# METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA

## PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES: A STUDY OF SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

**BY**

**KINGSLEY AGYAPONG**

**JUNE, 2011**

# METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA

## PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES: A STUDY OF SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

### BY

### KINGSLEY AGYAPONG
### MBAM/EP/09/10/0124

## THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
## IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MBA MARKETING DEGREE

### JUNE, 2011

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material previously published by another person except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

………………………………….. ………………

**KINGSLEY AGYAPONG** **DATE**

**(STUDENT)**

**MBAM/EP/09/10/0124**

**CERTIFIED BY:**

……………………………. ………………

**DR. BEDMAN NARTEH** **DATE**

**(SUPERVISOR- UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL)**

……………………………. ………………

**DR. DIVINE AKWENSIVIE** **DATE**

**(SUPERVISOR- METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA)**

i

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to God for how far He has brought me. To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever. (Psalm 30: 12)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to understand public relations practices within the context of private universities in Ghana. The objectives of the study were to investigate public relations practices in private universities, to identify public relations tools utilized by public relations in private universities, to identify if public relations in private universities have succeeded in building good corporate image and finally, to identify the challenges faced by public relations unit of private universities. Interview guide was the main tool used in gathering information for the study through personal interviews. The respondents were public relations managers of three private universities in Ghana.

The study revealed that the public relations units in the universities were not adequately resourced in terms of logistics to enable them perform effectively. At another level, the study also revealed that the public relations units of the universities were not represented at  the council which is the highest decision making body in the universities to enable them disseminate management decisions to the university's publics. The findings again showed that the universities were not avenues for money making, do not employ unqualified lecturers and do not admit unqualified students.

On the basis of these findings, the study recommends that public relations units of the universities should be adequately resourced in terms of staff and logistics to enable the unit contribute effectively in disseminating information in building the corporate image of the universities. In addition, the study recommends that public relations units of the universities should be represented on council meetings to disseminate timely and accurate information for decision making at the universities and also communicate effectively to external publics. Finally, the study recommends that public relations units of the universities should put in place a comprehensive strategy to debunk the idea that the universities are avenues for money making but rather a place where quality education is imparted to the students.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

**CHAPTER ONE**

## 1.0.    INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background to the study. This focuses on the need for public relations in universities, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study as well as organization of the study.

## 1.1.    BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Civilized and developing societies need universities because they provide the necessary skills for economic development. They are not an added extra but an essential part of the fabric of civilization.  The traditional functions of universities are teaching and research. In their teaching activities, universities provide the professional training for high-level jobs, as well as the education necessary for the development of the personality.

Today, the increasing number of private universities in the country is seen by many Ghanaians as a blessing for helping the nation to train qualified students who could not gain admission to the state universities. This has helped to produce manpower to spearhead the nation's socio-economic and technological development.

Therefore, private universities have helped to reduce the pressure on the State Universities such as University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba, University for Development Studies, Tamale and the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, because of inadequacy of the institutional facilities in the State Universities to cater for qualified candidates desiring to avail themselves of tertiary education.

Business leaders also recognize the essential contributions that private universities make in providing their companies with highly skilled workers who have the practical know-how.

1

Furthermore, private universities foster equity and through the dissemination of knowledge and ideas by way of educating qualified students who could not gain admission to public tertiary institution because of inadequate infrastructure such as residential and academic facilities. This has made it possible to expand educational opportunities to more Ghanaians.

Additionally, private universities have made it possible for more public resources to be targeted at the disadvantaged, the poor and the needy in the society (Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002). This demonstrates the capacity to innovate and share best practices in educational delivery.

Formally, few people gained admission to public universities resulting in fewer graduate populations in the country.  But the establishment of private universities in the country has helped in improving the situation by increasing the graduate population for industry and government.

Private universities are key players in the generation of entrepreneurs who are to expand businesses, thus creating thousands of new jobs that catalyze further investment in the economy.

Moreover, private universities are economically and socially contributing to their community, its economy and their own prosperity and quality of life. The activities touch virtually every aspect of lives and the prosperity of the communities they live in.

The ultimate yardstick for measuring the success of a university is the improvement in the lives of the people it serves. The full benefit from a university can be obtained only if the university and society are organically linked together.

## 1.2.    THE NEED FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS IN UNIVERSITIES

The most effective tool to monitor and manage opinion of the general public is through extensive use of public relations practices (Moore and Kalupa, 2007). In the views of Bruning and Ralston (2001) the practice of public relations at most

universities has been relegated to a single office concerned primarily with managing institutional reputation. Peyronel and Ławniczak (2000) 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. Additionally, Newson and Carrell (2001) believe that public relations director should serve as a spokesperson for the organization and overseer of the entire public relations program. According to Tengilimoglu et al (2008) public relations activities for all organizations can have an important effect on consumer decision-making when buying goods or services. Additionally, research by Tianping (2003) indicated that public relations is a basic function of a modern school's management and external public relationship is a basic element within public relations.

Furthermore,  in their study on Approaches to and instruments of public relations in higher education in the Czech Republic, Heskov and Pirožek (2003) found that the success of the new detached campus is accredited to skillful public relations. The researcher further urged higher education institutions to develop public relations capacities.  Bruning and Lambe (2008) wrote that relationship attitudes play a role in retention and showed that public relations strategies, grounded in interpersonal communication relationship-building theory positively affect public member attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors.

Owing to the  significance of public relations practices in universities, and because existing research does not fully describe the public relations aspects  handled by private universities to build upon their relationship, the aim of this study is to throw more light on public relations practices by private universities in Ghana.

## 1.3.    STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The private universities in Ghana have been mandated by National Accreditation Board to provide tertiary education and skills training to qualified candidates desiring to avail themselves of tertiary education for skills acquisition and training and overall personal development (Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

3

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the public seems not to have understood the role and mission of the private universities and for that matter keep on seeing private universities as an avenue for money making by admitting students who do make the entry requirements to public universities and also employ unqualified personnel. In view of this, the private universities are being perceived negatively and this perception has affected their image in Ghana.

It is however a well known fact that private universities have been rendering important services to the nation. It is estimated that out of the several thousands of candidates who qualify each year for admission into the existing Ghanaian public universities, only between 25%-30% of the total number gain admission (www.mucg.edu.gh/au_aboutas.html).

Dr. Asamoah, Principal of the Garden City University College (GCUC) postulated that it was wrong for people to describe students who did not gain admission to public universities as leftovers. He said this during the Third Matriculation of the College at Kumasi. (www.news.myjoyonline.com/education/200911/38299.asp.)

The practice of public relations could be used to correct the negative perception and build relationships with public relations publics.   According to Grunig and Grunig (2006) the practice of public relations should help an organization interact with the social and political components of its environment, which consists of publics that affect the ability of the organization to accomplish its goals.

Therefore, effective public relations practices will help position and affect the image and operational activities of the private universities. The question then is; how can public relations be used to build relationships with the various stakeholders of private universities?

## 1.4.    PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate and document how the practices of public relations units were contributing to the image building of the private universities.

4

### 1.5.    OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were the objectives of the study.

1) To investigate public relations practices in private universities.
2) To identify public relations tools utilized by public relations in private universities
3) To identify if public relations in private universities has succeeded in building good corporate image.
4) To identify the challenges faced by public relations unit of private universities.

### 1.6.    RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To answer the above research objectives, the following questions were formulated.

1) What are the public relations practices in private universities?
2) What are the public relations tools utilized by public relations in private universities?
3) Has public relations succeeded in building corporate image of private universities?
4) What challenges do public relations units face in private universities?

