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(SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH)

**THE ROLE OF PR PRACTICE IN PROMOTING EFFECTIVE
MANAGEMENT: A CASE OF SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN
GHANA**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to examine the role of PR in promoting effective management in some selected tertiary institutions in Ghana. The objectives of the study were to examine how PR practice is incorporated into the management of the various tertiary institutions, identify some of the mediums that managements use to engage with the PR department in relation to decision making and to assess the nature of challenges faced by PR practitioners in the official conduct of their duties. The research study employed a qualitative methodological approach utilizing an individual interview technique. Using a purposive sample of 3 selected public tertiary institutions within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, the interview guide was the main tool used in gathering information for the study through in-depth interviews. The respondents were public relations officers of the three tertiary institutions in Ghana. The underpinning theory this study used were the systems and excellence theory.

The findings from the study reveals that the various institutions incorporate PR practice into the management of their universities via information dissemination, publicity and event publications and management despite some bottlenecks in strategic management where PR units are ascribed peripheral roles in strategic decision-making processes. The findings also reveal that PR departments are largely not considered as part of the strategic management of institutions. They are only seen as information dissemination points of service to the general public and sometimes perform peripheral roles that are not directly linked to the strategic management decision-making outlet of the various institutions.

PR departments have subsequently been used for damage control and in most cases for crisis management which does not augur well for the effective management of the various universities. As a result, PR departments, have become conduits for the dissemination of decisions taken by

management without their actual involvement in the inception of ideas into policies taken or directives of the various institutions. Finally, the findings of the study reveal that PR practitioners encounter several challenges that tend to affect them negatively in the official discharge of their duties, roles and responsibilities.

On the basis of the findings, the study recommends that PR departments should be adequately represented on management boards, councils and decision-making bodies to ensure their effective contribution to managing the various universities. It is the contention of this study that this would pave way for the effective management of the universities in relation to policy design, formulation and implementation. It also recommends that the PR departments should be adequately resourced in relation to logistics and resources required to ensure that PR practitioners are able to deliver on their respective roles in relation to information dissemination and building the corporate image of the universities.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work towards the award of Master of Arts in Public Relations and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no materials previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any institution. All references have been duly acknowledged.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervisors of dissertation laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ). This research project is submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

Supervisor: Dr. Mrs. Mavis Essandoh

Signature:.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my dear mother, Ms. Sarah Ansah, for her endless love and support for me during this course. May the good lord continue to bless your handiwork and may you be filled with heavenly joy from above. Amen!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction and Background of study

Public relations practice is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public (Chartered Institute of Public Relations, CIPR). PR consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding (Jefkins, 2006). Public relations play a critical role in the organizational setups of various universities as they see to the day-to-day handling of vital information with regards to institutional goals, programs and policies.

There have been various studies undertaken in the field of public relations in educational institutions. A lot of these studies, have been centered on universities, which is probably because they deal with various publics which necessitate dissemination of information in the most appropriate manner (Veena, Dyayaneethie & Zukiswo, 2012). This is because public relations units are considered a necessary component in the administration of tertiary institutions, particularly universities. Ideally, the public relations practitioner or officer in the university should be at par with deans and should advice management on how to position the university to enhance its public image (Ojumo, Nikona & Kiroma, 2006).

The PR practitioner acts as a nexus between management and the public through information dissemination using various mediums that seeks to create a healthy balanced relationship. The practice of PR in public institutions must take into consideration the needs of the public in relation

to their interest in management organizational goals. The formulation of policies and decision making within the PR setting must factor the interest of clients or consumers.

This is critical for the survival of the university since they form a critical part of the university's framework as shareholders. The literature presents public relations as a management function, which uses the attributes of management (e.g., planning, collaborative decision making, and research) to foster the organization's ability to build mutually beneficial relationships on which the corporate vision and mission depend (Grunig, 2001). The management function of an institution if spearheaded in the right decision by way of ensuring that there is proper and effective planning and decision making, would go a long way in building lasting relationships for the realization of organizational goals.

The second stream in the literature presents public relations as communication management, which focuses on the flow of communication between an organization and its publics to achieve effective relationships (Grunig, 2001). The management of communication between an institution and its public is crucial as it is the lifeline to the survival of that entity. Publics represent a critical constituency in the life of an organization or institution that must be properly taken care of in relation to ensuring effective flow of communication. Since without effective communication between management and the public, the institution would gradually cease to exist by fading away.

The flow of communication must seek not only to relay management's decision but eliciting feedback that consolidates the existing relations between both management and publics. As such management and the PR desk could create innovative mediums such as the introduction of new media in PR relations. These new media comprising *WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat*" among others could lead to social engineering of PR practice which seeks ultimately to build effective relationships between the brand and the publics. Since research reveals that, more and

more people are getting interactive on these new emerging social media handles which has proven to facilitate information flow thereby boosting the confidence clients have on a product or service.

The third stream of literature presents public relations as relationship management, so that communication is a property of those relationships rather than the conduit between organizations and publics (Ferguson, 2004; Broom, Casey, and Ritchey, 2007). The management of relationship is very critical for any organization that seeks to achieve its long-term vision. PR sections or desks must always strive to maintain a healthy relationship management profile so as to win the hearts of its public. Institutions are gradually becoming organismic in their operations such that they always have to be there to satisfy the needs of clients and consumers thereby maintaining a healthy productive relationship to the business ecosystem.

PR efforts are generally seen as an attempt to manage communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984: 6). Johnson and Zawawi (2009, p. 6) also define PR as “a management function that uses communications to facilitate relationships and understanding between an organization and its publics.” Mehta and Xavier (2009, p. 192) note that the duty of a PR practitioner is to ensure successful communication between an organization and its publics, including monitoring and responding to issues, expectations and maintaining an effective working environment.

The essential role of PR practice can therefore be seen in the nature of work that PR practitioners perform. Therefore, PR is an intrinsic part of every organization. It provides organization’s the opportunity to monitor, dialogue, and respond to issues that affect key publics of the organization (Lamb & McKee, 2005,p.1). The essential role played by PR practitioners in managing information flow, actively engaging key publics, establishing strong relationships, striving to maintain a sound reputation at all times and through all circumstances, and through PR

measurement, helps the organization achieve strategic organizational goals (Public Relations Society of America – PRSA, 2012).

As globalization is continuously increasing economic, social and political interdependencies, many organizations are also interacting, physically and virtually, with their publics outside their own country to build a dynamic relationship. Molleda (2009) believes that “trade, direct foreign investment, political coalitions, worthy global cases, information flow, and social networking, among other phenomena, are increasing the complexity of these relationships dramatically.”

What this means is that there is a higher level of interdependence and interconnectivity among groups and organizations. The net effect is that there is now a strong demand on PR practitioners to manage communication and relationships between an organization and its stakeholders at local as well as international levels (Vercic, Zerfass & Wiesenberg, 2015, p. 415; Wakefield, 2001, p. 639). This makes the study relevant as it seeks to evaluate the role of PR practice in promoting effective management within selected public universities across the country.

1.1 The Research Problem

The body of knowledge on the practice of PR has experienced tremendous growth since the latter part of the 20th century. Evidence shows that the field will continue to evolve itself into an established discipline (Wilcox, 2006, p. 68). Despite its promising benefits, PR practitioners have largely been sidelined in relation to the day-to-day management of institutions. As a result of they are left out of management decision- making processes.

PR practitioners are largely not incorporated into management of the institution but rather act as messengers which does not augur well for effective management. The challenges for public relations practitioners in administration are evident in previous studies. Public Relations can

therefore not be overlooked in the management of the university since it is the first point of call in the relations of the organization to its publics.

D'Almeida (2003) states that the University Relations Offices (URO) is confronted with a number of problems that hinder the effective performance of its functions. The most important of which was cash flow. Messages must be timely so they have to be sent with dispatch. However, it takes money to send kinds of messages to the relevant publics at the right time especially media and messages and advertisement for time bound events. More often than not, funds for these messages are made available to the office much later that it should be to make such messages meaningful and effective.

They lack adequate resource to ensure the effect running of the office. They have no research staff, efficient phone system and depend on other offices for fax and e-mail facilities. On several occasions, they are called in to implement some decisions that they hardly understand because they were not part of the decision-making processes. They are not accorded the status that will make them part of those decisions. This gives an impression of insignificance of their function as role players in the management of universities (Eniola, 2011). The role of PR practitioners should be to work along with management at higher level decision making so as to make inputs geared towards the achievement of desired institutional goals.

An evaluation of the public relations office of some institutions found that there was the need to increase public relation activities in the section. It was explained that this could be achieved only when the public relations section is accorded the same status as the other departments by appointing a head with similar status (Holtzhausen and Voto, 2002). In a study of staff perception of the Public Relations outfit of the University of Education (Winneba Campus), D'Almeida (2003) found out that the highest functions of the Public Relations Officer among others as,

receiving visitors and seeing to their wellbeing, seeing of people and welcoming them at the Airport and other functions such as funeral matters.

The staff of UEW however did not know that the Public Relations Officer is the mouthpiece of the University. It appears the main role of the universities public relations offices is not well understood by the university community as well as the external publics. Meanwhile, the PR offices were not structured and organized professionally which emanates from belittling their role especially from the top leaders. Yet, the PR practitioners were trying their best to solve the problems which face both from the internal and external publics all by themselves. This trend is very worrying and if allowed to continue would lead to poor management of public universities across the country. Effective management of an institution requires the incorporation of PR practice across all levels so as to maintain cordial relationship between management of the universities and the publics. This is vital if public universities are to achieve their desired institutional goals.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How is PR practice incorporated into the management of the university?
2. What are some of the mediums that management uses to engage with the PR department in relation to decision making?
3. What are some of the challenges PR practitioners face in the conduct of their official duties?

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine how PR practice is incorporated into the management of the university.
- To identify some of the mediums that managements of universities use to engage with the PR sections in relation to decision making.

- To assess the nature of challenges faced by university PR practitioners in the official conduct of duties.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study involved selected tertiary institutions across the country. This study specifically targeted key tertiary institutions in Ghana namely the Central University, Accra Technical University (ATU) and the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ). These institutions were selected based on proximity and accessibility to the researcher since the study was undertaken within a limited time frame.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge on PR practice in higher educational institutions. It would help stimulate discussions on the role of PR in relation to management of various tertiary institutions. The findings would therefore inform policy making in relation to management of these institutions. Since PR is an intrinsic part of every organization, the role of PR is of essence when it comes to monitoring, dialogue, and responding to issues that affect key publics of the organization (Lamb & McKee, 2005, p. 1).

