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**THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE DISCHARGE OF THE
MANDATE OF THE GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS (GNAT).**

BY

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**A LONG ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN
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CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my original work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person, nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text. All sources of borrowed materials have been duly acknowledged.

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Date

SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents Reverend Samuel Agyei-Obessey and Mrs. Luxora Agyei-Obessey whose encouragement and support enabled me to pursue this course.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved siblings, Fred, Freda and Theodore Agyei-Obessey for all their love and care. May the God of all flesh richly bless and promote them in all their endeavors.

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ABSTRACT

Public Relations is a growing profession in many countries across the world. Since it is a growing industry, not all organizations in Ghana practise this profession. Some private and public sector organizations practise this profession to promote their objectives. This study provided a conceptual framework for the importance of public relations practice in the discharge of the mandate of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). The research examined the objectives of GNAT and the structure put in place to meet such objectives. To verify how Public Relations strategies were employed, issues that GNAT was faced with which had the potential to dent the image of the Union were examined. It was the conclusion of the research that Public Relations strategies adopted by GNAT were able to redeem its image and also helped to put GNAT on good standing with the public.

ABBREVIATIONS

GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreements
ILO	The International Labour Organization
CPP	Convention Peoples Party
NTC	The National Tripartite Council
NRC	The National Redemption Council
TUC	Ghana Trade Union Congress
GRNA	The Ghana Registered Nurses Association
CSA	Civil Servants Association
NDC	National Delegates Conference
NC	National Council
CCTA	The Consultative Council of Teachers Association
CHASS	Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary School
PRINCOF	Principals of Colleges Education
APTI	Association of Principals of Technical Institutes
CODDE	Conference of District Directors of Education
COMEU	Conference of Managers in Education Unit

COHESS	Conference of Heads of Special Schools
COHBS	Conference of Heads of Basic Schools
ECE	Early Childhood Education
PNO	Principal National Office
WAEC	West African Examination Council
NTTC	The National Teachers Training Council
GCE	General Certificate of Education
UEW	University Of Education, Winneba
UCC	University of Cape Coast
ICDE	Institute of Continuing and Distance Education
MoE	Ministry Of Education
TF	Teachers Fund
WTD	World Teachers Day
NAGRAT	The National Association of Graduate Teachers
CCT	Coalition of Concerned Teachers
GRA	Ghana Revenue Authority
GNA	Ghana News Agency

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Studies

The 1992 constitution of Ghana in chapter 5 covers “Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms” which states that, “Every person in Ghana, whatever their race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual and guarantees the right to form or join a trade union”.

Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) is a trade union organization of teachers in the pre-tertiary educational institutions in Ghana. The mission of the Ghana National Association of Teachers is to unify all teachers in pre-tertiary educational institutions and strive for better conditions of service and job security as well as to enhance their professional status.

The issue of how the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) pays attention to the grievances of teachers and methods to seek redress and anticipated results through engagement in round table discussions towards an amicable solution has been spear headed by the public relations department.

This research is set out to assess the potency and the strategy of public relations in the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) to address such issues.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers’ role in transmitting societies, values and norms, put them in a position of considerable influence if they choose to act as agents of social change. (Cook 1995; Torres et al 2000).

To this end, teachers, it may be argued, may be in a position to influence not only educational but also political developments while at the same time pushing upward mobility in the society (Woods 1996).

In the light of the above, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), which sees to the welfare of teachers, plays a very important role to assist the teachers who should belong to that organization, overcome impediments that stand in the way of achieving their objective of joining the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

For the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) as a teachers' union to function effectively in the face of government policies towards the demands and welfare of teachers, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) should be able to present themselves adequately to fight for the rights of their members.

In order to achieve this aim, an effective medium of communication should be advanced to assist in addressing all issues and bottlenecks.

In this vein, the researcher will like to address the role of public relations in assisting the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) to realize its core mandate.

Significance of the Study

Even though some research work has been done on the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), it has come to the observation of its researchers that such studies were on other aspects such as the history, operation and implementation of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) plans.

The important role of public relations in addressing such issues has not been highlighted.

The study will explore the employment of public relations in handling disputes and other issues that pertain to the objectives of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study is to inform members, other unions and the general public about the important role of public relations in organizations and how the role of public relations will promote such organizations to achieve their aims and objectives.

In addition, it will also serve as an encouragement and a guide to students of public relations in their quest to be educated in that discipline.

Scope of Study

This research will leave out the historical antecedence of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and concentrate on its formation in 1962.

It will cover the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) aims and objectives over its three related areas of trade union, professionalism and welfare.

In addition, its two main structures of political and administrative operations will be discussed to reveal a clearer picture of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)'s operations.

Research Questions

The research will be based on the following questions.

- ❖ What has been some external issues which have confronted the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)?

- ❖ How did the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) employ the expertise of public relations to address such issues?
- ❖ What were the outcome of such issues?

Definition of Terms

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT): The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) was established in 1962 as a recognized association of teachers in pre-tertiary schools and institutions in Ghana. The association was established to unite members and present a unified front to advise government in education policy formation and implementation. It also acts as the ‘spokesperson’ to discuss and influence government in the formation and the implementation of better conditions of service of teachers.

Public Relations: The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines public relations as, “A strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics”.

Mandate: The Cambridge English Dictionary defines mandate as the authority given to an elected group of people, such as a government, to perform an action or govern country. In this context core mandate of Ghana National Association of GNAT are:

- ❖ To arouse and increase public interest in educational affairs.
- ❖ To participate in public affairs.
- ❖ To place the services of the association at the disposal of public bodies and other organizations in pursuit of education.