### 1.7.    SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The result of the study would be of benefit to the management of private universities and other tertiary institutions by way of exposing the practices of public relations in modifying the general perceptions of private universities. This would inform authorities in formulating and implementing new policies geared towards modifying the perceptions of public towards private universities. This will hopefully contribute to increase patronage of private universities by the general public.

The study would also enable management of the private universities to understand, support and appreciate the unique role of public relations units in the private universities and also help enhance the private universities relationship with their respective publics.

Additionally, the result of the study would help to change the perceptions and behaviors of students towards private universities and also erode the negative perception that employers have about students from the private universities.

## 1.8.    ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The study examines public relations practices in Ghanaian private universities. The thesis work is organized in five chapters.

**Chapter One** of the study comprise background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, public relations in universities and organization of the study.

**Chapter Two** consists of reviewing the relevant literature on the topic. It covers the following areas: definitions of public relations, evolution of public relations, factors accounting for the growth of public relations, objectives of public relations, tools of public relations, types of public relations programs, relationships building approaches in public relations, key public relations functions, functions of educational public relations, misconception about public relations, evaluation of public relations activities, public relations in higher education and conceptual framework for the study.

**Chapter Three** comprises the methodology employed for the study. It encompasses the following:  research design, research strategy, population, data collection methods, data analysis techniques which include data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification ethical considerations and limitations of the study were also taken into account.

**Chapter Four** is made up of data presentation and discussions. It comprises write-ups from the interviews, within case analysis and cross case analysis.

**Chapter Five** presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the study. This focuses on the definitions of public relations, evolution of public relations, factors accounting for the growth of public relations, objectives of public relations, objectives and benefits of public relations, tools of public relations, types of public relations programs, relationships building approaches in public relations, key public relations functions, functions of educational public relations, misconceptions about public relations, evaluation of public relations activities, public relations in higher education and conceptual framework of public relations.

## 2.1. DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A review of modern public relations history gives a number of definitions. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000 p.8) state that "public relations is a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends". The key point such as "Mutual understanding" shows that public relations is a two-way-communication. It means, understanding the public and also being understood by the publics. The importance of public relations is to create better understanding and convert bad news into favorable ones.

Belch and Belch (2001) see public relations as a management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. The purpose is to establish and maintain a positive image of the company by focusing on the publics whose activities may influence an organization's positioning in the minds of the target market.

In the words of Wells et al (2005) public relations is a management function practiced by a wide range of organizations: companies, governments, non-profit

7

organizations, the educational system, labor unions, politicians, organized sports, and the media. Their goal is to achieve positive relationships with various publics in order to effectively manage the organization's image and reputation.

Lancaster and Jobber (2006) also stress that a more precise and comprehensive description of public relations is provided by Public Relations Society of America as follows:

- Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues which might impact, for good or ill, on the operations and plans of the organization.

- Counseling management at all levels with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication.

- Researching, conducting, and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims.

- Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy.

- Managing the resources needed to perform the functions of public relations.

Public relations therefore consist of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding.

### 2.1.1. Public Relations Publics

According to Price (1992) as cited in (Vasquez and Taylor, 2001) the term public originates from the Latin phrase populus, meaning "the people". Vasquez and Taylor (2001) observe that the term 'public' usually refers to matters of common interest and concern. In the fields of social psychology, marketing and public relations, the term public may refer to a situational collection of individuals who emerge in response to a problem.

8

Dewey (1927) was one of the first to develop a theory of publics. According to Dewey, a public is a group of people who face a similar problem, recognize that the problem exists, and organizes to do something about the problem. Dewey (1927) defines a public as "those indirectly and seriously affected for good or for evil [and] form a group distinctive enough to require recognition and a name". Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2004) also emphasize that "public encompasses any group of people who are tied together however loosely, by some common interest or concern and who have consequences for an organization". In view of the above, the public consists of all those who are affected by the direct or indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically catered for. It can be a church, a trade union, or a business corporation or an educational institution conducting itself so as to affect its internal and external publics.

## 2.2. EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to Moore and Kalupa (2007) public relations as practiced today is a twentieth century American phenomenon and its fundamental elements of informing people, persuading people and integrating people were basic to earliest society just as they are today. Lancaster (2005) also postulates that public relations is not new and its modern day origins in the United States can be traced as far back as 1807 with President Jefferson's address to Congress.

The First World War helped stimulate the development of public relations as a profession. During War, government propaganda agencies showed the power of propaganda over people.  Witnessing this demonstration, industrialists generally undertook to create a favorable content of public attitudes and business associations; they also planned and executed large-scale programs of public education.  Public relations specialists began to come into their own.  The need for public relations thinking and skills was developing fast. (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

Edward Bernays was considered self-appointed Father of Public Relations. Bernays drew many of his ideas from Sigmund Freud's theories about the irrational,

unconscious motives that shape human behaviour.  Bernays authored several books, including *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), Propaganda (1928), and The Engineering of Consent (1947). He saw public relations as an "applied social science" that uses insights from psychology, sociology, and other disciplines to scientifically manage and manipulate the thinking and behavior of an irrational and "herdlike" public.   Bernays contributions to public relations was in the area of assisting the Committee on Public Information.

(www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/MiniMe_HistoryOfPR.pdf)

During the economic depression of the early 1930s, the understanding and goodwill toward business, were developed by early public relations counselors during the booming 1920s. This phenomenon turned into distrust of business and the free-enterprise system.   Business management realized the need to regain public confidence lost during the depression and established public relations departments and employed public relations managers to improve the public image of business. Paul Garrett was one of these early managers of public relations and in 1931; he was employed by the General Motors Corporation as a one-man public relations department.  When he joined the corporation, he was asked by the directors, "How do you make a billion-dollar corporation look small?"  Garrett, who had left his position as financial editor of the New York Evening Post to pioneer in the field of public relations management, said that he did not know and that he did not think it was his job.  In his opinion, public relations was not a defensive device to make a corporation seem to be what it is not, but a continuing effort on the part of management to earn the goodwill of the public by acting so as to win public respect (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

Ivy Ledbetter Lee was also considered as one of the most famous of the early public relations practitioners. He was known as someone who maintained open communications with the media, and also being candid and frank in relating to the press. Lee is credited with making two significant contributions to the function.  First, he discovered the importance of humanizing business and bringing its public relations down to the community lever or employees, customers, and neighbors.  Second, he

10

dealt with top executives and carried out no program unless it had the active support and personal participation of management. (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

In the United Kingdom, during World War I, the government appreciated the value of public relations and used it to propagate its aims and objectives. The role played by public relations during World War I, gained more prominence in the United Kingdom in World War II. During all these era, industries and organizations in the United Kingdom were not much enthused about public relations as a tool of communicating companies' stories. It was until 1945, that public relations role gained momentum in industrial and organizational affairs and became an acceptable communication tool.

### 2.2.1. Factors Accounting for the Growth of Public Relations

Public relations tell an organization's "story" to various publics. Every action taken by an organization communicates an image to its audience. Public relations practices cover a spectrum of activities, ranging from broad corporate activities to promote or reinforce a favorable public image. The growth of public relations has become very important in recent years in the following areas as asserted by (Moore and Kalupa, 2007).

*The communications gap:* According to Moore and Kalupa (2007) the need for communication between organizations and their publics is attested to by the fact that public relations occupies a dominant role in the economy today.  It exists as an essential middleman between the corporation and its publics with a basic function to perform.  This function, simply expressed, consists in the development of informed and understanding publics in a complex society where communication tends to break down and, simultaneously, in the development within the organization of an understanding of its publics.  In order to perform these functions effectively, it must utilize certain instruments available to it, including the mass media and publicity; advertising, and public speaking as well as persuasion.

