

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES:

A CASE STUDY OF ACCRA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

FRANCESCA ACQUAH

(MAPR20003)

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH, GHANA INSTITUTE OF
JOURNALISM, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

NOVEMBER 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project work is my own research which I carried out at the Ghana Institute of Journalism, Accra. I have duly cited all references. I further declare that I have not presented this work (either in part or in whole) anywhere for the award of any degree or certificate.

I accept single-handedly and whole-heartedly, responsibility for any lapses that may be found in this work.

Francesca Acquah
.....

Francesca Acquah

AUTHOR

Modestus Fosu
.....

Modestus Fosu(Ph. D)

SUPERVISOR

13/12/21
.....

DATE

13/12/21
.....

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe an enormous debt of appreciation to a number of people without whom I would not have been able to complete this program. However, I want to express my gratitude to the Almighty God for assisting me in achieving yet another major goal in my life.

My supervisor, Dr. Modestus Fosu, has played a crucial role in guiding me through this task and has left no stone unturned for his huge enthusiasm and tremendous professional advice. Mr. Joseph Dzatsui has shown me affection throughout my academic career, and I shall be eternally thankful.

Dr. Nana Yaw Asabere for encouraging me to pursue this program, and Yaa Gyamera Sarpong for lending me a hand when I needed it the most during this journey.

Finally, I want to thank all of my family members, friends and colleagues, who have supported me in diverse ways.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Madam Patricia Patrick Adjeley Addo, my late mother. You will always be an inspiration and a pillar in my life.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to identify the public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavor, examine the rationale behind such practices and the relationship between public relations practices and image building of Accra Technical University. A qualitative research design was used in data collection and interview was the study instrument which was designed to cover the objectives of the study involving ten (10) respondents. Findings showed that ATU employs public relations practices in their academic endeavors by the public relations unit liaise between management of the university and staff and passing every form information and that the rationales behind their public relations is for effective communication among staff and stakeholders. Lastly, findings showed public relation practices had both negative and positive impacts at ATU some of which were the public relations unit has no impact internally on the university but externally had positively impacted the university by managing the school websites and other social media platforms and PR unit post external letters, advertise to the general public and university community during admission, and also a communication channel tools. Others also indicated that it had negatively impacted ATU because of the public relations unit lacking tools and equipment. It is recommended that be undertaken on a larger-scale in the various ministries will give researchers a wider scope on social media effectiveness and its challenges in communicating government policies and how these challenges can be mitigated. The study therefore recommends that staff at the public relation unit will constantly undergo trainings and adequate resource should be provided to this unit to help them be more creative and innovative and create an enabling environment and improve both internal and external communication among stakeholders of the institution.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.1.1 Public Relations and its Role in Educational Institutions	2
1.1.2 Impact of PR in Technical Universities.....	4
1.1.3 Relevance of Public Relations in Technical Universities.....	7
1.1.4 Public Relations in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana	8
1.1.5 ATU as A Technical University in Ghana: A Brief Profile	10
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	11
1.3 Research Objectives	13
1.4 Research Questions	13
1.5 Significance of the Study	13
1.6 Scope of the Study	14
1.7 Limitation of the Study	14

1.7.1 Definition of Acronyms.....	14
1.8 Organization of the Study	14
CHAPTER TWO.....	16
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
2.0 Introduction.....	16
2.1 Review of Related Literature	16
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	21
2.2.1 The Excellence Theory.....	22
2.2.2 Systems Theory	24
2.3 Summary of Chapter.....	26
CHAPTER THREE	27
METHODOLOGY	27
3.0 Introduction.....	27
3.1 Research Design.....	27
3.2 Sources of Data	27
3.3 Population	28
3.4 Sample and sampling techniques	28
3.5 Research Instrument.....	29
3.6 Data Collection Procedure	29
3.7 Data Analysis	30

CHAPTER FOUR	31
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	31
4.0 Introduction.....	31
4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents.....	31
4.1.1 Gender of Respondents.....	31
4.1.2 Department / Responsibility Area of Respondents.....	32
4.1.3 Working Experience of Respondents	32
4.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Findings	35
4.3 Chapter Summary	38
CHAPTER FIVE	39
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
5.0 Introduction.....	39
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	39
5.2 Conclusion	40
5.3 Recommendation	40
5.4 Future Research	41
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Gender of Respondents.....32

Table 2: Department of Respondents.....33

Table 3: Working Experience of Respondents.....34

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In the competitive world today, the flexibility to make and maintain a positive corporate reputation has become a useful asset (William, 2018). A study by Adjei (2015) established that a company thrives on the goodwill of its multiple stakeholders to stay competitive, hence the management of stakeholder relationships is an important think about organizational success. Having realized that packaging could be a necessary tool in making the wants and programmes of organizations known, higher educational institutions have also began to use it to achieve public support (Mitrović & Drača, 2013).

The practice of promotion in building good corporate image within the corporate world has been well documented in literature (Nakra, 2000). In line with Grunig and Grunig (2006) the practice of publicity should help a corporation interact with the social and political components of its environment, which consists of publics that affect the power of the organization to accomplish its goals. Also, the government of Ghana evolved a policy to convert some polytechnics into technical universities. The rationale and justifications for this are to realize parity of esteem with the colleges without departing from the practice-oriented philosophy of polytechnic education and training (Act of Parliament, Act 922). Upgraded polytechnics are mandated to remain focused on their core function of coaching technicians and technologists at a better level to satisfy the difficulties of the rapidly changing, technology-driven work environment (Adja,

Adjepong, & Nunfam, 2014). During this regard, the converted universities must deploy mechanisms that will rebrand them and boost the goodwill of their stakeholders in their new status. This can be for them to stay competitive within the pedagogy system of Ghana.

Doubtless, communication specifically Public Relation (PR) is central during this line with Okafor and Nwatu (2018,), “public relations within the educational sector may be a planned, systematic management function which relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with the goal of stimulating a much better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and wishes of the institution”.

Cutlip, Allen and Broom (2006) reckon that “public relations is that management function that establishes and sustains mutually favorable relationships between a company and its stakeholders”. Thus, this study seeks to look at the role of PR practices at the Accra Technical University (ATU), ascertain the impact of promotional material practices on students’ patronage of the university and identify strategies may be adopted to take care of adequate publicity within the university.

1.1.1 Public Relations and its Role in Educational Institutions

Public relations are used to build relationships with employees, customers, stockholders, voters, or the general public (Al-Jenaibi, 2012). Almost any of the company which owns a stake in how to visualize it in the public arena employs some level of public relations. There are a number of public relations disciplines and areas falling under the banner of corporate communications, such as analyst relations, media relations, investor relations, internal communications and labor relations. Most of them contain the aspect of peer review to get liability (PRO Convention, 2011)

The role played by Public Relations in educational institutions is to manage the flow of both internal and external communications (Aikins and Adu – Oppong, 2015). Public relations

departments in an educational set up does manage their organization's reputations with various groups including internal and external publics. Seitel (2009) mentions that "Public relations practice is based on two-way communication facilitated through a multimedia approach." In reference to public relations practice in the USA, Seitel writes that Public Relations is therefore accorded a prominent role in management from a position as a Vice President with board representation. The Executive Vice President presides over specialized functional areas headed by highly placed directions that handle specific activities and publics. However, the case is different in Ghana. Public Relations do not have that opportunity. Contrary to what exist in the USA, Public Relations practice in Ghanaian educational institutions are founded on disseminations of information usually coming from management of which the Public Relations practitioner is not part. A Public Relations Practitioner reports through a bureaucratic process as he or she is not accorded management status. In the case of University of Educations, the Public Relations officer report through the Registrar to the Vice Chancellor.

