UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

STRENGTHENING EDUCATION SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN GHANA AMID DECLINING FOREIGN AID

BY

LESLIE FREEMAN NORTEY

MAPRM24022

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION - INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM (UniMAC-IJ) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS WITH MARKETING

DECEMBER 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Leslie Freeman Nortey	MAPRM24022		_24_/_12__/2025
Student	**Index number**	**Signature**	**Date**

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication-Institute of Journalism, UniMAC-IJ.

Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman		_12__/_01__/2026
Supervisor	**Signature**	**Date**

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, whose grace and mercy made the completion of this academic journey possible. It is also dedicated to my mother, Madam Gifty Teiko Nortey, whose unwavering belief in my academic aspirations and consistent support sustained me throughout this pursuit of academic excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my profound gratitude to all individuals whose support, guidance, and encouragement contributed to the successful completion of this dissertation. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman, for his patience, critical guidance, and steadfast commitment throughout the research and writing process, even during challenging moments.

I extend sincere appreciation to my former employer and former Deputy Minister of Education, Professor Kingsley Nyarko, whose exposure of me to academic and policy circles inspired my interest in scholarly work and shaped my academic ambition. I am equally thankful to the Director of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) at the Ministry of Education Headquarters, Madam Rejoice Danquah, for her guidance, encouragement, and professional support during this journey.

I also acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of Drs. Nutsugah, Tandoh, Baah-Ofori, Teika-Odoom, Doe, and Samarco, as well as all faculty members whose teaching, mentorship, and academic engagement significantly shaped my development during the Master of Arts programme.

Finally, I offer special thanks to Osafo, who played a distinctive mentoring role during this academic experience and provided encouragement at critical stages of the programme.

ABSTRACT

This study examined how strategic communication functioned within education agencies in Ghana during a period of declining external assistance and intensified domestic responsibility. A qualitative case study design was employed, drawing on interviews with senior officials and document review across selected education institutions. The findings showed that communication assumed increased institutional importance as agencies adjusted to reduced aid and rising accountability pressures. Communication practices shifted toward domestic justification, public visibility, and organisational positioning. The study also found uneven institutionalisation of communication, reflected in wide variation in unit status, professional influence, and policy guidance. In addition, communication played a central role in attracting private and development partners and in shaping institutional credibility. However, capacity constraints, bureaucratic delay, and unequal bargaining power limited partnership outcomes in several cases. The study concluded that communication now operated as a governing capability rather than as a technical support function within Ghana's education sector. The findings highlighted the need for stronger structures, clearer authority, and coherent communication policy to support institutional performance in a post-aid environment.

Key Words: Strategic communication, Education, governance, Donor withdrawal, Partnerships

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAMFED – Campaign for Female Education

FAWE – Forum for African Women Educationalists

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

IMF – International Monetary Fund

JICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency

MoE – Ministry of Education

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PR – Public Relations

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

T-TEL – Transforming Teacher Education and Learning

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

UniMAC – University of Media, Arts and Communication

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Foreign aid has long played a critical role in Ghana's national development (Cudjoe, 2024; Park, 2023). Appiah-Otoo et al. (2022) note that aid has taken the form of grants, concessional loans, debt relief, and technical assistance across public sectors. These flows have historically financed healthcare, agriculture, water and sanitation, governance reforms, and infrastructure. Education, however, has remained one of the most structurally exposed sectors because of its deep integration with donor financing mechanisms. Over time, aid inflows have become both less predictable and substantially reduced. The OECD (2025) reports a 9% decline in official development assistance in 2024. Donor Tracker projects further cuts from key partners such as the United States and Germany, while McKinsey (2025) estimates possible global shortfalls of up to US$60 billion compared with 2023 levels. These reductions reflect donor reprioritisation, global economic volatility, and intensifying geopolitical competition (Iannantuoni, 2025; UNCTAD, 2025). In response, Arhin (2024) and Ntim and Botchway (2023) observe that countries including Ghana are being compelled to seek non-donor development paths. This shift aligns with the "Ghana Beyond Aid" agenda, which privileges domestic resource mobilisation and regional cooperation over external dependency.

Within this context, the education sector stands out for its persistent reliance on external finance. Lewin (2020) argues that many education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa have been shaped by donor priorities, often at the expense of domestic ownership and policy coherence. World Bank (2024) data show a 23% decline in education aid to Africa between 2020 and 2021. This reduction exposed the vulnerability of donor-dependent systems. The IMF (2022) stresses that resilient education systems require long-term institutional capacity, particularly in communication and stakeholder engagement. Education institutions occupy a distinctive position in the public sector because they manage both service delivery and societal expectations of development, equity, and mobility. In Ghana, donor involvement has underpinned major reforms. The 1987 Education Reform Programme, supported by the World Bank, introduced the Junior Secondary School system and expanded infrastructure (World Bank, 1989; 2008; Casely-Hayford et al., 2007). More recent initiatives include the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project, the Secondary Education Improvement Project, and the Complementary Basic Education Programme. Each initiative depended not only on funding but also on structured communication practices involving reporting systems, public accountability, and stakeholder mobilisation.

As aid contracts, this communication architecture has weakened. Ministry of Finance budget statements show declining education grants (Ministry of Finance, 2024; 2025). This contraction has disrupted programme continuity and weakened stakeholder engagement. Education agencies now face reputational and operational pressures previously absorbed by donors’ reporting systems and communication units. Similar patterns appear in Uganda and Kenya, where donor exit eroded institutional trust. Rwanda, by contrast, embedded communication units and public reporting tools within education governance and sustained partner confidence after aid withdrawal (IMF, 2020).

As Ghana repositions itself beyond dependence on external aid, the role of communication within education governance expands. Education institutions must now maintain credibility, coordination, and partner confidence with fewer external assurances. Communication therefore functions as an organising capability rather than a support activity. This study examines how agencies under Ghana’s Ministry of Education deploy strategic communication in response to declining foreign aid in order to sustain credibility, stakeholder engagement, and partnerships.

This framing situates communication as central to institutional adaptation within Ghana's education sector.

1.2 Problem Statement

Ghana's education sector operates as a multi-agency institutional ecosystem under the Ministry of Education, involving bodies responsible for policy, regulation, service delivery, and quality assurance. For decades, this system has been sustained by donor financing, which supported infrastructure, programme implementation, and reform (Lewin, 2020; World Bank, 2024). Key initiatives, including the Education Reform Programme, the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project, the Secondary Education Improvement Project, and the Complementary Basic Education Programme, were embedded within this structure and externally financed (Casely-Hayford et al., 2007; World Bank, 2008). Although resources were channelled through individual projects, donor requirements shape communication practices, reporting systems, and partnership frameworks across agencies. This settlement is now under strain as official development assistance declines (OECD, 2025; Donor Tracker, 2025; McKinsey, 2025).

As donor financing contracts, adjustment within Ghana's education sector is no longer confined to budgeting but extends to how agencies organise authority, coordinate programmes, and manage external relationships. Ghana's Beyond Aid agenda promotes domestic resource mobilisation and partnership diversification (Cudjoe, 2024; Arhin, 2024). Donor withdrawal therefore creates sector-wide pressure rather than isolated organisational strain. It alters reporting routines, weakens coordination, and reshapes information flows (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Comparative evidence shows that education systems preserve confidence when communication is reorganised across agencies, as in Rwanda, but experience trust erosion when it remains fragmented, as in Uganda and Kenya (IMF, 2020). What remains unclear is how this process is unfolding within Ghana's multi-agency education system.

In Ghana, communication practices in education agencies remain largely operational rather than strategic (Kankam, 2022; Kwasi-Agyeman, 2020; Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009), reflecting broader regional patterns (Ngondo & Klyueva, 2023). The unresolved issue is therefore not whether communication matters, but how agencies are aligning roles, coordinating strategy, and repositioning authority across the education ecosystem under aid decline. Despite increasing attention to donor exit, empirical evidence on these institutional adjustments within Ghana's education sector remains limited. This study therefore examines how agencies reorganise communication to sustain credibility, partnerships, and institutional coherence as foreign assistance contracts.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To examine how agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education are adapting their strategic communication practices in response to declining foreign aid.
2. To assess the extent to which strategic communication is institutionalised within these agencies as a mechanism for sustaining credibility and stakeholder engagement.
3. To analyse how strategic communication is used to attract and manage partnerships and alternative sources of support in a context of donor withdrawal.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with the objectives, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education adapting their strategic communication practices in response to declining foreign aid?
2. To what extent is strategic communication institutionalised within these agencies as a mechanism for sustaining credibility and stakeholder engagement?

3. How is strategic communication used to attract and manage partnerships and alternative sources of support in a context of donor withdrawal?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to understanding how education agencies in Ghana respond institutionally to declining foreign aid. As donor funding contracts, the ability of these agencies to maintain partnerships, public trust, and operational credibility increasingly depends on how communication is organised and applied. Yet existing research offers limited insight into how strategic communication functions within recipient institutions once donor support weakens.

The study is significant in three respects. First, it provides evidence from agencies that operate at the centre of policy implementation, shifting attention from schools to institutional actors that manage programmes, partnerships, and accountability. Second, it contributes to scholarship on strategic communication by examining its role in a context of financial constraint and institutional transition, rather than in stable or corporate settings where it is more commonly studied. Third, it offers policy-relevant insights for improving communication structures within the education sector, with implications for sustaining partnerships and organisational legitimacy during aid withdrawal.

By focusing on how education agencies communicate under changing funding conditions, the study advances debate on institutional adaptation in donor-dependent sectors. Its findings are expected to inform policy decisions on communication strategy, organisational design, and partnership management in education governance.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on selected agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education as a sectoral case for examining how public institutions employ strategic communication to sustain partnerships and institutional credibility amid declining foreign aid. The education sector is adopted because of its historical dependence on donor funding and its heightened exposure to aid withdrawal, which makes it an appropriate context for analysing organisational adaptation. The study is limited to public agencies responsible for policy implementation, programme coordination, and external engagement, excluding schools and private institutions. It concentrates on strategic communication as an institutional function rather than on educational outcomes or teaching practice. Evidence is drawn from interviews, policy documents, and institutional records relevant to the post-aid transition, and the findings are intended to generate analytical insights rather than sector-wide statistical generalisations.

1.7 Outline of Chapters

The study unfolds across five chapters, each building on the previous to provide a coherent narrative. Chapter One introduces the research problem, outlines the objectives, and explains why the study matters. It frames the background, clarifies the gap, and presents the questions that guide the entire inquiry. Chapter Two reviews existing literature and conceptual debates. It engages key definitions, frameworks, and empirical studies relevant to foreign aid, education governance, and institutional communication. This chapter helps position the research within broader academic and policy discussions, offering both comparison and critique. Further, Chapter Three explains the methodology. It outlines the research design, sources of data, and analytical approach. Chapters Four and Five present the findings and discuss their implications. The final chapter draws conclusions and offers recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

1.8 Operational Definitions

This section specifies how key terms are used in this study. The definitions reflect their application within the research rather than abstract theoretical meanings.