*Population growth:* A significant factor contributing to the development of public relations has been the increase in population and the resulting expansion of all types

11

of business, social, and political organizations.   As the number of corporate employees, customers, and stockholders increased, good communication from management to these publics was no longer possible.  People were often unaware of what management was doing that affected their interests. As a result, serious misunderstandings occurred and goodwill was sacrificed.   To explain corporate policies and actions and bring about better understanding, organized public relations communication is essential (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

*Recognition of social responsibility:* Public relations has grown in importance as corporations recognized that they have a social responsibility to serve the public. Public services of corporations include financial contributions to community, social welfare, health, and youth organizations; participation by employees in local government and education; and sponsorship of cultural education (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

*Big government:* Increasing government control of business, rising taxes, legislation adversely affecting business, legislative investigations of business and criticisms of business by politicians have all contributed to relations with local, state, and national governments (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

*Consumerism:*   Increasing emphasis on consumer service has caused many companies, seeking the goodwill and support of consumers, to respond by the employment of consumer-affairs activities.  Consumer activists, having served as pressure points on business, are frequently cited as an entering wedge for social reforms.  A cry for consumer rights has emerged in every part of business relations – product safety, truth in advertising, labeling, and full warranties. This is being supported by the government.  This pressure represents to business both a challenge and an opportunity (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

*Development of communications media:* Society is in a massive electronic surge, with a tremendous growth in video and cable system, leading to a fragmentation of television as a mass medium.  Not only that but people today do not like to read.

12

Therefore, although unprecedented developments are being made in the media of communication, making possible rapid and wide spread transmission of information, it will become increasingly difficult to find a mass audience, and communicators will have to be more adept at targeting their messages.   New challenges and new responsibilities will accordingly fall on public relations. (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

***New standards of ethics:*** Higher moral standards and ethical conduct in business have contributed to the development of public relations.  Management must speak truthfully, act fairly, and deal honorably with the public in order to enjoy good public relations.  As Robert Heilbroner has written: "Good public relations has come to be something very much like the corporate conscience – a commercial conscience, no doubt, but a conscience nonetheless.  If the public relations profession can bolster this role, if it can become the corporate conscience openly, fearlessly, and widely, speaking not only for business but to business, then it will have more than redeemed its name." (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

***Education in public relations:*** The growing emphasis on public relations education has helped to increase the prestige of the public relations industry.  There are twenty six public relations institutions currently accredited by the American Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication with several other excellent institutions that may eventually apply for accreditation in the near future.  (Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

## 2.3. OBJECTIVES/ BENEFITS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

According Jobber (2001) one of the objectives of public relations is to manage misconception so that unfounded opinions do not tarnish the image or operations of the organization. Well et al (2005) on the other hand asserted that public relations objectives are designed by planners to make changes in the public's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to a company, brand, or organization. Jefkins (2000) describes the ideal structure of the public relations department as independent and directly responsible to the chief executive officer (CEO). If public relations officer is placed at the marketing advertising or sales promotion department, the functioning of

the public relations officer is strictly limited. Lages and Simkin (2003) opine that the positioning of public relations as a management discipline is wider than communication techniques or specialized program such as media relations. It is also important to master the technical skills to know why and when to use them. As noted by Well et al (2005) public relations objectives focus on creating credibility, delivering information, and building positive images, Changing stakeholders attitudes, opinions, or behaviors about a brand or company and Creating stronger brand relationships with key stakeholders, such as employees, shareholders, and financial community, government, associations and the media.

Palmer (2000) states that public relations is an indirect promotional tool whose role is to establish and enhance a positive image of an organization and its products among its various publics. As an element within the promotion mix, public relations present a number of valuable opportunities. Some of these important characteristics of public relations are described below:

*Relatively low cost:* The major advantage of public relations is that it tends to be much cheaper in terms of cost per person reached than any other type of promotion. Apart from nominal production costs, much public relations activity can be carried out at almost no cost, in marked contrast to the high cost of buying space or time in the main media.   To make the most use of this apparently free resource, many companies retain outside public relations consultants who can prove themselves to be cost effective in developing these opportunities.

*Can be targeted:* Public relations activities can be targeted to a small-specialized audience if the right media vehicle is used. Since space and time in the media is not bought, specialized audience can be targeted.

*Credibility:* The results of public relations activity often have a high degree of credibility, compared with other promotional sources such as advertising. This can occur because the audience may regard a message as coming from an apparently impartial and non-commercial source. Where information is presented as news,

14

readers or viewers may be less critical of the message than if it was presented as a biased advertisement.

***Controllability:*** A company can exercise little direct control over how its public relations activity is subsequently handled and interpreted. If successful, a press release may be printed in full, although there can be no control over where or when it is printed. At worst, a Press release can be misinterpreted and the result could be very unfavorable news coverage.

***Saturation of effort:*** The fact that many organizations compete for a finite amount of media attention puts pressure on the public relations effort to be better than that of competitors. But there can be no sure guarantee that public relations activity will have any impact on whom the organization targets.

## 2.4. TOOLS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to Belch and Belch (2001), public relations uses variety of tools including special publications, participation in community activities, fund-raising, sponsorships of special events, advertising and public affairs activities to enhance an organizational image. Palmer (2005) also emphasize that a wide range of public relations tools are available and suitability of each tool depends on the promotional objective. Well et al (2005) describe categories of public relations tools and stressed that the tools are best suited to create awareness of an organization and its services depends on the amount of control the company has in its communication. The tools are described below.

### Controlled Public Relations

When a company controls the use of placement of their public relations tools, they are utilizing controlled channels. Examples of tools in this type include the below:

- House ads
- Public service ads
- Corporate or institutional and advocacy advertising

- Publications:  Brochures, Flyers, magazines, Newsletters

- Annual reports

- Speakers

- Photographs

- Films, videos, CD-ROMs

- Displays, exhibits

- Staged events


**Uncontrolled Public Relations**

When a company relies on the use and placement of their public relations to media, they are using uncontrolled channels. Examples of tools in this category are:

The news release (print, audio, video, e-mail, faxes)

- Features(pitch letters)

- Fillers, historical pieces, profile

- Press conferences and media advisory (media kits, fact sheets, background information)

- Media tours

- Bylined articles, letter to the editor

- Talk and interview shows

- Public service announcements


**Semi-Controlled Public Relations**

Whiles some aspects of the public relations tools are controlled and some uncontrolled by the company, there are other channels being utilized by public relations which are semi-controlled channels. Examples of tools in this category are:


- Electronic communication (web sites, chat rooms)

- Special events and sponsorship

- Word of mouth (buzz)

Lancaster (2005) also identifies the following as the media used by the public relations practitioner in communicating as well as disseminating information to the public. The media used are personal communication, press release, sponsorship, visual communication, literature, television, film and exhibitions.  This agrees with the views of (Belch and Belch, 2001; Lancaster, 2005; Palmer, 2005; Well et al, 2005)

- **Personal Communication**

  According to Lancaster (2005) personal communication is one of the means by which the public relations practitioner communicates with the public. The author was of the opinion that personal communication creates an opportunity for the practitioner to persuade its public to either adapt or accept the message being putting across.  In addition, this kind of communication enables the practitioner to adapt both matter and manner to the reactions of his or her audience.  The public relations officer is not expected to appear personally at organized functions but rather to get an appropriate representative of the organization to address the audience.

- **Press Release**

  Press release is considered by public relations practitioners as the most important form of medium of communication (Lancaster, 2005). He indicates that regarding press release, the practitioner needs to ensure that the information is released at the appropriate time and also it gets to the targeted public otherwise its desired impact would not be achieved. He pointed out that the aim of press relations is to ensure that organization's information are given the needed attention either by publishing or broadcasting it through newspapers, magazines, radio and television to enable the organization.