The underpinning theory of the study is the systems theory which emphasizes on organizations consisting of several subsystems that are dependent on each for survival. In relation to the study, the theory is used to explain how PR departments are part of a functional management of the various institutions and therefore contribute towards the attainment of organizational goals. The theory also helps to situate the roles PR practitioners play by way of providing important information to organizations' stakeholders and interpreting the environment to the organizations decision makers (Mehta & Xavier, 2009, p. 195). The existence of a system of interacting units

characterized by mutual interaction of its parts, provides an avenue for engagement of the various departments which include PR, thereby making them interdependent on each other for survival.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Systems Theory

One of the well-known theories that has been used in the field of PR is the systems theory, which was developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968. The theory is premised on the belief that organizations consist of subsystems that depend on each other for survival. It sees organization as having different but interconnected parts which adapt and adjust to changes. The organizations adapt to changes in relation to their environment, be it political, economic, or social (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth, 2012: 52; Tench & Yeomans, 2006, p. 27).

In the view of Mehta and Xavier (2009), the purpose of an organization is to create and achieve goals that will benefit both the organization and the environment they operates in. Such goals can consist of growth in profits and sales, gaining investor confidence/support, improving employment ratio, creating new products, or a lower carbon footprint (2009, p. 194). Within the systems theory, PR is regarded as a boundary spanner whereby practitioners act as a link between organizations and their environments. PR professionals provide important information to their organizations' stakeholders and interpret the environment to the organizations' decision makers, that is, by constantly providing information about the problems and opportunities in the environment and help the decision makers respond to such changes (Mehta & Xavier, 2009, p. 195). The systems approach is defined as "a system of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states" (Broom & Sha, 2012, p. 151).

This is in sync with Ludwig's (in Brooks and Walls, 2008, p. 96) definition of systems as "an entity which maintains its existence through the mutual interaction of its parts." Systems are "characterized by an assemblage whose relations make them interdependent" (Scott & Jaffe, 1995).

In adopting this theory, Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 8) defined a system/organization as a 'sub-system' that affects each other and continuously interacts with the environment. Gregory (2004, p. 49) states that the systems theory serves as a tool for understanding the theoretical underpinning that relates to PR roles in an organization. The theory stipulates that the well-being of an organization is largely dependent on the relationship it has with its internal and external environment.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000, p. 149) state that the role of a PR practitioner is simply to help organizations adapt and adjust to changes in the organization's environment, that is, by helping to achieve balance (homeostasis) between an organization and its publics. Plowman (2013, p. 907) argues that although closed systems operators believe they are independent of external influences, they nevertheless have to cope with factors within their environments, especially in increasingly turbulent ones. This means that closed systems can simply not ignore the environments. Plowman's (2013) assertion is in sync with the views of McKee and Lamb (2009, p. 1) that no formal organization is an island and organizations who think of themselves as having all the necessary resources to be on their own are too short-sighted for success.

Plowman (2013) concludes that the primary link in sustaining the interdependence between an organization and its environment is PR. In the application of the systems approach to PR, Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggest that the press agency model and public information is a reflection of the closed system. Dozier (in Grunig, 1992, p. 352) indicates that the systems theory addresses the

many roles played by the PR practitioner. It allows practitioners to understand the need to adapt to an increasingly unstable and threatening environment. The systems theory has some inherent weaknesses, despite its weaknesses the theory remains suitable for this study.

1.7 Research Methodology

A qualitative research paradigm was employed in this research to gather and analyze data. Qualitative research attempts to understand a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the population involved.

Lindlorf (1995, P.5) makes the point that qualitative research allows a researcher to interview people as a means of understanding their views “on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyze certain kinds of discourse.

1.7.1 Data Sources

The study utilized both primary source of data and secondary source of data. Since primary data provided firsthand account of events through interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Secondary data also provided essential data needed for the research using books, journals and other essential records.

1.7.2 Sampling Methods

The sample size employed in this research were three (3) tertiary institutions located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. These institutions were selected using a purposive sampling technique which enabled the researcher to select based on the knowledge level and experience of participants or respondents.

1.7.3 Data collection

Data collection techniques allow the researcher to learn about a phenomenon by gathering information from individuals, groups, and text in any medium (Biber et al 2011, p. 5). Approaches to data collection in qualitative research usually consist of interacting directly with participants either on a face-to-face level or in a group setting. Qualitative methods of data collection allow the researcher to gather rich information and also gain a deeper insight into the topic under investigation. Data can be collected by observation, through individual interviews or in a group setting (Kothari, 2004, p. 98). The researcher employed the personal interview technique to collect data from the research participants. The data collection technique section will provide detailed discussion on the individual interview technique. This helped to elicit the necessary responses from participants in relation to their professional working experience and knowledge on public relations practice in the selected public tertiary institutions.

1.8 Ethical Issues

Ethics simply refers to the moral principles or values that govern the actions of a researcher, that is, it deals with what is right and wrong (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 65; Babbie, 2008, p. 66). An important ethical element is informed consent, which deals with ensuring that the subjects under investigation are notified about the nature of the research project and permission sought prior to their participation in the study. As such, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their sources which was used solely for academic purposes.

1.9 Organization of Chapters

This study would be organized into five main chapters. Chapter one of the study would focus on the background to the research, research questions, objectives, scope and rationale of the study, the theoretical framework, literature review, sources of data and research methodology. Chapter

two would provide a literature review of public relations practice. It would specifically focus on the role of PRs in ensuring effective management. Chapter three explains the methodological process used to collect data for the study while chapter four presents and discusses the findings made. The last chapter, which is chapter five (5) summarizes some of the main findings, makes recommendations for policy and future research and concludes the entire study.

1.9.1 Chapter Summary

The chapter looked at the introduction and background of the study, the research problem, research questions, research objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, research methodology and ethical issues were all outlined in this chapter.

The next chapter will discuss the literature review and theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the literature in relation to the current study. It looked at prior studies that has been done relating to the research problem and also provides relevant literature to the research questions. It also provides a much clearer understanding of the literature along sub-themes organized in relation to the overview of public relations practice and its historical roots and the theoretical foundations and modules applied within the field. This literature section therefore focused on the theoretical foundation of the study which was discussed extensively as well as previous studies and research findings.

2.1 An Historical Overview of Public Relations

To be able to understand current practices in the field of PR, it will be important to understand how the profession begun. Butterick (2011, p. 7) argues for the importance of knowing the history of PR because it is used by practitioners to explain how PR is practiced and to produce theories. Broom and Sha (2012, p. 74) also state that understanding the history of the profession is essential to the professionalization of the practice. It gives an insight into the beliefs and values that have

shaped the profession as well as overall perception of PR by the public. Practitioners and academicians both agree that PR, as it is known today, started in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century in the USA and it was mostly used in politics. However, efforts to engage with others and influence public opinion existed long before then (Broom & Sha, 2012, p. 74; Wilcox & Cameron, 2012, p. 37; Seitel, 2007, p. 23). Broom and Sha (2012, p. 74) make the point that the difference between modern PR and ancient communication practice is the addition of the ‘tools, degree of specialization, breadth of knowledge, and intensity of efforts.’ Cutlip et al (2000, p. 103) map the use by American Revolutionaries during the War for independence.

Recognition of the social impact of poor business and immoral business, struggling industries, and muckraking, resulted in the emergence of PR. The term “Public Relations” was used for the first time in the United States and the United States Post Office Railway Union and in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1906, the first private company which the public services offered to its customers was created. In 1987 Association of Public Relations (IPR) provided a definition of public relations, which is still used. In this definition, PR is planned and continuous efforts to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its target audience (Skandari, 2004).

This created a necessity for corporations to adopt PR practice within their organizational setups. (Bowen, Rawlins & Martin, 2012, p. 21). The turn of the century saw the setting up of a number of press agents who defended business interest against journalists digging for scandals as well as government regulation development. PR was aimed at supporting businesses, influencing public opinion and lobbying against the increase of regulation of business by politicians (Tench & Yeomans, 2006, p. 5; Heath, 2005, p. 32; Cutlip et al 2000, p. 103).

Ivy Lee, a journalist by profession who is regarded by many as the father of PR and is credited with many of the techniques and principles currently practiced by practitioners, indicated in his Declaration of Principles in 1906 about PR that:

this is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency..... In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which is of value and interest to the public to know about (Broom & Sha, 2013: 87).

This marked a profound statement underlying the essential role of PR at that time, as it clearly iterated the concerns of business and the publics.

Although Lee had a great impact regarding how PR ought to be practiced, it was Edward Bernays who actually redefined the profession through his attempts to introduce systems and science into PR, hence earning the name “father of modern public relations”. The introduction of a science into the field complemented the efforts by predecessors who had begun the journey of defining PR practice as a field. Edward Bernays, gained recognition for his theories on PR, through books, teaching PR and public debate (Wilcox & Cameron, 2012, p. 47). Bernays’ books, including his first book “Crystallizing Public Opinion” which he wrote in 1923, were practitioner focused, case study based and backed by insight from the social sciences.

That was focused on how to control the public mind using persuasive techniques. His submissions and arguments on PR greatly influenced a number of practitioners who had gained expertise in propaganda during the war years and subsequently joined the profession (Tench & Yeomans, 2006, p. 10). Theorists such as James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) based three of their four models of PR on the different ways in which Barnum, Lee and Bernays practiced public relations (Butterick,

2011, p. 12). Since then, PR as a field has thrived as more and more scholarly work has been undertaken to develop the field into what it is today.

In Africa, modern day public relations is believed to be a relic of colonialism. PR is believed to have been introduced in Africa by the British colonialist in the 19 and early 20th century. Proto-public relations were used by the British colonial administration to disseminate government information. It was often used to support the formation of newspapers in British colonies in East and Southern Africa (Kiambi, 2014, Natifu 2014) as it did in West Africa (Watson, 2014). Kiambi found evidence of a British colonial information methodology that allowed PR to be practiced in a sophisticated way (that is, beyond the mere dissemination of information).

This may have been applied in other colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean in the early to mid-twentieth century (Watson, 2017, P. 6). Despite the evidence of PR practice in Africa during colonialism, I am very optimistic that there existed some form of PR practice embedded within our traditional institutional framework. As such, I firmly believe PR communication existed in our part of the world until the advent of colonialism which finds symbolism in our heritage as Africans in relation to traditional governance and other social organizations organized around groups. The literature on PR appears to be Eurocentric fueling the agenda that Africa never practiced some form of PR, which is not the case, as most of our traditional institutions had some form of communication that existed that sought to ensure effective dissemination of information to the publics using various mediums. These mediums were used to project the interest of the publics by ensuring feedback based on hierarchical roles and the cultural environment.