- *Strategic communication* refers to the deliberate use of communication by education agencies; it supports explanation, visibility, and engagement.
- *Institutionalisation of communication* denotes the degree to which communication is formally embedded within organisations; structure and authority matter.
- *Declining foreign aid* refers to the reduction or withdrawal of donor support experienced by education agencies; it is treated as a lived institutional condition.
- *Partnerships* are structured relationships between education agencies and external actors; they extend beyond funding alone.
- *Education agencies* are public institutions operating under Ghana's Ministry of Education; they perform policy, regulatory, coordination, or service functions.
- *Stakeholders* are individuals or groups that influence or are affected by education agencies; their expectations shape institutional behaviour.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter established the foundation for the study by introducing the research problem, context, and rationale. It defined the objectives and questions that shape the inquiry and explained why the topic holds relevance across academic, policy, and practical domains. The chapter also outlined the scope of the study and previewed the structure of the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a foundation for understanding the dynamics of foreign aid, public sector partnerships, and strategic communication. The overarching aim is to synthesise key scholarly contributions that illuminate how aid flows shape institutional practices, how communication frameworks influence credibility, and how partnerships can be leveraged amid declining donor support. By engaging with empirical findings, theoretical perspectives, and comparative insights, this section situates the study within a broader discourse that connects aid dependency, institutional reform, and communication strategies.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Resource Dependence Theory

Resource Dependence Theory explains organisational behaviour as a response to external control over critical resources. Organisations are not self-sufficient. They rely on actors that possess funding, legitimacy, expertise, or access to markets, which creates relations of power and constraint (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). A central tenet is that dependence varies with resource concentration, discretion, and importance, while power rests with those who control scarce inputs (Emerson, 1962). Consequently, organisations pursue boundary-spanning strategies to reduce vulnerability. These include diversification of revenue, alliance formation, co-optation of influential actors, and structural reconfiguration (Hillman et al., 2009; Ulrich & Barney, 1984).

Another core idea is that power is relational and reciprocal rather than fixed, which means organisations can reshape dependence through negotiation and repositioning within networks (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005). The theory also recognises strategic choice under constraint, where leaders make calculated adaptations instead of passive compliance (Oliver, 1991). Furthermore, external actors such as donors and regulators shape organisational actions through resource control and monitoring (Frooman, 1999). Recent work extends the theory by emphasising interdependence management as an ongoing capability rather than a one-off adjustment (Drees & Heugens, 2013; Malatesta & Smith, 2014).

2.2.2 Stakeholder Theory

Introduced by Edward Freeman in his 1984 work *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Stakeholder Theory challenged the primacy of shareholder value. Freeman argued that sustainable success requires balancing the interests of multiple groups including employees, customers, communities, and regulators. The theory evolved as a response to growing concerns about corporate responsibility and legitimacy in society.

The central assumption is that organizations operate within networks of interdependent relationships. Value creation emerges not only from financial outcomes but from addressing the expectations of diverse stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007). Ignoring these relationships risks conflict, loss of legitimacy, and long-term failure.

Key concepts include stakeholder identification, salience, and engagement. Tools such as mapping and prioritisation frameworks help organizations manage competing claims. The theory also differentiates between primary stakeholders, whose involvement is essential for survival, and secondary stakeholders, who influence reputation and legitimacy (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Its purpose extends beyond profit maximisation. It reframes organisational success as relational, ethical, and inclusive. Scope encompasses corporate governance, strategic planning, and public relations practice, where effective stakeholder management is seen as crucial to long-term sustainability.

The strengths of the theory lie in its ethical orientation and managerial flexibility. It acknowledges diverse claims and embeds accountability into decision-making (Phillips, 2003). Yet, critics highlight its lack of precise guidelines for resolving competing demands. Some argue that its broadness makes it impractical as a prescriptive model (Jensen, 2002). Nonetheless, the theory continues to shape debates in business ethics, communication, and management. Its emphasis on interdependence and accountability ensures continued relevance in contemporary organizational practice.

2.2.3 Relationship to the Study

This study is theoretically anchored in Resource Dependence Theory and Stakeholder Theory. First, the Resource Dependence Theory provides the foundation for understanding how the education sector became structurally reliant on donor funding and why the reduction of external support creates organisational vulnerability. It explains how education agencies seek to minimise uncertainty by strengthening external relationships, diversifying resource sources, and repositioning themselves within donor and partnership networks. Within this perspective, strategic communication functions as a mechanism for managing dependence through negotiation, visibility, and alignment with potential sources of support.

Further, the Stakeholder Theory as well complements this framework by explaining how education agencies manage relationships with diverse actors whose cooperation is essential for operational survival. Education agencies engage donors, corporate bodies, civil society groups, communities, and government institutions, all of which hold differing expectations and levels of influence. Stakeholder Theory highlights the need to identify, prioritise, and consistently engage these actors in order to sustain trust and institutional credibility. Strategic communication is therefore not limited to information dissemination but operates as a structured process of engagement through which relationships are cultivated, accountability is demonstrated, and partnership expectations are coordinated.

Together, Resource Dependence Theory and Stakeholder Theory position strategic communication as both a resource management strategy and a relational governance tool. Resource Dependence Theory explains the imperative for education agencies to secure alternative sources of support, while Stakeholder Theory clarifies how communication is used to sustain legitimacy and partner confidence. Their combined application offers a coherent analytical lens for examining how education agencies institutionalise strategic communication practices and use them to attract, manage, and sustain partnerships amid declining foreign aid.

2.3 Strategic Communication

Strategic communication may be defined as the purposeful and coordinated use of communication by an organisation to achieve its mission and long-term objectives (Hallahan et al., 2007). While public relations emphasises relationship building and dialogue between organisations and publics, strategic communication broadens this scope by integrating communication across management, marketing, and political functions (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig, 2009; Pedersen et al., 2021). Unlike traditional public relations, which often focuses on reputation and media relations, strategic communication is rooted in institutional strategy and decision-making (Argenti, 2016). L'Etang (2008) positions public relations as a mediating function, but strategic communication extends mediation into leadership systems and organisational control processes (Zerfass et al., 2018). In this sense, public relations manages relationships, whereas strategic communication structures organisational direction. Strategic communication therefore does not replace public relations but situates it within a wider management framework.

The central principles of strategic communication include goal alignment, audience orientation, internal coherence, ethical conduct, and continuous evaluation (Botan, 2021; Cornelissen, 2020). Freberg (2021) demonstrates that consistency across platforms sustains legitimacy, yet flexibility is required to adapt messages to diverse stakeholder expectations. While Kunadt (2025) highlights long-term planning as essential, Hallahan et al. (2007) stress that communication must remain responsive to context. Public relations may prioritise relational outcomes, but strategic communication foregrounds institutional performance. Together, these views position communication as a strategic resource rather than a technical support activity.

2.4 Strategic Communication and Partnerships

Strategic communication underpins the formation and durability of partnerships across public, private, and non-governmental sectors by aligning interests, clarifying roles, and coordinating action (Grimm et al., 2024). Donor agencies frame collaborations as shared development ventures to strengthen legitimacy and public confidence (Tsvetkova & Rushchin, 2021), a strategy also shown to mobilise political and institutional support in emerging economies (Tugyetwena, 2023). Recipient institutions operationalise these frames through reporting systems, stakeholder engagement routines, and visibility practices that sustain institutional credibility beyond project cycles (Ministry of Finance, 2024; 2025). Trust and credibility are therefore communicative achievements rather than automatic outcomes. Transparency, consistency, and professional conduct strengthen institutional authority (Hon & Grunig, 1999), yet communication can also mask unequal power relations by presenting partnerships as neutral despite asymmetries (Muganzi, 2022).

Partnership communication further intensifies within multi-actor settings characterised by uneven power and competing priorities (Civera et al., 2025). Education agencies navigate these pressures through negotiation practices shaped by cultural and institutional differences (Guo, 2025). Communication structures participation by framing shared purpose, while simultaneously regulating authority (Weder, 2022). Digital platforms facilitate ongoing engagement and visibility (Kent & Taylor, 2016), though they also expose partnerships to risks such as misinformation and exclusion (Alzoraiki et al., 2024). Organisational divergence, ambiguous messaging, and resource inequalities weaken collaboration, particularly when coordination depends on donor-funded systems (Zoleta et al., 2021; Muganzi, 2022).

As donor involvement recedes, the burden of coordination and communication shifts more prominently to recipient institutions. Education agencies are increasingly required to sustain credibility, manage partnerships, and maintain public visibility with constrained organisational resources (Ministry of Finance, 2024; 2025). Governance effectiveness in this context becomes closely tied to institutionalised engagement routines and accountability mechanisms rather than externally supported systems (Hassan et al., 2022). Donor withdrawal has been associated with weakened reporting structures and reduced communicative integration in education systems in contexts such as Ethiopia, Malawi, and Sierra Leone, where externally funded coordination mechanisms previously structured stakeholder interaction (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Comparative assessments further indicate that communication capacity shapes institutional continuity, with contrasting experiences observed in countries including Rwanda, Cambodia, and Nepal, where variations in institutionalised communication influenced post-donor credibility and coordination outcomes (IMF, 2020). These patterns are well documented, although sector-level communication reorganisation within multi-agency education systems has received limited focused attention.

2.5 Public Sector Partnerships

Public sector partnerships in education are sustained through communication as much as through formal agreements (Kiprono, 2025; Wango et al., 2025). Collaboration among governments, donors, corporations, and civil society depends on how goals are explained, roles are defined, and results are demonstrated (Syal et al., 2021). In this respect, communication operates as the organising mechanism of cooperation rather than as a support function (Izak et al., 2024). Education partnerships function as communicative systems in which authority, responsibility, and trust are continuously constructed through interaction and public presentation.

Globally, ministries of education that invest in coordinated communication structures tend to achieve more durable partnerships (Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek & Owczarek, 20220). Finland's education reforms were accompanied by systematic public engagement that strengthened policy legitimacy and public confidence (Salonen-Hakomäki et al., 2024). Rwanda institutionalised national education communication units after reductions in external financing to maintain transparency and donor confidence (Kayitesi, 2024). Following reductions in concessional World Bank financing (World Bank, 2017), Vietnam re-embedded externally funded reforms into domestic institutions rather than continuing parallel donor structures. In contrast, several studies from Sub-Saharan Africa show that donor exit often produces institutional instability when reporting systems, stakeholder engagement, and narrative control remain fragmented (Ndombi, 2021; Suva, 2025). These patterns suggest that partnership endurance depends on reputation management, expectation coordination, and accountability visibility rather than on funding alone.

Corporate engagement in education shows that communication functions as a strategic asset. Multinational firms use corporate social responsibility initiatives such as IBM's SkillsBuild and Microsoft's education partnerships to build credibility and organisational identity (Bhardwaj et al., 2024; Sehgal et al., 2020). As aid declines, education agencies must rely on transparency, reputation management, and strategic positioning to sustain legitimacy and bargaining power, since those unable to maintain public credibility lose influence despite operational capacity.

2.6 Public Sector Partnerships and Strategic Communication in Ghana

When it comes to Ghana's education system, public sector partnerships cannot be discounted. Education agencies rely on structured engagement to coordinate external actors, mobilise resources, and maintain institutional credibility (Mensah & Gordon, 2020). This becomes evident in long-standing education partnerships involving multilateral donors such as the World Bank, UNICEF, USAID, JICA, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whose support to Ghana has historically included school infrastructure, teacher development, and curriculum reform (Global Partnership for Education, 2025; Ministry of Education, 2022). These programmes were accompanied by formal communication mechanisms such as performance reporting, stakeholder briefings, and public accountability releases. As a result, partnership sustainability depended not only on financing but on how reforms were presented, justified, and evaluated through institutional communication channels.