Organization of the Study

This study will be conducted and presented in four broad chapters. Chapter One starts with the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, scope of the study, research questions and definition of terms. Chapter Two will be the literature review. It will discuss the relationship between other studies that are closely related to the one to be undertaken. Chapter Three will present results of the research. The last chapter will provide a Conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section will set out to review literature that is relevant to the topic of the importance of public relations in the discharge of the mandate of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). Since the latter, is an organized union, the research will briefly explore few issues about the start of trade unionism globally and trace their impact in the formation of unions in Ghana of which the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) is included. In this regard, the reader will be abreast with the trend globally and its culmination on the national scene, and how the organized union concept has benefited the working force of the Ghanaian working market.

This section will continue to examine further the outworking of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) which is the subject of this research and how public relations practices have helped to enhance its mandate towards the welfare of its membership on the Ghanaian front.

Beginning of Organized Labour

A labour union or trade union is an organized group of workers who unite to make decisions about conditions affecting their work. Labour unions strive to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to the union. For instance, the number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions in the USA stood at 14.6 million in 2019 (Economic News Release, 2020)

No matter what work you do, there's a union that represents your work, including: teachers, miners, firefighters, farm workers, bakers, engineers, pilots, public employees, doctors, nurses,

plumbers and bus drivers . Higher pay, better benefits, and a voice on the job. These are the main reasons to join a union (Economic News Release, 2020).

The origin of labour unions dates back in the eighteenth century and the industrial revolution in Europe. During this time there was a huge surge of new workers into the workplace that needed representation.

Union membership and power peaked around 1970. At that time, private sector union membership began a steady decline that continues today. However, membership in the public sector unions continues to grow consistently (Economic News Release, 2020).

All workers benefit from unions which set pay standards and workplace protections. Union members benefit most from the union's collective bargaining power to negotiate with employers on their behalf. This basic right gives the union member more power than if he or she tried to negotiate as an individual.

Unions help protect employees from unjust dismissal through Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA). Because of this, most union employees cannot be fired without "just cause". This is unlike many nonunion workers who are considered "at will" employees and can be fired at any time for almost any reason.

Union members also benefit from having the collective power to go on strike. The latter is when a group of workers stop working either in protest of labour conditions or as a bargaining tool during labour or management negotiations.

Today, unions continue to serve the same purpose for which they were originally founded. In the future, labour unions will continue to play an important role in every country's workforce and for the quality of life for working families.

“It’s never easy to be out of work when you have a family to support but I’m glad that I’ve always had solid job security. For 25 years, the union has provided me with a good job, with good benefits.” Kurt Stewartusw, local 286.

PR Strategies in Managing Crisis.

Most businesses will face a public relations crisis at one time or another. From a string of bad reviews to a serious executive scandal, a negative incident can have a powerful impact on a company’s reputation.

Public Relation’s strategies are mainly designed to manage crisis that are likely to cause significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly. Crisis management is not just one thing. It is a process that can be divided into pre – crisis, crisis response and post crisis. The pre- crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparation. The crisis response is when management must actually respond to a crisis. The post – crisis phase looks for ways to better prepare for the next crisis and fulfils commitments made during the crises phase including follow-up information. (Argenti, 2002)

For a successful public relations campaign the following key tools may be employed as found relevant to handle crisis that the institution is likely to face.

- ❖ Press release: a clear one page press release that captures newsworthy information about the firm that can persuade key media contacts to unite a story and mention the business favorably.

- ❖ Media kits: These can include press release, background information and business card parked into attractive folder which may include questions prepared to be answered on radio or television.
- ❖ Tip sheets and newsletters: This advice information is meant for the customers, prospects, vendors, investors and journalist which provide useful facts or interesting trend research.
- ❖ Awards: Many trade journals, government agencies and professional associations sponsor annual “best of” entrepreneur awards.
- ❖ Special Features: Creates a publicity niche around an upcoming event like seminars, conventions and other events that expose the institution to media types, potential customers and others are targeted to be reached.
- ❖ Online outreach: Websites, and other internet – basic tools to launch public relations campaigns.
- ❖ Give scoops: As one gets to know certain journalists, one may know what kind of stories they covet. Such a knowledge will facilitate dissemination of information which a particular reporter is interested in to assist the public relations officer to address some pertinent crisis issues.(Conroy Kathleen and Stans Kimberley)

International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission and social justice toward universal and lasting peace.

The constitution of Ghana, 1992, came into force on the 7th January 1993 and was amended on 16th December 1996. Chapter 5 covers “Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms”.

Section 12 (2) states that “Every person in Ghana, whatever their race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual.

Section 24 subsection (3) states, among other things that: “Every worker has the right to form or join a trade union of his choice for the promotion and protection of his economic rights and social interests”.

Further, section 40 on international relations states: “In its dealings with other nations, Government shall... (d) adhere to the principles of ... (v) any other international organization of which Ghana is a member”. Ghana joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1957 and immediately the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) government ratified many of the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions including the ‘core’ conventions that guarantee workers the right and freedom to form or join unions (convention No.87) the right to collective bargaining (convention No.98), abolition of forced labour among others.

Many other International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions that sought to promote industrial harmony and welfare of workers were also ratified. But in 1972, a tripartite committee, the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) was established by the National Redemption Council (NRC) which was charged with the responsibility of fixing the national minimum wage among others. Subsequent governments’ efforts, in collaboration with Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) and other unionized organizations like the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), contributed to the coming into force of labour act 2003 (5.112), which gave the National Tripartite

Committee (NTC) statutory backing and broadened its scope to re- introduce some of the principles which were expunged from the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention by the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) government in 1957.

The main function of the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) among others, was to facilitate the settlement of disputes, investigate unfair labour practices, prevent labour disputes and promote cooperation between workers and management.

The work of the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) has come to consolidate trade unionism in Ghana. The Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) and its affiliated national unions and other workers organizations have evolved into strong organizations. These include the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the Ghana Registered Nurses Association (GRNA), and Civil Servants Association (CSA) (Hodges and Baah, 2006).