2.2 Overview of Public Relations Practice in Organizations

Public relations practice is the art and science of dissecting patterns and issues of the organization, anticipating their result, guiding all the general populations of the association and actualizing

arranged program of activity which will serve both the association and its publics Newsome (2004, p. 29), Black (2003, p. 29) stated that the use of public relation is to persuade internal publics that the organization is “right” for them and make people feel good about working in , or with or for an organization and persuade them to do their best.

As Scott & Cutlip (2006, p.29) found an internal relation is communication inside an organization is arguably even more important than the external communication because the association needs to work viably in accomplishing its objectives keeping in mind the end goal to serve, in shore " opportune, finish and exact association correspondence and up close and personal administrative correspondence can anchor worker activity for organization.

Nevertheless, PR practice must always seek to strike a balance between internal publics and external publics since the two cannot exist without the other. Publics would always play an instrumental role in the organizations pursuit of goals. Since the beginning of the 21st century public relations (PR) has seen an immeasurable growth as an industry both in numbers and respect. As an industry and profession PR has matured to the point of becoming an essential part of businesses worldwide. Contemporary PR as it is known today has moved beyond being an industry based in the United States of America (USA) to a worldwide profession. PR practice now spans countries with diverse cultures, economic and political systems, and levels of development (Curtin & Gaither, 2012, p. 1; Culbertson, 1996, p. 1).

Gregory (2004, p. 1) describes the nature of PR as “dynamic, fast-moving, always developing, at the heart of the action.” This is because a lot more organizations, including developing/non-western countries, are gradually becoming aware of how communication/PR impacts on the success of their organization. Waiyachote (2007, p.1), for instance, attributes the rise of the PR industry to the profession’s ability to distribute messages clearly. Duncan (2005, p. 543) asserts

that PR has “the power to cut through messages” and is more cost-effective and sometimes more credible than advertising. This is reflective of the PR practice within the private sector industry, where messages are carefully couched and distributed through various channels that is less costly and timely.

Bowen, Rawlins and Martin (2012, p. 3) further emphasize the value of PR to organizational success when they posit that PR can mean the difference between “life and death” or the difference between “profitability and failure.” The increasing value of PR within organizations has primarily been due to economic, societal, and technological advancement and communication across the globe. Many businesses now transcend national borders to conduct businesses, leading to a competitive environment.

The increase in competition for foreign market among multinational organizations means that PR practitioners now service not only their environment, but a new, intercultural, worldwide audience (Chmielecki, 2012, p. 135, Jourde, 2007, p. 1). Grunig (1992, p. 541) points out that “most organizations are affected by publics throughout the world. Also, some organizations are also affected by competition with organizations in other countries.” This means organizations can no longer depend on a single strategy to communicate with its publics but must rather develop different strategies to address different situations (Gregory, 2002).

As globalization is continuously increasing economic, social and political interdependencies, many organizations are also interacting, physically and virtually, with their publics outside their own country to build a dynamic relationship. Molleda (2009) believes that “trade, direct foreign investment, political coalitions, worthy global cases, information flow, and social networking, among other phenomena, are increasing the complexity of these relationships dramatically.” What this means is that there is a higher level of interdependence and interconnectivity among groups

and organizations. The net effect is that there is now a strong demand on PR practitioners to manage communication and relationships between an organization and its stakeholders at local as well as international levels (Vercic, Zerfass & Wiesenberg, 2015, p. 415; Wakefield, 2001, p. 639).

The management of relationships between an organization and its stakeholders is key to unlocking the future prospects of tertiary institutions. Since management and stakeholders are keen on ensuring that institutional goals are met, it would be prudent to have a working relationship that is built on a strong solid foundation of PR practice so as to maximize output that is satisfactory. PR efforts are generally seen as an attempt to manage communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984 p. 6). Grunig's view appears to be relatively true in relation to various PR practices in Ghana that seeks to ensure a healthy balanced relationship.

Johnson and Zawawi (2009, p. 6) also define PR as “a management function that uses communications to facilitate relationships and understanding between an organization and its publics.” Global standards are essential if the field PR in developing countries must grow to be able to reach the level of practice in developed countries. This is crucial if PR practice in tertiary institutions is employed in order to be able to manage relationships between management and publics thereby ensuring a healthy balance.

As such, the managers of our various public institutions must take into cognizance the organizational or institutional goals so as to enhance public image of the institution and reputation. This would lead to building and maintaining relationships to achieve desired organizational goals and objectives. Mehta and Xavier (2009, p. 192) note that the duty of a PR practitioner is to ensure successful communication between an organization and its publics, including monitoring and responding to issues, expectations and maintaining an effective working environment.

PR is an intrinsic part of most organizations. It provides organizations the opportunity to monitor, dialogue, and respond to issues that affect key publics of the organization (Lamb & McKee, 2005, p. 1). Since issues would always arise, it is crucial that management monitors its development, create structures for dialogue and interaction and respond appropriately. This forms a vital part of the organizational design in relation to its balance between management and publics.

Management therefore must always seek to adopt a pragmatic approach to issues regarding the publics so as to build lasting relationship founded on effective communication. Lamb and McKee (2005, p. 1) define the profession as “the communication and action on the part of an organization that supports the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and the groups with which it is interdependent.”

The relevance of PR professionals to organizations is clearly found in the roles they play within the organisation. PR practitioners do not only manage information flow, they actively engage key publics, establish strong relationships, strive to maintain a sound reputation at all times and through all circumstances, and through PR measurement, help the organisation achieve strategic organizational goals (Public Relations Society of America – PRSA, 2012).

PR practitioners must always ensure that organizations engage with stakeholders to succeed in an increasingly competitive, product-saturated, service-oriented marketplace. PR is now a fundamental part of organizations in every country (McEllrath, Chen, Azarova & Shadrova, 2001, p. 665). As the world moves towards a more competitive-innovative approach, it would be prudent for PR practitioners to position themselves towards satisfying the needs of stakeholders. This is essential if one wants to succeed, as more and more stakeholders are increasingly seeking for mutual beneficial relationships that is built on effective engagement.

2.3 Defining Public Relations

The concept of modern PR dates back to the late 19th century and the early 20th century, although some scholars predate it back to earlier time (Wilcox, 2006, p. 68; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, p. 102). Since the formal practice of the profession was determined, PR has gone through many definitions, often evolving alongside its changing roles and technological understanding. The global nature of PR means that identifying a single meaning for the profession is very difficult. Scholars and practitioners do not seem to agree on a single definition of PR (Butterick, 2011, p. 6, Hutton, 2007, p. 45; Verčič et al 2001, p. 374). This is understandable as various forms of culture would interpret PR practice within the context of the environment thereby establishing meaningful engagements that seeks to engage the publics based on norms and values binding that society. This has led to various definitions that seek to highlight the importance of the PR field of practice.

The complexity of culture and its interactions has a profound way of establishing patterns that are localized within the settings of the field of PR practice. As cultures do not exist in a vacuum, so do modern institutions, as such PR practice would differ from place to place depending on the context in which it is practiced and how norms and symbols are negotiated based on the fusion of traditional and modern practices that has seen the field thrive in the past years.

Modern PR practitioners should therefore be grateful to the founding fathers such as Ivy Lee and Edward Bernay for the foundation laid for the field. PR has been defined variously by both scholars and institutions over the years. Whereas the European view of PR is based on four key dimensions, namely, reflective, managerial, operational and educational (or what is known as the reflective paradigm), the American concepts of PR focuses on the relational approach, that is emphasis is placed on the two-way symmetrical model as a means of establishing mutually beneficial relationships (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002, p. 14; Verčič et al 2001, p. 380).

The authors therefore defined PR as a communication activity based on sound strategy to maintain mutually beneficial relationship. For the Institute of Public Relations (IPR, UK), PR is about “reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you” (Franklin et al 2009, p. 175). The development of strategy is quite essential in PR practice which must be carefully tailored to building a good reputation among clients within the business eco-sphere.

The use of reputation management is based on the belief that good reputation enhances credibility which leads to several benefits including higher sales and earnings, price premiums, higher stock price, better community relations, among others (Therkelsen, Fiebich, Groehler, Freeman, Piltingsrud & Hutton et al 2008). It is worth to note that, despite the differences in the definition of various authors, there remains some key concepts that underlies the field of public relations. In 2012, the Public Relations Society of America came up with a new or modern definition of PR. The definition focuses on PR as a communication process that is strategic in nature and also places emphasis on mutually beneficial relationship. Hutton (2007, p. 46) suggests that PR pioneer Ivy Lee, in his description of PR, focused on honesty, understanding, and compromise, to create a “proper adjustment of the interrelations” of public and business rather than promoting a formal definition. Lee described himself as a provider of information as well as a lawyer representing his clients in the court of public opinion.

Another pioneer of the history of PR, Edward Bernays, also included the notion of adjustment: *“public relations is the attempt, by information, persuasion and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institutions.”* The two pioneers of PR summed in their definition view the PR as a field of practice which involves information sharing, representation, persuasion and adjustment between the public and management. It was however, Harlow (1976),

after scouring through over 472 different definitions coined between 1900 and 1976, who came up with what he considered to be a definition that was all-inclusive.

The first global definition of PR, as he called it, consisted of common elements found within the various definitions he sampled:

public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. (Tench & Yeomans, 2006, p. 4).

This definition appears to be very much comprehensive in recognizing the different roles of PR practice in effective management. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 6) construct a simple definition by describing PR as “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics.”

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000, p. 6), three key scholars in the field, define PR as “the management function that established and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.” The management of communication within an organization and publics remain crucial so as far as there exist some form of relationships built on a social contract focused on product or service and client satisfaction.

Burson (2011), after reviewing a number of definitions, offers his own definition of the profession to mean “an applied social science that influences behavior and policy, when communicated effectively, motivates an individual or group to a specific course of action by creating, changing or reinforcing opinions and attitudes.” This definition offers some insights in behavior studies as it focuses PR in relation to how it shapes or influences behavior towards achieving organizational

goals. It critically emphasizes specific course of action that is tailored towards influencing positively attitudes and opinions of the publics.

Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth and Van Leuven (2004, p. 4) also used the concepts of 'leadership and management' to describe the profession. This definition highlights the focus of this research study as it emphasizes the concept of leadership which is synonymous to higher management functions within public institutions. Johnston, Zawawi and Brand (2009, p. 7) add ethical dimensions to the definition of PR by defining it as the "development and management of ethical strategies using communication to build relationships with stakeholders or publics." The introduction of the ethical dimension in PR studies is relatively not pronounced but quite essential as ethics drives the morals of society. As such the publics would always demand that PR functions are tailored towards ethical responsibilities so as to build healthy relationships. Freitage and Stokes (2009, p. 5) suggest that such definitions may not work in developing countries and countries going through a transitional period such as Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

This is also emphasized by Sriramesh and Verčič (2009, p. xxxiv) who link the definition of PR to globalization by adding a cultural dimension to the practice. The authors believe that the practice of PR should reflect the cultural and political diversity that impact on its practice worldwide. On the contrary, these definitions are very applicable to the conditions of developing countries since they focus on key values such as honesty, transparency, ethics and accountability which are universally acceptable by all well-meaning institutions.

