through the same phase of popularity in Europe and the USA - a popularity that is now beginning to wane.)

Within the context of the *Journal of Communication's* "Ferment in the field debate", the American scholar, Pamela Shoemaker, warned in 1993 that in the battle for funds between disciplines, fields and departments, we must be aware of the general perception among scholars that the status of communication as an academic discipline is low. "For this reason there is an urgent need to articulate the scholarly focus of our discipline to others within the university, rather than allowing them to think that we exist merely to create so-called effective communica-

tors" (1993:147), or are only good for skills training.

What intensifies the problem in South Africa is the fact that we are expected on the one hand to produce a stream of skilled workers (in other words, there is an emphasis on skills) but on the other hand such an emphasis is exactly what constitutes the crisis of communication's legitimacy as an academic discipline. This lack of legitimacy is the result of:

- the lack of a tradition of own systematic theory-building;
- the invisibility of the research we have produced to colleagues in other disciplines who also do communication or communication related research. It is almost as if we are afraid to get involved with interdisciplinary research, afraid that we might not have anything to contribute, and
- a lack of critical thinking and the ability to focus on critical thinking in our curricula.

Whether or not we want to accept it, we are therefore at an intellectual disadvantage when compared to other disciplines such as our mother disciplines sociology and psychology, especially when it comes to asking questions about which subjects should be taught at universities and at technikons.

Not unrelated to the problem of academic legitimacy, is the very nature of our curricula. In this regard Pamela Shoemaker, supported by other scholars, argued that the very organisation of our departments and curricula is the outgrowth of the industrial revolution and may not be useful in the information age (Shoemaker 1993:150). The traditional division in our departments,

and curricula between, for instance, journalism, public relations, organisational communication, advertising, broadcasting, etc., and curricula to train students in each division to fill particular job slots, is not unlike the process of training workers to fill slots on an assembly line (ibid.)

This way of teaching has worked well for a time, but as the communication industry has changed and is still rapidly changing, we can no longer anticipate what the job slot will be in the years to come. Furthermore, students can no longer only be trained for one slot. For instance, the convergence between media, media and computer science, media and telecommunications, etc., requires flexibility from the worker. The same goes for the other fields of specialisation within communication studies. The public relations officer must also be a journalist with a sound knowledge of media technology, media management and media sociology in order to perform his/her duties professionally. Flexibility must be a valued characteristic of communication workers, and generating flexibility requires a different sort of education than that needed to train somebody to "fill a slot".

In South Africa, especially in those departments where the curricula are mainly based on the American model, we have an even bigger problem: Our communication industry is by far not as advanced, nor the size of that, in the USA. Nevertheless, we tend to base our curricula on what is being done in the USA. In the process we are neglecting what is of real importance in South Africa. With the so-called specialised training offered in certain departments we are creating the wrong expectations amongst students that each one will leave the university as a professional and qualified journalist,

PRO, advertiser, communication official, television presenter, director/producer, and that he/she will find a job as such. Furthermore, it is fact that we haven't got the technical training facilities, finances or staff to offer the kind of professional training offered in the USA.

We may ask, as has also been asked in the USA and in Europe, whether our tendency to focus on so-called specialisation, and the fragmentation that results from this, isn't the reason for the lack of theoretical coherence in our curricula, a coherence based on a critical understanding of the basic principles and nature of communication in different contexts and circumstances. Isn't that the reason why the Task Force on Government Communication came up with the conclusion that communication officers are ill prepared to face the challenges of their work? They may have knowledge about the lay-out of a newsletter, or how to conduct a press conference, write a press release, etc., but don't ask them to solve a problem directly related to the nature of communication, because they know nothing about communication.

The only way out of this dilemma, also one that could be a means to improve our legitimacy as an academic discipline, is to teach our students the skills of critical thinking, which, to its virtue, is emphasised in the White Paper. Such an approach to teaching will educate graduate students to adapt to changing professional environments. What is meant by the skills of critical thinking? Critical thinking is the ability to analyse, synthesize, and evaluate information that will allow communicators to train themselves in each new situation. Teaching critical thinking skills means a close reading and investigation of all the basic concepts

underlying different forms of communication and how they differ and/or interrelate in different communication situations. These concepts form the knowledge base our students should have when they leave a three or four year communication course at a university. Once we have given them the old and new concepts as they have evolved, and once we have taught them how to evaluate these concepts theoretically and methodologically, they will be able to do the same with new concepts, models, theories and practical communication situations, needs and developments, as they evolve in the working place.

In the 1984 Oregon Report on journalism training in the USA, Dennis (1984) told us that we should give our students a general communication education with a large conceptually based core of courses. He said:

There can still be a place for classes that give students technical skills for specialised entry-level jobs, but these must be subordinate to classes that teach critical thinking, law, history, mass media and society, international communication, and so on. [I want to include language and writing skills.] These will prepare our students for new careers. Our graduates must leave campus with the ability to train themselves when changes in the field require it, to work effectively with others to solve problems, and to think critically about the world around them. (Dennis 1984.)

CONCLUSION

To conclude: the purpose of my paper wasn't to evaluate the documents I referred to, neither to criticize the legitimacy of communication studies as an academic discipline, or what we have

done in the past and are still trying to do. By briefly presenting some of the principles, objectives, and requirements as set out in three crucial documents, I hope that I have emphasised the need for critical reflection and action against the background of these national objectives with the transformation of higher education. I end with the following suggestions of how we could begin to prepare ourselves for the future:

Suggestions

- 1 I think it will be a worthwhile research product to compile a joint survey of our graduated students. Where are they, what are they doing, what are their experiences of the value of their studies, and how well did we prepare them for their careers?
 - 2 Within our individual departments, and as SACOMM, we should hold a series of workshops to discuss
 - our combined and distinct missions;
 - fields of expertise, strengths and specialisations;
 - critical evaluations of our curricula;
 - subject-specific criteria for the auditing and assurance of quality and teaching outcomes;
 - the possibilities of exchanging courses;
 - the possibilities of sharing scarce human resources. We are all experiencing problems with insufficient teaching and research staff,
- both in terms of quantity and quality; and
- the possibilities of sharing scarce physical and training facilities.
- 5 Furthermore, and apart from our annual SACOMM conference, we should investigate the possibility of at least two, as far as I am concerned, extremely necessary annual sub-conferences on
 - the didactics of communication teaching. How do we teach communication? What are the latest developments in communication studies, how should we incorporate it in our syllabi and how should we teach it?
 - communication research. What are the latest developments in communication research, how do we incorporate it in our syllabi, how do we teach it? What is the quality of postgraduate research in South Africa? How can we improve our own research and that of our students? It is important that all registered postgraduate students attend such a conference where they can get the opportunity to discuss their work and get inputs from other scholars and fellow students.
 - 4 A fourth suggestion is that we should investigate the possibility of co-operative subject-related research projects that will benefit the South African society at large, and at the same time contribute to the establishment of an South African perspective on communication needs, development communication, the culture(s) of communication, communication policy, etc.

- 5 It is urgent to establish collective links with SAQA and its National Standards Bodies. versity of Bristol, 9-11 September 1996.
- 6 Finally, and to improve our academic legitimacy, we should investigate the possibilities of interdisciplinary co-operation with other disciplines, whether it is in teaching and/or research.

One thing is for sure: we will have to change and in order to ensure our future we should realise that the time of working independently, of conducting fragmented research and of developing courses in isolation and without consultation, is over. If SACOMM can act as a facilitator in doing the above it will serve its mission as a subject-related academic association, and at the same time contribute to the future of excellence in communication studies in South Africa.

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