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INTRODUCTION

Public relations professionals have faced ethical dilemmas for decades. However, PR educators did not stress the ethical issues both in education and research until late 1980s (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Along with the increase of PR graduates and practitioners, educators in this field have paid more attention to ethics instruction. Especially when the PR industry moves toward the global practice, the ethics issues become very complicated and important (Kruckeberg, 1998).

Contrary to this need, few researches in PR ethics education are found in Asia (Ekachai & Komolsevin, 1998). In response, this paper will review how PR ethics is taught in undergraduate programs in Taiwan. It will review current PR curriculum, identify pedagogical strategies and suggest teaching methods that educators in Taiwan can employ to increase students' awareness and knowledge in PR ethics. It will also help PR practitioners and educators to better understand the ethical aspect of decision-making process by using the global approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Ethics in Public Relations Education

PR professionals have been concerned about ethical issues for decades. The issues include providing false or misleading information, offering advertising for favorable publicity and hosting free trips or tickets for third-party endorsement.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) adopted its code of ethics first in 1954 and revised it in 1959, 1963, 1977 and 2000 to provide professionals with a detailed guideline. However, in the early 1980s, few PR scholars paid attention to both ethical research and education (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Since late 1980s, more efforts from PR scholars have been made to increase the focus on ethical thinking and behavior. Kruckeberg (2000) and Taylor (2001) argue that as the global economy becomes increasingly integrated and dynamic, ethical issues grows more complex. Kruckeberg (2000) suggests that PR practitioners should use a "strategic ethics" approach in global practice. Since multiple values and belief systems need to be considered, ethical decision-making should be perceived as a process more than an outcome. New technology also brings the importance of ethics into the PR practice (Kent, 2001). "Should employee computer use be monitored?" "Does the corporate website release misleading or false information?" The ethical implications in new technology also add the complexities to the global practice.

The importance of PR ethics was addressed during the 1998 NCA Summer Conference "Dialogue on PR Education." The conference assigned educators to several task forces, including pedagogy, curriculum development and outcomes. The conclusions appeared in a special issue in *Public Relations Review* in Spring 1999 (Toth, 1999). The task forces listed 12 assumptions to build the PR education. The first one is the ethical practice of PR. The list states that "the

ethical practice of PR is the context in which and for which education must occur." The task force identifies ethics as a part of necessary knowledge along with other eleven topics which should be taught in undergraduate education. It also recommends ethical decision-making as one of the necessary skills that students should learn in the undergraduate years.

To echo the conclusion of the 1998 NCA task force, in the same issue of *PR Review*, Leuven (1999) suggests four new course competencies for PR majors. He mentions that "the first one is principles, practices, theory, and emphasis on ethics." The 15-year study of excellence in PR and communication management in the USA, the UK and Canada explains the value of PR and provides a theoretical benchmark for auditing the quality of a PR unit. The study suggests that all PR educators must view PR as a strategic managerial function rather than a technical support function (Grunig & Grunig, 2002). All programs should develop advanced communication skills including the knowledge of strategic management, research, ethics and social responsibility in their students.

Will PR ethical education ensure students' future career development? McGovern (1993) contends that students are competitive if they have strong ethics because strong ethics guarantee success. Therefore, it is important for students to be familiar with ethical thinking and skills and to be ready to form an ethical work force in the future. As Grunig & Hunt (1984) suggests, "only when the majority of practitioners behave ethically will it be clear when some are

unethical."

What Needs to be Taught and How

What kinds of ethics should be taught and how should ethics be taught

becomes another important topic. The 1998 NCA PR task force recommended

that "the content in PR ethics should include codes of ethics and practice in PR

and in other professions."

Furthermore, textbooks should be considered as one of the major sources to

teach ethics. The study in late 1980s indicated that few texts covered ethical

issues and often focused on the PRSA Code of Professional Standards (Pratt &

Rentner, 1989). It suggested that PR educators should use more diverse

approaches to stimulate the ethical discussion instead of simply relying on the

PRSA code. Currently, more PR textbooks are available in addressing the ethical

issues and providing cases for educators to teach ethics (Hutchison, 2002). They

also offer the Code of Ethics from different disciplines. For example, in *Mixed

Media: Moral Distinctions in Advertising, PR, and Journalism*, Bivins (2004)

writes a chapter to suggest a checklist for moral decision making. It is useful to

provide practitioners with criteria and examples in ethical decision-making

process.