L'etang (2008, p. 230) uses the term 'international communication' to mean the "over-arching field which includes intercultural and multicultural communication, diplomacy and development communication." This term 'international communication appears to highlight the existing fact that there exist several heterogeneous cultures around the world which demands that organizations

or institutions operating within the multi-national space adjust their organizational goals to suit the different cultural context in which it operates.

This would position the organization to serve the publics efficiently and meet management's expectations. Wilcox et al (2012, p. 532) also describe international PR as "planned and organized effort of a company, institution, or government to establish and build relationships with the publics of other nations." The role of planning and organization forms an essential part of PR practice which demands that corporations or institutions at all times seek uphold high its relations with the publics. Therefore, its courses of action must be carefully planned and organized taking into cognizance the context of the publics in relation to their expectations. When PR gets it right, organizations, corporations and institutions would always get it right and successful is therefore guaranteed as the publics are informed through proper and effective communication. PR practice therefore can be likened to the proverbial linguist who acts in between the chief and his audience. As such, PR must be seen as a field of practice that is necessary for the organization or institution to thrive within business eco-system. Public relations characterized as an applied social and behavioral science that measures, assesses and deciphers the attitudes of the different pertinent publics is vital to ensuring the sustainability of the organization. Moreover, having a good relation is the most important factor to build a good relation with companies' various publics Asemah (2011).

Bruning, D. & Lambe, E. (2008) recommended public relations as a management function which assesses attitudes of publics by recognizing their essential role in the business strategy. According to Banik (2006), public relation is an effort to spearhead the policies and programs of an organization with the objective of establishing a bridge of understanding and good will between institution and its publics. Since policy making and programs forms an essential part of an

organization's framework, PR practice must always seek to align to its operations towards the various policies and programs introduced by management in order to ensure harmony of objective.

Among the communication strategies, public relation has been identified as the effective way of delivering message to the targeted group, and the main objective of public relations is to convey information that will impact individuals Stokes & Rubei. (2010). The public relations specialist acts as an advocate to management and as a mediator, making an interpretation of private points into sensible, publicly acceptable policy and activity. In this manner, it is unmistakably clear that public relations assume principal part in political, monetary, social and ecological measurements of the general public (Rensburg and Can't, 2009 Cutlip et al. 2000). Public relations can be likened to a bridge linking between people and organizations.

Duties of public relations are now classified into three main categories: a) informing, b) advertising and c) seeking cooperation, integration and optimizing affairs. Scholars have enumerated two sub duties for public relations that include advertisements and formalities that these are public relations tool, not duty, and its purpose and nature. Formalities include: delivery, reverence, acceptance, cooperation, and settle and hospitality guest of organization (Lerner, 1964).

Also, managers of the public relations should be familiar communication and management. A lot of public relations managers don't have thinking-oriented approach to public relations (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). Other characteristics of a good and effective public relations manager include an expert in matters of culture-social, benefits of the use of force expert advice from outside the organization, control of activities and mechanism and decisions of organization and (Rezvani Gilkalaei, 2008).

In recent years, numerous universities have established public relation units. They have done so in order to better communicate with students, alumni, donors, neighboring communities and other publics (e.g., Grillis, 1997; Kettman & Robinson, 1991; Mullins, 1996). Universities look to public relations units to manage crises, boost rankings, increase donations, and carry out a variety of other tasks (Hirsch & Weber, 1999; Spagnolia, 1998). Samsup, Brunner and Hon (2002), for example, examined how practitioners can measure relationships in a university setting. DeSanto and Garner (2001) recommended that university public relations set synchronized goals, identify stakeholders, and conduct evaluations.

Grillis (1997) argued that it is critical for public relations practitioners to have access to the top leaders within a university. Henderson (2001), therefore proposed a four-step process for managing communication in universities: research, planning, communication and evaluation. This emphasis on strategic public relations management is clearly evident in research done by scholars studying the practice of public relations by universities in the former Soviet-bloc countries (e.g., Hall, 2002, Hall & Baker, 2003, Pabich, 2003).

Pirozek and Heskova (2003), for example, examined the public relations practice of a university in the Czech Republic. They showed how the two-way symmetrical tactics of research and feedback systems helped the university gain a better understanding of the attitudes of its key publics. Kaverina's (2003) study of a state university in Russia showed how two-way symmetrical efforts to initiate dialogue (e.g., radio call in shows, open house functions) helped strengthen the relationship between the university and its key publics. Jarrell (2003) encouraged universities to involve public relations in decision making because practitioners can lessen risk by forging good relations with publics and can scan for emerging issues.

Simpson (2002) advised university communicators to build strong community relationships, take local concerns seriously and attend to internal and external constituencies. The above studies emphasize the importance of deploying a two-way symmetrical tactics tailored towards strategically positioning the universities to better understanding their relationship with the publics. The findings of the empirical studies would therefore inform this study by way of situating it within the context of the literature. Furthermore, in their study on approaches and instruments of public relations in higher education in the Czech Republic, Heskov and Pirozek (2003) found that the success of the new detached campus is accredited to skillful public relations. The researcher further urged higher education institutions to develop public relations capacities. It is worth noting, that Kotler and Mindak (2000) argued that public relations play a greater role in academia, but a relatively reduced role in commercial organizations.

Notwithstanding, the differences in definitions espoused by the various scholars, there are similarities that are worth noting specifically the idea of PR as a management function, international communication highlighting the need for PR to adopt a multicultural approach to enhancing its roles, the ethical dimension of PR practice and above all globalization. These are essential to understanding the concept of public relations practice.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 The Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory is an essential and defining statement of what constitutes effective PR in an organisation. The theory was a result of a 15-year study by Grunig and Dozier (Grunig, 2008: 1620) to determine the features of what they called ‘excellent communications’ and of the organizations that engage in excellent PR. The theory discusses how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness, its organisation and management, environmental conditions within

an organisation that makes the organisation more effective, and how organizations determine the monetary value of PR (Grunig, 2008, p. 1620).

The Excellence Theory is an amalgamation of a number of theories including the four models of PR identified by Grunig and Hunt in their earlier studies, and is based around the Systems Theory (Waterman, 2012, p. 1). The Excellence Theory is regarded as an amalgamation of strategic management theories of PR into a greater whole and seeks to address the question: How, why and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives? Again, they sought to answer what they called the excellent question: How must PR be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute most to organizational effectiveness? (Grunig, 1992, p. 5).

One of the key elements of this study is to determine how PR contributes to effective management within tertiary institutions. Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995, p. 4), based on their study, conclude that excellent PR is universal across countries regardless of the industry or type of organisation one works with.

Some scholars such as Le Roux (2010, p. 69) postulates that the Excellence Theory describes the characteristics of the PR practitioner and the organizational culture that the PR practitioner needs to practice excellent PR and be able to contribute to organizational performance. The Excellence Theory is one of the most discussed and critiqued theories in PR. Laskin (2009, p. 37) considers it the most dominant theoretical perspective in the field of PR. A number of publications have indeed tried to show a link between effective organizations and what is called excellent PR (Kent & Taylor, 2006, p. 10).

There exists a link between PR and effective management which is quite obvious in relation to an organizational set up. PR functions plays a pivotal role in enhancing organizational goals thereby contributing to building a culture of excellence that is geared towards achieving desired goals. The central of this theory emphasizes the key role of management, environmental conditions and what constitutes organizational effectiveness. It is an idealistic theory that seeks to embrace the instrumental of PR to transforming management's decisions to achievable organizational goals. The effectiveness of organizational goals lies in how PR practitioners are able to influence and shape management taking into the environmental conditions within an organization.

Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru and Jones (2003, p. 51) also suggest that the theory has “the largest share” of theory building in PR. Browning (2010, p. 1) calls it the “most dominant and influential paradigm in PR theory.” The Excellence Theory is an essential and defining statement of what constitutes effective PR in an organisation. The theory attempts to explain the role of the communication manager in the dominant coalition. It presupposes that a communication/PR manager can contribute to the overall effectiveness of an organisation by being part of the dominant coalition. It highlights the instrumental role of the PR practitioner in contributing to effective management within tertiary institutions under this study.

That is, PR can be part of the planning and decision-making process (a management function) and play a key role in ensuring the organisation achieves its set objectives (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 199). This is largely not the case in some public institutions in Ghana, as most ignore the central role of PR in management functions. PR practitioners are sideline or marginalized from the decision-making process. They are only given feedback on management decisions which requires dissemination. This has led to many PR desks or departments to be used as messengers rather than being part of management functions.

At its core, the Excellence Theory attempts “to build good long-term relationships with strategic publics” (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002, p. 57), but for this to occur, PR must be practiced in an excellent way. Bowen (2013, p. 323) notes that the main objective of the Excellence Theory is to provide understanding of how PR as a management function can contribute effectively to the planning and response processes necessary for organizational effectiveness. The Excellence Theory therefore emphasizes the role of PR practitioners to contributing to the management function of organizations. It highlights management as a critical role played by PR which enhances organizational effectiveness.

Public relations contribute to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization’s goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organisation. Public relations contribute to effectiveness by building quality, and long-term relationships with strategic constituencies. Public relations are most likely to contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she is able to shape the organization’s goals and to help determine which external publics are most strategic (Franklin et al, 2009 p. 10). The dominant coalition as applied in this study refers to management of tertiary institutions.

For PR practitioners to provide direction for the pursuit of organizational goals, they must be part of the dominant coalition that is management of the institutions which makes critical decisions on policy and organizational goals. As part of the dominant coalition, the PR desk could provide a sense of direction for managers of the institution to tailor their goals strategically to meet the desired expectations of its constituencies. As most constituencies in relation to the higher education, do have critical needs and expectations in relation to admission, academic progress, value systems, mentoring, fee payment systems, welfare and security.

PR, thus achieves excellence when it facilitates the reconciliation of the organization's goals with the expectations of key stakeholders (Franklin et al 2009, p. 83). Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2006, p. 24-50) categorized the theory into four levels: which includes the organizational level, programme level, societal level and functional level. At the organizational level, PR must be recognized as a management function. That is, it must be part of the dominant coalition that takes decisions for and on behalf of the organisation. PR practitioners must report directly to the senior-most person in the organisation. This allows the practitioner to develop strategies and programmes that truly reflect two-way symmetric communication.