Structure of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), a unionize teacher organization, has two structures it operates with. The structures are the political hierarchy and the administrative set-up. The National Delegate Conference (NDC) is “the highest decision – making body of the association”. In other words, it is the supreme authority in the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). It is composed of:

- ❖ Members of the National Council.

- ❖ Special regional representation of two (2) female delegates for each region elected by a regional conference.

- ❖ District branch representation on the basis of one delegate for every 500 members or part thereof if in excess of 250, elected by a district conference (Darkwah, 2014, 19).

The functions of the National Delegate Conference (NDC) are clearly set out in the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) constitution and succinctly summarized in Osae (1981). In sum, the National Delegate Conference (NDC) reviews the past deals with the resolutions and motions before it. It examines the finances of the association and elects the National Officers of the association. These National Officers are the President, Vice President, Treasurer and two Trustees (Darkwah 2014, 19).

Another important function of the National Delegate Conference (NDC) is to amend or alter any article of the constitution through stipulated and well defined procedures. A National Delegates Conference (NDC) is held once in four years, but provision is made for emergency meetings. It must be pointed out that as part of the general political structure and since Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) operates at different levels, there are delegates' conferences at each of the lower levels. In other words, there is a Regional Delegate's Conference, District Delegates Conference and the Local Delegates Conference. The composition and functions of the lower delegates' conferences are limited to their particular levels. (Darkwah 2014, 21)

The next level or second highest body in the hierarchy of the political structure is the National Council (NC). The National Council (NC) is the governing body of the association. It manages the affairs of the association and takes major decisions between two National Delegates Conference (NDC). Membership of the National Council (NC) consist of the five principal National Officers of the association, namely, the National President, National Vice President, National Treasurer and the two Trustees. Also included are the Regional Chairmen, and one other representative from each of the administrative regions in Ghana. (Darkwah 2014, 22)

Others include the District Chairman of each district branch of the association , one representative each from the following recognized constituent bodies : the Consultative Council of Teachers Association (CCTA), Conference of Head of Assisted Secondary School (CHASS), Principals of Colleges Education (PRINCOF), Association of Principals of Technical Institutes (APTI), Conference of District Directors of Education (CODDE), Conference of Managers in Education Units (COMEU) , Conference of Head of Special Schools (COHESS), Conference of Heads of Basic Schools (COHBS), Early Childhood Educators (ECE), and from private institutions and educational administrators (Darkwah 2014, 22).

Duties of GNAT

The duties of the National Council (NC) as spelt out by the constitution of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) include:

- ❖ To interpret the constitution and settle disputes arising from it, and any matter on which the constitution is silent.
- ❖ To receive, collate and present resolutions to the National Delegates Conference (NDC).
- ❖ To approve the annual budget of the association and oversee the proper administration of the association's funds.
- ❖ To create new districts and periodically adjust boundaries of districts on the recommendation of the regional delegates conference.

The next political organ of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) is the National Executive. This body is responsible to the National Council and gives direction to the day- to –

day administration of the association. In other words, it is the political body that directs and controls the day- to- day work of the full – time administrative set-up. Membership of the National Executive includes the five Principal National Officers (PNO), Regional Chairmen and one other person elected at the various Delegates Conferences and representatives of the recognized constituent bodies on the National Council.

The National Executive meets once in three months. As in the case of other national bodies, there is provision for emergency meetings. Again, like other superior organs in the political hierarchy, an executive council exists at regional, district and local levels. It needs to be pointed out that representation on the various hierarchal bodies of the political structure is elective – this is the one major difference between the political structure and the administrative structure. (Darkwah, 23)

The administrative set-up is headed by the General Secretary who is assisted by three Deputy General Secretaries. Each Deputy General Secretary is in charge of the specified schedule. For their roles, one Deputy General Secretary is responsible for administration and Labour Relations; another is in charge of education, training and professional development; and the third deals with finance and related investment and development programmes of the association. Under each Deputy General Secretary are the various schedule officers within his or her division. Directly under the General Secretary are the officers who deal with public relations, research, gender development, and (the latest addition 2011/2012), youth development. It is the administrative set-up that deals with the day- to day chores of the whole organization and translates into practice or realization of the decisions of the various organs of the political set – up at the national, regional, district and local levels. (Darkwah 2014, 24)

The political, and the administrative set- ups are the structures put in place by the association to implement its aims and objectives. It must be emphasized that, like the aims and objectives

themselves, the structures have been reviewed periodically and improved upon over the years to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances. The National President is the head of the whole association. He or she presides over major meetings and conferences of the association as well as superintends the general administration of all the officers of the association. He or she is the chief spokesperson for the association. Political and all major policy statements are made by the National President or his or her accredited representatives. It is perhaps needless to add that regional, district and local chairmen exercise corresponding functions at their level (Darkwah 2014, 24)

Kofi Darkwah in the history book of GNAT outlined the aims of the organization as follows:

- ❖ To promote the interests of teachers and secure for them attractive conditions of service that will retain them in the profession.
- ❖ To co-operate with the government of Ghana in the pursuit of educational advancement.
- ❖ To arouse and increase public interest in educational affairs, and to participate in public affairs. (Darkwah 2014, 42)

Attaining the aims of GNAT since its inception in 1962 has not been easy. Infringement upon the legitimate human and labour rights and threat to job security of teachers by the government of Ghana were not the only issues GNAT took up.

It has also persistently and consistently made representations and protests to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and other relevant government bodies on matters dealing with educational policies and teachers' condition of service. (Darkwah 2014, 42)

GNAT had representation on the committee on review of education reforms in Ghana which raised issues concerning early childhood education, and also proposals for preconditions for the successful implementation of the new education reforms on GES, the management of basic education institutions, of second cycle education institutions, inspection and supervision, teacher education, technical, vocational and agricultural education. (Darkwah 2014, 43).