Corporate social responsibility initiatives now position the private sector as a central actor in Ghana's education partnership landscape (Fusheini & Salia, 2021). The MTN Ghana Foundation's scholarship scheme, Vodafone Ghana Foundation's Instant Schools initiative, and AngloGold Ashanti's support for secondary and tertiary education illustrate sustained corporate engagement (Citinewsroom, 2022; Graphic Online, 2022; Vodafone Ghana Foundation, 2016), with communication practices conferring legitimacy through annual reports, beneficiary accounts, and public events, while enabling state agencies to signal policy delivery and institutional relevance. As donor funding declines and fiscal pressures intensify, the strategic value of communication has increased under Ghana's "Beyond Aid" agenda, which prioritises domestic resourcing and diversified partnerships. Education agencies are therefore under growing pressure to signal capacity, efficiency, and measurable outcomes to philanthropic actors such as the Mastercard Foundation, whose work in Ghana and across Africa spans scholarships, secondary education reform, and EdTech initiatives (CAMFED, 2024; FAWE, 2024; Mastercard Foundation, 2024; T-TEL, 2023). Mariam (2025) shows that fragile communication systems constrain collaboration, whereas deliberate and forward-oriented engagement enables partnership expansion. Consequently, strategic communication extends beyond administrative reporting to function as a mechanism of credibility, coordination, and support mobilisation under financial constraint.

2.7 Empirical Review

First, Odoom et al. (2024) assessed government communication around Ghana's Free SHS policy using a survey of 491 respondents analysed through inferential statistics. While the policy was perceived as financially beneficial, official communication was judged insufficient in addressing quality concerns and articulating long-term value, leading to calls for transparency, participation, and continuous evaluation.

Shifting from programme delivery to fiscal priority-setting, Naz (2025) examined whether strategic communication could influence education investment in Balochistan. Interviews with education specialists and communication practitioners showed that underinvestment reflected communicative failures as much as fiscal constraints. Institutional messaging, media narratives, and advocacy shaped policy salience, thereby affecting expenditure. Naz recommended ICT-enabled public communication, stronger government–media relations, and communication-led reform. Similarly concerned with collective direction, Kumi (2020) analysed how Ghana's "Beyond Aid" agenda was communicated through 67 interviews. Although widely endorsed, its operational meaning for education remained unclear due to weak messaging on implementation and financing, compounded by politicisation, which diluted institutional readiness.

As these studies foreground practice, governance, and policy change, Menashy (2018) examined communication as power within the Global Partnership for Education. Interviews and document analysis revealed that participatory language masked asymmetrical flows, with donors dominating agenda-setting and reporting. Control over communicative infrastructure sustained donor authority and restricted recipient voice. Extending the governance lens to finance, Lewin (2020), using historical spending data, showed persistent aid reliance across Sub-Saharan Africa and concluded that domestic revenue mobilisation was the sustainable route.

Finally, at the level of evaluation and legitimacy, Riddell (2018) found that accountability regimes privileged donor metrics and interpretations, limiting organisational learning among recipients. Accountability thus functioned primarily as donor communication rather than institutional development. Collectively, the studies demonstrate that communication shapes acceptance, priorities, power relations, funding trajectories, and accountability in education aid, yet often fails to deliver sustained local ownership without participatory design and fiscal anchoring.

2.8 Research Gaps and Synthesis

Existing scholarship has established the risks of donor dependency in education systems and documented declining external financing across Sub-Saharan Africa (Lewin, 2020; World Bank, 2024). Studies also show that communication shapes governance, trust, and accountability in education reform and donor relationships (Menashy, 2018; Riddell, 2018; Hon & Grunig, 1999). However, most research examines donor policy, national reform outcomes, or individual institutions rather than communication restructuring across education governance systems. While the influence of aid on education policy is well documented, there is limited empirical analysis of how communication responsibilities are redistributed within multi-agency systems once donor reporting frameworks dissolve. Further, existing work gives priority to donor perspectives, with little attention to recipient-side institutional adjustments (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). This study therefore fills a significant gap by examining how education agencies within a shared governance system recalibrate communication under aid contraction, and how these adjustments affect alignment, credibility, and partnerships.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed key theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature on foreign aid, education governance, strategic communication, and partnerships. Resource Dependence Theory and Stakeholder Theory provided the analytical foundation, while sector-specific studies highlighted the centrality of communication to accountability and trust in education systems. The chapter established that although donor withdrawal and education financing are well examined, how education agencies reorganise communication within a shared governance system remains under-researched. The literature therefore justifies the present study's system-level focus and positions strategic communication as an institutional mechanism rather than a support activity.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted for the study. It explains the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The chapter situates the chosen qualitative approach within the research objectives and provides justification for its suitability. The overarching aim is to detail the processes through which the study's research questions were addressed, ensuring rigor, credibility, and alignment with the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry.

3.2 Research Method

Qualitative research is best understood as an approach that seeks to interpret meanings rather than measure variables (Mason, 2017; Merriam, 2009). It explores lived experience, context, and practice through close engagement with participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that it enables the study of problems in depth, while Denzin and Lincoln (2018) maintain that it is grounded in interpretivist traditions that view reality as socially constructed. This orientation privileges thick description over numerical generalisation (Silverman, 2020; Flick, 2018). It also emphasises subjectivity and context, with Patton (2015) stressing that the focus lies in exploring the how and why of social life, and Bryman (2016) insisting that design should follow purpose rather than rigid templates. Data are often collected in natural settings (Schwandt, 2014), interpreted holistically, and linked to the wider environment (Seale, 2018).

Qualitative inquiry is also characterised by flexibility in design and the use of diverse sources (Charmaz, 2014). Dialogue provides a route to insight (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), while small but information-rich samples allow for depth (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Document analysis complements interviews by broadening the evidence base (Bowen, 2009), and triangulation enhances credibility (Denzin, 2017). The method supports interpretive analysis and reflexivity, as shown in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Trustworthiness is assured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), while quality is guided by sincerity and resonance (Tracy, 2010). For this study, the qualitative method was essential because it captured how agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education organised communication in response to aid decline. It also enabled triangulation of interviews and documents to reveal strategies, practices, and beliefs that could not be reduced to numbers (Miles et al., 2014; Nowell et al., 2017).

3.2.1 Case Study Design

The case study design provides a focused lens for examining complex phenomena in real-life contexts. Yin (2018) defines it as an empirical inquiry that investigates a case within its environment, especially when boundaries are not clear. Stake (1995; 2006) views it as a way to understand the particular in detail, while Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe it as a bounded system that makes the unit of analysis explicit. It is also recognised for its ability to show both the uniqueness of the case and its connection to wider conditions (Simons, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Case studies often rely on multiple sources of evidence, which strengthen validity and richness. Baxter and Jack (2008) highlight that embedded designs allow subunits to be examined within a broader case, while Thomas (2011) stresses the need to define case, phenomenon, and context. Gerring (2007) notes that careful bounding of time, place, and organisational scope ensures analytic clarity, and Flyvbjerg (2006; 2011) adds that although generalisation is limited, case knowledge can be powerful and transferable.

In this study, the case study design was appropriate because the "case" was defined as Ghana's education governance ecosystem rather than individual organisations. The Ministry of Education and its agencies were examined as an interconnected system in which communication structures, coordination mechanisms, and partnership practices were distributed across multiple institutional units. Agencies were treated as embedded subunits through which system-level processes were observed, rather than as self-contained cases. This design enabled analysis of how communication was organised across institutional boundaries under conditions of declining foreign aid. Evidence was drawn from interviews and documents to capture both operational practice and sector coordination. By adopting this approach, the study produced a holistic account of how communication was repositioned, institutional roles were recalibrated, and partnerships were maintained within Ghana's education system as donor support contracted.

3.3 Target Population

The target population refers to the group from which insight is drawn (Babbie, 2020). Defining this group clearly strengthens validity (Neuman, 2014) and ensures that data collection remains aligned with study objectives. For this study, the target population was defined as communication and public relations personnel within agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education, including heads of units, directors, and senior officers responsible for communication strategy. These officials operate within Ghana's education governance system at points where information flow, coordination, and partner engagement intersect. Participants were therefore selected as institutional communication actors rather than organisational representatives, enabling analysis of how strategic communication was organised and aligned across the education sector under conditions of declining foreign aid.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling involves selecting participants to investigate specific phenomena (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In qualitative research, adequacy depends on relevance rather than sample size, with saturation guiding credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Marshall et al., 2013). Sampling strategies therefore align participant selection with research aims (Etikan et al., 2016; Robinson, 2014). This study adopted purposive sampling to engage participants with direct responsibility for strategic communication within the education sector (Patton, 2015). The approach prioritised depth over representativeness (Saunders et al., 2019; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

3.4.1 Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of participants or units selected from a population to be included in a study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) note that in qualitative research, the concern is not statistical representation but the ability to capture depth and meaning. Similarly, Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) argue that qualitative adequacy depends on information power rather than quantity alone. For this study, the decision to engage eight (8) participants aligned with the principle that smaller samples can yield substantial insights when the scope is narrow and the participants are strategically placed within their organisations (Sandelowski, 1995; Polit & Beck, 2010).

The choice of eight (8) participants was supported by several scholars. Guest et al. (2006) found that data saturation often occurred within the first dozen interviews, particularly when participants occupied similar roles. Mason (2010) also demonstrated that depth of analysis rather than numerical size determined the robustness of qualitative outcomes. These arguments justified the current selection as logical and defensible. Furthermore, Bowen (2009) showed that triangulating interview evidence with document analysis enhanced validity and reduced reliance on large numbers. Consequently, adopting a sample of eight (8) ensured that the study remained manageable, produced rich data, and stayed consistent with established methodological guidance.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection refers to the process through which a researcher gathers information to answer the study's questions and meet its objectives. As Creswell and Creswell (2017) emphasise, careful planning of data collection enhances the credibility and reliability of the study. Flick (2018) also notes that combining different methods enables triangulation, which strengthens validity. In qualitative research, interviews and document analysis are two of the most widely adopted methods (Silverman, 2020; Mason, 2017), as they allow the researcher to capture perspectives, narratives, and records that together provide a fuller understanding of social phenomena.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviews were one of the primary sources of data in qualitative research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) described interviews as professional conversations aimed at producing knowledge. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that interviews allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in depth. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials from selected agencies under the Ministry of Education. The semi-structured format allowed for consistency across interviews while providing flexibility to probe further into issues as they emerged. This approach was particularly effective for uncovering strategies, challenges, and practices in institutional communication.

The participants for these interviews included directors, communication officers, and programme leads who directly managed or influenced communication activities within their agencies. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that selecting participants with direct experience ensured the collection of rich and relevant data. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives rather than brief answers. According to Seidman (2013), such questions encouraged participants to reflect and elaborate on their experiences, thereby producing detailed insights. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and with participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in transcription and analysis.

3.5.2 Interview Guide

Since interviews were selected as the data collection method, the interview guide was the suitable tool for facilitating this process. The interview guide is a structured list of themes and questions that directs discussion while allowing flexibility for probing (Brinkmann, 2014; Qu & Dumay, 2011). It was developed from literature on strategic communication, public sector partnerships, and qualitative interviewing (Kallio et al., 2016; Turner, 2010) and included broad, open-ended questions to capture narratives on communication practices, challenges, and strategies. The guide ensured coherence and comparability without limiting depth (Patton, 2015), aligned data collection with research objectives and theory (Bryman, 2016), and supported systematic exploration of how communication was organised and adapted amid declining foreign aid, thereby strengthening credibility and trustworthiness.

3.5.3 Data Collection and Management

Building on the semi-structured interviews and the interview guide, data collection proceeded in clearly defined phases. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews supported by an interview guide. Eight officials were recruited through invitation letters, information sheets, and consent forms, with interview sessions scheduled within a four-week period either in private offices or via secure platforms such as Zoom (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Prior to each interview, the guide was shared 48 hours in advance, consent was reconfirmed, and anonymous study identification codes were assigned. Recording equipment was tested, and participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any stage (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each interview followed a structured yet flexible format, with field notes used to capture contextual information and nonverbal cues. Relevant non-confidential documents were also requested to support triangulation.