At the programme level, PR programmes should be strategic in nature in order to meet objectives while at the societal level, organizations should realize their impact on other organizations and stakeholders. This means they must be socially responsible. Lastly, at the functional level, PR is seen as an integrated function not sublimated to any other department, including marketing, and reporting to senior management. When this happens, the organisation is less likely to focus on long-term relationship with its constituents and likely to engage in asymmetrical communication. Excellent communication is therefore deliberate and proactive in its activities and is backed by research (Waters, 2013, p. 69).

The categorization of the excellence theory thus depicts its holistic appraisal of the organizational setting within the society. The various levels provide some form of structure in the practice of PR and provides some form of focus and direction to serving the needs of both management and society. It does this by taking into cognizance the management function which spells out what the PR practitioner must do in his line of work by reporting and engaging with superiors in the organization. This involves taking decisions as part of the dominant coalition thus management of the institution and facilitating its dissemination to the publics.

The theory actually prescribes the essential role of PR in relation to the dominant coalition as most at times PR is not assumed to be part of this group who largely make decisions for the various organs of the institution. It therefore helps to merge the role of PR practice by way of ensuring that PR practitioners play a crucial as part of management (dominant coalition). The development of strategies that include the plan, design and approach could provide management with policy direction that facilitates its organizational goals.

Waters (2013, p. 70) cites an example where American owners of football teams in the UK who employed excellent communication had more hospitable reception from fans than those who did not. What this means is that organizations that employ the excellence principles are in a better position to achieve effectiveness compared to those who employ the asymmetric position. Van Heerden (2004, p. 5) states that the ability of PR in contributing to organizational effectiveness is premised on the concepts of autonomy, interdependence, and relationships. So for organizations to be effective they must be able to adapt, cooperate, and interact with groups capable of limiting their autonomy. Heerden (2004) concludes by asserting that organizations that have good relationships ultimately become more effective due to their high level of freedom and autonomy. The core duty of PR is therefore to build relationships and manage interdependence.

The Excellence Theory thus shows the value of PR to organizational effectiveness which therefore makes it the best suitable theory underpinning this research study. The quality of relationship between an organisation and its internal and external environment is based on their level of interaction and how they view each other. Organizations must be able to solve problems and satisfy the needs of stakeholders as well as management. Failure to do this could result in stakeholders putting pressure on the organisation to change or oppose it in ways that add cost and risk to policies and decisions (Grunig, 2008, p. 1620).

Positive relationships are therefore crucial to organization's as they reduce cost of litigation, regulation, legislation, and negative publicity caused by poor relationships, reduce the risk of making decisions that affect different stakeholders, or increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders (Grunig, 2008). PR involvement in strategic management empowers them to develop strategies that strengthen the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders.

The excellence study itself, like any dominant theory, has been subjected to critical examination with diverse opinion regarding its usefulness, particularly in different settings and among organizations with self-interest. The excellence study tends to follow the same principle as two-way symmetrical communication which is regarded as ethical and the best way to practice PR. Critics such as L'Etang (2006) describe it as a misrepresentation of the reality of the communication process in organization's where the practice of PR is influenced by the interest of the organization. Cheney and Christensen (2001, p. 181) also suggest that the theory be used with caution as it is nothing more than 'self-reports' by managers. They argue that symmetric communication, as postulated by Grunig, does not consider the various systems of power and influence that shape PR practices.

After critically analyzing the theoretical foundations for systems theories and the Excellence Theory, Pieczka (2006) concluded that much as the theory has a good foundation, it was nevertheless filled with many contradictions. For instance, although two-way symmetrical communication is based on open dialogue and negotiation, practitioners can however only be effective when they are part of the dominant coalition. She also argues that the research questions that defined the theory and established effective PR in terms of benefits resulted in a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' that presents two-way dialogue as the best.

Meaning, organization's that do not subscribe to two-way communication have failed; a situation that is not acceptable especially when dealing with stakeholders in environments where the culture greatly influences the nature of PR practice. The idealistic nature of the Excellence Theory was not lost on Larissa Grunig (2011) when she admitted to the likely elusive nature of two-way symmetrical communication during the PRSA conference in 2010: "the interactive nature of the social media, of the digital media, makes it more possible than it was in the 60s or 70s or 80s or 90s or even 2000 to have a two-way balanced dialogue with the public. Before that, we always talked about the importance of symmetrical balanced communication but try to find any organizations that did this successfully (L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 2011, p. 43).

This appears to support Macnamara's (2009, p. 11) view that despite the rapid growth of social media as a medium of interactive communication, key areas of PR practices still remain firmly in a control paradigm that is focused on one-way, top-down monologue. Browning (2010, p. 126) admits that the Excellence Theory does have its strengths but still casts doubt on its efficacy and therefore rejected the idea of the theory as the best model for PR practice. Larskin (2012, p. 365) also called it an unrealistic utopia and normative and hence misleading in its principles. Kenny (2016, p. 87-88) reviewed the diverse criticisms of the theory.

He therefore came to a conclusion that theory the theory extends corporate capitalism selectively through globalization, thereby perpetuating inequalities of power. This occurs through the imposition of mono-cultural and normative management models hence devaluing national traditions, minorities, and cultural differences while subjecting the well-being of society to corporate profitability. Despite its criticisms, the excellence theory situates well within the scope of the research study.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter focused on literature review with an emphasis on the historical overview of the PR practice and how PR practice is undertaken in various organizations. It also provided literature in relation with theoretical foundations underpinning the study that is the excellence theory and systems theory. With evidenced based literature, the study was well situated within the literature so as to provide some form of empirical findings during data presentation and analysis. The next chapter deals with the methodology of the study which would highlight on the research design, population, sampling methods and data collection procedure using a focused group technique.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology and procedures for data collection and analysis. Every empirical research utilizes a certain methodology for the purposes of data collection (Babbie, 2009). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), research methodology entails the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. Therefore, the chapter provides a description of the method employed in the study, research design, population, sampling and sampling technique, data collection as well as the mode of data analysis and summary of the chapter.

3.1 Research Design

Research design (Vogt, 2005, p. 87), is the plan that a researcher will follow when conducting the study. According to Kumar (2011), a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. A good research design has a clearly defined purpose, and has consistency between the research questions and the proposed research method (O. Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

A qualitative research paradigm was employed in this research to gather and analyze data. Qualitative research attempts to understand a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the population involved. Lindlorf (1995, p. 5) makes the point that qualitative research allows a researcher to interview people as a means of understanding their views “on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation.

This approach helps to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyze certain kinds of discourse.” The researcher therefore employed a qualitative research design due to its exploratory and open-ended nature of the research questions. Qualitative research paradigm is in-depth research using a range of techniques with the aim to understand reason, opinion and motivations. This is to enable the researchers elicit responses in relation to the role of public relations (PR) practice in promoting effective management of the various public tertiary institutions across the country.

The benefit of qualitative approaches is that it is an open-ended approach that adapts and evolves as the study progresses which enhances the quality of the data and insights generated. It also allows the researcher to understand the issues from different perspectives. Some common qualitative methods include interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation (Watkins, 2012). Methodology pertains to the decisions we make about the areas we are researching, data gathering techniques and data interpretation forms when preparing and executing a research study (Silverman, 2005).

It shows how research is carried out and provides a foundation for the research. The design also places great importance on what is to be studied in order to generate comprehension rather than vague results (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The qualitative research method has been criticized as being

subjective. However, it best suits this study because it offers ample information and fundamentals for better understanding of the research problem of this study (Zikmund & Carr, 2000).

This approach gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain in-depth data from participants through their personal narratives and statements about the knowledge they have about child rights (Gray, 2009). As suggested by Duncan et al (2009), it is safe to adopt a qualitative research approach when the researcher is not sure of the nature of responses that would be given and also when the researcher wants to adopt an open realm of response.

The researcher employed the qualitative approach in the data analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. The qualitative research paradigm was used in presenting and analyzing the data. This approach enabled the researcher to describe and make inferences based on the responses of participants (PR Practitioners) across the various public tertiary institutions across the country.

3.2 Research Methods

The research made use of both primary and secondary data, which were gathered from diverse sources, including, archival sources, text books, journals/articles (both published and unpublished), and internet sites. The primary research is tailored to suit the needs of the research. This research involved the collection of raw data, which forms the main basis for achieving the research objectives. The sources of which includes, unpublished documents, research institutes and other agencies. An attempt was made at collecting and analyzing primary data which has gone a long way to validate the findings and conclusions drawn from the research.

Secondary sources provide relevant analysis of data found in primary sources including books, journals, dissertations, reports, speeches and so on (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 186; du Plooy,

2009, p. 62). These sources would be used in the data collection process. The qualitative research approach was deemed to be appropriate by the researchers hence its adoption. Saunders et al. (2007) opined that the method for collecting research data is linked to research approaches adopted. Babbie (1990, p. 133) describes validity as “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration”. He also defines reliability as “a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time.” Consequently, the good sampling technique used in this research makes it very credible Kvale, (1995).

The study used an interview guide to elicit responses from PR practitioners in the field of practice of the various public tertiary institutions across the country. About 15 PR practitioners in public tertiary institutions were interviewed and their responses recorded via a recorder. This was to ascertain their views on the role of PR practice in promoting effective management of public tertiary institutions. These institutions were selected using a purposive sampling technique which enabled the researcher to select based on the knowledge level and experience of participants or respondents.

3.3 Research Site

The research was conducted across various public tertiary institutions across the country. Ghana currently has a number of tertiary institutions which include mainly: *“University of Ghana, University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba; University for Development studies, Tamale; and the Ghana Institute of Journalism, Accra. Ghana also has a number of Technical Universities which include the Accra Technical University, Sunyani Technical University, Kumasi Technical University, Cape Coast Technical*

University, Sunyani Technical University, and Wa Technical University. There are other private Universities which include the Central University, Methodist University College and others”.

The scope of this study involved public universities across the country. This study specifically targeted key tertiary institutions in Ghana namely the Central University, Accra Technical University and the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

The choice of selected institutions was based on proximity and accessibility of participants in the various public tertiary institutions. This was to enable the researcher to gather data easily due to the time frame of the research study. As such, key public tertiary institutions were selected in relation to their proximity and accessibility of PR practitioners within the field of practice. It is expected that this research study would help situate PR practice in efficient management of higher education.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling, especially in qualitative research, allows researchers to obtain a deeper understanding of a problem under study (Black, 2012, p. 168-169, Stacks, 2011, p. 197). Participants were selected based on their deep knowledge and experience of the issue under investigation (Merriam, 2009: 77). Purposive sampling allows cases or units to be specifically selected due to their ability to give detailed information about the issues that are important to the research.