In January 2010 during GNAT's 50th National Delegates Conference, the latter called on the government of Ghana in a resolution, among others to adequately support the training and retraining of teachers by paying full cost of tuition for teachers undertaking distance education programmes.

These examples clearly show that on matters of education, GNAT, as a professional teacher's association, did not fail to make its views known to GES, MoE and Government. (Darkwah 2014, 44)

Another avenue opened to GNAT was policies involving governance, politics and the economy of Ghana. GNAT has, over the years had representation on a number of national boards, committees, commissions and institutions which have an education – related mandate. Among which are Ghana National Commission on UNESCO, the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the National Teachers Training Council (NTTC), the Center of Continuing Education of UCC, the Advisory Board of the Institute of Educational Development and Extension (IEDE) at the University of Education, Winneba etc. (Darkwah 2014, 44)

Other areas and opportunities available to GNAT was its participation and contribution to public affairs. One such area is the public sector pay and pension administration.

Over the years, commissions and committees have been set to reform public service salaries and to manage the disparities and inequalities in the administration of the system. (Darkwah, 45).

To each of these committees or commissions, GNAT presented memorandum to express its views as to what is thought would be a fair deal for teachers. (Darkwah 2014, 45)

Besides the search for equitable pay policy, there was also a search for an equally fair pension scheme. GNAT, since 1988 had expressed discontent with the disparities in pension administration between government pension (cap 30) and SSNIT pension.

When GNAT took a collective decisive action through a mammoth demonstration in Kumasi, a pension reform commission was established out of which came – the introduction of single spine pay policy and the new three – tier government pension scheme. This success was in pursuit of GNAT's objectives in participation in public affairs. (Darkwah 2014, 49)

Education and Professional Development

GNAT has developed over the years, programmes and activities to help its members to acquire mastery over the subjects they teach, promote high academic standards, professional competence and exemplary conduct.

Among the programmes were the GNAT promotion classes. When non- graduates in the public service were supposed to write and pass promotion examinations before they were promoted, a difficult task for many teachers, GNAT intervened by organizing promotional classes for the teachers. The programme took place during the school holidays, thus assisting the teachers who attended to pass their promotional examinations. (Darkwah 2014, 50)

GNAT fashioned appropriate syllabuses to enable about 4000 certificate “B” teachers to be upgraded to certificate ‘A’ (post’ B’) status from the 1960’s to date. (Darkwah 2014, 50)

Another popular upgrading course instituted by GNAT, working together with the teacher education division of Ghana education service, is the remedial programme for failed / referred teachers. Those who were unable to avail themselves of the opportunity were enrolled into a six-week remedial programme jointly organized by GES and GNAT after which they were examined. Those who passed the examination were awarded teacher certificate ‘A’ by the GES and accorded that status. (Darkwah 2014, 50)

Besides the promotion and upgrading programmes, GNAT also initiated General Certificate of Education (GCE) classes for teachers, to encourage and help teachers to improve upon their academic and professional qualifications. (Darkwah 2014, 51)

As part of the academic and the professional improvement for teachers, GNAT encouraged and supported the setting up of distance education programmes at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and University of Cape Coast (UCC). For teachers, it enabled them while working in the classroom to, at the same time, undertake courses at the university to improve their academic and professional competence. (Darkwah 2014, 51)

Apart from all these education and training programmes, GNAT has over the years, encouraged and sponsored the participation of some members in the annual New Year and Easter schools organized by the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education (ICDE).

- ❖ The New Year and Easter schools are held to discuss selected themes or topics of relevance to national development.

Another important membership mobilization and professional development project initiated by GNAT is collaboration with a cooperating partner in the early youth and childhood development project. (Darkwah 2014, 59)

When the Ministry of Education (MoE) initiated its book for basic schools project, GNAT was able to inject a large number of titles into the educational system, especially books in local languages that were scarce at the time. This was possible because of the experience gained from the GNAT / CTF Book Development Project. (Darkwah 2014, 59)

The GNAT / CTF book development project code named NKABOM project sought to achieve the following:

- ❖ Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood education and care.
- ❖ Ensuring that by 2015, all children, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- ❖ Ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- ❖ Achieving fifty percent improvement in levels of adult literacy, especially for women;
- ❖ Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015;
- ❖ Improving all aspects of quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in numeracy, literacy and essential life skills are achieved by all.

Physical and Infrastructural Development

GNAT, like any serious business enterprise, has registered offices from where its operations are carried out. The association has acquired the land on which the headquarters' building now stand.

By the end of 1994, the first phase of GNAT regional offices and hotels had been built in all the regional capitals to provide services to members in various ways; for example, they provide affordable and readily available accommodation for members visiting the regional centres; they also serve as centres to facilitate Distance Education Programmes in the regions; they serve as convenient places for making WAEC scripts and also as places for organizing regional functions, among others. (Darkwah 2014, 75)

GNAT as an association has taken steps to provide houses for its members, not only as official residences for employees at the headquarters and in the regions, but also as personal houses for teachers in the classroom , who form the bulk of the association's membership (Darkwah 2014, 78)

In 1968, GNAT began to promote self- help schemes in the teacher's credit unions among its members in the districts. This project was not sustained until 1992 when the national delegates conference of the year finally agreed to set up such a scheme with the objectives of:

- ❖ Providing loans to purchase or build houses.
- ❖ Provide loans to meet urgent financial needs.
- ❖ Provide consumer credit facilities (Darkwah 2014 , 81)

In 1998, a scheme called the Teachers Fund (TF) was set up and through its several subsidiary investment outlets, for example TF hotels Ltd, at Legon a complex of some 1000 rooms has been

built on the University of Ghana campus to help ease student accommodation problems. (Darkwah 2014, 84)