- **Press Conference**

  Press conferences according to Belch and Belch (2001) are held by politicians while used less by organizations and corporations and can be very effective. The authors argue that usually major accomplishments, major breakthroughs, emergencies and catastrophes warrant a national press conference. Companies often call press conferences when they have significant news to

17

announce, such as introduction of a new product or advertising campaign. In the words of Palmer (2000) press conferences are used where a major event is to be announced and an opportunity for two-way dialogue between the organization and the media is considered desirable.

- **Sponsorship**

  Another media used in public relations is sponsorship.  Lancaster (2005) believes that sponsorship has a strong public relations component to it and firms can use it in a variety of ways.  He claims that important clients and other key individuals can be invited to artistic events such as concerts, plays or opera. Such key individuals who have been targeted for such promotion can be contacted, entertained and long term relationships built and maintained. In the view of Palmer (2005) sponsorship involves investment in event or cause in order that an organization can achieve objectives such as increase in awareness level, enhanced reputation and help enhance the image of an organization.

- **Visual Communications**

  Visual communications is considered by Lancaster (2005) as a medium of communication. He is of the view that information with pictorial representation can create the desired impact needed to change the perception of targeted public. He argued that providing photographs of an event which has already happened serves as evidence in the minds of the public that the event actually occurred and has the potential of influencing the impressions of the public. Moore and Kalupa (2007) also were of the view that events play an important part in changing attitudes and opinions. The authors further assert that events provide information that often induces a change of mind. Therefore, public relations practitioners must recognize the importance of events in transforming passive attitudes into positive opinion on controversial issues.

- **Literature**

  Additionally, medium of communicating issues of an organization to its public by the public relations officer is through the use of literature in the form of

leaflets, folders, booklets, books and other media including wall charts, diaries, postcards and pictures, and this is often used to target certain desired audience. Lancaster (2005) was of the opinion that this medium of communication provides the necessary information that can inspire confidence and trust in an organization.

- **Television**

Television is also considered as a medium of communication used in public relations. 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.  His argument was 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, he said has the ability to erase any erroneous impressions about such companies.

- **Films**

In the view of Lancaster (2005), films have become an integral part of public relations arena of communicating information to the public. In the views of Lancaster, some years past the expensive nature of using films as a medium of disseminating information of a company to its targeted public became the sole preserve of larger organization. According to him, with the development of video technology which is suitable for many public relations purposes has increased the rate at which films are used to communicate information of a company to the desired audience.

- **Exhibitions**

Exhibitions are also considered to be a medium of public relations which has the potential of creating the opportunity for public relations officers as well as marketing communicators to come in face-to-face contact with desired targeted audience or visitors (Lancaster, 2005).   He claimed that since visitors

19

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. Lancaster (2005) and Well et al (2005) have similar views on the tools of public relations in communicating with the public.

Therefore, in utilizing the above mentioned tools, public relations team needs to work closely with the marketing department to gain a competitive advantage. Ability to monitor and evaluate these tools becomes very critical for public relations professionals. Furthermore, tracking of the outputs in terms of news releases that make up stories in media, its outcome as well as attitude or behavior change is necessary to prove the effectiveness of the public relations program (Wells et al, 2005).

### 2.4.1. Types of Public Relations Programs

The term public relations refers to relationship with various stakeholders.  In public relations, there are different types of relations which are referred to as relationship with various stakeholders. Wells et al (2005) described the different types of public relations. The key publics addressed by relationship management are the following:

- **Media Relations**

  This focuses on developing a relationship with the media and finding out if the media is interested in the organizations story. The term "public relations" is sometimes associated with the term 'publicity', which indicates the importance of this media function. The organization initiates publicity and provides relevant information to media. A successful relationship between a public relations person and the editor is built on public relations professional's reputation for honesty, accuracy and professionalism. When these qualities are tarnished or lost, the public relations professional cannot function effectively as a liaison between a company and the media (Wells et al, 2005**).**  White and Park (2010)

20

revealed in their study that public relations was perceived positively as against the negative perceptions portrayed by the mass media.

- **Employees Relations**

Most corporations place heavy emphasis on externalities such as marketing, branding and image management, and lesser attention on internal communications (Chong, 2007). It is crucial to pay more attention to employees as they are considered one of the "most trusted information sources about an organization (Dortok, 2006). Therefore, Employee's relations programs should be organized to communicate information to employees. The function of employee relations is both public relations and human resource management function. Employees' relations also involved internal marketing which communicate an effort aimed at informing employees concerning marketing programs as well as encouraging their support. This is because this goes a long way to affect the image of the organization (Wells et al, 2005).

- **Financial Relations**

The responsibilities of public relations practitioners in the arena of financial relations largely surrounded the stakeholders. The public relations department generates items such as annual general reports and financial reports, with inputs from other departments, to update its publics. Financial relations includes all communication efforts aimed at the financial community, such as press releases sent to business publications, meetings with investors and analysts, and annual reports which the government require of public held companies. Therefore, when stakeholders or even media, raise concerns over issues which might affect the public confidence, public relations practitioners are obligated to not just "pacify" the uncertainty, but to reaffirm the stakeholders regarding their investments.

- **Corporate Relations**

Corporate relations programs focus on organization's image and reputation. The purpose is to persuade the public to perceive the company in a positive light. According to Wells et al (2005) the public relation expert Fraser Seitel

21

has stated in the practice of public relations, that "it takes a great deal of time to build a favorable image for a corporation but only slip to create a negative public impression." The goal of reputation management in a corporate relations program is to strengthen the trust that stakeholders have in the company. Therefore, corporate reputation is a perception; it is earned through deeds, not created by advertising.

- **Public Affairs**

  Focuses on corporate communication with governments and with the public on issues related to government and regulations. Public affairs include both lobbying and communication efforts. Issue management is another term for this function. In addition to government relations, public affair programs also monitor public opinion about issues central to the organization's interest and develop programs for communicating to, and with the public on these issues.

- **Community Relations**

  Organizations have obligations to their communities through various kinds of support including encouraging employees to do voluntary work, providing a grant to the local band or art museum, donating needed equipment to local schools and hospitals. Leeper (2004) notes that recognizing community as the context within which organizations operate, and recognizing the importance to organizations of establishing strong communities, is a good backdrop for realizing idealistic role of public relations. Wilson (2004) indicates that participation in a community is both a right and a responsibility. Therefore, active and continuing participation within a community helps to maintain and enhance cordial relationship to the benefit of both the institution and the community at large. Post, Preston, and Sachs (2002) pointed out that a company's wealth and its license to operate are influenced by its relationship with stakeholders. In this case, it is influenced by the company's relationship with communities. In this view, relationship building approach becomes very important in public relations activities.

## 2.5. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING APPROACH IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

The idea of relationships as the core of public relations was first advocated by Ferguson in 1984 (as cited in Bruning and Ledingham, 2000). The concept was then advanced through the adoption of a relational definition of public relations during The First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations as cited by (Newson and Carrell, 2001): public relations practice is the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both organizations and the public interest. It is therefore a well-known fact, that successful public relations practitioners are responsible for numerous tasks on a daily basis. Whether it is relationship management, event planning, or even crisis communications, public relations practitioners must always keep a level-head and be prepared for any situation at any given time. Managing mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics is the most important role of a public relations practitioner. Kotler (2003) further opine that building good relations with the company's various publics helps obtain favorable publicity, build up a good corporate image and head off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events. The mutual relationship between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends becomes the core aim of public relations practitioner. Good relationship building is grounded on trust between the organization and its public (Kotler, 2003).