For the purposes of this research study, a sample size of 15 PR practitioners from various public tertiary institutions were sampled for the study. Given that all the respondents were PR practitioners, the researcher could not have possibly interviewed all respondents, hence, the researcher employed purposive sampling procedure. This is because it was convenient for him to

get access to PR practitioners from the selected institutions within the study to respond to his interview guide because of the proximity and accessibility of respondents.

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study was an interview guide. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires. e.g to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999).

The general interview guide approach adopted in this research study was to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee. This helps to provide more focus. Interviews are widely used as a data collection tool in qualitative research. They are typically used as a research strategy to gather information about participant's experiences, views and beliefs concerning a specific research question or phenomenon of interest (Lambert and Loiselle, 2007). Sandelowski (2002) purports that one-to-one interviews are the most commonly used data collection tools in qualitative research.

The interview guide consisted of an outline of categories that are relevant to the research and on which interview questions are ultimately based (Polit & Hungler (1995). The sequencing of questions enabled the interviewee to be aware of what specific areas he or she is being asked about. More sensitive questions should be kept for when rapport and trust have been established and the interviewee is relaxed (Trochim, 2005).

As such in using the interview guide to elicit responses from the various participants, the researcher sought to follow through with the guide as a way of ensuring that respondents are kept on the right

track so as to achieve the desired research objectives stated within the study. The researcher ensured that prompts were administered intermittently when the need arises since the interviewee might sometimes not stay within the scope of discussion. This is very helpful in permitting the interviewee to expand on a particular issue or in getting them to re-engage with the interview process if they lose their train of thought (Robson, 2002). Tod (2006) suggests that the flexibility of the interview structure is one of its greatest strengths.

The use of the interview guide served its purpose of flexibility as it enabled the interviewer to elicit responses in a manner that sought to engage the interviewee.

3.6. Data Collection

Qualitative methods of data collection allowed the researcher to gather rich information and also gain a deeper insight into the topic under investigation. Data collection techniques enables the researcher to learn about a phenomenon by gathering information from individuals, groups, and text in any medium (Biber et al 2011, p. 5). Approaches to data collection in qualitative research usually consist of interacting directly with participants either on a face-to-face level or in a group setting. Data was collected through personal interviews with the interview guide (Kothari, 2004, p.98).

The researcher employed the individual interview technique to collect data from the research participants. The data collection technique was very effective as it enabled the researcher to have a personal connection with the participants thereby fostering the bond of trust during the interviewing process. The interview technique helped to elicit the necessary responses from participants in relation to their professional working experience and knowledge on public relations practice in the public tertiary institutions. Data collection was undertaken using a recorder that

helped to collect the responses of the participants. The participants were asked questions using the interview guide as a way of ensuring that both interviewer and interviewee remained within the scope the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of coding, categorizing, editing and tabulation of accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data-groups (Kothari, 2004). Data collected was assorted and assigned codes to ensure that each participants response was captured. In the current study, data were analyzed by using a thematic approach that was derived based on the interview guide.

Data analysis was therefore undertaken devoid of bias in this study by reporting exactly what respondents said on the study field via a recorder and transcription done using thematic analysis. The primary and secondary data sources such as books, journal articles, internet sources and reports were analyzed contextually. Data analysis was undertaken to seek to ensure that all recorded responses of participants are transcribed verbatim in relation to the data collection process.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

There is a common agreement that qualitative researchers or inquiries have to demonstrate that their study is credible through reliability and validity (Creswell, 2014). Altheide and Johnson, 1988, p.593) state that: “validity suggests that a proper set of standards for assessing validity entails considering the place of evidence in an interaction process between the researcher, the subject matter (phenomenon to be investigated), the intended effect or utility and the audience for which the project will be evaluated and assessed”

By this, the researcher provided detailed information about role of PR practice in promoting effective management of public tertiary institutions through the responses of the various participants and the kind of conversations that took place during the interviewing process that goes on to give detailed elaboration of the theme that emerged from the data gathered. Reliability which has to do with credible data collection methods are in other words a form of evidence to support how the data was gathered.

3.8.1 Ethical Issues

Ethics simply refers to the moral principles or values that govern the actions of a researcher, that is, it deals with what is right and wrong (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 65, Babbie, 2008, p. 66). An important ethical element is *informed consent*, which deals with ensuring that the subjects participating in the interview process are notified about the nature of the research project and permission sought prior to their participation in the study. As such, the participants would be assured of the confidentiality of their sources which would be used solely for academic purposes.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methods adopted in gathering data necessary to achieve the research objective. The research methodology applied in this study was the qualitative research approach which enabled the researcher to gain insights on the roles of PR practices in promoting effective management of public tertiary institutions. It explored how primary and secondary data was adopted in collecting data via a recorder with participants. It also touched on the data analysis process that involved assorting the data, coding process of the various participants and their responses based on the themes so as to generate meaningful data for interpretation.

The next chapter focuses on the data gathering process, analysis and discussion of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of findings along the study research and objectives, in relation to the role of PR practice in promoting effective management of public tertiary institutions across the country. The findings of the research study are presented in this chapter according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from data collected through in-depth-interviews. Instead of participant's real names, codes were used to refer to the participants or respondents in relation to the interview responses. The interviewing process was undertaken using the interview guide. The data presentation and analysis section therefore focuses on data gathered from respondents from the various public tertiary institutions in the country.

4.1 The incorporation of PR practice in the management of the university

The first objective of this study was to find out how PR practice is incorporated into the management of the university. This theme critically analyses ways in which PR practice has been harnessed into the management of the various institutions. The various sub-themes sought to find out how PR practices are undertaken, involvement of PR practitioners in the day-to-day management of the university, ways in which PR practitioners are engaged in management's decision-making processes and how PR roles are designed by the various institutions in relation with the delegation of specific roles and responsibilities. Other sub-themes focused on how PR practitioners are involved in policy design, development, delivery and advocacy, strategies adopted to ensure that PR practitioners are effectively represented on management boards of institutions and the level of involvement of PR practitioners in management policy decision-making.

The study found that the various institutions incorporate PR practice into the managements of their universities via information dissemination, publicity and event publications and management despite some bottlenecks in strategic management where PR units are ascribed peripheral roles in strategic decision-making processes. This view is expressed by the various participants in representative quotes:

information dissemination, advertising and event management functions in the University are usually spearheaded by the PR practitioners. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

PR practitioners are involved in publicizing internal circulars, website content management, media monitoring, responding to external correspondences and environmental scanning. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

The Public Affairs Unit is involved in publicizing all internal memos, event management, media engagement and monitoring, advertising, website content management and so on. (PR03, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

The findings confirm Lerner's classification of the duties of public relations into three main categories: a) informing, b) advertising and c) seeking cooperation, integration and optimizing affairs (Lerner, 1964). This was confirmed by the various respondents who state the various ways in which PR practices is incorporated into the management of their institutions. Therefore, PR consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding (Jefkins, 2006). This is in sync with National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) in America (2010) who state that: educational public relations professionals handle the following major functions: counselling, media liaison, communications planning, publicizing students and staff achievements, community relations liaisons and information station. PR sections or units can be considered as building blocks between the institutions and the public which is evidenced in the discharge of their various duties.

These duties range from information dissemination, communication, corporate leadership and projecting institutional values and mission via strategic management tailored towards influencing the objectives of the institutions positively. It is worthy of note that, PR functions play a crucial role in management of educational institutions, as they provide a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization (National School Public Relations Association (2010).

Johnson and Zawawi (2009, p. 6) also define PR as “a management function that uses communications to facilitate relationships and understanding between an organization and its publics.” Mehta and Xavier (2009, p. 192) note that the duty of a PR practitioner is to ensure successful communication between an organization and its publics, including monitoring and responding to issues, expectations and maintaining an effective working environment. The role of PR practitioners in the various institutions help to promote effective management by way of ensuring that timely information gets to be at the right time and place and ensuring that it achieves its desired goals whilst maintaining a balance between educational institutions and their major stakeholders.

The study also sought to find out how PR practices are undertaken in the various institutions. The various participants indicated that:

The PR functions are well represented in the various activities and processes in place to serve as the bridge between the various publics of the University. These practices are also evident in the communication functions undertaken by the PR Directorate. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

PR activities are undertaken at the instance of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, or the Registrar. PR activities are also very routine save for a crisis. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

The Public Affairs Unit takes care of internal circulars and serves as the mediator between the various publics of the university. The

unit mainly works at the instance of the Rector and the registry.
(PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

These findings demonstrate that PR functions are undertaken routinely by their various institutions which is evidenced by the various circulars and memos circulated periodically by the PR section or unit to various departments, colleges, faculties and management of the universities. This routine process of circulation of information with regards to management decision, updates of events and publicity has become the most commonly known role of PR sections within the confines of the various institutions. Notwithstanding this notion of PR, it forms an intrinsic part of every organization. It provides organizations the opportunity to monitor, dialogue, and respond to issues that affect key publics of the organization (Lamb & McKee, 2005, p. 1).

The study also sought to find out if PR practitioners are engaged in management decision-making processes and it was found that PR practitioners in these various institutions are not regularly consulted on various issues in relation to management decision-making processes of the university. Even when they were consulted, it was usually when their services were needed during crises periods or when it lies within their scope of work. The PR section or unit has been relegated to a peripheral role of recipient of information rather than participation in making decisions. A participant indicated that the PR unit in his/her institution was not usually consulted but when consulted it's because it has a bearing on their mandate. This view is expressed by participant PRO1 who said that:

they are not regularly consulted for their input when managements decisions are taken at the top level but when they are consulted it's because it has a bearing on their scope of work. They are also part of some statutory committees where their views are received on varied topics but seldom implemented. Although, it is not enough since we can do more than just these roles. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

Participant PRO2, also noted that:

generally, PR practitioners are not involved in managements decision-making processes. PR practitioners are only involved in managements decision-making process mainly during crisis. This should not be the case where we are seen as rescuers of the situation, we should be part of strategic management in order to give direction to policy making which would aid effective management of the institution... (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

This assertion confirms Eniola's (2011) view that PR officers responsible for public relations are usually left out of decision-making processes, thereby playing a peripheral when it comes to management of the institutions. This gives an impression of insignificance of their function as role players in the management of universities (Eniola, 2011).

This view is expressed by participant PRO3, who emphasized that:

the Public Affairs unit isn't part of management in the first place. Our inputs aren't taken with the kind of seriousness it deserves. Management only comes to us when there is crisis looming. Our roles are limited and nothing else. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

In the Excellence study, Grunig et al (2002), indicate that they found out that the most effective public relations departments participated in the making of overall strategic decisions. Less effective departments generally had the less central role of disseminating messages about strategic decisions made by others in the organization. Both the Excellence study (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002) and Yun's (2006) research on practitioners of public diplomacy showed that two principles of excellence related to strategic management (participating in strategic management and the knowledge to practice public relations strategically) were the variables that most distinguished excellence from less-excellence public relations departments. An evaluation of the public relations office of some institutions found that there was need to increase public relations activities in the section. It was explained that this could be achieved only when the public relations section is accorded the same status as the other departments by appointing a head with a similar

status (Holtzhausen and Voto, 2002). It is therefore crucial that PR practitioners are accorded similar privileges of being part of strategic management in relation to making inputs as part of the decision-making process.