In tertiary institutions, most decisions are made at the committee level which includes academics. Administrators serve as secretaries or implementers of the decisions. Since public relations practitioners who are also administrators are not privileged to be part of the decision making process, they are hardly able to comprehend the decisions made by the academics and this impedes their ability to advocate and propagate the decisions. An evaluation of the Public Relations office of some institutions found that there was need to increase public relation activities in the section. It was explained that this could be achieved only when the Public Relation section is accorded the same status as the other departments by appointing a head with similar status (Holtzhausen and Voto, 2002).

1.1.2 Impact of PR in Technical Universities

Gqamane (2010) suggested that public relations practitioners should place their focus on studying and understanding organizational relationships. The purpose and direction of an organization are affected by the various links that it has with key constituents in its environment. Aikin and Adu-Oppong (2015), therefore, suggest that the relational perspective of public relations proposes that the primary purpose of public relations' professionals in the organization is to build sustainable and long-term relationships with key stakeholders in the organization's environment. These relationships should be managed so that the public and the organization's interests are balanced. Axelsson and Nordberg (2005) reinforce that public relations cover the daily exchange of information to manage all corporate communications including marketing activities. This view is reinforced by Teresa (2017) who state that public relations play a managerial role to develop strategies to maintain relations with public groups to gain public trust and mutual understanding.

Onsongo, Mberia and Jjuuko (2017) investigated the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda. The study focused on the current execution of public relations activities and how they enhance the organizational effectiveness of private universities. The researchers based this study on the excellence and the systems theories of public relations and the strategic constituent's models of organizational effectiveness. The study also relied on quantitative descriptive survey design and analyzed the data using the SPSS software. The findings revealed that PR had a high positive influence on organizational effectiveness. The enhancement of PR practice in private universities to the Excellency theory standards enables PR practitioners to contribute to the effectiveness of institutions.

Stroh (2007) argues that public relations should be the umbrella function that manages the communication between an organization and its publics to build and enhance healthy relationships to the benefit of all parties involved. Therefore, this view of relationships, being at the center of the function of public relations, can be seen as one of the essential ingredients for an effective organization. This perspective puts public relations on the level of a strategic management function because it can influence the way stakeholders support an organization's goals. Ledingham (2003) reinforce that public relations' professionals add value to an organization when they develop cooperative relationships with all publics affected by organizational behaviors, not just those who give the organization something in return. Apart from all the other activities of the public relations function, such as community relations, fundraising, crisis communication, and corporate social responsibility, cooperative relationships are essential if organizations are to be socially responsible and to add value to society as well as to clients. The operational role is responsible for preparing means of communication for the organization to help the organization formulate its communication strategies. This role is also concerned with communication plans developed by others and is aimed only at the implementation and evaluation of the communication process. The reflective role is there to analyze changing standards and values in society and discuss these with members of the organization to adjust the rules and benefits of the organization.

Frederick (2012) sought to assess the contribution of public relations practice in achieving organizational goals in selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region. The study used Christian Service University College, Ghana Baptist University College, Garden City University College and University College of Management Studies as selected cases. The study found that three out of the four selected private tertiary institutions do not have a public relations department.

The study also found that all four tertiary institutions agree that public relations is very important in dealing with the external and internal publics of the various universities in achieving the organizational goals. Among the stated functions were that the PR serves as a mouthpiece for their institutions, are responsible for organizing programmes for their universities, have oversight responsibility of publicizing their universities, responsible for media relations and alumni relations, manage the notice boards and perform protocol functions. This study used only five participants for the study which was too limited for the four selected tertiary institutions.

Kotler and Mindak (2000) argued that public relations plays a greater role in academia, but a relatively reduced role in commercial organizations. Newsom and Carrell (2001) also asserted that public relations director should serve as a spokesperson for the organization and overseer of the entire public relations program. According to National School Public Relations Association (2010) educational public relations function or practice helps improve the programs and services of an educational organization. Educational public relations programs therefore assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry on involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support (National School Public Relations Association, 2010). National School Public Relations Association (2010) further mentioned the following as the functions or practices of educational public relations: counseling, media's liaison, communications planning, publicizing students and staff achievements, community relations liaisons and information station. According to Jobber (2001) one of the functions of public relations is to manage misconception so that unfounded opinions do not tarnish the image or operations of the organization. Peyronel and Lawniczak (2000) also state that literature in higher education public relations affirms that senior public relations administrators should be involved in institutional decision making at colleges and

universities and 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 (Nakra, 2000). This indicates that public relations is a basic function of a modern university's management. Pirozek and Heskova (2003) examined public relations practice of a university in the Czech Republic and found that two-way symmetrical tactics of research and feedback systems helped the university gain a better understanding of the attitudes of its key publics. Tengilimoglu et al., (2008) believe that public relations activities for all organizations can have an important effect on consumer decision-making when buying goods or services.

1.1.3 Relevance of Public Relations in Technical Universities

Research in public relations focuses on the whole public relations process and studies the communications relationships among and between organizations and their key aim audience groups. In addition public relations departments use research for many reasons, Research in public relations help describe the overall situation, process or phenomenon that can affect the business, if the public, media or company stakeholders develop unfavorable opinions of the company, public relations research notifies the department why and how to solve and fix the problem. Public relations research can also predict about what can also may occur in a number of cases, which help the plan of organization courses of action (Roslyn, 2011; Al-Jenaibi, 2014). The majority of the public relations / public affairs officers have to identify the following as real “needs” for guiding and conducting public relations research:

- To gather information that public relations professionals want to have and to know to do their works more effectively.
- To obtain benchmark data about the views of key goal audience groups.

- To plan, improve, or perhaps refine a public relations, public affairs or marketing communications program or activity or events.
- To track or monitor programs, activities or events that are or can be significant to the organization.
- To assess the overall effectiveness of a specific public relations or public affairs program or activity, by determining outputs and outcomes against a predetermined set of purposes.
- When facing an unexpected and sudden crisis, to put the issues involved into good perspective through emergency monitoring or polling.
- When conditions allow, to provide proper support in publicizing or promoting a specific program, event or activity (Walter, 2006).

1.1.4 Public Relations in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

Tertiary institutions in Ghana have public relations offices which are created to propagate their missions. Quite often, the public relations office is charged with the responsibility of advancing the objectives of the university to enhance its corporate image. Since 1948, the National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP) has been promoting educational public relations all over the world. This study conducted by Dornyo and Adiko, 2015 was to examine the public relations practice in two private universities that is Islamic University College and Valley View University in Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative in-depth interview to find out from the communication practitioners from these institutions how they managed communication at their respective universities, the kinds of communicator roles they performed and the models of public relations they applied in their works. The results showed that the public relations practitioners largely failed to strategically managed communications in their institutions. Media relations emerged as the dominant role these communicators performed. The over emphasis on media

relations made the public relations managers of the two institutions mostly applied one-way public information model in their communication process to the detriment of the more acceptable two way symmetrical model.