To teach PR knowledge effectively, the 1998 NCA PR task force suggests

that teaching should emphasize active learning. Team-based work is also

encouraged, since PR work is done by teams. The teaching strategies involve

multiple pedagogies, including Socratic dialogue, lectures and guest presentation, oral presentations, group discussion, video conferences with practitioners, multi-media presentations, journal keeping and reports based on trade publication and professional newsletter articles. Case studies are another excellent tool to connect theory and practice. The group project is a valuable resource tool for teaching technical, managerial and ethical issues (Lordan, 1996). In addition, Lordan (1996) suggests that long-term project is better than one-shot deal.

McInerny (1997) also suggested to open the dialogue with other disciplines. First of all, he argues that ethical discussion in PR should be carried out throughout the curriculum. More than that, academic departments of PR can participate in a dialogue with other disciplines, including ethical theorists from business, communications, journalism and political science fields. He also recommends introducing ethical theory into the PR process and into the evaluation process.

When teaching business ethics, DesJardins and Diedrich (2003) asked students to examine the economic, ethical, and ecological implications along each step in the life-cycle of the product. Using life-cycle cases to examine ethical issues will help students apply alternative views of corporate social responsibility and corporate PR. Other recommendations in teaching ethics in religion include using powerful clips or entire films to give background information to stimulate class discussion because such materials could engage emotions and build a

personal connection with the ethical issue (Marshall, 2003). In the accounting

field, a discussion of cross-cultural factors with a focus on Eastern and Western

philosophy increases students' appreciation of the ethical thinking and behavior

among cultures (Waldmann, 2000)

Issues

Where ethics should be taught in the PR curriculum remains an issue among

scholars. Should it be taught as a specific course or throughout the curriculum? A

study of journalism and mass communication programs showed there had been a

56% increase in the number of ethics courses offered since 1984 (Lambeth,

Christians & Cole, 1994). However, Hutchison (2002) argues that educators

should teach ethics throughout the curriculum instead of designing a specific

class. Thus, students could be familiar with ethical thinking and apply the

knowledge in various levels of PR classes.

Public Relations Ethics Education in Asia

Asia is a challenging place for PR professionals to conduct strategic PR

because of its complicated cultures, as well as political and media systems

(Sriramesh, 2002). To train truly multicultural PR professionals, educators should

integrate experiences from other countries into the content of PR knowledge.

Hickson (2004) argues that it is necessary for businesses and PR professionals to

examine the ethical issues in a dynamic business, particularly in the Asia Pacific.

To better understand ethics as applied in the industry, Hickson (2004) identified

ten ethical issues that surround PR practitioners: personal, professional, political, cultural, racial/religious, trade/business, social, legal, financial and environmental. Thus, Hickson suggests that professionals should pay attention to ethical issues and develop professional standards in the process.

Several studies acknowledged the difficulty of teaching in PR in Asia. Ekachai and Komolsevin (1998) claim that not all PR programs in Thailand prepare students to be competitive in the practice. One issue is the lack of PR research in Thailand. The other issue is the difficulty in applying western theories, principles, and case studies to the Thai contexts. Thus, they suggest that Thai teachers conduct more research and develop their own teaching materials. Students can learn about western theories and practices but can also begin to develop a Thai approach to PR education and practice.

Based on the framework above, this paper will review how PR ethics are taught in undergraduate programs in Taiwan. It will examine current PR curriculums, identify pedagogical strategies/issues and suggest teaching methods that educators in Taiwan can use to increase students' awareness and knowledge in ethical decision-making. It will also help PR practitioners and educators to better compare and contrast the ethical perspectives in a global surrounding.