Another sub-theme sought to find out the level of involvement of PR practitioners in management policy direction and some participants emphasized the following in representative quotes:

the level is dependent on what policy is under consideration. In some cases, the PR practitioners are part of the policy formulation process and in other cases, they are only informed about the policy's existence and tasked with the dissemination and education process. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

involvement has been low and is still low. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

as I said earlier the Public Affairs Unit isn't part of management and so in terms of policy direction, the PR isn't involved. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

These findings further confirm the literature, as most PR sections or units are largely not considered as part of the strategic management of institutions. They are only seen as information dissemination points of service to the general public and sometimes performing peripheral roles that are not directly linked to the strategic management of the various institutions. These confirm the literature in relation to PR practitioners not deliberately involved in decision-making of the various institutions. In the views of Bruning and Ralston (2001), the practice of public relations at most universities has been relegated to a single office concerned primarily with managing institutional reputation. Peyronel and Lawniczak (2000) state that literature on higher educational public relations affirms that senior public relations administrators should be involved in institutional decision making at colleges and universities. This trend is very worrying as it has a long-term effect on the effective management of the various institutions. This can largely result in PR sections being sidelined thereby hampering their potential to contribute to effective management of the various universities.

Furthermore, the sub-themes also focused on some strategies adopted to ensure that PR practitioners are effectively represented on management boards of the various institutions. Some of the participants indicated that:

the university's statute secures some membership slots for PR practitioners on some important boards in the institution despite this we are not duly accorded equal representation on those boards. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

there isn't any visible strategy (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

Per the statute of the university PR secures slots in some committees which are critical with policies in the institution but it would be essential that going forward we are given equal space to participate on management boards. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

The findings above demonstrate some form of effort to ensure representation on management boards of the various institutions, despite its limited role in ensuring effective participation by virtue of inputs made to decision making, thereby contributing to effective management. Among the communication strategies, public relations have been identified as the effective way of delivering messages to targeted groups, and the main objective of public relations is to convey information that will impact individuals (Stokes & Rubei, 2010). The essential role played by PR practitioners in managing information flow, actively engaging key publics, establishing strong relationships, striving to maintain a sound reputation at all times and through all circumstances, and through PR measurement, helps the organization achieve strategic organizational goals (Public Relations Society of America – PRSA, 2012). Management of the various institutions must therefore ensure that PR practitioners are accorded similar status with respect to other departments and faculties. so as to harness the fruits of effective management. In the view of Nakra (2000) public relations activities must be involved early in the process when developing strategies for building and maintaining the corporate image and reputation. Hutton et al (2001) argued that

companies with extensive corporate communication strategies were more likely to have a strong reputation. Nakra (2000) observe that reserving a seat at the corporate boardroom tables for public relations executives and involving them in strategy development, would be a logical first step for corporate reputation building.

In relation to how PR practitioners are incorporated in policy design, development, delivery, and advocacy, some participants indicated that:

their input is usually solicited either through official memos or their incorporation into committees that work on some of the policies in the university, despite some few bottlenecks where PR practitioners are not given the opportunity in the making of decisions. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

the PR practitioners are incorporated in the design of policies related to communications when it comes circulation of information that is decisions taken by management which we have to communicate with the public. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

the Public Affairs Unit as stated earlier to you is part of committees and as such their inputs are used not always in part of the developments and policies in the university. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

Cutlip et al (2006) noted that the public relations function will be useful only if management wants it. If the management perceives this function as not something crucial for the company, it will not have a strategic position in the company and its contribution will be minimal. According to Clow and Baack (2007) all the recipients of company communications are important, thus constituent who makes contact with a company should receive a clear, unified message. In creating positive image for their organizations, the public relations department can send out messages through press releases and press conferences to highlight these positive, image building activities (Clow and Baack, 2007).

Furthermore, one of the most important public relations functions is damage control (Clow and Baack, 2007). According to Clow and Baack (2007) depending on an organization's image and handling damage control should take two forms: proactive prevention strategies and reactive damage-control strategies. In the case of crisis management, public relations units or sections, are the first point of call to address these issues in the public domain. According to Pines (2000) crisis management as an art has been around since the beginning of recorded time. Many times, a crisis has the potential to improve the firm's position and image (Clow and Baack, 2007). It is therefore crucial that PR practitioners are incorporated into policy design, development, delivery and advocacy so as to reap the dividends of effective management rather the peripheral roles accorded PR when it comes to crisis management.

The final sub-theme sought to find out how PR roles are designed by the various institutions when it comes to delegation of specific roles and responsibilities. The findings depict some form of effort to delegate specific roles and responsibilities. Some participants stated that:

all advertising, media engagement, branding and publication functions are clearly delegated to the PR practitioners in the university. Protocol at official events is also coordinated by the PR office. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

specific roles and responsibilities are drawn from the Technical Universities Statutes and Schemes of Service; however, the Director of the Public Affairs Directorate has the discretion of assigning roles but not inconsistent with the provisions of the Technical Universities Statutes and Schemes of service. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

the Public Affairs is solely responsible for advertising, internal memos, media engagement, event management of the University. All these engagements with the university's publics are spearheaded by the unit. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

The findings reveal that when it comes to delegation of specific roles and responsibilities, the various institutions ensure that PR sections are delegated with specific despite the peripheral played by these units.

4.2 Mediums used by management of the University to engage with the PR section in relation to decision making

The second objective of the study sought to find which mediums management of the various institutions uses to engage with the PR section in relation to decision making. The sub-themes focused on how these institutions engage PR practitioners using various mediums that are geared towards ensuring effective engagement processes. The findings reveal the existence some mediums used to engage PR practitioners such as memo's, circulars, notices, and meetings despite the peripheral role assigned to them in the decision-making process. Some of the views of participants are expressed in representative quotes:

official memos, emails, phone calls and some social platforms, board and committee meetings are some of the mediums used at my institution. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

memos. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

official memos, phone calls and committee meetings are the mediums used. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

From the above quotes from the various respondents, it can be deduced that the memos is the most used mediums utilized in engaging PR practitioners in the various institutions. It can further be observed that these mediums are largely used to communicate decisions taken by management during strategic meetings. PR sections or units therefore became venues for dissemination of decisions to the public instead of their actual involvement from the inception of ideas into policies taken or directives of the various institutions. They are mostly used to communicate to the public

thereby becoming communication units instead of being a critical component of management of the institution. Also, the use of press release is considered by public relations practitioners as the most important form of medium of communication (Lancaster, 2005). This helps to ensure that information on policy direction and updates on events are well circulated to the public especially the media and the student body.

The sub-theme on management meetings or board meetings or council meetings held or carried out by the various institutions reveals that there exist several engagement platforms depending on the nature of institutional dynamics, structure and organization despite its lack of effectiveness and limited representation making it difficult for PR sections or unit to effectively deliver on their mandate. Some participants expressed their views by stating the following:

academic board, academic management committee, finance committee, faculty board, appointment and promotions committee, students' Affairs committee, publications committee etc. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

council meetings, academic board meetings, committee meetings. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

committee meetings. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

This trend is largely attributed to the way PR practice is viewed in our part of the world, where they are not accorded the necessary prestige and recognition in the field of management of institutions. They are not considered vital in the processes of higher strategic decision- making and have over the years been handed already taken decisions to disseminate to the public.

The sub-theme on the timelines management meets with the various PR sections reveals that there exist planned meetings for the annual year which is sometime held quarterly or yearly. The various participants indicated the following:

Quarterly. (PRO1, Public Relations Officer, Central University)

Yearly. (PRO2, Public Relations Officer, Accra Technical University)

Quarterly. (PRO3, Public Relations Officer, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

Another sub-theme sought to find out the effectiveness of the mediums used in ensuring effective participation by the PR section of the various institutions. Some of the participants revealed that these mediums were helpful in relaying information to the public and ensuring that the various units of the institution are well coordinated when it comes to a centralized form of communication despite the wide held notion that PR sections are meant just to circulate information.

they help with tracking agreed deliverables and are quite useful. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

they help with quick responses and clear dissemination of messages that occur internally in the university. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

they are very useful since it gives quick responses to issues and also helps in the following of agreed timelines. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

Other sub-themes sought to find out how the existing structures and spaces promote effective management of the various institutions. The findings reveal that the existing structures have been quite effective in ensuring the smooth operation of management despite the limited role-played PR practitioners within these spaces and structures.

the existing structures help to streamline activities and serve as checks and controls for the effective management and governance of the institution despite the need for reforms. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

the existing structures promote effective management of the institution due to the bureaucratic nature of these structures; roles are specific and assigned to respective persons. Accountability thus is high but we would need some form of autonomy to be able to discharge our duties professionally. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

the existing structures are bureaucratic in nature and also mechanic which in the long run checks and controls the effectiveness and governance of the institution. For us to achieve our targets, these structures need to be accorded similar status in terms of hierarchy of decision making not just as recipients of information. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

Van Heerden (2004, P. 5) states that the ability of PR in contributing to organizational effectiveness is premised on the concepts of autonomy, interdependence, and relationships. The existence of these structures must promote the interdependence and autonomy of the PR section or unit so as to achieve the deliverables when it comes performance of its roles and responsibilities. This non-existence of autonomy and participation in strategic management decisions continues to hamper the potential of the PR section further entrenching the notion of mere conduits for the circulation of information to the various departments, faculties, management, student body and the public.