Following each interview, audio files were encrypted, and verbatim transcripts were produced within 72 hours to enhance accuracy. Public documents, reports, and strategic plans was collected concurrently, catalogued systematically, and compared with interview narratives to ensure consistency and corroboration (Hodder, 2000; O'Leary, 2017). All data was stored securely with password protection, while consent forms were kept separately from interview materials. An audit trail was maintained to document analytic decisions and file management processes, thereby strengthening credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to interpret qualitative data. Thematic analysis, initially articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and later developed into reflexive thematic analysis to emphasise the researcher's interpretive role (Braun & Clarke, 2019), provided a systematic framework for analysis. The analytic process followed six stages: familiarisation through transcription and repeated reading, generation of initial codes by labelling data segments, searching for themes through the clustering of related codes, reviewing themes for coherence and consistency, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report supported by illustrative quotations and documentary evidence. Reflexive notes were maintained throughout the analytic process, and coding was managed through manual charting or qualitative data analysis software to ensure transparency and methodological rigour (Nowell et al., 2017).

This method was appropriate for examining how education agencies adapted their communication practices amid declining foreign aid. Interview data were coded inductively, while also attending deductively to issues identified in the literature and research questions. Policy documents and reports were subjected to the same coding procedures to facilitate triangulation and strengthen analytic validity (Hodder, 2000). Rigour was reinforced using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, supported by systematic analytic frameworks that enhanced reliability and coherence (Miles et al., 2014). These procedures ensured that the findings remained grounded, credible, and analytically robust.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this qualitative study because of the direct interaction with participants and the handling of sensitive institutional information. Protecting the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants was fundamental to research integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Ethical principles guided all stages of the research process, from participant recruitment to data dissemination (Bryman, 2016). Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant review board prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Participants received an information sheet and consent form outlining the study’s purpose, procedures, and rights. Written informed consent was obtained, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any point, reflecting the principles of transparency and voluntary participation (Orb et al., 2001).

Confidentiality was strictly maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage procedures. Audio recordings and transcripts were encrypted, while consent forms were stored separately from research data (Kaiser, 2009). Reflexivity was also practiced throughout the study to remain attentive to potential biases and power relations inherent in qualitative research. As Tracy (2010) observed, reflexivity strengthens ethical integrity and analytic sincerity. Findings were therefore reported with care and sensitivity, ensuring that meaning was preserved without compromising participant confidentiality.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the methodological choices adopted for the study. By employing a qualitative research design, the study generated in-depth insights into how agencies under the Ministry of Education in Ghana adapted their communication practices amid declining foreign aid. The use of purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis ensured that the data collected was rich, contextually grounded, and aligned with the study's objectives. The next chapter presents the findings, organised around the research questions and themes that emerged from the analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and explains how empirical data were analysed in relation to the research objectives. Drawing on interview material and document review, the analysis identifies key patterns in how strategic communication is organised, practised, and repositioned within education agencies under conditions of declining foreign aid. Findings are presented thematically, with sections reflecting the relative strength of patterns emerging from the data rather than uniform structure, and illustrations are drawn from participant accounts and institutional records to support analytic credibility.

4.1.1 Institutional Profile of Participating Agencies

Data was generated from interviews with eight senior personnel working within public education governance institutions in Ghana. Participants occupied roles linked to financing and coordination, regulation and quality assurance, service delivery and access, and public knowledge and learning systems. All interviewees held positions with responsibility for communication, coordination, or policy-related decision-making, ensuring that accounts were grounded in institutional practice. Levels of professional experience ranged from mid-level to senior appointments, reflecting variation in exposure to organisational processes. To protect institutional identity, neither agency names nor individual titles are disclosed, and participants are identified only through coded labels. The functional positioning of participants' institutions, which provides the contextual basis for interpreting variations in communication practice, is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Functional Classification of Coded Agencies

Code Group	Institutional Role
RES1–RES2	Financing and international coordination
RES3–RES5	Regulation and quality assurance
RES6–RES7	Service delivery and access
RES8	Public knowledge and learning systems

Source: Filed Data (2025)

4.2 Overview of Emergent Themes

Analysis of the data revealed three broad patterns that capture how education agencies are reorganising communication in the context of declining foreign support. First, communication has shifted from a support function to an institutional survival tool, with agencies relying more heavily on communication to maintain visibility, manage expectations, and assert relevance in the absence of stable external funding. Second, the degree to which communication is established as a formal institutional function varies considerably across agencies, with strong differences observed in staffing, authority, and internal recognition. Third, communication has become central to partnership mobilisation, as agencies increasingly depend on public reputation, message control, and engagement practices to attract non-donor support and sustain external relationships. These themes are presented unevenly in the sections that follow in order to reflect the analytical weight of the data rather than impose uniform structure.

4.3 RQ1: Communication as Institutional Survival Mechanism

The enquiry showed that as donor support declined, communication became integral to institutional continuity rather than a technical function. The data indicated that agencies relied on communication to sustain authority, regulate expectations, and preserve legitimacy under increasing uncertainty. Communication practices shifted toward image reinforcement, stakeholder alignment, and internal stabilisation. These findings suggested that survival depended not only on financial resources but on the ability of institutions to actively construct relevance through controlled messaging and strategic visibility.

4.3.1 Communication following donor withdrawal

Following the withdrawal of external financing, communication shifted from routine activity to an institutional organising function, as agencies absorbed responsibilities previously carried by donor systems for reporting, justification, and public positioning. Funding-oriented agencies stressed credibility signalling and relationship maintenance, while regulatory and service agencies prioritised mandate protection, authority, and coordination. These patterns reflect resource dependence and strategic adaptation rather than passive adjustment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Frooman, 1999; Hillman et al., 2009; Oliver, 1991; Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Drees & Heugens, 2013), with education and Ghana-specific studies confirming similar effects after donor exit (Lewin, 2020; Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016; World Bank, 2024; Kumi, 2020; Ministry of Finance, 2024; 2025), and communication scholarship framing communication as a managerial capacity under uncertainty (Hallahan et al., 2007; Argenti, 2016; Zerfass et al., 2018; Cornelissen, 2020).

Meanwhile, RES6 explained how practices were recast when formal donor templates disappeared:

> *When the project cycles stopped, the way we communicated changed at once. Before, donors gave us schedules, formats, and language for progress. After the funds reduced, nothing came with structure, yet the public still demanded explanation. We began crafting reports ourselves, not because policy directed us to, but because silence looked like failure. Communication changed from a task to a shield, especially when programmes stalled. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

In contrast, RES2 emphasised external-facing pressures that followed donor departure:

> *Once international support declined, the silence from partners did not mean the pressure stopped. We had to initiate contact, justify programmes,*

and present ourselves as stable without borrowing credibility from donors. Communication became momentum. If we did not speak deliberately, we were simply forgotten in the network that decides where attention and resources go. (RES2, Interview, November, 2025)

In addition, RES4 focused on authority preservation within regulatory work:

Our concern was not partnerships first; it was authority. When donors were around, policies carried weight by association. When they left, our directives were questioned. We had to explain mandates repeatedly, not because the law changed, but because confidence changed. Communication took the form of internal briefings, staff circulars, and continuous reminders of why our work mattered. (RES4, Interview, November, 2025)

Likewise, RES1 described a financing context that required deliberate positioning:

In a funding agency, the moment donors pull back, you are suddenly visible and invisible at the same time. Everyone looks to you for answers, yet nobody protects you anymore. Communication had to expand in two directions: outward to reassure partners, and inward to sustain staff morale. We learned that funding without explanation became suspicion. (RES1, Interview, November, 2025)

The findings showed that agencies redefined communication as an organising function rather than a technical task, aligning more with Resource Dependence Theory than Stakeholder Theory because resource loss, not ethics, drove behaviour. Stakeholder perception remained relevant (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997), but survival through visibility and meaning control dominated. Menashy (2018) and Riddell (2018) showed how donor withdrawal exposed institutional weakness, while IMF (2020) and Kayitesi (2024) illustrated that internalised communication, as in Rwanda, strengthened resilience. Overall, resource conditions shaped conduct more strongly than relational concerns, with shifts in dependence preceding changes in communication (92 words).

4.3.2 Visibility, reporting, and legitimacy work

The data here, showed that, after external verification declined, visibility and reporting became central instruments of legitimacy. Agencies used communication to construct institutional presence, replace donor symbolism, and display order during uncertainty through rewritten reports, increased notices, and stronger executive briefings. This aligned with claims that credibility develops through structured engagement rather than assertion (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kent & Taylor, 2016; Weder, 2022) and that visibility is forward-looking work (Cornelissen, 2020; Freberg, 2021; Kunadt, 2025). Prior education studies and Ghana-focused research similarly confirmed that authority rests on how value is narrated and defended (Samoff & Stromquist, 2001; Odoom et al., 2024) (96 words).

In this light, RES5 underscored the symbolic role of reporting:

> *What people underestimate is that reporting is not about numbers; it is about reassurance. When donors were present, reports went upward. Now they go outward. They are written to be read by the public, not just by an office in another country. That forced us to think about language, tone, and explanation. It became performance with purpose. (RES5, Interview, November, 2025)*

Similarly, RES7 highlighted visibility as institutional continuity:

> *Once funding decreased, our fear was disappearance. Not closure, but irrelevance. We increased engagement activities not because we had more money, but because silence meant we did not exist. Communication became our proof of life. Communities needed to see us before they trusted us. (RES7, Interview, November, 2025)*

Moreover, RES3 emphasised the political dimension of communication:

> *Our reports now spoke as much to Parliament and the public as to any partner. That changed how we wrote. We documented not just outputs but decisions. Legitimacy depended on showing that choices were reasoned, not secret. Communication worked as governance evidence. (RES3, Interview, November, 2025)*

Meanwhile, RES8 focused on the learning public:

> *For us, the audience was not donors; it was users. We knew that if citizens stopped engaging, funding arguments failed. So we invested in public communication. Not advertising, but explanation. People supported what they understood. (RES8, Interview, November, 2025)*

These patterns reflected Stakeholder Theory more directly than the prior theme, as agencies prioritised presence, explanation, and trust among varied publics. Freeman et al. (2007), Phillips (2003), and Mitchell et al. (1997) affirmed the centrality of legitimacy through engagement. Yet the findings also challenged Jensen (2002) by demonstrating that broad stakeholder focus did not dilute management action; instead, it structured it. The literature on partnership communication (Grimm et al., 2024; Civera et al., 2025; Muganzi, 2022; Zoleta et al., 2021; Izak et al., 2024) reinforced the observed link between narrative and authority. The data thus suggested a layered explanation: resource dependency explained urgency, while stakeholder processes accounted for method. Communication did not simply inform; it authorised. This dual pattern explained why agencies sustained reporting even when funding did not follow immediately. Presence preceded provision, and legitimacy preceded partnership.

4.3.3 Communication within leadership systems

As external support declined, communication moved into the centre of everyday leadership. It became a tool for guiding staff, explaining decisions, and sustaining confidence, rather than a task left to specialist units. Leaders framed change and defended strategy as part of routine management. This shift reflects work that places communication within executive responsibility (Argenti, 2016; Cornelissen, 2020; Zerfass et al., 2018) and governance research on leadership under pressure (Hassan et al., 2022; Mensah & Gordon, 2020). Resource Dependence Theory explains this change, as leaders took communicative control when external protection weakened (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009).