Curriculum Review

Seven universities specified on their websites that they offer PR and advertising undergraduate programs to students who are preparing for the

industry. They are National Chen Chi University, Shi Hsin University, Ming Chuan University, Fu Jen Catholic University, Kun Shan Universities, Nan Hua University and Chang Jung Catholic University. Only National Chen Chi University is a public school; others are private. Five of these programs are in the Department of Advertising or Department of Public Relations and Advertising. The other two are in the Department of Communication Management and Department of Mass Communications. Three of the programs are in the College of Communications or College of Journalism and Communications. The other four are in the College of Business, College of Social Science, College of Humanities and Social Science and College of Liberal Arts, respectively, as Table 1 shows. A few other communication departments added PR as part of their course curriculums for students to have a general overview of the communication industries.

College of Communications in National Cheng Chi University was established in 1989. The PR and Advertising Section of the Department of Journalism became an independent department in 1987. College of Communications has the longest history in Taiwan. The research and teaching of the faculty members maintain a leading status in communication education. Compared with other six schools, its website is the only one clearly specifying the importance of ethics. The program is aiming to prepare students to be professional and ethical practitioners in the future.

Table 1.Schools in Taiwan Offering PR Classes

School	College	Department	Majors
National Chen Chi University (public)	College of Communications	Department of Advertising	Advertising PR
Shih Hsin University	College of Journalism and Communications	Department of PR and Advertising	Advertising PR
Min Chung University	College of Communications **	Department of Advertising	Advertising PR
Fu Jen Catholic University *	College of Liberal Arts	Department of Advertising and PR	Advertising PR
Kun Shan University*	College of Creative Media	Department of PR and Advertising **	Advertising PR
Nan Hua University	College of Social Sciences	Department of Communication Management	Journalism Advertising PR
Chang Jung Christian University	College of Humanities and Social Sciences	Department of Mass Communication	Journalism Advertising PR

* The two schools also have other communication-related departments.
** Media ethics classes are offered at these two universities.

Among the other five private schools, Shi Hsin University has the longest history and the largest alumni in the communication industries in Taiwan. Two programs (Fu Jen Catholic University and Kun Shan University) are located separately in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Business. There are other communication-related departments within the two universities.

PR curricula at seven universities are very similar to those in America. They all cover both PR theory and practice, such as introduction to PR, PR writing, PR strategy and planning, crisis communication, cases in PR and seminars in PR. The only difference is that most programs offer corporate PR instead of international PR course. There are no specific ethics classes offered in most curricula. However, Min Chung University provides a media ethics class as a college-based elective class. Kun Shan University provides a communication ethics class as a department-based elective class in the forth year of the undergraduate program. The class was newly opened in spring semester of 2003 and focused on PR ethics (See Appendix).

Syllabus Review

Normally, the ethics session is allocated in all fundamental or knowledge-based classes, such as introduction to PR, crisis communication, corporate PR, or seminars in PR. For introduction classes, the ethics class will be taught in one session ranging from third to eighth session. For two seminars in PR classes, the syllabi design one ethics session and specify ethics among the course objectives as well. There is, however, one exception; it is surprising to find one introduction class in two sections at one university with different arrangements in teaching ethics. One specifies the ethics in the third session, while the other one does not allocate the session at all. However, as far as skill-based and practice-based classes, such as PR writing and campaign classes,

are concerned, most of them do not allocate the ethics session in their syllabi.

Most instructors adopt English textbooks as the major reading source and list several Chinese textbooks or Chinese-translation textbooks as reference. Three most used textbooks include one chapter devoted to ethics. They are *PR: Strategies and Tactics*, Wilcox et al. (2003), *This is PR: The Realities of PR*, Newsom et al., and *PR Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems*, Center et al. (2003).

All PR courses are taught in the lecture format, a traditional teaching format, including theory explanation, class discussion and dialogue. In addition, the instructors adopt two or three other methods such as case studies, group presentation, group project and guest speech. The communication ethics class in the department of PR and advertising asks students to search local cases regarding ethical issues and give group presentation as major activities and evaluation. For introduction level classes, ethics are evaluated in the examination. For capstone classes, group projects and case studies are the most common strategies to evaluate the ethics learning.