4.3 Challenges PR practitioners face in the conduct of their official duties

The third objective of the study also sought to identify the various challenges encountered by PR practitioners in the conduct off their official duties. The findings of the study reveal that PR practitioners encounter several challenges that tend to affect them negatively in the official discharge of their duties, roles and responsibilities. These challenges are mainly inadequate resources and logistics, inadequate personnel and budget constraints and lack of independence and autonomy in the discharge of its duties. Some responses recorded during the focused group discussion process is expressed by respondents who state that:

The main challenges are resource and logistics related. There are many ideas and brand promotion/marketing campaigns that are stalled due to budgetary constraints. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

inadequate personnel, delay in the delivery of office supplies and funding. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

inadequate personnel, logistics and resources deficiency, budgetary constraints and lack of autonomy and independence. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

The sub-themes of the study also sought to find out how these challenges affected the nature of your work output. Some participants emphasized the fact that these challenges tend to limit work output in relation to the conduct of their official duties, delays the execution of assigned tasks and responsibilities. Some of the views of participants are expressed as follows:

These challenges limit the number of interventions we would have undertaken. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

Generally, delay in the execution of assigned responsibilities. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

These challenges limit us in the number of assigned works we would have done and also slows our innovation implementations. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

The last sub-theme was on what the various institutions have done to overcome some of these challenges inhibiting PR practitioners from discharging their roles. The various participants revealed that:

They have communicated to management some of these challenges and there is some form of optimism that they would be addressed soon or in the near future. And so, as PR practitioners they would continue to follow up on recommendations made to management to ensure that these challenges are resolved to enable them perform effectively. (PRO1, Public Relations Unit, Central University)

We as PR practitioners have tabled our concerns to management and yet to receive feedback on how it would be addressed but we are confident that with the kind of leadership we are having now, some efforts would be undertaken to resolve these challenges. (PRO2, Public Relations Unit, Accra Technical University)

“For us, management has already started to address some of the challenges we face after we informed them on how these challenges are affecting work output. And so, we would continue to remind management of their commitment to equipping our unit with the necessary logistics and personnel to meet the teaming demands of the nature of our job. (PRO3, Public Relations Unit, Ghana Institute of Journalism)

Despite some of the challenges PR sections or unit encounter, there is much optimism for the field of practice as the various responses of participants during the focused group discussion reveals some form of efforts tailored towards addressing the plights of PR practitioners. From the various

challenges with regard to limited operational space and shared resources, it is hoped that management would address them. Finally, with regards to representation at the management advisory board which is the third highest body, it is hoped that decision making processes would involve the unit so as to ensure effective management of the various institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

Based on the outcome of the study, this chapter presents the summary of findings of the research, conclusion and recommendations which are supported by both primary and secondary data. The findings were analyzed according to themes developed which reveals that the various institutions incorporate PR practice into management of their universities despite some pitfalls in the area of decision making which has largely rendered the PR section or units non-functional in relation to the performance of their roles and responsibilities. The findings reveal a peripheral role discharged

by the various PR sections or units across the various institutions which is evidenced by the nature of roles assigned to them. The various respondents indicated that the mediums they used to engage the public was quite helpful in relaying vital information. In relation to policy design, some respondents reiterated the fact that they consulted but largely as a formality of the process.

The findings also reveal that in undertaking PR practices across the various institutions, PR practitioners served as a bridge between the university and the public within a hierarchical structure which is based on a routine depending on the structure of the institutions. So orders are being given by institutional heads or registry that needs to be carried out. Despite the existence of structures, spaces and platforms for engagement, it lacked some form of effectiveness in relation to designed goals and limited representation. There exist some form of delegation of specific roles and responsibilities though it is limited to the dissemination of information and other peripheral roles that do not involve strategic management of the universities. Finally, the study revealed widespread challenges across all institutions in relation to inadequate logistics and resources, lack of personnel and budget constraints.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

In order to answer the first research question of this study which is (How is PR practice incorporated into the management of the University?), respondents or participants from the various institutions were asked questions in relation to how PR practice has been incorporated into the management of the university. The study found out that the various institutions incorporated PR practice by way of dissemination information, advertising and events management. This is also involved publicity and responding to external correspondence using various such as memo's, circulars and press releases to reach out to the public whilst providing a good image of the various institutions. In undertaking PR practice, most of its roles serve to create a bridge between

management of the various institutions and the public thereby ensuring a harmonious relationship that guarantees a good image during crisis management.

In relation to engagements on managements decisions, the study revealed that PR practitioners are not regularly consulted and if consulted seldom it becomes part of management's decision since they are not accorded similar status as core members of management. They are largely viewed as rescue missions when there emerges a crisis between management and the public. At this point, management relies on the PR section or unit in ensuring that the crisis is resolved amicably. Their role has been reduced primarily to implementing decisions taken but not playing active role in making those decisions. The sub-theme on strategies reveals some form of efforts in ensuring adequate representation on management boards despite the limited role in the performance or discharge of its core mandate. Equally important is the sub-theme on delegation of specific roles and responsibilities. The findings reveal some form of effort to delegate specific roles and responsibilities though it was not tailored to strategic management decisions that would have meant that PR sections or unit could be part of problem solving rather than recipients of already taken decisions that are then delegated to be carried out.

The second objective of the study was to identify some of the mediums that management uses to engage with the PR section or unit in relation to decision making. The findings reveal that there exist some mediums though limited that are used to engage PR practitioners which include memo's, circulars, notices and formal meetings. These mediums are mainly used for dissemination of information or to convey management's decision to faculties, departments and student body. It is essential to note, though these mediums are largely meant to pass on information rather providing the PR practitioners the room to be part of the process of making those decisions.

The study further found that though there exist platforms for engagement of PR practitioners they are not as effective in relation to inputs made to decisions coupled with a lack of adequate representation on those board meetings or council meetings held. The sub-theme on timelines of management in relation to meetings revealed that there exist quarterly or yearly meetings in the various institutions. Though the study reveals the existence of structures and spaces which have been moderately effective in helping ensure the free flow of information to parties involved despite the existence of top-down hierarchy that gives orders for specific tasks to be undertaken without adequate consultation.

The third objective of the study also sought to assess the nature of challenges faced by PR practitioners in the official conduct of duties. The findings reveal a plethora of challenges encountered by the various PR sections or units which has hindered their ability to deliver effectively on their mandate towards ensuring effective management of the universities. Some of these challenges include mainly inadequate logistics and personnel, budget constraints and lack of autonomy or independence which posed a bottleneck in their operations. PR sections have largely been under-resourced in terms of staff and logistics to enable them perform effectively contributing to limiting their roles as conduits for carriage of information.

Some participants expressed optimism in relation to management's effort at addressing their plights or concerns in the nearest future so as to ensure that the PR section or unit is firmly equipped with the needed resources, personnel, autonomy and adequate representation in the decision-making process.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by stakeholders, policy makers and civil society groups in consolidating the gains made within the field of PR practice. Based on

the findings, it is suggested that PR sections or units should be adequately resourced with the right tools and approaches to deliver on their mandate or core responsibilities. Public relations therefore require resources to function as an important brand building tool (Kotler et al, 2005). PR sections should also be provided with a high calibre of personnel who are abreast with current trends in skill and knowledge required for the growing field of PR. This has become very essential since the provision of these resources and personnel would be pivotal towards delivering on its core duties.

The study also recommends the creation of a common platform of sharing information and coordination among the various units of the institutions so as to keep each department, faculties or colleges informed of management decisions. This enables smooth circulation of information enabling the PR unit to effectively deliver on its mandate via inputs from other units that could be harnessed into effective management of the various universities.

Also, the study recommends that the various PR sections or units should be given adequate autonomy and independence in the discharge of their core mandate whilst ensuring that these units or sections become a core part of strategic management of the various universities with regard to strategic decisions at the higher level and policy direction. This would pave way for effective management of the various institutions by way of a broader management inputs that takes into cognizance the crucial role of PR in elevating the status of the universities. This would go a long way to maximize the potential of PR practitioners further consolidating the gains made by the various universities with regards global brand and image development. Findings in this study, provides policy makers and major stakeholders within the PR field of practice, some guidelines in harnessing the potential of PR practitioners. In addition, future research should be undertaken in this area to specifically look at how PR practice contributes to strategic management of public tertiary institutions.

5.3 Conclusions

The field of PR practice continues to evolve with several approaches and tools that are tailored towards institutional dynamics, structures and management processes. PR practice therefore is an intrinsic part of every organization and without its contribution to effectively managing an institution, the institution is bound to fail in its brand image, goals and long-term vision. The key to the success of every institution lies in resourcing its PR sections or unit to ensure optimum performance in relation to the discharge of its roles and responsibilities.

Public relations practitioners within an institution have many tools that they employ in their day-to-day activities. The tools include various activities such as, speeches, sponsorships, events, corporate advertising, and in-house publications, visual presentations that create company publicity, press releases, press conferences, seminars, media tours, corporate websites, internal publications and notice boards within the universities. These are channels used to deliver public relations messages to both internal and external publics of the universities and in line with the views of (Belch and Belch, 2001; Lancaster, 2005; Moore and Kalupa, 2007; Palmer, 2000; Well et al, 2005).

The impact may take the form ranging from corporate image building, positioning or repositioning of the university, changing stakeholder's attitudes, opinions or behaviors, building trust as well as managing misconception about university's programs. This view is supported by (Clow and Baack, 2007; Jobber, 2001; Wells et al, 2005). This places universities in the eyes of both internal and external publics as an avenue for academic and social development (Kotler and Mindak, 2000). Kotler et al (2005) and Lancaster and Jobber (2006) in their views sees budget and personnel as paramount in public relations activities. It is therefore vital that PR sections or units are part of the

strategic management of the various universities so as to harness the potential of its practitioners who poses a wealth knowledge and skills to contribute towards the effective management of the various institutions.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSAR)

My Name is SMITH ALEXANDER KELVIN, an MA student at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. As part of the requirements for the award of the MA Degree, I am conducting a study titled **“THE ROLE OF PR PRACTICE IN PROMOTING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT: A CASE OF SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA”**.

The aim of the study is to ascertain the role of PR practice in promoting effective management across the various public tertiary institutions. It seeks to ascertain how PR practices have been incorporate within management set-up and how their roles are designed to ensure that management’s goals are met.

1.0 Incorporating of PR into the management of the University

- How are PR practitioners involved in the day-to-day management of the University?
- How are PR practices undertaken in your institution?
- What are some of the ways PR practitioners are engaged on management's decision-making processes?
- What has been the level of involvement of PR practitioners in management policy direction?
- What are some of the strategies adopted to ensure that PR practitioners are effectively represented on management boards of your institution?
- How are PR practitioners incorporated in policy design, development, delivery, and advocacy?
- How are the PR roles designed by your institution when it comes to delegation of specific roles and responsibilities?

2.0 Mediums that management uses to engage with the PR section in relation to decision making

- What are some of mediums (eg. emails, notices, memo's, social media platforms etc). executive meetings, board room meetings, council meetings etc) used to engage PR practitioners in your institutions?
- What are some of the management meetings or board meetings or council meetings held or carried out by your institution?
- What are some of the timelines management meets with your PR sections? (Quarterly, Yearly etc).

- How effective are these mediums to ensuring effective participation by the PR section of your institution?
- How are the existing structures and spaces promoting effective management of your institution?

3.0 Challenges PR practitioners face in the conduct of their official duties?

- Please can you outline some challenges faced by the PR practitioner or department?
- How have these challenges affected the nature of your work output?
- What has the institution done to overcome some of these challenges inhibiting PR practitioners from discharging their roles?
- Do you have anything else to say?

Thank you for your views and your time.