At one point, RES3 described leadership communication as translating policy into conviction:

> *We did not just issue instructions anymore; we explained them. Staff were anxious, unions were asking questions, and the public expected certainty. Our leadership work became a constant exercise in meaning-building. Every directive had to carry purpose, otherwise it was resisted or misunderstood. (RES3, Interview, November, 2025)*

Elsewhere, RES1 presented executive communication as organisational protection:

> *When funding reduced, staff morale went down as fast as budgets. Leadership communication stopped being ceremonial. It became survival talk. We had to explain why salaries delayed, why projects slowed, and why we still mattered without external logos behind us. (RES1, Interview, November, 2025)*

In addition, RES6 highlighted leadership visibility:

> *Our managers were suddenly visible everywhere such as meetings, briefings, media. Not because rules demanded it, but because people needed reassurance. Leadership without communication felt like abandonment. Speaking constantly became part of governance. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

Likewise, RES4 described communication as internal diplomacy:

> *Authority could no longer rest in policy alone. Staff questioned directives emotionally, not legally. So leadership communication had to become diplomatic. We persuaded before we instructed. (RES4, Interview, November, 2025)*

These patterns suggested that leadership processes depended strongly on communication structures. Stakeholder Theory explained part of this shift as leaders balanced expectations from staff, unions, communities, and external actors (Freeman et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997). However, Resource Dependence Theory offered a stronger account. Leadership behaviour changed primarily due to loss of resource security rather than moral obligation. Communication filled the gap left by donor authority and replaced external validation with internal coherence. The findings therefore supported dependence logic more strongly than relational balancing, even though both frameworks remained informative.

4.3.4 Coordination gaps and internal strain

Under conditions of financial pressure, internal weaknesses in coordination became harder to contain. Standard procedures and workflow structures weakened, leading to overlapping duties, slow communication, and unclear lines of responsibility. Rather than improving efficiency, communication networks became strained. Earlier studies similarly show that funding withdrawal often disrupts coordination and increases organisational tension (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016; Lewin, 2020; Drees & Heugens, 2013), while public management research reports declining integration in periods of fiscal stress (Hassan et al., 2022; Ndombi, 2021; Suva, 2025).

RES5 described breakdowns in routine coordination:

> *Before, if we needed data from another agency, donors structured it. Deadlines existed outside us. When that stopped, cooperation slowed. We waited, followed up, waited again. It was not refusal, it was exhaustion. Everyone was overwhelmed. (RES5, Interview, November, 2025)*

Meanwhile, RES2 explained information overload stating that "when systems fragmented, everything came to communication desks. We received messages meant for other departments. Coordination collapsed into inboxes." Furthermore, RES7 described operational friction, "we worked in the same sector but stopped moving in sequence. One agency released information the other had not seen. Communities blamed us all equally." In similar terms, RES8 noted institutional fatigue, "we spent more time explaining confusion than delivering services. Communication drained energy instead of organising it."

These experiences reflected system-level stress more than individual failure. The findings resonated with Zoleta et al. (2021) and Muganzi (2022), who described similar strain in partnership networks. They also reflected Kent and Taylor (2016) and Weder (2022) in showing how poor communicative integration destabilised trust. Resource Dependence Theory again offered the stronger explanation; when shared external coordination disappeared, the system absorbed its own disorder. Stakeholder Theory added texture by explaining relational consequences, but dependence logic explained causation. Communication therefore functioned both as a pressure point and as an attempted remedy.

4.4 RQ2: Institutionalisation of Communication Practice

Building on this shift, the data revealed uneven integration of communication into organisational structures. In some agencies, communication functioned within formal systems and senior oversight, while in others it remained scattered across administrative units. This variation shaped levels of coordination, accountability, and public engagement. The findings showed that where communication lacked status and authority, institutional response to funding pressure was weaker and less coherent.

4.4.1 Status of communication units

The findings showed that agencies differed markedly in how far communication had been embedded structurally. A minority described dedicated communication units headed by senior officers who reported close to executive leadership. In such cases, communication staff had clear mandates, budget lines, and formal involvement in planning cycles. This evidence reflected arguments that institutionalised communication structures served as preconditions for strategic practice (Cornelissen, 2020; Hallahan et al., 2007; Zerfass et al., 2018; Silverman & Smith, 2024). It also mirrored studies that presented communication units as important for coordinating multi-stakeholder environments in the public sector (Gupta et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2022; Mensah & Gordon, 2020).

RES3 described this position in the following terms:

> *In our agency, communication had a directorate status. The unit sat at the same table as planning and finance. That meant issues of messaging, stakeholder engagement, and media response were considered when strategies were formed, not after the fact. We were not waiting to be told what to say; we were part of deciding what would be done. (RES3, Interview, November, 2025)*

In some agencies, communication was integrated into leadership and functioned as internal advice, consistent with studies that link executive visibility to proximity to decision-making

(Argenti, 2016; Cornelissen, 2020) and with evidence from Ghana that effective partnerships rely on established communication offices (Mensah & Gordon, 2020). In others, arrangements were minimal and low-ranking, leaving communication reactive rather than strategic, a pattern also reported in Ghana and other African contexts (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Kankam, 2022; Ngondo & Klyueva, 2023). RES6 explained this constraint as follows:

> *We had one person managing communication for the whole service, yet the structure still treated that function as if it was just issuing press releases. There was no directorate, no seat at top management. When challenges emerged around funding or policy, communication came in late, after decisions had already been taken and criticised in public. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

In a related way, RES7 highlighted the absence of formal recognition:

> *On paper, we had a communications officer. In practice, the role was squeezed between administration and protocol. There was no clear unit, no defined team. That meant we depended on goodwill from other departments to gather information, and messages often reached the public with gaps or delays. (RES7, Interview, November, 2025)*

Funding and coordination agencies presented another variation. Some had communication functions formally located within corporate affairs or external relations, with explicit responsibility for donor and partner engagement. Others lacked separate units but assigned these tasks to planning or international cooperation divisions. These arrangements reflected Resource Dependence Theory, which suggested that structures evolved in relation to critical resource environments (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009; Drees & Heugens, 2013). Where agencies depended heavily on external networks for support, the data suggested more deliberate attention to how communication was organised.

As RES1 noted:

> *Our communication set-up grew out of necessity. When partners became more demanding, leadership realised that leaving engagement to chance was too risky. A small unit was created, but it reported through finance because the justification came from resource concerns rather than image alone. (RES1, Interview, November, 2025)*

These findings suggested that structural status depended strongly on perceptions of communication as either a technical support service or a strategic capability. Stakeholder Theory helped to explain aspirations to manage diverse publics more deliberately (Freeman et al., 2007; Phillips, 2003; Mitchell et al., 1997). However, Resource Dependence Theory appeared to offer a closer fit to the observed pattern, as agencies gave higher structural status to communication when resource conditions made external engagement and reputation central to survival. Communication units expanded or stagnated in relation to perceived dependence on external stakeholders, which reflected the core propositions advanced by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and elaborated by Frooman (1999) and Malatesta and Smith (2014).

4.4.2 Role clarity and professional authority

Beyond structural status, the findings pointed to significant variation in how communication roles were understood and respected within agencies. In some agencies, officers had clear duties, regular expectations, and direct access to leadership, which positioned them as advisers on risk, public sentiment, and institutional standing. This aligns with research that describes communication professionals as interpretive specialists rather than technical staff (Hallahan et al., 2007; Botan, 2021; Zerfass et al., 2018) and with studies that stress professional authority as essential for influence in governance and policy settings (L'Etang, 2008; Farinloye et al., 2020; Ngondo & Klyueva, 2023).

RES4 illustrated this position by stating:

> *My responsibilities were clearly outlined. I was expected to advise management on implications before announcements were made, not simply to tidy up language afterwards. When major policy documents were being prepared, the communication office had a defined role in shaping how they would be presented to teachers, unions, and the media. (RES4, Interview, November, 2025)*

In such agencies, communication staff were part of leadership discussions and acted as interpreters of stakeholder expectations for management, in line with Stakeholder Theory and studies that cast them as organisational intermediaries (Freeman et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997; Grunig, 2009; Kent & Taylor, 2016). In others, authority was weak and involvement was limited to crisis moments, creating a gap between title and influence. This pattern reflects earlier accounts from Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa that place practice within media handling and protocol (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Ngondo & Klyueva, 2023) and arguments that marginal treatment restricts impact on policy and investment climates (Naz, 2025; Odoom et al., 2024). RES2 captured this frustration as follows:

> *The organisation liked to say it valued communication, but in practice we were informed after decisions had already leaked. We were called when damage had to be managed, not when choices were being considered. That made it difficult to advise or to prevent misunderstandings. (RES2, Interview, November, 2025)*

Similarly, RES5 described the consequences for professional identity:

> *Our job descriptions sounded strategic, but daily work felt reactive. We responded to requests for speeches and social media posts with little information about the thinking behind them. It was difficult to challenge this, because communication was still seen as a service rather than expertise. (RES5, Interview, November, 2025)*

RES8 also emphasised the ambiguity around authority:

> *People assumed that anyone who could write could handle communication. That perception reduced our influence. We were consulted for editing, not for judgement. (RES8, Interview, November, 2025)*

These accounts reflected a tension between structural recognition and practical authority. While some agencies granted communication units formal status, their staff still experienced marginalisation in decision-making. Resource Dependence Theory helped to explain why budget-holding departments sometimes overshadowed communication professionals, since control of resources translated into agenda-setting power (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009). At the same time, Stakeholder Theory remained useful for understanding how communication officers framed their own practice as representing multiple publics whose perspectives were otherwise underrepresented in executive deliberations (Freeman et al., 2007; Kent & Taylor, 2016). The data therefore suggested that role clarity and authority remained contested, with professional aspirations for strategic input often constrained by resource-based hierarchies.

4.4.3 Communication policy weakness or absence

The findings also showed that formal communication policies were either weak, outdated, or entirely absent in several agencies. Participants repeatedly indicated that their work was guided by past practice, personal judgement, and informal norms rather than by structured institutional frameworks. This situation reflected what Zerfass et al. (2018) and Silverman and Smith (2024) described as low communication maturity, where organisations lacked documented standards for planning, evaluation, and crisis response. It also echoed public sector communication research that stressed the importance of policy frameworks for consistency, transparency, and accountability (Gupta et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2022).

RES6 described the situation in blunt terms:

> *We had no communication policy that matched the realities we were facing. There were old guidelines about press statements, but nothing that spoke to social media, stakeholder engagement, or digital reporting. Most decisions depended on who was on duty and how cautious or bold they felt. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

RES7 similarly pointed to the reliance on informal routines:

> *What we did was based on tradition. People said, 'This is how it has always been done,' but no one could show a document. That made it difficult to justify decisions when they were challenged by the public or by other agencies. (RES7, Interview, November, 2025)*

Where policies existed, they often focused narrowly on media handling and did not address internal communication, stakeholder mapping, or partnership engagement. This narrowness contradicted the broader understanding of strategic communication advanced in the literature, where authors such as Hallahan et al. (2007), Cornelissen (2020), and Botan (2021) presented communication as encompassing internal, external, and digital dimensions. It also stood in contrast to international examples, such as Rwanda and Finland, where communication frameworks had been deliberately crafted to support education reforms (IMF, 2020; Kayitesi, 2024; Salonen-Hakomäki et al., 2024).

RES1 remarked on this disconnect:

> *Our documents focused on how to clear press releases, not on how to plan communication around major reforms or funding changes. When donors stepped back, we realised that we lacked written guidance on how to explain difficult decisions to staff, parents, or Parliament. (RES1, Interview, November, 2025)*

RES3 also highlighted the implications for coordination:

> *Without a shared policy, each department communicated in its own way. Some were cautious, others were promotional. The result was that our messages did not always reinforce one another. Partners received mixed signals about our priorities. (RES3, Interview, November, 2025)*

These experiences speak to core debates on communication and institutional reform. Prior work shows that weak investment in communication frameworks often produces misunderstanding and resistance to reform (Naz, 2025; Odoom et al., 2024; Kumi, 2020), a pattern confirmed by the findings. The study also indicates that prolonged donor presence discouraged the development of domestic policies, since external reporting once supplied structure (Riddell, 2018; Menashy, 2018; Lewin, 2020). Resource Dependence Theory explains this persistence: as donors provided both finance and templates, agencies had little incentive to formalise local systems. Stakeholder Theory remains relevant for trust and legitimacy, but dependence logic clarifies why policy vacuums endured despite sustained advocacy (Hallahan et al., 2007; Cornelissen, 2020; Gupta et al., 2021).