In 1998, GNAT contributed to the National Heart Foundation in recognition of the good work done in coronary health of Ghanaians and other patients from all over West Africa. (Darkwah 2014, 87)

The association has cultivated the habit of reaching out to needy pupils, schools and communities in some deprived areas of Ghana. In October 2010 during the World Teachers Day (WTD) celebration in the Eastern Region, fifty (50) needy pupils from Fantekwa District were presented with school bags containing school uniforms, canvas shoes, textbooks and stationeries. (Darkwah 2014, 87)

In the face of all the successes chalked by GNAT, the association was confronted with a big challenge in the 1970's when there was massive migration of teachers, especially graduate teachers. These graduate teachers were dissatisfied with GNAT and began to criticize their association and eventually formed a second teachers union, the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) (Darkwah 2014, 105)

In spite of the breakaway of some teachers to form NAGRAT, GNAT as a teacher union, lies in the size and the wide national geographical spread of its membership. Of the estimated 260,000 teachers in first and second cycle schools in Ghana as at 1992, an estimated 163,800 were members of GNAT. This numerical strength provides the association with the capacity to generate revenue internally through the check – off system of dues payment. (Darkwah 2014, 125)

Having catalogued some achievements of GNAT in the association's bid to live up to its aims and objectives of promoting the welfare of its members, the next chapter will examine instances where

the role of public relations in that set up plays and how public relations strategies were employed in the association's quest to achieve its mandate.

Methodology of the Research

The research work is a library research, where the materials are made up of books, journals and speeches of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)'s officials, in addressing issues that the union has gone through which needed the assistance of public relations.

The result of such library research will show how public relations was used to address the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)'s issues.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Introduction

This chapter will examine the role public relations played in that set up and how public relations strategies were employed in the association's quest to achieve its mandate. One of the very challenging issues which GNAT has found was the breakaway of some of its members to form a competing association called the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT).

NAGRAT'S Issue

GNAT had to employ rigorous public relations strategies through the print and electronic media to address the impasse, which eventually led to the separation. But GNAT was able to redeem its image which NAGRAT sought to impugn. The account was narrated by the current head of Public Relations of GNAT, Mr. Peter Korda at the head office in Accra on Tuesday 1st of September, 2020.

According to him, GNAT was the only teacher union in the country. It got to a time when some members decided to branch off to form another teacher union called NAGRAT. They broke off with the idea of getting graduate teachers in the association to their fold. It did not work as they wanted because they put the name graduate teachers to create the impression that those who belonged to that association were all graduate teachers. If one belonged to another association they were not graduate teachers. That did not work. A lot of GNAT members had their master's degree. They were not doing anything different so why did people leave this association to theirs? Their number was a few as compared to GNAT's.

The Coalition of Concerned Teachers of Ghana

The time of cessation of some members to form the Coalition of Concerned Teachers of Ghana (CCT) had arrived. These members came together apparently to break away from GNAT. When the agitations started these allegations were levelled against GNAT;

- ❖ Management of GNAT was misappropriating funds.
- ❖ They received fat envelopes when they attended functions with government officials and that was the reason why in their view they were not fighting for teachers as they ought to. People thought that was the situation on the ground since it looked real.
- ❖ When teacher's dues were deducted they put them in sacks at the headquarters and the money distributed among GNAT administration.

GNAT was not able to fight for the cause of teachers because it was old. They needed youthful ones to steer the affairs of teachers. The coalition used both the print and electronic media to put forth their allegations. GNAT also had to respond through Newspapers, radio stations and Ghana web to correct the false news that was coming from their opponent as follows:

- ❖ When dues were deducted in a particular month the association received theirs the following month. Moneys were not paid direct to GNAT workers but through the Standard Chartered account at High Street the following month. GNAT explained to the whole world that there is a constitution that guided in the disbursement of money to the association. Every four (4) years they go in for the National Delegates Conference where five (5) national officers are elected. At that forum, laws were made to govern that decision. It was the highest decision body. The teacher delegates do not vote but delegate people to

represent them. Every four (4) years, the constitution is amended and indicate clearly how to disburse funds.

In constitution 28 article 36 of GNAT, the administration of funds is as follows.

- ❖ The national council of the association shall be responsible to the conference for the proper administration and use of all funds of the association.
- ❖ All monies received shall be paid promptly to the association's bank account.
- ❖ The following shall be signatories to the bank association. The General Secretary, The National Treasurer and one member by the National Council.
- ❖ The signatures of any two of the three signatories shall be valid of withdrawal.
- ❖ All operators of the account shall be residents of the region where the headquarters is situated.
- ❖ The national council shall cause the account of the association to be audited annually.
- ❖ The finance and administration subcommittee shall be responsible for ensuring the implementation of audit report recommendations by management.
- ❖ The national council shall submit statements of audited accounts of the association to the national delegates' conference.
- ❖ The account of the association shall include the accounts of the regional, district and local branches of the association.
- ❖ The national council shall appoint auditors of the association and report it to the conference.

- ❖ Examiners of the account shall be appointed by the national executive to audit the account of the regional branches.
- ❖ Examiners of account shall be appointed by the regional executive to audit the account of the district branches.
- ❖ The district executive shall appoint examiners of the account to audit the accounts of a local branch in a district.
- ❖ All elective executives of the association may be paid allowances at the local, district and national to be determined by the national council subject to the national delegates conference.
- ❖ The national council may suspend or withdraw an allowance through elected executives on a stated course. These makes sure that monies are not misappropriated.

GNAT made sure that all evidence had to refute the allegations of NAGRAT was factual.

The PR wrote a lengthy article under a pen name to refute those allegations. GNAT later observed that it was not in the interest that NAGRAT was formed but that they wanted to be leaders. It was said that some of their leaders used their money to put up a story building and to do courses at GIMPA for which those leaders after being prosecuted were sacked.

Professor Adei's Issue on Slashing Teachers' Salaries to Half.