Personal Interview

The researcher interviewed four PR educators in Taiwan -- one professor from a public university, one assistant professor from a communication program in a private university, one assistant professor and one lecturer from a PR and advertising department in another private university. The assistant professor from

the PR and advertising department teaches a communication ethics class.

A.) The first one is a professor who teaches "*Introduction to PR*" and who previously taught "*PR Cases Study.*" For her, PR ethics is an important topic. It is taught in the third session of the class. She asserts that the fierce competition in Taiwan media produces crucial ethical issues such as product placement and advertorial in PR practice.

She mentions that Code of Ethics from PRSA provides a detailed list and plenty of examples for class discussion. She also uses Code of Ethics from other disciplines in class to encourage students to have a cross-discipline comparison.

She provides two suggestions for ethics learning. A dialogue between the media and the PR practitioners and educators will allow students to learn different perspectives on ethics. Career consultancy after graduation creates more dialogues and experience-sharing between educators and students.

B.) The second interviewee is a lecturer who teaches corporate PR and who previously taught issues management with over three years of professional experiences. She stresses that PR ethics are important, because ethical dilemmas are the central part of the practice. Practitioners are concerned about product placement and deception issues. For example, it is common in agencies that one team pitches a client and leaves it to another team for implementation.

She adopts a textbook containing one chapter devoted to ethics as major source and recommends other Chinese textbooks as reference. However, she feels

that Chinese textbooks cover very few topics about ethics. She applies Code of Ethics from PRSA and one article from *PR Magazine* as supplementary reading materials. Assignments or group projects do not cover ethical issues and concerns.

Lecture, case studies and class discussion are often used in her classes. It is difficult to lead the discussion when students have very polarized answers. Other difficulties include finding teaching materials and applying effective teaching methods. It is hard to teach ethical decision-making while there are no checklists or criteria.

In 2005, she invited one guest speaker with years of practical experiences to teach the ethics session. It worked well. The guest speaker inspired enthusiasm among the students. It was a positive opportunity for students to learn from real cases.

C.)   The third interviewee is an assistant professor who teaches communication ethics and who previously taught "*Introduction to PR*" three years ago with one-year professional experience in a research company. He mentions that he proposed the communication ethics class because he is interested in ethics, particularly in PR ethics. In addition, the program is flexible to accommodate an elective class. The syllabus focuses on PR ethics. However, he adds, it is flexible to accommodate other disciplines, such as advertising or communications, in the future.

He mainly focuses on Code of Ethics from PRSA because the code provides a detailed list and plenty of examples for class discussion. However, it is not enough to rely on the code only so that local case studies are assigned for group projects and presentation. He strongly argues that one specific ethics class increases students' awareness and skills in ethical decision-making. It helps students to be familiar with the ethical dilemma after taking the class.

D.)　　The last interviewee is an assistant professor who teaches PR theory and crisis communication. He mainly uses English textbooks for lecturing in the class and applies local cases for class discussion. Journal articles are included as well.

He used lecture as the most common method when teaching "*PR Theory*." The effectiveness of learning is evaluated in the examinations. Case studies, group presentation and in-depth interviews are the most common strategies he used to teach "*Crisis Communication*." These are also the methods to evaluate students' performance. He also asks students to have mock news conferences to deal with crisis communication. So far, the students have not complained about ethics learning.

ANALYSIS

Most PR educators in Taiwan argue that ethics are important and need to be taught in undergraduate programs. It is critical to increase students' awareness,

knowledge and skills to prepare them for an ethical work force in the future. Many scholars mention the ethical concerns between the local media and PR practitioners or ethical issues in practitioners' daily life. In addition, PR educators apply lots of local cases as supplementary materials or class assignments instead of relying on the Code of Ethics from PRSA only.

However, reviewing the syllabi, not all educators allocate ethics into the class plans. It shows the risk that some students are aware of the ethical thinking while others are lacking the knowledge. In addition, most educators know how to apply pedagogical strategies and local cases to deliver the knowledge effectively. Nevertheless, most educators are using lecture format as a teaching method. A few educators are concerned about lacking the teaching methods and teaching materials to facilitate the class discussion and learning.