4.5 RQ3: Communication and Partnership Formation

Against this structural backdrop, the findings showed that agencies increasingly depended on communication to attract partners and secure alternative support. The data indicated that reporting practices, narrative framing, and public positioning were used to project credibility and invite collaboration. However, organisational gaps constrained the depth of engagement and limited partnership stability.

4.5.1 Attraction of private and development actors

The data showed that agencies increasingly used communication to attract private foundations, corporate programmes, and alternative development partners through deliberate positioning rather than passive receipt of support. Mandates, achievements, and needs were framed to align with funder priorities, reflecting efforts to diversify dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Frooman, 1999) and recent African education practice (CAMFED, 2024; FAWE, 2024; Mastercard Foundation, 2024; T-TEL, 2023). Communication officers worked with technical units to produce concept notes, profiles, and evidence briefs that presented gaps as investment opportunities, consistent with views of communication as value framing in contested funding environments (Hallahan et al., 2007; Cornelissen, 2020; Botan, 2021; Kunadt, 2025). RES1 noted that partnership attraction required deliberate presentation rather than assumption:

> *We recognised that donors were no longer circulating in the way they used to. New partners did not simply arrive at our door. We therefore prepared clear, accessible briefs that showed what we had achieved with limited resources and where additional support would have the greatest effect. These documents were not only technical; they were written to persuade. (RES1, Interview, November, 2025)*

Other agencies with service delivery and access mandates described outreach to corporate foundations that were interested in education as part of their social responsibility portfolios. Participants reported that they used communication channels such as websites, public events, and targeted correspondence to present their institutions as credible vehicles for implementing scholarships, infrastructure projects, or community learning initiatives. This practice mirrored analyses of corporate social responsibility in Ghana and elsewhere, which indicated that firms preferred partners that could demonstrate transparency and institutional capacity (Bhardwaj et al., 2024; Sehgal et al., 2020; Citinewsroom, 2022; Graphic Online, 2025; Vodafone Ghana Foundation, 2016).

RES7 illustrated this approach in relation to corporate partners:

> *We started treating the private sector as a potential partner rather than a distant observer. Our communication highlighted communities we served, success stories from learners, and systems we already had in place. When companies saw that we were organised and accountable, they were more willing to discuss collaboration. (RES7, Interview, November, 2025)*

The findings also indicated that agencies with international coordination roles sought to reposition themselves as attractive interlocutors for multilateral and regional initiatives. They used diplomatic language and emphasised alignment with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals, inclusive education, and digital learning. This strategy reflected earlier work on public diplomacy and strategic communication, where states and agencies sought to present themselves as credible partners in international policy arenas (García, 2021; Tsvetkova & Rushchin, 2021; Amevor, 2025).

RES2 remarked on this international dimension:

> *Our communication emphasised that Ghana remained a serious partner in education even as aid declined. We drew attention to our policy reforms and internal reforms, so that potential collaborators could see continuity and seriousness. We were not begging for help; we were inviting partnership. (RES2, Interview, November, 2025)*

Across the agencies, therefore, attraction of private and development actors depended heavily on how communication presented institutional competence, alignment with broader agendas, and evidence of prior success. Resource Dependence Theory provided a strong explanatory frame, because the behaviour observed reflected attempts to mitigate vulnerability by expanding the network of supporters (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009). Stakeholder Theory complemented this by clarifying why agencies diversified their narratives for different audiences, presenting technical detail to some and social impact stories to others (Freeman et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997). The findings did not suggest that partnership attraction was purely instrumental; participants also emphasised the desire to extend service reach. Nevertheless, resource concerns remained central to the way communication strategies were conceived.

4.5.2 Credibility signalling and narrative control

A second feature of the findings concerned how agencies sought to use communication to signal credibility and maintain control over narratives about their performance. The data demonstrated that agencies used communication to signal credibility and shape narratives after donor validation declined. Annual reports, audited accounts, evaluation results, and beneficiary stories became tools for demonstrating reliability, supporting the view that trust grows through openness and dialogue rather than claims alone (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kent & Taylor, 2016; Weder, 2022). Ghanaian evidence likewise showed that public acceptance of policy depends on explanation and justification (Odoom et al., 2024; Kumi, 2020). As scrutiny increased, agencies planned messages more carefully, managed timing, and engaged journalists and opinion leaders to retain control over interpretation and public confidence.

RES5 explained this shift in emphasis:

> *We could no longer rely on partners to speak for us. In the past, donor reports served as proof that we were on track. Now we needed to produce our own evidence and tell our own story. That meant investing more effort in how we framed our achievements and our setbacks. (RES5, Interview, November, 2025)*

Agencies also described efforts to synchronise internal and external messaging, so that staff at different levels communicated consistent information to stakeholders. This approach echoed communication frameworks that recommended internal alignment as a foundation for external credibility (Cornelissen, 2020; Silverman & Smith, 2024; Izak et al., 2024).

RES3 highlighted the importance of this internal focus:

> *Legitimacy did not depend only on media statements; it depended on what our own staff said in classrooms, offices, and community meetings. We therefore shared key messages internally before public announcements, so that colleagues could answer questions with confidence. (RES3, Interview, November, 2025)*

At the same time, participants acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining narrative control in a competitive media and political environment. Social media amplified criticism and created pressure for rapid responses. Communication officers reported that they needed to monitor public discussion and adjust their messaging when misunderstandings spread. This experience reflected broader debates about digital communication in public institutions, where scholars such as Freberg (2021), Kent and Taylor (2016), and Farinloye et al. (2020) described both opportunities for engagement and risks of reputational damage.

RES6 commented on this dynamic:

> *Information travelled faster than our formal channels. Social media could spread incomplete or inaccurate versions of our work before we had spoken. We had to become more proactive and more present, otherwise other people's stories defined us. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

Credibility signalling also involved deliberate demonstration of accountability. Agencies referenced financial reporting to Parliament, independent audit processes, and collaborative evaluations with civil society or academic partners. These efforts mirrored international calls for stronger domestic accountability in education financing (Hassan et al., 2022; Zickafoose et al., 2024; Oketch et al., 2020) and reflected arguments by Riddell (2018) that understanding of aid effectiveness depended on transparent communication.

RES8 provided an example from a knowledge and access institution:

> *We invited stakeholders to events where we presented not only our successes but also our constraints. That openness-built respect. People could see that we were serious about learning and improvement, not only about praise. (RES8, Interview, November, 2025)*

In all, these practices suggested that citation by donors had been replaced by domestic methods of credibility building. Resource Dependence Theory remained relevant, because agencies sought to reassure potential supporters that they represented low-risk, high-impact partners (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009). However, Stakeholder Theory offered a particularly strong lens in this subtheme, as agencies managed perceptions among multiple audiences, cultivated trust, and tried to shape shared understandings of their role (Freeman et al., 2007; Phillips, 2003; Mitchell et al., 1997). Communication served both as evidence and as narrative, blending factual reporting with interpretive framing in ways that reflected contemporary work on strategic communication in public sectors (Hallahan et al., 2007; Cornelissen, 2020; Gupta et al., 2021).

4.5.3 Constraints in managing partnerships

Despite strategic intent, many agencies faced barriers that weakened partnership management. Capacity limits, bureaucracy, political influence, and unequal power relations often constrained communication efforts, reflecting wider critiques of aid governance and collaboration under fiscal pressure (Samoff & Stromquist, 2001; Menashy, 2018; Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016; Ndombi, 2021; Suva, 2025). A central problem was understaffing and limited skills in communication units, where few officers handled multiple functions at once, reducing responsiveness and making sustained engagement with partners difficult. RES4 summarised this challenge:

> *We knew that partnership management required ongoing communication, but the team was too small to maintain consistent contact with all stakeholders. We prioritised crises and high-visibility events, which meant*

> *that relationship building often took place in brief windows rather than through sustained dialogue. (RES4, Interview, November, 2025)*

Another constraint arose from bureaucratic procedures. Participants explained that even when communication officers developed compelling proposals or responses to partner interest, internal approvals could take considerable time. Potential partners sometimes lost momentum or redirected resources elsewhere while agencies awaited clearance from multiple layers of authority. This pattern reflected broader governance concerns in the literature, where slow decision-making processes in public institutions reduced agility in responding to opportunities (Nyanyofio et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2022).

RES2 described this situation in relation to external actors:

> *Some partners expected quick confirmation. Our internal processes involved several endorsements and legal reviews. By the time we concluded, their funding cycles had moved on. Communication created interest, but administrative delays weakened our ability to convert that interest into actual partnerships. (RES2, Interview, November, 2025)*

Participants also referred to negotiating from positions of relative weakness. They observed that agencies sometimes accepted terms that were not fully consistent with their strategic priorities because they feared losing scarce resources. This experience reflected critical accounts of partnership where organisations with limited leverage struggled to assert their preferences (Menashy, 2018; Muganzi, 2022; Tugyetwena, 2023).

RES5 commented on this dilemma:

> *In theory, partnerships were supposed to be mutual. But, we sometimes felt compelled to accept conditions because we did not have alternatives. Communication helped us to present our case, but it did not remove the fact that we needed the support more than the partners needed us. (RES5, Interview, November, 2025)*

In addition, political dynamics influenced which partnerships could be pursued or sustained. Participants mentioned shifts in priorities following changes in leadership or policy direction. Agreements that had been carefully negotiated and communicated sometimes lost support when political attention moved elsewhere. This dynamic echoed Kumi (2020) and Ntim and Botchway (2023), who described how political narratives in Ghana shaped the implementation of broader development agendas, including Ghana Beyond Aid.

RES6 reflected on this source of uncertainty:

> *We invested time in building relationships around certain reforms, only for priorities to change after leadership transitions. Partners asked whether the commitments would endure. Our communication could reassure them to a point, but we could not fully control political decisions. (RES6, Interview, November, 2025)*

These constraints suggested that communication alone could not resolve structural and political challenges in partnership management. Nevertheless, the findings indicated that robust communication capacity improved agencies' ability to navigate them, by clarifying expectations, documenting agreements, and maintaining engagement even when progress slowed. From a theoretical standpoint, Resource Dependence Theory explained why agencies accepted unfavourable conditions at times, given their reliance on external support (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman et al., 2009). Stakeholder Theory added an important perspective by highlighting the ethical and relational tensions that practitioners experienced when balancing organisational needs with the expectations of communities, staff, and partners (Freeman et al., 2007; Phillips, 2003). Communication practitioners occupied a complex space in which they sought to protect institutional interests while also advocating for transparent and respectful partnership practices.