- **Trust and Public relations**

  Kent and Taylor (2002) postulates that, as it is known in public relations, once public trust has been lost, it becomes very difficult and sometimes impossible, to regain it. Therefore, relationship building by public relations is based on establishing trust with the publics of the institution. According to Huang (2001) trust is a crucial factor which influences relationships between publics and organizations. This becomes a foundation of relationship building. Without trust, management and public will not be able to communicate and cooperate well with each other. Wood (2008) states that public relations has more credibility than other promotional tools because the audience receives the message through media channels perceived to be more objective than

sources controlled by the organization.   Merenda (2004) additionally stated that credibility is a key in establishing trust. Therefore, establishing trusting, relationship is important objective in public relations. Dozier (1995) (as cited in Bruning and Ledingham, 2000) mentions that the direction of an organization was affected by relationships with the key publics in its environment. These calls for the use of communication as a strategic management function to help manage relationships with publics that affected the organization's mission, goals and objectives". Bruning and Ledingham (2000) further indicated that communication becomes a vehicle used by an organization to "initiate, develop, maintain and repair mutually productive relationships".

The above outlines the main roles of the professional public relations person. That is, analyzing, predicting their consequences and counseling organization leaders. These roles fall into the management context in which public relations personnel help to frame, implement, adjust and communicate the policies that govern how institution interacts with its publics.   Communication therefore becomes a vehicle in public relations activities.

- **Communications and Public Relations**

    Communications is central to public relations. The purpose of public relations is to establish a two-way communication to resolve conflicts of interest by seeking common grounds or areas of mutual interest (Lancaster and Jobber, 2006). Dolphin (2004) argues that communication makes an organization more transparent and enables stakeholders to appreciate its operations more clearly, facilitating a better reputation. In the view of Grunig et al (2006) integration of the public relations function into other areas means that this function cannot be managed strategically, because it cannot move communications resources from one strategic public to another - as an integrated public relations function can. There are also arguments that public relations is not efficient when practitioners master the technical skills without the understanding of when and why to use public relations to make communication more competent for organization.   Leges and Simkin (2003)

support Jobber (2001) view of public relations as the "management of communication and relationships to establish goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics".  Public relations exists implicitly or explicitly whether an organization likes it or not. Carrying out day-to-day operations, an organization necessarily communicates certain messages to those who, for whatever reason, interact with the institution. Public relations is essentially a process of communication and is needed most when normal communications are strained and some people are left uninformed.

- **Corporate Reputation and Public Relations**

    Pickton and Broderick (2005) see image as the perception of the company by its publics.  Therefore the corporate image is the perception of the organization by its audiences. The authors emphasized that an organization have many images, but not just one, because each target audience is affected by its own interest and contacts.

In the view of Nakra (2000) public relations activities must be involved early in the process when developing strategies for building and maintaining the corporate image and reputation. Corporate relations program is to strengthen the trust that stakeholders have in the company. It deals with intangible product and also with a person's judgment, an attitude, a sense a feeling rooted in his or her mind. Individual Judgment, attitude and a sense a feeling affects the reputation of an institution. Good reputation is hard to build and cannot be bought. It is fragile and very easy to lose. Additionally, Clow and Baack (2007) remark that corporate reputation is extremely vulnerable and extremely valuable hence, good reputation is hard to build and cannot be bought. This makes reputation fragile and easy to lose.

Hutton et al (2001) argue that companies with extensive corporate communication strategies were more likely to have strong reputations. Once companies focused on managing relationship with its publics; the more likely they were to have a strong reputation.  Nakra (2000) observe that reserving a seat at the corporate boardroom

25

tables for public relations executives and involving them in strategy development, would be a logical first step for corporate reputation building.  Dolphin (2000) argues that corporate reputation can win competitive advantages for an organization in a crowded marketplace. Beavers-Moss (2001) emphasizes that building credibility and trustworthiness are main issues in public relations.  In view of the above, managing corporate reputation is very important but very delicate and sensitive process.

## 2.6. KEY PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS

Public relations department is a unit in the firm that manages publicity and other communications within every group that is in contact with the company. Cutlip et al (2006) remark that the public relations function will be useful only if management wants it. If the management perceives this function as not something crucial for the company, then this function will not have a strategic position in the company and its contribution will be small.

According to Clow and Baack (2007) many public relations activities are not considered marketing functions. The authors further opined that marketing department concentrates on customers and channel members but public relations department focuses on a variety of internal and external stakeholders including employees, stockholders, public interest group, the government and society as a whole.  Clow and Baack (2007) identified five key public relations functions.

- ***Identifying Stakeholders***

    According to Clow and Baack (2007) all the recipients of company communications are important.  Any constituent who makes contact with a company should receive a clear, unified message.   Therefore, the stakeholders who are targets of public relations efforts are important. A stakeholder is a person or group that has a vested interest in the organization's well-being.  A vested interest can be a variety of items, including the following:

    Profits paid as common stock dividends, Loan repayments that a lending institution seeks to receive, Sales to the company or purchases made from the

company, Wages paid to employees, Community well-being and a special-interest topic. Clow and Baack (2007) state that there are two types of stakeholders that every organization must not underestimate.

### (a) Internal Stakeholders

Company leaders should not underestimate the importance of internal communications.   Employees are a potentially powerful channel of communication to people outside of the organization and can either enhance the firm's reputation or damage it.  What employees say to those around them has a much higher level of credibility than what a company says about itself. Word-of-mouth communications, even informal ones through employees, impact decisions about purchasing and investing. Employees as well as internal stakeholders, such corporate shareholders and any labor unions should receive a constant flow of information from the company.  To work effectively in communicating with employees, the public relations department Publications and communications aimed at employees must be consistent with the image and message that the firm is espousing to customers and other groups (Clow and Baack, 2007).

### (b) External Stakeholders

Overseeing external communications is a daunting task, because the organization has little or no influence on how these publics perceive organizational activities.  External stakeholders include groups such as the media, local community, financial community, government, and special-interest groups.  The organization usually has little power over what these groups say or how they interpret information about the organization.   It is important, therefore, for the organization to disseminate positive information and quickly react to any negative publicity or views that are expressed.  The key is to monitor constantly what is going on around the organization in order to keep constituents as happy and satisfied as possible (Clow and Baack, 2007).

- **Managing Corporate Reputation**

Additionally, Clow and Baack (2007) mentioned that corporation's reputation is extremely vulnerable. It is also extremely valuable. In their view, well-received corporate and brand names can enhance businesses during the good times and protect them when a crises or problem occurs. Potential employees decide where to apply and where to work based on the organization's reputations. To attract and maintain employees depends on the institutions reputation. Assessing and managing an organization's reputation is as important as promoting its products. Assessment begins when company leaders take the time to conduct surveys and interviews to find out what people think of the organization. The process of assessment should include internal views of the corporation's reputation as well as opinions held by those outside the company (Clow and Baack, 2007).

- *Auditing Corporate Social Responsibility*

Social responsibility is the obligation an organization has to be ethical, accountable, and reactive to the needs of society. (Clow and Baack, 2007) In general, business experts agree that socially responsible firms are more likely to thrive and survive in the long term. Companies engaged in positive activities generate quality publicity and customer loyalty that result in a positive image of the firm. The organization can reduce damage to its public image and increase positive public perceptions of the organization. A corporate social responsibility audit is usually undertaken by the organization's management team in conjunction with department managers (Clow and Baack, 2007) The purpose of a social responsibility audit is to make sure the organization has clear-cut ethical guidelines for employees to follow and that the company acts to serve the interests of all publics. Guidelines include use of a corporate or professional code of ethics, specifying activities that would be construed as being unethical, and statements about the positive activities a company will pursue. The task of the public relations department is to make sure internal publics are aware of a corporation's social responsibility efforts. The

28

department can then inform the general public about these activities to help enhance the firm's image.