Again, studies on public relations in Ghana, researchers looked at Christian Service University College, Ghana Baptist University College, Garden City University College, and University College of Management Studies. The study found that three out of the four selected private tertiary institutions do not have a public relations department. The study also found that all four tertiary institutions agree that public relations is very important in dealing with the external and internal publics of the various universities in achieving the organizational goals. The PR serves as a spokesperson for their institutions, is in charge of organizing programs for their universities, has oversight responsibility for publicizing their universities, is in charge of media relations and alumni relations, manages notice boards, and performs protocol functions, among other things. This study used only five participants for the study which was too limited for the four selected tertiary institutions. In a study of staff perception of the Public Relations outfit of the University of Education. Boateng (2014) found that Public Relations Officers' roles involve receiving visitors and seeing to their wellbeing, attending to people and welcoming them at the Functions and seeing to funeral matters, among others. The study also found that staff of ATU did not know that the Public Relations Officer is the mouthpiece of the University. The researcher recommended that the Public Relations Officer should be involved more in decision making and he also should occupy its proper position of a Deputy Registrar in the organizational structure and must report directly to the Vice Chancellor. Also, in the University of Education, Winneba a study conducted by Aikins and Adu-Oppong, 2015 was to examine the extent of practice of public relations as a tool for facilitating the achievement of the objectives of. Data for the study was collected from a

sample of One Hundred and Fifty (150) respondents sampled from staff of the University. Findings from the study showed that the University's public relations department is poorly resourced to perform its functions. Among the challenges militating against its operations are scarce telecommunication equipment, lack of official means of transportation and lack of trained personnel. Furthermore, the study revealed that the public relations position is neither accorded the same status as other senior management positions nor involved adequately in decision making. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that the public relations unit of the University be adequately resourced and the practitioners adequately empowered.

1.1.5 ATU as A Technical University in Ghana: A Brief Profile

Accra Technical University (Accra Polytechnic) was founded in 1949 as a Technical School and commissioned in 1957 as Accra Technical Institute. It was the first Technical University in Ghana. Under the leadership of President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the Institute was renamed Accra Polytechnic in 1963 in order to become a significant driver of the country's industrialization effort. Following The Polytechnic received tertiary status with the implementation of the PNDC Law of 1992 (PNDC 321) in 1993/1994. With the elevation, the University was given the authority to issue Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) through the National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations, which was overseen by the Higher Education Council (NABPTEX). The PNDC Law 321 of 1992 was abolished in 2007 when the Polytechnic Act (Act 745) went into effect, giving polytechnics the authority to issue Higher National Diplomas.

Accra Polytechnic was transformed to Accra Technical University by the Technical

University Act, 2016, (Act 922), which gave it Technical University status with 8 other Polytechnics. The promotion was intended to improve technical education, with a focus on creating world-class graduates who are molded in excellence and professionalism in a variety of technical programs, both in theory and in practice. The University now includes five colleges and 16 departments, including the Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Built Environment, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Applied Arts, and Faculty of Business. Accra Technical University is a prominent college with two campuses. The old Tudu campus and the new Mpemhuasem campus, which has yet to be made accessible for usage. After it became a Technical University, new courses were established to allow HND and DBS students to finish their top-up courses, or degrees, to be precise. Ten (10) Bachelor of Technology (Btech) and fifteen (15) Higher National Diploma (HND) programs are presently available at Accra Technical University. There are three schools that offer these programs. Currently, the university has 5 faculties; Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Built Environment, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Applied Arts, and Faculty of Business and also has 16 departments. ATU has an established public relations unit to better communicate with their key publics, to manage crises, increase donations, boost rankings, and carry out a variety of other tasks. The unit also deals with both external and internal publics in achieving the institutional goals. With the presence of the Public Relations unit in ATU, the purpose of this study is to identify the communication or public relations practices they employ in their academic endeavors, examine the rationale behind such practices and also examine relationship between the public relations practices and their image building.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies have proven that the majority organizations are yet to spot the role, position and contribution of promotional material within their organization (Adjei, 2015). This is often because,

for a few organizations, promotion doesn't feature prominently in their organizational structure (Aikin & Adu-Oppong, 2015). In Ghana, although educational institutions have publicity departments and units, the general public Relations unit haven't been accorded the identical status as other departments. A critical take a look at educational institutions reveals that even as other sections of the university play roles with specific objectives, publicity is required to perform certain responsibilities. The Public relations departments play major roles in shaping public opinions about the colleges (Peyronel & Lawniczak, 2000). However, studies by (Narteh et al, 2013) further shows that the general Public Relations unit weren't represented at the tutorial board council of the institution, which is that the highest decision-making body within the universities to enable them disseminate management's decisions to the university's publics. Jefkins (2000) argued that the perfect structure of the general public relations department should be independent and directly responsible to the chief officer (CEO). Grunig et al., (2006) also asserted that integration of the general public relations functions into other areas means the functions can't be managed strategically. Thus, if the general public relations officer is placed in the other department its functions are strictly limited. Therefore, the general public relations officers in an establishment, if accorded the needed recognition they deserve by management, a seat are going to be reserved at corporate boardroom tables for his or her involvement in strategy development (Nakra, 2000). There have been various studies on public relation practices in tertiary institutions in Ghana but little studies have been done in Accra Technical University on public relation practices. Hence, the study seeks to bridge that gap by looking at the role of promotion practices at the ATU, ascertain the impact of PR practices on students' patronage of the university, examine the rationale behind such practices and also examine relationship between the public relations practices and their image building.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine Public relations practice in higher educational institutions in Ghana with a focus on Accra Technical University. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives;

- To identify the communication or public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavors.
- To examine the rationale behind such practices.
- To examine relationship between the public relations practices and its impact on ATU.

1.4 Research Questions

- What communication or public relations practices does ATU employ in its academic endeavors?
- What is the rationale behind such practices?
- : What is the relationship between the public relations practices and its impact on ATU?

1.5 Significance of the Study

All members of the university, especially those in leadership, management and supervisory positions have public relations roles to play, all of which are coordinated by the public relations practitioner. Examining the strategies adopted by management and the PR department to maintain PR would therefore, enlighten various stakeholders on how management coordinates with the PR department. It will also inform both the management and the PR department on the relevance of their coordination towards the achievements of the goal of the organization, Accra Technical University.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was on Public Relation Practices in Technical Universities and Accra Technical University was used as the case study. Hence, data was collected from staff working in the University.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The limitations of this study was time constraints, resources and access. Because the time span within which the researcher was to complete this work was not enough to allow for the study of all technical universities in the Greater Accra Region the study was limited to Accra Technical University.

1.7.1 Definition of Acronyms

ATU - Accra Technical University

PR - Public Relations

1.8 Organization of the Study

The entire research project is segmented into five chapters; a summary of the content explained in each chapter is briefly described. **Chapter One:** This section presents an outline of research and it covers the background of the research, research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, and significant of the research, the limitations of the study, and the organization of the study. **Chapter Two:** Literature relevant to the study is reviewed in this chapter. Theories and models that form the basis of public relations are identified and being explained further. Related work of this research is also significant in this chapter. **Chapter Three:** This chapter further explains the research methodological process and elaborates on the research plan and models. There is a presentation on the sampling methods adopted as well as the sample size used.