The second challenge was when Professor Adei called for 50% drop in the salary of teachers who wanted to remain at home because schools had been shut down. The ministry's deputy Public Relations Officer, Kwasi Obeng- Fosu, noted that the teachers could not suffer a salary cut because

they did not call for the closure of schools. Professor Adei made this comment in reactions to concerns by some teachers and education stakeholders about ongoing plans to reopen schools.

The National Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, for instance, called on government to postpone the reopening of schools. Prof Adei said if teachers were unwilling to return to classrooms, then they must be willing to accept only half their salaries because public workers are not entitled to their salaries when they are not working. But when Ghana Web reached out to the Education Ministry for a reaction to Prof Adei's comment, Kwasi Obeng-Fosu, said teachers had only expressed concern about preparations that preceded the re-opening of schools.

According to him, the teachers had not said they were unwilling to return to the classrooms to teach. "What the Prof said, he has a point. But to say the teachers were doing nothing while at home was misplaced. The teachers are willing and ready to work. We have a pandemic on our hands, and they have stated their points. We [government] called them for their input and we have gotten their input," he said in defense of the concerns raised by the teachers.

He added: "We are not in normal times...teachers are home doing all manner of things. Teachers are helping with online learning, they are sending questions...some have created WhatsApp platforms to monitor students and send feedback to parents."

He added that some teachers were also working on content for the government's online learning platforms, for instance, the Ghana Learning TV.

"The same teachers that some were claiming were not doing anything, they are the same teachers working in groups, creating content for our online platforms," Kwasi Obeng-Fosu said.

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) has described as offensive, constant attacks on teachers in the country by Professor Stephen Adei.

A statement signed by the Association's General Secretary Thomas T. Musah said "We wish to stress that this is not the first time Professor Adei has turned his radar on our teachers. Knowing Professor Adei for who he is, we deem his call for the 50 per cent reduction of salaries of teachers as an attempt to instigate the greater society against teachers and cause disaffection for them.

Teachers are not the cause of the Corona virus and all the challenges it has brought in its trail; like all other segments of society, teachers are victims of circumstances, and must not be punished by a phenomenon they did not originate, as the garrulous Professor seeks to do".

Professor Stephen Adei is reported to have proposed that teachers must be ready to forgo 50% of their salaries if they want to continue staying at home due to the closure of schools as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19.

According to him, aside from the teachers writing a letter to protest the reopening of schools in the next few days, they should have offered to let go half of their salaries for some months as their contributions to the efforts at containing the virus.

The position of the retired educationist has however provoked teachers who say the comments of the learned professor is just one of his many disparaging and unacceptable attacks on teachers in the country.

"We hereby reiterate, that as professionals, teachers are not above criticism. However, when someone consistently subjects teachers to insults and ridicule, berate and set us up for attacks and create disaffection for us, as does Professor Adei, constantly on the electronic and social media platforms, then we have no option than to defend ourselves and safeguard our reputation.

We wish to state that we won't accept any repugnant and offensive expressions on our persons or families" the statement said.

They added that “We shall continue to accept constructive, and morale-boosting criticisms and not reprehensible, offensive and degrading ones. Let all know that we take exception to verbal attacks, and any pronouncements or policies meant to denigrate our persons or the teaching profession.”

The Teacher Association further stated that they are ready to return to schools to teach if government puts in good measures that will offer sufficient protection to both students and teachers adding that, “We want to tell Professor Adei and all who think like him, that it isn’t teachers who called for the schools to shut, and can therefore not be made to suffer the 50 per cent drop in their salaries, the period the shut remains in place.

We are happy the Ministry of Education has told the Professor Emeritus of Ashesi University, Chairman of the NDPC, and Chief Executive of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), that teachers have not said they are unwilling to return to the classrooms to teach.”

In this instance, GNAT was employing public relations strategy through the media to counteract the wrong message from Professor Adei that teachers were not doing anything and should not be paid their full salaries during the COVID -19 era.

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT): Observation on Goings- In the Country.

Since GNAT is a teacher union which seeks the interest of teachers to ensure that teaching and learning go on in a peaceful atmosphere to ensure that human development from basic to apex does not suffer from instability in the country, they have found it prudent to add their voice to issues going on in the country.

The association has observed that during an election year, there is lack of forbearance, understanding, tolerance and willingness to march onto unity and smooth electionary process. People who lack such virtues will go all the way whether by fair or foul means to come to power or entrench themselves and stay in power.

It is in this vain that a group of educators and shapers of the minds and personalities of future generation of Ghanaians, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), is a critical stakeholder in the fortunes and continues cohesive existence of Ghana and therefore must be concerned and make its voice heard, when things are going steady in the country and also when things are not going the way they should.

The GNAT continued that an enabling environment in the country will give every child the opportunity for an education adapted to his/ her capacity, capability, interest and needs, and make adequate provision for the growth and development of his/her physical and mental health.

This, according to GNAT is the environment in which every Ghanaian has been raised and educated. The Ghanaian is thus seen as very decent, conscientious, refined and forward looking. These have been the hall marks, of the Ghanaian throughout the years.

But what GNAT has observed these days are that there is indiscipline all over the land, decorum is missing in our communication and discourse in the print, electronic and the traditional media (radio), intolerance and haughty language have taken over the airwaves, politicians are insulting and threatening mayhem, leadership of the country, chiefs and religious leaders have not been spared either.

Moral turpitude is the order of the day, and there seems to be no end in sight! Indeed the centre seems not to be holding, and the country and its citizens seem to be held hostage and in anarchy.

GNAT as a critical stakeholder in the fortunes of the country cannot stand unconcerned and watch these nefarious goings – on the country.

The association condemns these acts and developments in no uncertain terms, and urge a stop to them immediately, to put the nation back on the road to civility, discreet and temperate language and communication, respect for offices, positions, authorities and the elderly.