- *Creating Positive Image-Building Activities*

In an effort to positively influence the views that consumers and other stakeholders have about a company, many organizations have turned to cause-related marketing (a program in which an organization ties a marketing program in with some type of charity in order to generate goodwill) and green marketing (the development and promotion of environmentally safe products or activities). These planned events are designed to draw positive attention to the organization as a solid corporate citizen and one committed to social responsibility. In creating positive image-building, the public relations department can send out messages in the form of press releases and hold press conferences to highlight these positive, image building activities (Clow and Baack, 2007). Jo (2003) conducted a research on the Portrayal of Public Relations in the New Media. It was found that the term public relations is primarily used to suggest image building, reputation management, and persuasion efforts.

- *Preventing or Reducing Image Damage*

Furthermore, one of the most important public relations functions is damage control (Clow and Baack, 2007). Damage control is reacting to negative events caused by a company error, consumer grievances, or when unjustified or exaggerated negative press appears. Corporate and brand images are quickly damaged by negative publicity and events. A strong company image, which took years to build, may be destroyed in just a few weeks or months. The role of public relations professional is to build strong company image through public relations activities. According to Clow and Baack (2007) defending an organization's image and handling damage control take two forms: proactive prevention strategies and reactive damage-control strategies.

### (a) Proactive Prevention Strategies

Proactive prevention means that rather than waiting for harmful publicity to appear and then reacting, many firms work hard to minimize the effects of any bad press.  These approaches may prevent negative publicity from starting in the first place.  Two proactive prevention techniques are entitlings and enhancements (Clow and Baack, 2007).

❖ *Entitlings* are attempts to claim responsibility for positive outcomes of events.

❖ *Enhancements* are attempts to increase the desirable outcome of an event in the eyes of the public.


### (b) Reactive Damage-Control Strategies

A Company's public relations unit must react to unforeseen events, because they cannot anticipate every possible contingency.  In these instances, organizations must work diligently to blunt the effects of unwanted bad publicity by every means possible. Reactive damage-control strategies include Internet interventions, crisis management programs, and impression management techniques (Clow and Baack, 2007).

❖ *Internet Interventions*

These are designed to combat negative word of mouth.  Individuals can put any information they desire on the Internet through e-mail, chat rooms, rogue Web sites, ad Internet blogs. The internet has opened an entirely new venue for people to vent emotions, which can be devastating to a company's reputation.  Unfortunately, few companies monitor these communications and even fewer do anything about them (Clow and Baack, 2007). In their study, Wright and Hinson (2010) found that facebook was the most current media used for public relations messages. Therefore, organizations must be vigilant and realize the power of the Internet and what it can do to an organization's reputation.

❖ *Crisis Management*

According to Pines (2000) crisis management as an art has been around since the beginning of recorded time. Adam had to manage the first crisis after Eve

persuaded him to eat the apple.  Crisis involves either accepting the blame for an event and offering an apology or refuting those making the charges in a forceful manner. A crisis may be viewed as either a problem or an opportunity or an organization.  Many times, a crisis contains the potential to improve the firm's position and image (Clow and Baack, 2007).

❖ *Impression Management*

Another reactive damaged-control strategy is impression management. This is the tendency to protect one's self-image or "the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions."   In order to maintain or enhance self-image, individuals and corporations attempt to influence the identities they display to others.  The goal is to project the organization through its public relations activities in such a manner to maximize access to and the visibility of positive characteristics while minimizing any negative elements that may damage the image of the company (Clow and Baack, 2007).

## 2.7. FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to National School Public Relations Association (2010) educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function to help 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. According to the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) in America (2010) educational public relations professionals handles the following major functions:

• *Counseling*

Public relations officers function is to provide counseling to students, take a proactive stance, anticipate problems, and provide solutions. They are also required to communicate with the internal and external publics as well as handle all aspects of the school district's publications such as its external and internal newsletters, among others.

31

- ***Media's Liaison***

  The public relations officers further serve as the media's liaison with the school district by writing news releases for all local newspapers, television as well as radio. They work to get media coverage of school district news and also handle the developments of budget or bond issue campaigns and publications.

- ***Communications Planning***

  Educational public relations professionals handle communications planning which include crisis communications planning as well as writing and developing communication plan for the district detailing how to reach its internal and external publics. They are expected to conduct formal and informal research, surveys, polls to determine public opinion and attitude as a basis for planning and action implementation. Finally, they deal with media during crises.

- ***Publicizing Students and Staff Achievements***

  Educational public relation professionals publicize students and staff achievements, develops staff and retirement recognition programs. They also provide public relations training to staff and PTA's in areas such as communicating to the media. Therefore, communicating in a crisis are the responsibilities of the public relations professionals.

- ***Community Relations Liaisons***

  Additionally, educational public relations professionals also act as community relations liaisons. They serve as the district's liaison with community groups such as civic associations and service clubs; helps plan or publicize district and community service programs. So in effect, the public relations practitioner in the educational institution plays a major role in the management and governance of the institution.

- ***Information Station***

  Finally, educational public relations professionals serve as information station by answering public and new resident requests for information. They also maintain extensive background files; keep district's historical and budget

passage records and plan for school district anniversary celebrations. They further provide public relations training to staff in areas such as talking to the media, communicating in a crisis and recognizing that non-teaching staff are part of the school public relations team.

## 2.7.1. Misconceptions about Public Relations

Misunderstanding and ignorance as to the nature of public relations has led to it being confused with other disciplines and activities. The terms publicity, advertising and public relations are often thought of being synonymous. Publicity is often called 'free advertising'. Also confusing is when publicity professionals give publicity the alias of public relations and vice versa. Many authors contributing to the growing body of public relations concept have emphasized that the profession is often viewed as, or confused with other communication practices.   In the search for understanding of public relations, it is crucial to at least acknowledge such misconceptions and explain what public relations is not (Lancaster and Jobber, 2006).

- *Advertising and Public Relations*

  According to Lancaster and Jobber (2006) Public relations is not free advertising. Advertising complements selling whiles Public relations is about informative, educational and creates understanding through knowledge. The authors argued that Public relations is not free but time consuming and costs money in terms of management expertise. Also, editorial space and broadcasting time have more credibility than advertisements. Every organization, consciously or unconsciously, has Public relations involves communications with many groups and audiences, not just potential customers. Advertising, as indicated by Bentele and Wehmeir (2003) has been the simplest and dominant understanding of public relations. At the most basic level, it is argued that public relations is advertising for trust, information and the creation of attention designed to build trust in organizations and to draw the attention of the media to their products and images." (Bentele and Wehmeir, 2003).

Wilcox et al (2001) drew attention to how control of information is managed in both disciplines. The authors indicated that the public relations personnel prepare the material to be put in the public domain for onward submission to the Editors who in turn determine the substance of the material.  According to the authors, advertising on the other hand is just buying space and "broadcast time". Wilcox et al (2001) further explanation regarding advertising and public relations is that advertising is a narrow and a straight jacket form of communication and public relations contends with the entire policies and activities of the organization which will enhance the reputation of the organization. This means that public relations deals on a much broader base than advertising. Wilcox et al (2001) claim that public relations embraces the overall communications function of the organization while advertising lends itself only to the domain of marketing and concentrates on customers and channel members.

Clow and Baack (2007) believe that public relations focuses on a variety of internal and external stakeholders including employees, stockholders, public interest group, the government and society as a whole.  Although both professions rely upon similar means of communication it would be quite incorrect to view them as having the same objectives.