The tool for data collection and the methods as well as data analysis and presentation are explained in this chapter. **Chapter Four:** This chapter provides the steps required to develop and implement the proposed system. **Chapter Five:** This chapter summarizes the whole research work with a conclusion and recommendations for the future.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is the literature review and it outlines the relevant literature in the area of Public relation practices. It discusses public relations the tools of public relations, strategies for and effective PR, the theoretical frameworks and the review of the related study.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Public Relations (PR) scholars such as Cutlip and Broom (2006) see public relations as a systematic effort to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. Over the years, public relations have been playing very important communication roles in society. Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001) posits that educational Public Relations is a planned, systematic management function, designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with the goal of stimulating better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the organization. According to the association, this kind of public relations aims at assisting in interpreting public attitudes, identifying and helping shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carrying on involvement and information activities which earn public support and understanding National School Public Relations Association, (2002); Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001) noted that, school public relations used to be a one-way communication street which aimed at getting positive image about the school out. These scholars suggested a reverse situation where education public relations establish and promote partnerships within the school community. According to them an effective public relation must create value by giving the public the information they need. It must also ask

for information just as much as it transmits it. The school through its public relations unit must try to understand the needs and desires of their publics and helps them (the public) understand the entire educational process and how it will contribute to bringing out the best from the students. This will create positive communication, builds confidence in the school system and its goals and establishes avenues of open communication Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001). With the proliferation of public relations units in Ghanaian tertiary institutions, one wonders if the practitioners have changed from the old one-way publicity model or they have embraced the two-way model being propounded by public relations scholars.

Palmer (2005) emphasized that a wide range of public relations tools are available and suitability of each tool depends on the promotional objective. Belch and Belch (2001) echoed that public relations uses a variety of tools including special publications, participation in community activities, fund-raising, and sponsorships of special events, advertising and public affairs activities to enhance an organizational image. The tools are described as controlled (e.g. House ads, Public service ads, Publications, Photographs, Displays, exhibits), uncontrolled (e.g. News release, Press conferences, Talk and interview shows, Public service announcements) and semi-controlled (e.g. Electronic communication (web sites, chat rooms), Special events and sponsorship, Word of mouth). Lancaster (2005) states that companies that use television as a medium of communication stand the chance of achieving a high level of impact on their customers or public due to its visual nature. The author observed that during a television program, individual's explanation regarding issues relating to their companies could be supported with either products or footage of the company's participation in a sponsored event. This, the author argued, has the ability to erase any erroneous impressions about such companies. Lancaster (2005) further mentions exhibition as one of the potential tools for creating the opportunity for public relations officers as well as marketing communicators to come into face-to-face contact with desired targeted audience or visitors. The

author claimed that since visitors treat exhibitions as a shop window and an opportunity to gather technical information, the public relations officer would have the opportunity to explain and provide all the necessary information that can inspire confidence and trust in an organization by the customer or the targeted public and build relationship. Clow and Baack (2007) also argued that the internet could be used as a major tool of public relations to help combat negative word of mouth. Khalil (2004) also asserted that the explosive growth of mobile computing and wireless networks has helped educational institutions stay at the forefront of the changing world. Audu (2006) revealed that the Internet has many benefits in the academic cycle as it provides around the clock access to global sources of information. Thus, internet and website provide a faster, broader reach for public relations practitioners to publish company press releases, background information, introduce new products or services and provide promotional information for an organization. This view is supported by Yumba (1997), Ojedokun and Owolabi (2003); Adomi, Omodeko and Otolo (2004). Thus, internet has become an invaluable tool for teaching, learning, and research. In their study, Wright and Hinson (2010) found that facebook and the website were the most current media used for public relations messages. Therefore, organizations must be vigilant and realize the power of the Internet and website and what it can do to an organization's reputation.

The challenges for public relations practitioners in educational institutions are evident in previous studies. Public Relations can therefore not be overlooked in the management of Sunyani Technical University. Boateng (2014) states that University Relations Offices (URO) are confronted with many problems that hinder their effective performance. The most important of which was access to funding. More often than not, funds for PR activities are made available to the office much later than it should be to make such activities meaningful and effective.

Aikin and Adu-Oppong (2015) examined the extent of the practice of public relations as a tool for facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the University of Education, Winneba. Data for the study was collected from a sample of One Hundred and Fifty (150) respondents sampled from the staff of the University. Findings from the study showed that the University's public relations department is poorly resourced to perform its functions. Among the challenges militating against its operations are limited telecommunication equipment, lack of official means of transportation and lack of trained personnel. Furthermore, the study revealed that the public relations position is neither accorded the same status as other senior management positions nor involved adequately in decision making. Johansson and Larsson (2015) identified the lack of managerial education for PR practitioners as one of the eight challenges to public relations being accepted as a mainstream managerial function within an organization. The other seven challenges are:

- a. the lack of a consensus on what the term PR means and the controversy over how the boundaries of the discipline or function should be defined
- b. ignorance of the value of PR efforts to the organization
- c. the lack of a managerial function that is formally recognized within the organization
- d. overlap and /or encroachment of PR functions and roles by other managerial functions
- e. the size of the PR function and presence in most organizations
- f. the wide variety of PR roles and functions
- g. Varied background of PR practitioners with most of them not having any education in PR or any related course like journalism. According to the writers, this is why senior practitioners have often struggled to be accepted as needing to be a part of the dominant coalition.

Odongo (2009) explored PR in the education sector in Kenya, with specific attention to strategies, roles and challenges in the management, growth and the development of middle-level colleges in Kenya. It applied descriptive approach where questionnaires were used to collect data from 60 respondents from Orthodox College of Africa. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics comprising mainly tables and percentages. The findings were that PR was a central factor in the management of the institution. The challenges that affect effective PR practice include lack of financial allocation, lack of management goodwill, poor planning and coordination and confusion of PR roles with other functionalities.

In another development, Dornyo and Adiku (2015) used the excellence theory to examine public relations practice in two private universities (Islamic University College and Valley View University) in Ghana. The study adopted in-depth qualitative interviews to find out from the communication practitioners from these institutions how they managed communication at their respective universities; the kinds of communicator roles they performed; and the models of public relations they applied in their works. The results showed that public relations practitioners largely failed to strategically manage communication in their institutions. Media relations emerged as the dominant role these communicators performed. The overemphasis on media relations made the public relations managers of the two institutions mostly apply one-way public information model in their communication processes to the detriment of the more acceptable two-way symmetrical model.

Also, Aikins and Adu-Oppong, 2015 conducted a study in the University of Education, Winneba to examine the extent of practice of public relations as a tool for facilitating the achievement of the objectives of. Data for the study was collected from a sample of One Hundred and Fifty (150) respondents sampled from staff of the University. Findings from the study showed

that the University's public relations department is poorly resourced to perform its functions. Among the challenges militating against its operations are scarce telecommunication equipment, lack of official means of transportation and lack of trained personnel. Furthermore, the study revealed that the public relations position is neither accorded the same status as other senior management positions nor involved adequately in decision making. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that the public relations unit of the University be adequately resourced and the practitioners adequately empowered. Dornyo and Adiko, 2015 also examined the public relations practice in two private universities that is Islamic University College and Valley View University in Ghana. The study adopted a qualitative in-depth interview to find out from the communication practitioners from these institutions how they managed communication at their respective universities, the kinds of communicator roles they performed and the models of public relations they applied in their works. The results showed that the public relations practitioners largely failed to strategically managed communications in their institutions. Media relations emerged as the dominant role these communicators performed. The over emphasis on media relations made the public relations managers of the two institutions mostly applied one-way public information model in their communication process to the detriment of the more acceptable two way symmetrical model.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study utilized the excellence theory and the system theory as its framework. These theories are explained below.