The speech delivered by the General Secretary of GNAT Mr. Thomas Musa went on to condemn the abuse of the president by some SHS final students, as well as their acts of vandalism , attacking invigilators with stones and other offensive weapons and attempting to engage in examination malpractices.

Going forward, GNAT reminded all about the 2020 general elections and cautioned that the citizenry, politicians, the political parties and persons and groups with sinister motives not to scuttle or thwart the process. This is the clarion call of GNAT to fellow Ghanaians. (Musah, 2020).

Prosecute Sex- For – Grades Teachers – GNAT to Government

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) has urged authorities to resort to prosecution as a measure in stopping the incessant harassment of female students in the country’s basic and secondary schools.

Such a measure, GNAT said will not only save the future of such girls but also help to resolve the lost glory of the profession as many Ghanaians are skeptical about the work of teachers especially those at the basic and secondary levels.

It has been noted that some female students in the Assin district in the Central Region accused their teachers of demanding sex from them in exchange for grades. The girls indicated that those who refused such advances from their teachers suffered humiliation and other forms of punishment in the hands of the said teachers.

The report mentioned that this practice was not limited to schools in Assin but that there are media reports to suggest that students from other parts of the country were facing similar harassment by their teachers.

The Central Regional Secretary of GNAT, Buadu Abedu William called on parents to stop settling such matters at home when they pop up. According to him, prosecution will cause recalcitrant teachers to desist from such acts as the future of such girls get jeopardized in the process with many being unable to complete their education as pregnancies set in.

He also urged government to fast track the licensing of teachers as the measure will help regulate the actions of teachers with licenses of the recalcitrant being revoked to serve as deterrent.

This is an avenue where GNAT uses public relations strategies in the print and electronic media to voice its concern on vital national issues that affect teaching and learning. (Culled from todaygh.com Prosecute sex- for –grades teachers – (Buadu Abedu 2018).

Retool Public School Teachers – GNAT

Secondi – Takoradi Metropolitan Secretary of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), Cosmos Ennu Kwaw, has said that the public sector education continues to be the best form of education not withstanding challenges they are confronted with.

He said retooling teachers of public schools with the requisite teaching and learning materials was fundamental to realizing the potential of the Ghanaian child, according to him, “Public Sector education is the best and gives more to students than private sector education.”

Mr. Kwaw mentioned further in an interview with Ghana News Agency (GNA) in Takoradi, Western Region that parents were more willing to provide for their children in private schools with regard to textbooks and other learning materials, a situation which was different in public school.

He lamented that when one went to a private school every student had a textbook bought by the parent but in public school a class of 50 may have only four textbooks for teaching and learning. ‘Why won’t they excel’, he observed. He, however, said GNAT was working at ending this problem in the public sector education through in-service training and retooling.

The metropolitan GNAT secretary said: “Teaching in freedom, empowering teachers” which was the theme for that year’s World Teacher Day celebration, brought a lot of reflection, particularly to the country’s basic education sector, and the need to retool teachers to give their best in building a strong human resource foundation for every Ghanaian child.

He said further, that it was time that politicians concentrated on strengthening the public sector education to enable it yield the needed results. He said the association was solidly behind its members and urged them to work within the confines of the law to enable them enjoy maximum protection from the association.

Once again, GNAT is observed to be addressing an issue of national concern and appeal to the government and all stakeholders to assist in addressing this public and private education disparity.

The medium used was an interview granted a reputable media organization in the country, the Ghana News Agency (GNA). (Ennu Kwaw 2017).

GNAT Calls for New CBA

Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) has called on government and all stakeholders in the education sector to ensure that a new Collective Bargain Agreement (CBA) is signed before the end of 2017.

According to the teacher union, it was incumbent on the government to reach an agreement so as to avert any future labour unrest.

Addressing a durbar of teachers, educational workers and some industry players at Ajumako in the Central Region to mark world teacher's day, chairman of Ajumako – Enyam – Essiam District branch of GNAT, Mr. Bright Abekah – Mensah, revealed that the teacher union “does not have a collective agreement with government. He explained that the collective agreement between them (GNAT) and government expired in December 31, 2012.”

According to him, another issue that has threatened the labour front was the delay in paying all salary arrears due some of their members. Even though the union has reached an agreement with the ministry of finance and other institutions to fast – track the validation of the documents of the teachers involved, the process had not begun.

The district director of Ghana Education Service of Ajumako- Enyam – Essiam, Mr. Philip Kwesi Incoom underscored the need to improve the living conditions of teachers and explained that teachers must have the freedom and peace of mind to deliver. That the GES will support teachers to give of their best. The teachers were however admonished to exhibit the highest standard ideals of the profession.

In this instance, GNAT is using diplomacy to address its financial labour issue to avert any future labour unrest. (Asare – Donkor, 2017).

GNAT Warns Against Partisan Politics on Teachers' Social Media Pages.

The Ghana National Association of Teachers GNAT will not be dissuaded from its objective by recalcitrant teachers who are part of the union. In this view, the association has come out to address an anomaly which was cited on social media pages emanating from some of its members.

The chairman of the Gomoa district of GNAT, Mr. Samuel Bonney, has ordered teachers, who use social media pages created for teachers, to discuss partisan politics, to stop or face the wrath of the executives.

According to him, such pages are usually created to discuss pertinent matters affecting the welfare of teachers and nothing else. Mr. Bonney gave the warning at the celebration of this year's world teacher's day of the Gomoa district branch of GNAT, where he praised teachers in Gomoa West, Central and East for their hard work, (Adogla-Bessa 2019).

GNAT Calls On Government to Make Retraining of Teachers a Priority

The Ghana National Association of Teacher (GNAT) wants the government to be more proactive in ensuring the continuous growth of teachers in the country for better and quality teaching and learning in schools. The call was made during the Continuous Professional Development Day, marked on October 30,2019, and spear headed by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to provide teachers with an avenue to upgrade themselves.