In conclusion, I raise five recommendations to improve the methods in teaching PR ethics. First, supplementary teaching materials are essential. Second, multiple teaching methods are helpful to stimulate the class discussion and effective learning. Third, dialogue with other countries and other disciplines improve students' awareness of complexities in ethical decision-making process. For example, educators in different countries could develop the same ethical dilemmas for generating cross-national perspectives. Fourth, seminars or brainstorming sessions will provide educators with an increase ability to teach ethics. It also helps educators to build up the consensus in curriculum design and

syllabus content. Fifth, career consultancy after graduation provides guidance to student on their career development and ethical decision-making process. It also provides educators a chance to receive feedbacks from students for future ethics teaching (See Table 2).

Should the media ethics be taught in a specific class or throughout the curriculum? Most scholars tend to favor the latter, while a few argue a specific class work better for effective ethical learning. Ideally, ethics should be taught throughout the curriculum with multiple materials and pedagogical strategies so that students could learn ethical thinking and skills in four years, not just one course work. Since not all PR educators teach ethics throughout the curriculum currently, it is a positive way to add one specific ethics class to ensure all students to learn its knowledge and skills.

Table 2.Recommendations for Ethics Teaching

	First Year/Second Year	**Third Year**	**Fourth Year**
Class	Introduction to PR PR writing	Corporate PR Crisis communication Issue management PR strategy and planning	Cases in PR Seminar in PR Media ethics
Teaching materials	Textbooks Code of Ethics with cases Local cases	Textbooks Code of Ethics from other disciplines Local cases	Textbooks Internship journal taking Experience sharing from internship
Pedagogy	Lecture Film	Case studies Guest speakers Group projects	Cases studies Dialogue with other disciplines Guest speakers Panel discussion
Assignment/ Activities	Reflection papers	Searching for local cases Practitioner interview	Apply the ethics into planning and evaluation Situation analysis
Evaluation	Reflection papers Exams	Presentation Case analysis	Case analysis Journal taking

FUTURE RESEARCH

Because of the time, distance and language factors, this study is based on a survey of public relations curricula, syllabi and PR educators' opinions. In addition, the class schedule of semesters is different than that in the United States. For example, one school is updating the curriculum, and therefore the curriculum will not be available until late February. It is better to review the curriculums and syllabus on a year-round basis. It will be better to get a deeper insight if all curricula and syllabi are to be reviewed and more faculty members could be interviewed. The interviewees in this study are full time faculty members. For further research, both full-time and part-time educators should be included as well.

PR students usually start their internship in their third year, and begin their career soon after graduation. It is necessary to examine how students are taught about PR ethics through capstone classes. What is the level of ethical awareness among the senior students? Do these classes adequately prepare students to be able to make ethical decisions in future practice? Do the students have enough opportunities to make ethical decisions and analyses in class activities?

It is equally important to gain the perception and attitude from students regarding ethical learning. How do students perceive the importance of PR ethics? Do they have enough knowledge and skills in ethical decision-making? Are there

any issues or difficulties in learning the theory and practice? What are the different attitudes, if any, held by students toward PR practice before and after they learn PR ethics? How do students perceive the differences among PR ethics, advertising ethics and journalism ethics? What are effective teaching methods for students to learn the theory and practice? It is important to get perspectives from PR students so that PR educators can improve the teaching methods for future instruction.