2.2.1 The Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory which Boakye et al., 2012 claimed was founded by International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) in 1984 formed the basis of this study. It is a general theory of public relations (PR) that specifies how public relations is organized, managed and how it (PR) makes an organization more effective. The theory, according to these scholars, also shows how the monetary value of public relations can be determined and the conditions and environments that make PR more effective in an organization. Scholars such as Grunig, (1992) and Grunig et al., (2002) did further works on the theory and came out with a set of characteristics of an excellent public relations function which they grouped into four categories empowerment function, communicator roles, integrated function and relationship with other functions, and models of public relations. The empowerment Public Relations Function involves the senior practitioners in the dominant coalition, managing communication programs strategically and building a direct reporting relationship between the public relations executive and the dominant coalition Grunig et al., (2002). According to Grunig et al., (2002), an organization whose public relations function adheres to the empowerment principle can easily balance its needs with that of publics. This function helps organizations to effectively manage issues and minimize crises. An integrated public relations unit is able to quickly respond to issues and allocate resources to address problems without delay Grunig et al., (2002). Of the four models of public relations, Grunig et al., (2002) claim that excellent public relations units utilize the two-way symmetrical communication model instead of the public information, press agency, or the two-way asymmetrical models. The two-way symmetrical model uses research to facilitate mutual understanding and communication. According to these scholars, this model helps PR managers to adjust the behaviors of dominant coalitions and bring the public and dominant coalition closer together. Based on the above principles, the present study sought to find out if the public relations units of BlueCrest College

and Valley View University are engaging in excellent public relations practices. Related Work Communications scholars such as Pirozez & Heskova, (2003) claim that public relations practice in universities used to be one-way asymmetrical communication process. These scholars posit that communication practitioners in those days were much concerned with providing accurate but favorable information about their institutions to their publics. Consequently, the major communicator roles performed by the practitioners were media relations. Consistent with this assertion, Coman, (2003) indicates that in the past, public relations practice at the universities in the former soviet bloc was a mixture of marketing, advertising, and lobbying. This communication style by the universities contradicted the main tenet of excellent theorists who argue that effective public relations should involve two-way symmetrical process. Recent studies, however, point to the fact that the trend for public relations practice in educational institutions has changed. Similarly, Kaverina, (2003) also claimed that the relationship between a state university he studied and its key publics were strengthened through the university s use of the two-way symmetrical models of public relations. It will be interesting to find out if the public relations units of the Ghanaian universities under study are using the two-way symmetrical models or they are still adhering to the old one-way communication style. The benefits that communication practitioners stand to gain from excellent principles of public relations practice have made a lot of scholars advocate their (the excellent principles) acceptance and use by all public relations practitioners. Whilst Grillis, T. (1997) earlier advocated the need for public relations practitioners to have access to the top leaders within their respective institutions, Jarrell, A. (2003) argued that if the universities go a step further to involve public relations practitioners in decision making, it will help minimize crises in the institutions. Other scholars DeSanto & Garner, (2001); Ross, (2004) stressed the need for all university public relations practitioners to set clearly defined goals, identify key stakeholders, use research on their stakeholders as the basis of drawing their programs

and conduct evaluations on every program they have undertaken. These, the scholars believe, will not only enhance the work of the communication practitioners, but will also make them relevant to the institutions they work in. This study, therefore, sought to find out if the public relations practitioners of Islamic University College and Valley View The Excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined (Onsongo et al., 2017). The Excellence Theory explained that the cost of public relations lies in organization-public relations (Mitrović & Drača, 2013). A good relationship with strategic publics is helpful for an organization to develop and achieve goals desired by both the organization and its publics, reduce costs of negative publicity, and increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders. Hence, in the Accra Technical University, its development and continued existence is reliant on the production of quality graduates to the society and maintaining a good relationship with all its stakeholders. A better understanding of its stakeholders and how these stakeholders can be served better will help in the understanding of the social responsibility of the university to its stakeholders. To maximize the value of public relations, public relations must identify strategic publics and build long-term relationships with them through regular communication programmes.

2.2.2 Systems Theory

The work of Knight (1986) recognized the need of an organization to interact with its external environment, unlike what was proposed by classical school theorists like Max Weber, F. Taylor and Fayol who viewed the organization as a closed system. To him, for the survival of an organization like the way living organism survives, the organism should operate in an open system and interact with their environment. An open system changes the way of thinking about

organizational management from a mechanical point of view of the organization. The case study which is Accra Technical University is an example of an open system as it receives inputs and gives outputs to the environment. Its survival is dependent upon a series of exchange and the continual interaction with the environment which gives rise to some broader responsibilities to society in general. Things like technology, social and economic phenomena are not static but are always changing. Hence Accra Technical University needs to adapt, not only to survive but to produce graduates who can fit into the current developmental world. The management of organizations, notwithstanding, consist of various internal subsystems that need to be coordinated continuously together so that they all work towards the achievement of the common goal of the firm and to ensure that all these systems operations are aligned with each other. As a company grows, its internal systems evolve and become more complex, and hence there is a need for effective coordination among all these systems for the production process (Abah, 2017). These interdependencies can quickly become so complicated that a minor event in one subsystem may amplify into severe unintended consequences elsewhere in the organization. No organization operates in a vacuum but works to be related to and also associated with other companies within the ecosystem. In systems theory, PR practitioners are thought to be boundary spanners, straddling the edge of an organization; looking both inside and outside of an organization (Bell, 1980). PR practitioners, therefore, play the middlemen between the organization and the environment in an open system. The PR practitioner plays a mirror role which is giving the organization an outside perspective and the window function which is to take to the external environment the viewpoints of the organization. This helps in making strategic decisions with the position of the public in mind.

2.3 Summary of Chapter

This chapter is the literature review and it outlines the relevant literature in the area of Public relation practices. It discusses public relations the tools of public relations, strategies for and effective PR, the theoretical frameworks and the review of the related study. The next chapter is the methodology and it outlines the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods used in the study and provides information on data gathering and data analysis. The chapter discussed the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative method was used as it uses subjective judgment based on "soft" or nonquantifiable data (Smith, 2021). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, an exploratory research was done. Yin (2003) argues that a case study is more convincing since the researcher gathers a larger amount of data to support the solidness of the study. Blaxter et al., (2001) also explained that data in case studies are drawn from people's experiences, which allow researchers to show the complicity of real-life circumstances. Exploratory research is an attempt to discover something interesting and new through the topic of study (Swedberg, 2020).

3.2 Sources of Data

According to Burns and Grove (1999) data collection is a process of gathering information using questionnaires, interviews or observation. According to Walliman (2001) data may be collected from either primary or secondary sources. Primary data is a data originated by the researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the research problem". It is what the researcher originally collects from the sample or target population. The secondary data are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical

process (Neuman, 2006). For the purpose of this study, data were collected mainly from primary sources only.