According to GES, the step was to improve the workforce of the educational system with the requisite knowledge and skills in the teaching profession.

The Head of the department for salaries, terms and conditions of service at GNAT, Kwamena Quarshie said it was the duty of the government to provide the necessary development training for teachers. He is quoted as saying that “As an employer of teachers, one of their cardinal duties is to train or retrain teachers. In this dispensation, if they have embarked on one –day to train teachers on what they can do or not so they can share ideas and bring everything into perspective to enable everyone to appreciate what they are supposed to do.”

He added that

“Every teacher must undertake some form of continuous professional development programme before they will be promoted. Training and retraining of teachers is the responsibility of the government.”

Here the researcher sees that GNAT is using this interview with Citi news to stress the need for government to rise up to its responsibility of ensuring that teachers are adequately trained to be professionally equipped for their work as competent teachers (Lartey, 2019).

Conduct Mass Testing in Schools with COVID-19 Cases – GNAT to Government

GNAT in its effort to see to the safety of its members has waded into discussion on issues of COVID-19 in schools and has reminded the government that the president promised that mass testing would be in order in the event of recorded cases in schools.

It is on record that Accra Girls SHS, Konogo Wesley SHS and Mfanstiman girls SHS were among schools with confirmed cases of COVID -19. According to Philippa Larsen, the GNAT president,

“We were informed that anytime there was the information of a confirmed case in a particular school, students and staff of the school would go through the testing”.

GNAT, along with other teacher unions and observers, had initially proposed mass testing before school resumed on June 22, 2020. But the government had consistently argued that mass testing was not feasible.

The government assured that each student, teaching and non-teaching staff would be provided with three pieces of reusable face masks. Eighteen thousand veronica buckets, 800,000 pieces of 200-milliliter sanitizers, 36,000 rolls of tissue paper, 36,000 gallons of liquid soap and 7,200 thermometer guns were supposed to be supplied to schools. The GNAT president acknowledged that schools were largely adhering to safety protocols (Adogla- Bessa, 2020).

Inability to Read at Grade Two is Disheartening – GNAT

Children’s inability to read basic words at grade two is disheartening, Mr. Palham Oyiye, the national coordinator, Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) has said.

This was disclosed at a virtual conference organized by the Ghana Publishers Association to celebrate the 2020, “World literacy Day”. He said some children were unable to read simple words like ‘the’ and ‘cat’.

The conference was on the theme: “Child literacy as foundation for future development: strategies in COVID -19 crisis and beyond.” He said a report by the World Bank Ghana Accountability for the learning outcomes project revealed that the early grade reading assessment did not change between 2013 and 2015.

He said the report indicate that only two percent of grade two or ‘primary 2’ pupils in Ghana were able to read at the appropriate grade level with 50 percent unable to recognize a simple word.

At the secondary level, Mr. Oyiye said learning outcomes were also low a only 33 percent of students passed the West African Senior School Certificate Examination for mathematics in 2017, while in 2016, only 23 percent of students qualified for entry into tertiary education.

He said that the ultimate goal of literacy was to build pupils comprehension, writing skills, and overall ability to communication, train them to keep current events, and be best social fit in building intra and inter relationships.

It was, therefore, important that teachers learnt how to teach children, provide them with the right learning experiences, and communicate with the right language when teaching.

He entreated teachers to search for resources from online platforms to teach their pupils and students and provide them with emotional support when engaging them on video sessions.

GNAT was using the forum to present facts primary and secondary levels and also to advice its teacher membership to get equipped to nip the challenge in the bug towards advancement in the educational system in the country. (Ampomah, 2020).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research examined the role public relations played in GNAT and how public relations strategies were employed in the association's desire to achieve its mandate.

In so doing, a few instances where GNAT faced challenges which confronted them that needed to be addressed to clear the air of anomalies, issues of misconduct, the need to set some records straight were alluded to.

Such instances included how the breakaway of the coalition of concerned teachers to form NAGRAT to paint GNAT black in the eyes of the public was debunked by GNAT through their Public Relations strategies in the mass media.

Another instance which came to the fore was that of Professor Adei's assertion that teachers during the COVID -19 pandemic were idle and should not be paid their full salaries. This assertion was refuted by GNAT through its public relations to inform the whole world that teachers were not lazy as was claimed by the renowned educationalist but that the exigencies of the times did not allow the teachers to teach PLOf the deadly and contagious nature of the pandemic.

GNAT's observations of some on goings in the country that put the country in a bad light due to negative behavioral tendencies of some Ghanaians have the tendency to influence the youth of the country. GNAT suggested a behavioral change from leadership and inculcation of disciple to ensure that livelihood prevailed in the country.

The tendency of sex for grades in schools where teachers took undue advantage of girls to abuse them sexually before passing them in exams was vehemently condemned by GNAT. The latter suggested that culpable teachers were to be prosecuted to serve as deterrent to other offenders.

GNAT also brought to the notice of the public through its public relations strategies that the public schools should be retooled to promote efficient teaching and learning as compared to the private schools which was way ahead of the public in that area.

Within the scope of this research, the few instances that were mentioned where GNAT used Public Relations strategies to address those issues, suggest that Public Relations was important in the dissemination of information to arrive at the mandate of GNAT as a unionized association which sees to the welfare of teachers and also to promote effective atmosphere for teaching and learning in Ghana to prepare a solid human resource base for a better Ghana.

By extension, it can be said that Public Relations strategies can be adopted by any progressive institution , association or outfit to make its voice heard on a number of issues and also to counteract negative issues that are likely to lead the public astray on a number of false issues or other that have been misconstrued which need correction.

This research work therefore suggested for the use of any outfit that wished to employ Public Relations strategies to promote the course of the organization.

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