4.6 Cross-Agency Contrasts

The data showed that communication practice differed consistently across institutional types, not because of individual leadership style alone, but because of mandate location within the education system. Agencies responsible for financing and international coordination treated communication primarily as an instrument for external positioning and partner engagement. Their inquiry into communication focused on reputation management, proposal framing, and strategic engagement with non-state actors. By contrast, regulatory and quality assurance agencies placed greater weight on mandate explanation and internal authority, using communication to manage compliance, professional discipline, and institutional credibility. Service delivery agencies, on the other hand, emphasised public reassurance and community engagement, with communication directed toward sustaining confidence among beneficiaries rather than attracting external capital. The Ghana Library Authority displayed a distinct orientation, with communication centred on visibility and public learning rather than regulation or financing. These variations demonstrated that communication practice followed institutional role more closely than organisational culture, and that differences observed in Themes One through Three reflected patterned institutional conditions rather than isolated administrative choices. Across agencies, the findings therefore depicted a stratified communication system in which emphasis, direction, and intensity were shaped by functional responsibility within the education sector.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter showed that reduced external support elevated communication to a core institutional function across agencies. Communication supported organisational continuity, leadership action, and partnership building. The findings also revealed uneven formal integration, seen in differences in unit status, professional authority, and the presence of policy frameworks. These differences followed institutional roles rather than chance. Communication practices reflected responsibility structures within the education system and shaped responses to pressure and scrutiny. The next chapter relates these findings to theory and examines implications for practice and policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesised the results of the study and drew the inquiry to a close through interpretation, conclusion, and forward guidance. Attention moved from analytical description to reflective assessment of what the findings revealed about communication practice within Ghana's education governance system. The chapter therefore consolidated evidence from earlier chapters and examined its implications for institutional organisation, leadership practice, and partnership work. In addition, it outlined action-focused recommendations and identified directions for further scholarly attention.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The study examined how strategic communication functioned within selected education agencies during a period characterised by declining foreign assistance and increased domestic responsibility. The inquiry focused on changes in communication practice following donor withdrawal, the place of communication within leadership systems, institutional structures supporting communication work, and the role of communication in partnership mobilisation. The objectives were pursued across agencies with differing mandates in order to reveal patterned behaviour rather than isolated experience.

The findings showed that communication assumed expanded relevance once donor-led coordination systems weakened. Agencies no longer depended on externally provided reporting frameworks to structure public communication. Communication activities therefore shifted toward internal explanation, domestic accountability, and institutional positioning. Messages became more locally oriented, and reporting increasingly targeted communities, professional groups, and national actors rather than international sponsors. Communication consequently operated as a means of institutional continuity under pressure.

Furthermore, leadership practice became distinctly communication-oriented. Authority was exercised through explanation, visibility, and reassurance rather than instruction alone. Managers placed greater emphasis on interpretation of policy change and financial constraint. Routine leadership work became communicative in form. As a result, senior officials were required to mediate uncertainty and sustain confidence through extended engagement with staff and the wider public.

In addition, institutional support for communication displayed wide variation. Some agencies maintained formally recognised communication units with decision-level access, while others operated with minimal staffing and uncertain authority. The presence or absence of policy frameworks further shaped practice. Where written guidance was lacking, decisions depended largely on precedent and discretion. Partnership activity intensified across agencies, yet constraints relating to capacity, bureaucracy, and negotiation power limited success in several cases. Communication facilitated access to external actors but did not eliminate structural risk.

5.3 Conclusion

The inquiry began with a concern about how education agencies in Ghana responded to the reduction of external financial support. It sought insight into how communication practice changed under conditions of fiscal contraction and institutional transition. Earlier chapters established the context of declining aid and positioned communication as an underexplored dimension of governance reform. The need for empirical attention to institutional communication emerged from this background.

Subsequently, the study engaged agencies operating within different functional areas of the education sector. Through field data and documentary review, the inquiry traced changes in reporting practice, leadership engagement, organisational structure, and partnership work. The analysis revealed progressive reliance on communication as a controlling mechanism within institutions. Communication shifted from auxiliary task to core activity.

Thereafter, interpretation of the findings demonstrated that communication influenced institutional stability, authority, and external engagement. Patterns differed across institutional roles, yet a common emphasis on visibility, coherence, and positioning was evident. The formation of partnerships and maintenance of credibility depended increasingly on deliberate communication effort. Leadership engagement also became symbolically important in managing uncertainty.

Finally, the study closed with the position that strategic communication now operated as a governing capacity within Ghana's education system rather than a support function. Institutional resilience depended on communication practice as much as on regulation or financing. The study therefore established that communication was central to institutional performance under constraint and would remain so as Ghana strengthened domestic capacity.

5.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the Ministry of Education should develop a national strategic communication framework for agencies within the education sector. The framework should extend beyond media relations to cover internal communication, partnership engagement, and public accountability. Clear guidance would promote consistency and institutional coherence.

Governing councils and management boards of education agencies should elevate communication units to senior administrative status where this remained absent. Placement within top management structures would improve access to decision-making and increase institutional responsiveness. Communication leadership should be positioned alongside planning and finance functions.

Agency heads should issue formal role definitions for communication personnel. Clear authority would strengthen professional contribution and reduce reactive dependence. Staff development programmes should include communication leadership as part of capacity building.

Inter-agency coordination mechanisms should be introduced to harmonise messaging across the sector. Shared platforms for briefings and information exchange would reduce inconsistency and support public clarity.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

Future research should examine strategic communication practice within decentralised education systems. Comparative studies across African countries would illuminate institutional variation. Longitudinal inquiry would clarify how communication capacity evolves over time. Research on private sector engagement in education governance would also extend understanding of partnership dynamics.

References

Alzoraiki, M., Milhem, M., Ateeq, A., Almeer, S., & Hussein, T. M. (2024). Strategic flexibility: an essential capability for innovation and sustainable performance in times of technological uncertainty. In *Business Development via AI and Digitalization: Volume 1* (pp. 271-281). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Amevor, E. B. (2025). Culture-Centered Strategic Communication for Sustainable International Development in Africa. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1-23.

Appiah-Otoo, I., Acheampong, A. O., Song, N., Obeng, C. K., & Appiah, I. K. (2022). Foreign aid—economic growth nexus in Africa: Does financial development matter?. *International Economic Journal*, *36*(3), 418-444.

Arhin, A. A., Kumi, E., & Adam, M. A. S. (2018). Facing the bullet? Non-Governmental Organisations'(NGOs') responses to the changing aid landscape in Ghana. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *29*(2), 348-360.

Babbie, E. (2020). *The practice of social research* (15th ed.). Cengage.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544–559.

Bhardwaj, A., Gupta, A., & Tawangar, S. (2024). CSR in engineering education: evidences from India and abroad. *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, *34*(1), 19-40.

Botan, C. H. (2021). *The handbook of strategic communication*. John Wiley & Sons.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27–40.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597.

Brinkmann, S. (2014). InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Casciaro, T., & Piskorski, M. J. (2005). Power imbalance, mutual dependence, and constraint absorption. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 50*(2), 167–199.

CAMFED. (2024, September 23). *Supporting girls to learn, earn and accelerate Africa's economic transformation: Celebrating a new six-year partnership between the Mastercard Foundation and CAMFED.* https://camfed.org/mastercard-foundation-education-partnership/

Casely-Hayford, L., & Associates. (2007). *Aid and donor partnerships in Ghana's education sector, 1987–2007: A critical review of the literature and progress to date*. Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN), Radboud University. Retrieved from https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/6959/ssoar-2007-casely-hayford_et_al-aid_and_donor_partnerships_in.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Cheeseman, N., Swedlund, H. J., & O'Brien-Udry, C. (2024). Foreign aid withdrawals and suspensions: Why, when and are they effective?. *World Development, 178*, 106571.

Citinewsroom, (2022). VRA, Anglogold Ashanti & Vodafone Ghana Foundation, MTN Ghana Foundation win big at 6th SSI awards. https://citinewsroom.com/2022/11/vra-anglogold-ashanti-vodafone-ghana-foundation-mtn-ghana-foundation-win-big-at-6th-ssi-awards/

Civera, C., Cortese, D., Dmytriyev, S., & Freeman, R. E. (2025). Letters to stakeholders: An emerging phenomenon of multi-stakeholder engagement. *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility*, *34*(1), 246-259.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Cornelissen, J. (2020). *Corporate communication: A guide to theory and practice*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Cudjoe, P. (2024). *The Ghana Beyond Aid, exploring its efficacy as a plan for national development.* (Master’s dissertation, University of Iceland).

Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Donor Tracker. (2025, July 4). *The Budget Cuts Tracker*. Retrieved from Donor Tracker website

Drees, J. M., & Heugens, P. P. M. A. R. (2013). Synthesizing and extending resource dependence theory. *Journal of Management, 39*(6), 1666–1698.

Emerson, R. M. (1962). Power-dependence relations. *American Sociological Review, 27*(1), 31–41.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1–4.

Farinloye, T., Wayne, T., Mogaji, E., & Watat, J. K. (2020). Social media for universities' strategic communication. In *Strategic marketing of higher education in Africa* (pp. 96-115). Routledge.

FAWE. (2024). *Second Chance Pathways for increased access to tertiary education for marginalized young women and men (FAWE/Mastercard Foundation Phase II Program, 2024–2030).* https://fawe.org/en/second-chance-pathways-for-increased-access-to-tertiary-education-for-marginalized-young-women-and-men/

Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(2), 219–245.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 301–316). SAGE.

Freberg, K. (2021). *Social media for strategic communication: Creative strategies and research-based applications*. Sage Publications.

Frooman, J. (1999). Stakeholder influence strategies. *Academy of Management Review, 24*(2), 191–205.

Fusheini, K., & Salia, H. (2021). The contribution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to student enrollment and performance in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *35*(3), 606-620.

García, C. (2021). When an Efficient Use of Strategic Communication (Public Diplomacy and Public Relations) to Internationalize a Domestic Conflict Is Not Enough to Gain International Political Support: The Catalan Case (2012-2017). *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *15*(4), 293-309.

Gerring, J. (2007). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Gerring, J. (2017). *Case study research: Principles and practices* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Global Partnership for Education. (2025, May 29). *US$80 million partnership to boost learning and strengthen Ghana's education system.*

Graphic Online, (2025). MTN Ghana awards 500 Bright Scholarships. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/mtn-ghana-awards-500-bright-scholarships.html?

Grimm, J., Ruehle, R. C., & Reinecke, J. (2024). Building common ground: How facilitators bridge between diverging groups in multi-stakeholder dialogue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *194*(3), 583-608.

Grunig, J. E. (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. *PRism, 6*(2), 1–19.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59–82.

Guo, W. (2025). Conflict resolution in intercultural communication: strategies for managing cultural conflicts. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12(1), 1-10.

Gupta, D., Jai P, N., & Yadav, S. J. (2021). Strategic communication in health and development: concepts, applications and programming. *Journal of Health Management*, *23*(1), 95-108.

Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Verčič, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 1*(1), 3–35.

Hassan, E., Groot, W., & Volante, L. (2022). Education funding and learning outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review of reviews. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, *3*, 100181.

Hillman, A. J., Withers, M. C., & Collins, B. J. (2009). Resource dependence theory. *Journal of Management, 35*(6), 1404–1427.

Hodder, I. (2000). The interpretation of documents and material culture. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 703–715). SAGE.

Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.

Iannantuoni, A. (2025). Foreign aid volatility and institutional development. *World Development*, *189*, 106690.

International Monetary Fund. (2020). *The development path less traveled in Rwanda* (IMF Working Paper No. 20/010). Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/087/2020/010/article-A001-en.xml

International Monetary Fund. (2022). The power of education policy. *Finance & Development, 59*(2). Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/view/journals/022/0022/001/article-A010-en.pdf

Izak, M., Case, P., & Ybema, S. (2024). Communication in organizations: An overview and provocations. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *26*(4), 628-648.

Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(11), 1632–1641.

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for an interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 72*(12), 2954–2965.

Kayitesi, E. (2024). Think tanks, governance, and development in Africa: the case of Rwanda. In *Think Tanks, Governance, and Development in Africa* (pp. 158-180). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Kankam, G. (2022). Are Public Relation Strategies Useful for Ghanaian Public Universities: An Exploratory Inquiry on the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. *Archives of Business Research*, *10*(7), 66–78. https://doi.org/10.14738/abr.107.12317

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2016). From Homo Economicus to Homo dialogicus: Rethinking social media use in CSR communication. *Public Relations Review, 42*(1), 60–67.