3.3 Population

According to Momoh, 2021, a population is the pool of individuals from which a statistical sample is drawn for a study. Accra Technical University formally known as Accra Polytechnic is the population of study. It was established in 1949 as a Technical School and commissioned in 1957 as Accra Technical Institute, and became the first Technical University to be established. In 1963 the Institute assumed a new name as Accra Polytechnic under the directions of President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to be a key driver of the country's industrialization process. Following the operationalization of the PNDC Law of 1992 (PNDC 321) in 1993/1994, the Polytechnic gained tertiary recognition. With the coming into force of the Polytechnic Act (Act 745) in 2007, the PNDC Law 321 of 1992 was repealed to allow polytechnics the autonomy to award Higher National Diplomas (HND), Diplomas, Certificates and other degrees that the Polytechnic may deem appropriate, all accredited by the National Accreditation Board. The Technical University Act, 2016, (Act 922) converted together with 8 other Polytechnics, Accra Polytechnic to Accra Technical University, given it a Technical University status. Currently, the University has 5 faculties namely; Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Built Environment, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Applied Arts, and Faculty of Business and 16 departments with about 1000 staff.

3.4 Sample and sampling techniques

A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting respondents who are staff at ATU that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell

& Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, the availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner was also factored in sampling. The sample size used for the study were ten (10) respondents because in qualitative research, the basis for selecting respondents is their ability to reflect the diversity and breadth of the target population. To this end, a large sample size will not necessarily generate the expected output exhibiting the depth and the breadth of perspectives (Wilmot, 2005)

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instruments used to collect primary data were interviews using an interview guide. The interviews were conducted as a result of the need to obtain accurate and reliable data and also because it offered an opportunity to probe further and clarified ambiguity faced by the respondents and also allow the respondents express themselves better. The interview guide was designed to meet the objectives of the study that is to identify the communication or public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavors, to examine the rationale behind such practices and to examine the relationship between the public relations practices and whether it affected the image building of ATU positively or negatively.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Punch (2000), asserts “all social research involves consent, access, and associated ethical issues since it is based on data from people about people”. Thus, the interviews were conducted using accepted protocols and procedures. An informed consent was obtained from respondents who were adequately informed about the research objective including the criteria for choosing them to partake in the study. Respondents’ were guaranteed of confidentiality, and anonymity. Also, the organization of study granted permission to interview its staff and relevant information

useful for the study. The researcher encountered some challenges during the interviews as some respondents were not willing to be interviewed. The researcher used five (5) days to interview respondents at ATU.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis as it is a useful for learning and doing rigorous qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis offers tremendous “theoretical flexibility” and potentially being used as “just an analytic method, rather than a methodology, which most other qualitative approaches are” (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It is useful for finding out about **people’s experiences**, views, and **opinions**. Data analysis was done by researcher familiarizing with collected recorded data, assigning preliminary codes, searching for themes in codes across the various interviews, reviewing themes and naming the themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The chapter outlines the findings and the analysis of the data collected. The methodological approach used was a qualitative method and data presented were gathered using interview guide. The main purpose of the study was to identify the communication or public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavors, to examine the rationale behind such practices and examine the relationship between public relations practices and its impact on ATU.

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

A total of ten (10) respondents filled the questionnaire, out of that majority of respondents were male with a frequency of 7 representing 70%, while three (3) were females representing 30% of the population. This shows that there was a fair distribution of data collection among both males and females.

In summary, the gender responder group consists of seven (7) males with a 70% response rate and three (3) females with a 30% response rate, totaling 100%.

Source: Field Data, 2021

4.1.2 Department / Responsibility Area of Respondents

Majority of respondents were in the public relations and human resource department representing 20% of the population respectively while the remaining respondents were at the library, finance, procurement, academic affairs, mechanical and engineering as well as computer science department representing 10% respectively. This shows that the respondents were interviewed in various departments to have an in-depth information on the public relations practices at Accra Technical University and recorded a total of 100% respectively.

Source: Field Data, 2021

4.1.3 Working Experience of Respondents

As survey was conducted and recorded, majority of respondents at Accra Technical University who worked there between 1 – 5 years and they represent 40% of the population, 30% had a working experience of 11 – 15 years, 20% of respondents also had a working experience of 6 – 10 years and 10% of respondents had worked for 16 and above years.

Source: Field Data, 2021

4.1.1.1 Public Relations Practices in ATU's Academic Endeavors

Findings from the study indicated that Accra Technical University practices public relations in their academic endeavors. Some respondents stated that when it comes to communicating with students it is mostly the public relations unit at ATU that communicates. It was further explained that,

“The PR unit liaise between management of the University and students and every information passes through the PR unit.” (Respondent 3)

Also, other public relations practices in the academic endeavors of ATU stated by respondents are communicating during durbars, seminars and workshops for staff. Again, the Public Relations Unit collaborates with the Students Representative Council (SRC) on activities related to the student

body. Other respondents also stated that newsletters, emails, notices, school website and social media platforms are some of the public relation practices ATU uses in communicating academic endeavors to both students and staff.

4.1.1.2 Rationale Behind Public Relations Practices

Majority of respondents from the study indicated that there are rationales behind the public relations practices at Accra Technical University some of which are for effective communication among staff and stakeholders. This was further explained by respondents as,

“The reasons behind such practices is to communicate effectively for the University community to be abreast with information always.” (Respondent 5)

“To be able to reach out to students and staff and as well stakeholders of the institution (ATU)” (Respondent 8)

“To have a smooth flow of communication between staff and students.” (Respondent 9)

“To send information concerning the institution to the stakeholders.” (Respondent 10)

4.1.1.3 Impact of Public Relation Practices at ATU

According to respondents, public relation practices has both negative and positive impacts at ATU. Some respondents indicated that the PR unit has no impact internally on the university but

externally had positively impacted the university by managing the school websites and other social media platforms. This was also further explained by Respondent 2 that,

“Public relations practices has positively impacted the university because the PR unit send reminders of every programme on the social media platforms at every given point of time and negatively because their notices and memos that come in hardcopies does not help in effective flow of communication often.”

Also, respondent 6 stated that,

“In my opinion PR practices has impacted ATU negatively. The reason is that the PR unit lack tools or equipment in working”

Lastly, Respondent 9 also indicated that public relation had a positive impact by stating that,

“It has positively helped the institution because the PR unit post external letters, advertise to the general public and university community during admission, and also a communication channel tools.”

4.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Research Question 1: What communication or public relations practices does ATU employ in its academic endeavors?

According to Cutlip and Broom (2006), public relations is a systematic effort to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. Over the years, public relations have been playing very important communication roles in society. Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001) posits that educational Public Relations is a planned, systematic management function, designed to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization.

Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001) noted that, school public relations used to be a one-way communication street which aimed at getting positive image about the school out. These scholars suggested a reverse situation where education public relations establish and promote partnerships within the school community. According to them an effective public relation must create value by giving the public the information they need. It must also ask for information just as much as it transmits it. The school through its public relations unit must try to understand the needs and desires of their publics and helps them (the public) understand the entire educational process and how it will contribute to bringing out the best from the students. This will create positive communication, builds confidence in the school system and its goals and establishes avenues of open communication Carlsmith & Railsback, (2001). Findings from the study also affirms literature as ATU employs public relations practices in their academic endeavors by the

Public relations unit liaise between management of the university and students and passing every form information. They also communicate during durbars, seminars and workshops for staff and collaborates with the Students Representative Council (SRC) on activities related to the student body. They also use newsletters, emails, notices, school website and social media platforms in communicating academic endeavors to both students and staff.