- ***Propaganda and Public Relations***

  Moore and Kalupa (2007) assert that propaganda is a major instrument of international conflict; it is employed in television and radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, and motion pictures to influence public opinion throughout the world.  The authors state that growing literacy has made it possible for unscrupulous governments and social propagandists to influence the opinions of people of underdeveloped countries through periodicals and pamphlets in many languages. They further emphasize that public relations is sometimes referred to as propaganda.  Since they are deliberately designed to influence public opinion, public relations programs may be considered as propaganda in the best sense of the efforts to influence public opinion.  In the view of Lancaster and Jobber (2006) propaganda is designed to indoctrinate to

34

attract followers.  It does not necessarily call for an ethical content, so facts can be distorted or falsified for self-interest.  Public relations on the other hand seek to persuade by securing the willing acceptance of attitudes and ideas. Propaganda has come to be known as an evil force through its wide spread use in creating hate and fear in time of war by means of atrocity, stories, brainwashing, brutality, and barbarism.  It has been used to further aggression by subverting public opinion at home and abroad (Moore and Kalupa, 2007). It must be deduced that not only are the two activities different but they are opposing forms of communication in their objectives and goals.

- ***Publicity and Public Relations***

According to Jobber (2001) publicity is the communication about a product or organization by the placing of news about it in the media paying for the time or space directly. Publicity is a result of information being made known.  The result may be uncontrollable and either good or bad.  Public relations is concerned with the behaviors of an organization, product or individual that leads to publicity. This means that publicity is a major element of public relations. It clearly seeks to control behavior in such a way as to attempt to ensure that the publicity is good (Lancaster and Jobber, 2006). Flodin (2003) agreed that the majority of the general public only views public relations as an art of publicity in all its entirety. This is a misunderstanding that has grown in strength due to the fact that publicity cannot be distanced from public relations in the way that other misconceptions can. Public relations activities are therefore performed through publicity.

## 2.7.2. Evaluation of Public Relations Activities

Public relations effectiveness and evaluation is based on setting measurable objectives in the beginning of the planning (Wells et al, 2005).  Philips (2001) also asserted that the ability to monitor, measure, evaluate and plan content is critical for most public relations practices as a ground of competitive advantage. According to Wells et al (2005) public relations practitioners must track the impact of a campaign in terms of output, how many news releases led to stories, and outcome like attitude or

behavior change. Such tracking is done to prove the effectiveness or public relations programs and to learn from it to be able to fine-tune Public Relations activities. In the view of Lancaster and Jobber (2006) effective public relations depends on setting specific objectives that are capable of evaluation, integrating public relations function into the organization and selecting the right personnel to carry out the public relations function. Philips (2001) provides a framework developed to set up and evaluate public relations activities. The author outlined a five-step approach to research and evaluation as follows:

- *Audit Research*

    There should be an audit research about the organization, products and services, and an audit of communications with audiences. Research can help to identify and track the progress of the campaign and its outcome. Looking into existing research saves time and money. Senior management should be involved at this stage to demonstrate the role that public relations can play.

- *Objectives*

    The objective set should reflect the strategic business goals of the organization. Public relations should be coordinated with other functions such as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and sponsorship. The target audience, the medium, the desired response and the timing should be identified.

- *Strategy and plan*

    There is the need to decide on level of measurement. Output measures show the message went out and its reachability. How was the massage remembered and understood by the target audience? Therefore, there is the need to measure outcomes of public relations activity to see whether it has changed opinions, behavior or attitudes of the target audience.

- *Measurement and evaluation*

    This measures the direction of public relations activities. It answers the question, whether the organization is getting there, and if yes, does the

organization stay on course? But if not, should the organization adjust the current tactics, strategy or objectives?

- ***Results***

  Results must be reviewed against the stated objectives. Did the organization achieve the stated objectives of public relations? What strategy worked best for the organization and which strategy should the organization change? Which strategy should the organization implement in the years ahead? Answers to all these questions will result in effective evaluation of public relations activities. Xavier et al (2005) put forward that there is no general method for measuring effectiveness but practitioners selected among an array of different methods and models to demonstrate the effectiveness of public relations activities. Therefore, public relations practitioners should follow-up measure and evaluate public relations activities to implement them effectively. Lages and Simkin (2003) further support the importance of utilizing overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organization's public relations communication with both external and internal publics.

Wells et al (2005) provided guidelines for common types of evaluation measures used in public relations:

- **Output Production**. Numbers of public relations products, such as news releases or event activities generated.
- **Distribution**. Number of media outlets (TV stations, newspapers) receiving public relations products.
- **Coverage**. Number and size of clips, column inches, seconds, or minutes of time or space.
- **Impressions**. Media placements multiplied by circulation or broadcast reach.
- **Advertising value**. Equivalent ad cost for time space.
- **Systematic Content Analysis**. Positive or valence (whether the story or mention seems to be more positive or negative), key messages (the idea in the story), sources, and prominence.

**Outcome Objectives Achieved**:

- **Awareness**.  Aided and unaided to recall the target audience.
- **Attitude**.      Perceptions and preferences or intent to buy.
- **Behaviour**.  Did they do what you wanted them do?

## 2.8. PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In recent times, the competition among universities has made marketing educational institutions to the outside world very important. Therefore, public relations units of institutions need to position universities to be viewed as one of the best in the system.  Newson and Carrell (2001) emphasize that public relations personnel for the local schools district must be aware of the feelings of students, parents, voters and the regional accrediting agency. The authors further opined that any institution has many publics and the public relations director must be able to advise management about the possible impact on those publics of various plans, policies and actions.

Mu-Li  and Wen-Bin (2010) reveal that organizational factors have significant influence on public relations performance than individual factors on the higher educational institution. Wilcox et al (2001) believe that the practice of public relations is indeed a process, one that utilizes frequent and concentrated communication. Communication is vital part in almost every educational institution.  A lot of early practitioners of public relations contributed to the growth of educational public relations. Therefore, university public relations professionals should build strong community relationships, take local concerns seriously, and attend to internal and external constituencies.

It is worth noting, however, that Kotler and Mindak (2000) argued that public relations play a greater role in academia, but a relatively reduced role in commercial organizations. In their view, 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. Another study by Kaverina (2003) of

a Russia state university also showed that two-way symmetrical efforts helped strengthen the relationship between the university and its key publics. It implies that public relations in higher education must rely on a comprehensive two-way communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the institution.

In the same vein, Henderson (2001) proposed a four-step process for managing communication in universities: research, planning, communication, and evaluation. According to White and Park (2010) public relations is important in providing positive information to the society. In the words of Kotler et al (2005) public relations still captures only a small portion of the overall marketing budgets of most firms, though public relations is considered as an important brand building tool. Therefore, in the practice of public relations, a lot of tools are employed within the universities to communicate with the various publics.