King, K. (2007). Multilateral agencies in the global education agenda. *Comparative Education, 43*(3), 377–391.

Kiprono, P. (2025). Collaborative Partnership Strategies and Sustainable Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Kenya. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, *1*(1).

Kumi, E. (2020). From donor darling to beyond aid? Public perceptions of ‘Ghana Beyond Aid’. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 58(1), 67-90.

Kunadt, F. (2025). Combining Strategic Foresight and Strategic Communication: An Interdisciplinary Framework of Future-Oriented Communication in Times of Multiple Future Challenges. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1-23.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Kwasi-Agyeman, F. (2020). *Public funding of higher education and student access: A comparative study of two public universities in Africa.* (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Western Cape).

L’Etang, J. (2008). *Public relations: Concepts, practice and critique*. SAGE Publications.

Lewin, K. M. (2020). Beyond business as usual: Aid and financing education in Sub Saharan Africa. *International journal of educational development*, *78*, 102247.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.

Malatesta, D., & Smith, C. R. (2014). Resource dependence, alternative supply sources, and mechanisms of governance. *Public Administration Review, 74*(5), 543–553.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753–1760.

Mariam, S. (2025). Exploring Collaboration and Partnerships: A Qualitative Study on Strategic Alliances and Business Networking for Value Creation. *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business*, *5*(2), 386-399.

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research? A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems, 54*(1), 11–22.

Mason, J. (2017). *Qualitative researching* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3), Art. 8.

Mastercard Foundation. (2024, June 13). *The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at CAMFED Ghana: Celebrating a decade of impact.* https://mastercardfdn.org/en/our-research/the-mastercard-foundation-scholars-program-at-camfed-ghana-celebrating-a-decade-of-impact/

McKinsey & Company. (2025, May 6). *A generational shift: The future of foreign aid*. Ministry of Finance. (2024). *The 2024 budget highlights*. Government of Ghana. Retrieved from https://mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/budget-statements/2024-Budget-Highlights.pdf

Menashy, F. (2018). Multi-stakeholder aid to education: Power in the context of partnership. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *16*(1), 13-26.

Mensah, A. M., & Gordon, C. (2020). Strategic partnerships between universities and non-academic institutions for sustainability and innovation: Insights from the University of Ghana. In *Sustainability Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa I: Continental Perspectives and Insights from Western and Central Africa* (pp. 245-278). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Ministry of Finance. (2025). *The budget statement and economic policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2025 financial year*. Government of Ghana. Retrieved from https://mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/budget-statements/2025-Budget-Statement-and-Economic-Policy.pdf

Muganzi, M. I. (2022). *Afro-pessimism reconsidered: an analysis of International Non-Governmental Organisations communications in East Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds).

Naz, A. (2025). Strategic Communication for Enhancing Balochistan Government Investment in Education: Mobilizing Resources for Sustainable Development. *Available at SSRN 5106983*.

Ngondo, P. S., & Klyueva, A. (2023). Public relations in Sub-Saharan Africa: A ten-year review. *Public Relations Management in Africa Volume 1: Exploring Organisational Impact*, 17-40.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1–13.

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Ndombi, C. L. (2021). *Project Exit Strategies, Stakeholders Management, and Project Sustainability of Donor-funded Livelihood Projects in Kilifi County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Ntim, E. O., & Botchway, T. P. (2023). Ghana beyond aid: A bargaining Chip for draconian economic policies in Ghana. *The African Review*, *1*(aop), 1-33.

Nyanyofio, J. G. T., Domfeh, K. A., Buabeng, T., Maloreh-Nyamekye, T., & Appiah-Agyekum, N. N. (2022). Governance and effectiveness of public–private partnership in Ghana's rural-water sector. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *35*(7), 709-732.

Odoom, D., Anani-Bossman, A., Opoku, E., Tandoh, I., & Asare, K. B. (2024). Public Perceptions of Government Communication Regarding Ghana’s Free Senior High School Policy. *The Journal of Development Communication*, *35*(2), 10-26.

OECD. (2025, April). *International aid falls in 2024 for first time in six years, says OECD*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Retrieved from OECD website

Oketch, M., McCowan, T., & Schendel, R. (2020). The impact of external support on education in Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development, 78*, 102–121.

Olaleye, S., Ukpabi, D., & Mogaji, E. (2020). Social media for universities’ strategic communication: How Nigerian universities use Facebook. In *Strategic marketing of higher education in Africa* (pp. 116-135). Routledge.

O’Leary, Z. (2017). *The essential guide to doing your research project* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(1), 145–179.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *33*(1), 93–96.

Park, D. (2023). *Examining the Alignment of Foreign Aid Priorities with Ghana's National Development Plan: A Comparative Analysis of the US and China* (Masters dissertation, Seoul National University).

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Pedersen, P. M., Laucella, P. C., Kian, E., & Geurin, A. N. (2021). *Strategic sport communication*. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1978). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*(11), 1451–1458.

Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management, 8*(3), 238–264.

Riddell, A. (2018). Aid to Education: Framing Accountability Research and its Prospects. *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education 2017*, 59-65.

Riddell, A., & Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2016). The effectiveness of foreign aid to education: What can be learned?. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *48*, 23-36.

Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. SAGE.

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *11*(1), 25–41.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Salonen-Hakomäki, S. M., Soini, T., Pietarinen, J., & Pyhältö, K. (2024). Leading Complex Educational Change Via National Participative Reforms? A Case of Finnish Core Curriculum Reform Leadership. *Journal of Educational Change*, *25*(3), 531-554.

Samoff, J., & Stromquist, N. P. (2001). Managing educational aid. *International Journal of Educational Development, 21*(4), 361–379.

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health, 18*(2), 179–183.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Schwandt, T. A. (2014). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Seale, C. (2018). *Researching society and culture* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Sehgal, G., Kee, D. M. H., Low, A. R., Chin, Y. S., Woo, E. M. Y., Lee, P. F., & Almutairi, F. (2020). Corporate social responsibility: A case study of Microsoft Corporation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Education, 3*(1), 63-71.

Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, K., & Owczarek, T. (2020). Complementarity of communication and coordination in ensuring effectiveness of emergency management networks. *Sustainability*, *13*(1), 221.

Silverman, D. (2020). *Interpreting qualitative data* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Silverman, D. A., & Smith, R. D. (2024). *Strategic planning for public relations*. Routledge.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. SAGE.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. SAGE.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. Guilford Press.

Suva, B. I. (2025). Enhancing Accountability and Transparency in Nonprofit Organizations: Examining the Impact of Limited Regulatory Oversight in Africa Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Nonprofit Innovation*, *5*(1), 4.

Syal, R., van Wessel, M., & Sahoo, S. (2021). Collaboration, co-optation or navigation? The role of civil society in disaster governance in India. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *32*(4), 795-808.

Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 77–100.

Thomas, G. (2011). A typology for the case study in social science. *Qualitative Inquiry, 17*(6), 511–521.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837–851.

T-TEL. (2023). *Secondary Education Reform (Leaders in Teaching) programme: Overview.* Transforming Teaching, Education and Learning (T-TEL), in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and Government of Ghana. https://t-tel.org/our-work/t-shel/

Turner, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754–760.

Tsvetkova, N., & Rushchin, D. (2021). Russia's public diplomacy: from soft power to strategic communication. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *20*(1), 50-59.

Tugyetwena, M. (2023). A literature review of the relationship between governance, funding strategy and sustainability of non-government organizations. *International NGO Journal*, *18*(2), 10-19.

Ulrich, D., & Barney, J. B. (1984). Perspectives in organizations: Resource dependence, efficiency, and population. *Academy of Management Review, 9*(3), 471–481.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2025, April). *Trade and development foresights 2025: Under pressure – Uncertainty reshapes global economic prospects* (UNCTAD/GDS/INF/2025/1). UNCTAD. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/publication/trade-and-development-foresights-2025-under-pressure-uncertainty-reshapes-global

Vodafone Ghana Foundation, (2016, November 5). Vodafone Foundation launches Instant Classroom Project. https://www.vodafone.com/news/vodafone-foundation-news/instantschools-forafrica

Wango, N., Oluga, M., & Rarieya, J. (2025). The Impact of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships on Educational Outcomes: A Case of East Africa. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *9*(2), 18.

Weder, F. (2022). Strategic problematization of sustainability reframing dissent in strategic communication for transformation. *Public Relations Inquiry*, *11*(3), 337-360.

Wodon, Q. (2014). *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Comparing faith-inspired, private secular, and public schools* (World Bank Study No. 16391). The World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-9965-1

World Bank. (1989). *Ghana: Adjustment and investment in the education sector* (Report No. 7853-GH). Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/641621468281389317/pdf/multi-page.pdf

World Bank. (2024). *EFW 2023: Africa Edition* (special edition). The World Bank. Retrieved from https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/70f42d39bab0a849b36b2de4208a35e1-0140022024/original/EFW2023-Africa-edition.pdf

World Bank. (2008). *Sustainable financing of secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana case study* (Working Paper No. 136). Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/246421468007193103/pdf/429120v50PUB0WB1WP1361App400Box327348B.pdf

World Bank. (2017). *Vietnam's transition to IDA graduation and continued partnership.*

Wu, M. Y., & Baah-Boakye, K. (2009). Public relations in Ghana: Work-related cultural values and public relations models. *Public Relations Review, 35*(1), 83-85.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., & Volk, S. C. (2018). Communication evaluation and measurement: Skills, practices and utilization in European organizations. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 23*(4), 483–500.

Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., Nothhaft, H., & Werder, K. P. (2018). Strategic communication: Defining the field and its contribution to research and practice. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 12*(4), 487–505.

Zickafoose, A., Ilesanmi, O., Diaz-Manrique, M., Adeyemi, A. E., Walumbe, B., Strong, R., ... & Dooley, K. (2024). Barriers and challenges affecting quality education (Sustainable Development Goal# 4) in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. *Sustainability*, *16*(7), 2657.

Zoleta, J. M. R., Alvarez, K. B., & Canas, R. J. C. (2021). Impact of Linkages and Consortia on Organizational Performance. Liceo Journal of Higher Education Research, 17(1).

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The purpose of this research is to explore how agencies under Ghana's Ministry of Education adapt their communication strategies in response to the decline in foreign aid. Your insights will help us understand how strategic communication supports credibility, stakeholder engagement, and partnerships in this context.

- Participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw at any point without penalty.
- With your consent, this interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy.
- All responses will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any report; instead, a pseudonym or code will be used.
- The interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes.

A. Background and Rapport

1. Please describe your role in this agency and how it involves communication or stakeholder engagement?

B. Strategic Communication amid Declining Aid (Objective 1)

2. How has your agency's communication strategy changed in response to the decline in foreign aid?
3. What challenges have emerged in sustaining communication activities under reduced funding?

C. Institutionalisation of Public Relations (Objective 2)

5. How is Public Relations structured or formalised within your agency? (e.g., units, policies, frameworks)
6. In what ways does your agency work to build and maintain credibility and trust with stakeholders?

D. Communication for Partnerships and Support (Objective 3)

7. What communication approaches have been effective in attracting new partners or alternative funding sources?
8. How do you see communication shaping your agency's sustainability in the future?

E. Reflections and Forward-Looking Insights

10. What lessons can other public agencies in Ghana learn from your agency's experience?
11. What improvements or innovations would you suggest for strengthening communication strategies?

Do you have any final thoughts on the role of communication in advancing the "Ghana Beyond Aid" agenda?