Research Question 2: What is the rationale behind such practices?

Public relations are used to build relationships with employees, customers, stockholders, voters, or the general public (Al-Jenaibi, 2012). The practice of promotion in building good corporate image within the corporate world has been well documented in literature (Nakra, 2000). In line with Grunig and Grunig (2006) the practice of publicity should help a corporation interact with the social and political components of its environment, which consists of publics that affect the power of the organization to accomplish its goals. Also, the government of Ghana evolved a

policy to convert some polytechnics into technical universities. The rationale and justifications for this are to realize parity of esteem with the colleges without departing from the practice-oriented philosophy of polytechnic education and training (Act of Parliament, Act 922). Upgraded polytechnics are mandated to remain focused on their core function of coaching technicians and technologists at a better level to satisfy the difficulties of the rapidly changing, technology-driven work environment (Adja, Adjepong, & Nunfam, 2014). During this regard, the converted universities must deploy mechanisms that will rebrand them and boost the goodwill of their stakeholders in their new status. This can be for them to stay competitive within the pedagogy system of Ghana.

Doubtless, communication specifically Public Relation (PR) is central during this line with Okafor and Nwatu (2018,), “public relations within the educational sector may be a planned, systematic management function which relies on a comprehensive, two-way communication process involving both internal and external publics with the goal of stimulating a much better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and wishes of the institution”.

Cutlip, Allen and Broom (2006) reckon that “public relations are that management function that establishes and sustains mutually favorable relationships between a company and its stakeholders”. This affirms findings from the study as respondents from the study indicated that the rationales behind the public relations practices at Accra Technical University are for effective communication among students, staff and stakeholders.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the public relations practices and its impact on ATU?

Onsongo, Mberia and Jjuuko (2017) investigated the contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness in private universities in Rwanda. The study focused on the current

execution of public relations activities and how they enhance the organizational effectiveness of private universities. The researchers based this study on the excellence and the systems theories of public relations and the strategic constituent's models of organizational effectiveness. The study also relied on quantitative descriptive survey design and analyzed the data using the SPSS software. The findings revealed that PR had a high positive influence on organizational effectiveness. The enhancement of PR practice in private universities to the Excellency theory standards enables PR practitioners to contribute to the effectiveness of institutions. According to respondents, public relation practices has both negative and positive impacts at ATU. Some respondents indicated that the PR unit has no impact internally on the university but externally had positively impacted the university by managing the school websites and other social media platforms and PR unit post external letters, advertise to the general public and university community during admission, and also a communication channel tools. Others also indicated that it had negatively impacted ATU because of the public relations unit lacking tools and equipment.

4.3 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the findings and the analysis of the data collected. The methodological approach used was a qualitative method and data presented were gathered using interview guide. The main purpose of the study was to identify the communication or public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavors, to examine the rationale behind such practices and examine the relationship between public relations practices and its impact on ATU. The next chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. It also concludes the study and makes recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. It also concludes the study and makes recommendations based on the findings.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The objectives of the study were to identify the communication or public relations practices Accra Technical University (ATU) employ in its academic endeavors, to examine the rationale behind such practices and to examine relationship between the public relations practices and its impact on ATU. Findings from the study indicated that ATU employs public relations practices in their academic endeavors by the public relations unit liaise between management of the university and students and passing every form information. They also communicate during durbars, seminars and workshops for staff and collaborates with the Students Representative Council (SRC) on activities related to the student body. They also use newsletters, emails, notices, school website and social media platforms in communicating academic endeavors to both students and staff. Again, respondents from the study indicated that the rationales behind the public relations practices at Accra Technical University are for effective communication staff and stakeholders.

Lastly, respondents stated that public relation practices had both negative and positive impacts at ATU. Some respondents indicated that the PR unit has no impact internally on the university but externally had positively impacted the university by managing the school websites and other social media platforms and PR unit post external letters, advertise to the general public and university

community during admission, and also a communication channel tools. Others also indicated that it had negatively impacted ATU because of the public relations unit lacking tools and equipment.

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to gain an insight into public relations practices, the rationale behind such practices and the relationship these practices and its impact on ATU. According to Peyronel and Lawniczak, (2000) public relations departments play major roles in shaping public opinions about the universities. However, the study shows that they were not represented at the council which is the highest decision-making body in the universities to enable them disseminate management's decisions to the university's publics. Findings of the study shows that the public relations unit at ATU is not utilized effectively as there is limited autonomy enjoyed by the unit and its limited involvement in top management decisions. It also shows that the unit is unable to use different public relations tools in its internal and external communications as a result of challenges such as lack of resources, lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the role of the public relations unit.

5.3 Recommendation

The study recommends that the PR unit should involve in the decision making of the University. They should be involved in developing programmes to improve the university and maintain a two-way communication between the organisation and its publics. The study therefore recommends that staff at the public relation unit will constantly undergo trainings and adequate resource should

be provided to this unit to help them be more creative and innovative and create an enabling environment and improve both internal and external communication among stakeholders of the institution.

5.4 Future Research

Future studies must extend the study to other private universities in Ghana as well as the sub-region so that the findings could be generalized. Similarly, this study ignored the public relations practices other public universities. Since the public universities offer similar services, future studies must investigate the practice of public relations in public universities to give a better representation so that a comprehensive understanding of public relations in higher educational institutions could be known. Also, future studies should be conducted on some of the challenges of public relations practices and how these challenges can be mitigated. Again, future studies can be done find out strategies that can be put in place by tertiary institutions to improve their public relation practice to improve both internal and external communication within the organization.

REFERENCES

- Abah, E., 2017. *Administrative and Management Principles, Theories and Practice*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Adja Kwabena Adjei, N., Nyarko, D.A. and Nunfam, V.F., 2014. Industrial Attachment in Polytechnic Education: An Approach to Polytechnic-Industry Nexus in Human Capital Development of Selected Polytechnics in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(33).
- Adjei, M.K., 2015. *An assessment of public relations contribution in an ICT company: A case study of RLG* (Doctoral dissertation, University Of Ghana).
- Adomi, E.E., Omodeko, F.S. and Otolu, P.U., 2004. The use of cybercafé at delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. *Library hi tech*.
- Aikins, E.D. and Adu-Oppong, A.A., 2015. Using public relations as a management tool in tertiary institutions. *Afro-Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), pp.1-15.
- Al-Jenaibi, B., 2012. The scope and impact of workplace diversity in the United Arab Emirates— A preliminary study. *Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 8(1).
- Al-Jenaibi, B., 2014. Comparing the roles of PR practitioners in the public and private sectors in the UAE. *International Journal of Information Systems and Social Change (IJISSC)*, 5(3), pp.64-76.
- Audu, C., 2006. Internet availability and use by postgraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Global Review of Library & Information Science*, 2, pp.34-43.
- Axelsson, D. and Nordberg, H., 2005. The role of PR: In the introduction stage of a new brand.

- Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A., 2004. Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective 6th. *New York: McGraw-Hill*.
- Bell, M.L., 1980. Management by objectives. *The Journal of nursing administration*, 10(5), pp.19-26.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M., 2010. *How to research*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Boateng, A.B., 2014. Branding Public Universities through Advertising: A Study of Two Public Universities in Ghana. *UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA*.
- Clarke, V., Braun, V., 2013. Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26(2), 120–123
- Clow, E. K. and Baack, D., 2007. *Integrated Advertising, Promotion, and Marketing Communication*, 3rd Edition, Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.
- Creswell, J.W. and Plano Clark, V.L., 2011. Choosing a mixed methods design. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, 2, pp.53-106.
- Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H. and Broom, G.M., 1994. *Effective Public Relations*, 7-th edition.
- Dorny, P. and Adiku, E.A., 2015. Public Relations Practice in Ghanaian Tertiary Institutions: A Study of Islamic University College and Valley View University. *International Journal of ICT and Management*, 3(2), pp.35-40.
- Gqamane, Z., 2010. *The role of public relations: case study of selected corporate organisations within the greater Durban area* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Grunig, J.E., Grunig, L.A. and Dozier, D.M., 2006. The excellence theory. *Public relations theory II*, pp.21-62.

- Jefkins, F. Yadin, D. (2000). Advertising 4th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Jobber, D., 2001. Principles & Practice of Marketing 3rd McGraw.
- Johansson, B. and Larsson, L., 2015. The complexity of public relations work. *Nordicom Review*, 36(1), p.125.
- Khalil, M.A., 2004. Vision to Reality: Applications of Wireless Laptops in Accessing Information from Digital Libraries: End-Users' Viewpoints. *Library Hi Tech News*.
- Knight, W. H., 1986. Theories of Modern Management. Association of School Business Officials International, 31(5), pp. 34–45.
- Kotler, P. and Mindak, W., 2000. Marketing and public relations: should they be partners or rivals?. *Journal of marketing*, 42(4), pp.13-20.
- Lancaster, G. (2005). Public Relations.
- Ledingham, J.A., 2003. Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of public relations research*, 15(2), pp.181-198.
- Mitrović, K., & Drača, M., 2013. Strategic Management of Public Relations in. Interdisciplinary Management Research V, 23(2), pp. 245–254.
- Momoh, O., 2021. Understanding Population Statistics.
- Nakra, P., 2000. Corporate reputation management: " CRM" with a strategic twist?. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 45(2), pp.35-42.
- Narteh, B., Akwensivie, D.M. and Agyapong, K., 2013. PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES: “A STUDY OF SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA”. *Globus*, 2,

pp.156-169.

National School Public Relations Association (2010). Educational Public Relations.

Neuman, W. L., 2006. Social research methods qualitative and quantitative approach (6th ed.).
Upper Saddle River: Pearson.

Newsom, D. and Carrell, B., 2001. Public relations writing: form and style Belmont. CA:
Wadsworth.

Odongo, O.S., 2009. *The Trend Of Public Relations Practice In Educational Institutions In Kenya: Comparative Study Of Orthodox College Of Africa And PC Kinyanjui Technical Institute* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi.).

Ojedokun, A.A. and Owolabi, E.O., 2003. Internet access competence and the use of the Internet for teaching and research activities by University of Botswana academic staff. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 13(1), pp.43-54.

Okafor, O.C. and Nwatu, C.B., 2018. Public Relations as a tool for attaining educational institution objectives in Enugu State. *International Journal of Marketing and Management Research*, 9(3), pp.1-22.

Onsongo, A.N., Mberia, H. and Jjuuko, M., 2017. The contribution of public relations practice to organizational effectiveness: A case of private universities in Rwanda. *International Journal of Computer Science and Technology*, 8(2), pp.155-169.

Palmer, A., 2000. Principles of Marketing, Oxford University Press Inc., United States of America.

Peyronel, A.C., 2000. The role of senior public relations administrators in institutional decision making: Are they at the table?. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 9(4), pp.25-

35.

Pirožek, P. and Heskova, M., 2003. Approaches to and instruments of public relations: Higher education in the Czech Republic. *Higher Education in Europe, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December 2003*, 28(4), pp.487-494.

PRO Convention. (2011). PRO 101 basic. Retrieved 2011, November 8 from <http://www.proconvention.com/2011PROCSessions/What%20Is%20A%20PR%20-%20007%20and%20Snap.pdf>

Roslyn, F. (2011, May 11). Roles of PR research. Retrieved 2011, December 4 from eHow website: http://www.ehow.com/info_8398128_role-organizational-shorttermlongtermobjectives.html

Singh, A.S. and Masuku, M.B., 2014. Sampling techniques & determination of sample size in applied statistics research: An overview. *International Journal of economics, commerce and management*, 2(11), pp.1-22.

Smith, T. (2021). *Qualitative Analysis*. Investopedia.

Steyn, B., 2009. The strategic role of public relations is strategic reflection: A South African research stream. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53(4), pp.516-532.

Ströh, U., 2007. 1 The conundrum of public relations versus marketing: Clarifying the differences in terms of relationship management.

Swedberg, R., 2020. Exploratory research. *The production of knowledge: Enhancing progress in social science*, pp.17-41.

- Tengilimoglu, D., Yesiltas, M., Kisa, A. and Dziegielewski, S.F., 2008. The role of public relations activities in hospital choice. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 24(3-4), pp.19-31.
- Teresa, C. (2017). The Practices and Challenges of Public Relations within Two Ethiopian Towns: Harar and Dire Dawa. *African Research Review*, 11(1), pp.136– 155.
- Walliman, N., 2001. *Your research project: a step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher*. Sage.
- Walter, K. L., 2006. Public relations research for planning and evaluation. *Institute for Public Relations*.
- Wilmot, A., 2005. Designing sampling strategies for qualitative social research: with particular reference to the Office for National Statistics' Qualitative Respondent Register. *SURVEY METHODOLOGY BULLETIN-OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS-*, 56, p.53.
- Wright, D.K. and Hinson, M.D., 2010. How new communications media are being used in public relations: A longitudinal analysis. *Public Relations Journal*, 4(3), pp.1-27.
- Wu, M.Y. and Baah-Boakye, K., 2009. Public relations in Ghana: Work-related cultural values and public relations models. *Public Relations Review*, 35(1), pp.83-85.
- Yeo, S.L. and Sriramesh, K., 2009. Adding value to organizations: An examination of the role of senior public relations practitioners in Singapore. *Public relations review*, 35(4), pp.422-425.
- Yin, R.K., 2003. Case study research. Design and methods. *Appl. Soc. Res. Methods Ser*, 5.
- Yumba, D., 1997. Internet in the library: potentials. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 7(2), pp.163-168.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSAR)

Dear Respondent,

My Name is Francesca Acquah, 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 on **PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES: A STUDY OF ACCRA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**. I kindly request you to spare few minutes of your busy schedule to partake in this interview. The information given will be treated very confidentially, and will only be used for academic purposes. Thank you for your time. Sincerely,

Francesca Acquah

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about Accra Technical University (ATU) and what is your role/responsibility area in the organization.
2. How long have you worked at ATU?
3. What public relation tools do you use at ATU?
4. What communication or public relations practices does ATU employ in its academic endeavors?
5. What are the reasons behind such practices?
6. How has these practices impacted ATU?
7. Has public relations affected the image of ATU positively or negatively? How?