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Appendix

Curriculum
Department of Advertising
College of Communications
National Chen Chi University

PR classes in PR program:

	First Year-I	**Second Year-I**	**Second Year-II**	**Third Year-I**	**Third Year-II**	**Fourth Year-I**	**Fourth Year-II**
Required		Introduction to PR (3)					
Elective			PR writing (3)	Managing publics (3) Corporate PR (3)	PR strategy & planning (3)	Political PR (3) Seminar in PR theory (3) Internship (1)	Seminar in PR research (3) PR & IMC (3)

No media ethics class

Curriculum
Department of PR and Advertising
College of Journalism and Communications
Shih Hsin University

PR classes in PR program:

	First Year-I	First Year-II	Second Year-I	Second Year-II	Third Year-I	Third Year-II	Fourth Year-I	Fourth Year-II
Requir-ed	Introduction to PR (2)		English PR writing (2)		PR writing (2)	Crisis & issue management (2)		
Elect-ive			PR industry management (2) International PR (2)	Cases in PR (2)	Corporate PR (2) Advanced PR (2) PR strategy & planning (2)	PR & organizational behavior (2)	Seminar in PR (2)	Media relations (2)

Curriculum
Department of Advertising
College of Communications
Min Chung University

PR classes in PR program:

	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Required/Elective Classes are listed together Schedule in semester I or II is subject to change		Introduction to PR (2) Practices of PR (2)	PR strategy (2) PR media planning (2) Business PR (2)	Seminar in PR practices (2) Managing PR corporations (2) Case studies in PR (2) **Media ethics (2)**

Media ethics class is available as a college based elective class.

Curriculum
Department of Public Relations and Advertising
College of Creative Media
Kun Shan University

PR classes in PR program:

	First Year-I	First Year-II	Second Year-I	Second Year-II	Third Year-I	Third Year-II	Fourth Year-I	Fourth Year-II
Required		Introduction to PR (3)	PR writing (2)			PR strategy & planning (3)		
Elective				Non-profit PR (2)	Corporate PR (2) PR/AD internship I (2)	Issue management (2) (including crisis communication) PR/AD internship II (2)	Political PR (2)	**Media ethics (2)** Cases in PR (2) Seminar in PR (2)

Curriculum

Department of Communication Management

College of Social Sciences

Nan Hua University

PR classes in PR/AD sequence:

	First Year -I	First Year -II	Second Year-I	Second Year-II	Third Year-I	Third Year-II	Fourth Year-I	Fourth Year-II
Required				Introduction to PR (3)				
Elective					PR writing (2) Crisis Communication (2)	PR strategy & planning (2) Cases in PR (2)		

No media ethics class available

Curriculum

Department of Mass Communication

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Chang Jung Christian University

PR classes in PR sequence:

	First Year-I	First Year-II	Second Year-I	Second Year-II	Third Year-I	Third Year-II	Fourth Year-I	Fourth Year-II
Required					PR Theory (3)			
Elective						Marketing PR (3) Cases in PR (3)		

Curriculum
Department of Advertising and PR
College of Liberal Arts
Fu Jen Catholic University

Fundamental courses

Language, liberal arts (including ethics) and computer science

Communication courses

PR courses

PR theories: Introduction to PR, cases in PR, negotiation, and government PR

PR practices: PR writing, PR strategy and planning, PR practice, media planning and internship

PR classes in PR sequence (Spring 2004):

	First Year-I	First Year-II	Second Year-I	Second Year-II	Third Year-I	Third Year-II	Fourth Year-I	Fourth Year-II
Required			PR writing (2)					
Elective					PR practice (2)			

Teaching Ethics:

An Exploratory Review of Undergraduate Public Relations Programs in Taiwan

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《Abstract》

Public relations professionals have faced ethical dilemmas for decades. However, PR educators did not stress the ethical issues both in education and research until late 1980s, especially when the PR industry moves toward the global practice. This paper explores how PR ethics is taught in undergraduate programs in Taiwan through a curriculum review and in-depth interviews with educators to identify pedagogical strategies.

Most Taiwanese PR educators recognize that ethics are important and need to be taught in undergraduate programs in order to increase students' knowledge and skills. Educators normally apply local cases as supplementary materials instead of relying on the Code of Ethics from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) only. A few educators are concerned about lacking the teaching methods and materials to facilitate ethics learning. Five recommendations were provided to improve PR ethics teaching such as providing supplementary teaching materials, applying multiple teaching methods, initiating dialogue with other countries and other academic disciplines, giving seminars or brainstorming sessions, and providing career consultancy after graduation.

Keywords: Public relations education, public relations ethics

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