## 2.9. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of displaying a conceptual framework for this thesis is to assist in answering the research questions. When reviewing the existing literature in the area of public relations practices in private universities, it can be found that the area is not thoroughly researched. Therefore, models and theories from existing literature are hard to find. The study provided a framework which served as the basis for the interview guide developed in order to collect relevant data for this thesis. The framework assumes that in order to understand the role of public relations in higher education, one needs to understand the strategic role assigned to public relations, the tools employed, the impact of the public relations activities and the obstacles faced by public relations. Figure 2.1 provide a schematic representation of these issues.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

**ROLE/PRACTICES**

- **Disseminating Favorable News**
- **Relationships Building**
- **Prevent Image Damage**
- **Positive Image-Building**
- **Managing Corporate Reputation**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility**
- **Dealing with Media**
- **Dealing with Employee relations**

**TOOLS**

- **Speeches**
- **Sponsorships**
- **Corporate Advertising**
- **Press Releases**
- **Press Conferences**
- **Corporate Websites**
- **Events**
- **Notice Boards**
- **Television**

**IMPACT**

- **Change Attitude**
- **Positioning Or Repositioning**
- **Trust Building**
- **Manage Misconception**

**CHALLENGES**

- **Budget**
- **Qualified Personnel**
- **Lack of Office Space**
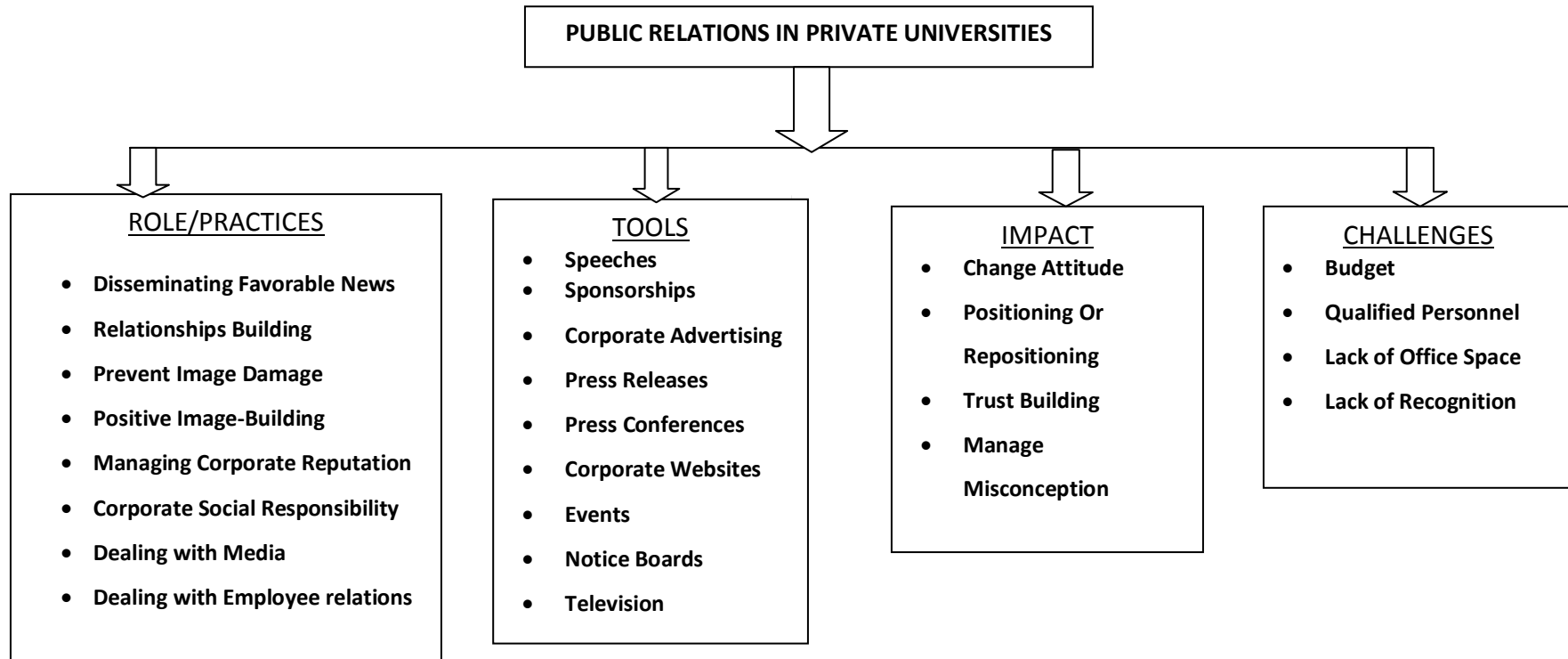- **Lack of Recognition**

**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

The functions or roles of public relations take many forms in different institutions. Public relations unit in the universities handle both organizational and societal functions. The organizational functions that are handled by public relations professional within a university set up include media relations, employee relations, corporate relations, community relations, public affairs, and financial relations. This agrees with the views of (Well et al, 2005).

Societal functions of public relations are related more toward establishing and maintaining effective relationships with the general public. Societal public relations goals are to promote a positive image to its public. In trying to promote a positive image, public relations unit focuses on presenting an image of being trustworthy to society, disseminating favorable news about the university, and creating high level of students and staff satisfaction through students and staff achievements and publication in newsletters and magazines. This also agrees with the views of (Clow and Baack, 2007; National School Public Relations Association, 2010; Palmer, 2000; White and Park, 2010; Well et al, 2005)

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

The impact may take the form ranging from corporate image building, Positioning or repositioning of the university, changing stakeholders' attitudes, opinions, or behaviors, building trust as well as managing misconception about university's programs. This view is supported by (Clow and Baack, 2007; Jobber, 2001; Wells et al, 2005).  This places the private universities in the eyes of both internal and external

publics as    an avenue for academic and social development (Kotler and Mindak, 2000).

The challenges of public relations in the university stems from a lot of areas and involves budget to run public relation activities, qualified personnel to man the unit, office space and recognition. Kotler et al (2005) and Lancaster and Jobber (2006) in their view sees budget and personnel as paramount in public relations activities. The challenges may limit the ability of the public relations strategic role to select the right tools to help build good corporate image.

**Summary**

In view of the above, for the private universities to make a significant impact and inform the public of the philosophy and orientation of the institutions, the public relations units must be made to function effectively. It has to undertake research and provide counseling, and identify the needs of its relevant public both within and external to the organization, planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public perception. It also has to establish channels for effective communication flow in and out of their institutions and maintaining harmonious relations with the relevant publics. The public relations unit will therefore help create a better understanding of private university education necessary for a greater stakeholder support. To this end, public relations unit should be seen as a very important component in the administration of the private universities.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research design, data collection and analysis. Particularly, it deals with how the researcher went about achieving the research objectives. This focuses on target population, method of gathering data and data processing, ethical considerations and limitations of the research work.

## 3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Usually, there are two main research approaches which have widely been used among researchers. These are quantitative research and qualitative research (Malhotra, 2007). The distinction can be made between a quantitative and a qualitative research method. In most situations, numbers describe the quantitative data, and words describe the qualitative data Quantitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing information in many forms. It tends to focus on exploring in detail, which provides more precision. Qualitative research on the other hand tends to offer more detail about the subject, with data on large scale, which is often perceived as "facts'. Furthermore, qualitative research method is employed to create a deeper understanding of the studied problem by gathering relevant data, analyzing and interpreting the data which are difficult to represent in numbers.

The research approach chosen for this thesis is qualitative which according to Blaxter et al (2001) is concerned with collecting and analyzing  information in as many forms, mostly non-numeric and tends to focus on exploring in as much detail as possible and aim to achieve the 'depth' rather than 'breath' of a study. The focus here lays on providing a better understanding of public relations practices within private universities in Ghana. Therefore, the suited research strategy is the case study.

## 3.1.1. Research Strategy

According to Yin (2003) there are five different strategies for research. These are experiments, surveys, archival analysis, history and case studies. But some of these

43

strategies are better studied than other for dealing with specific issues, and a crucial thing for good research is that strategy choices are done rationally.

### 3.1.2. The Multiple-Case Design

Case study according to Denscombe (2007) is the best way to penetrate and investigate a single of few complex situations. Blaxter et al (2001) note that case study in many ways is suited to the needs and resources of a small-scale researcher and focus on just one example or just two or three.  Yin (2003) hinted that evidence from multiple cases is more convincing since the researcher gathers a larger amount of data to support the solidness of the study. In their view, Blaxter et al (2001) believe that data in case studies are drawn from people's experiences, which allow the researcher to show the complicity of real life circumstances.

Yin (2003) wrote that multiple case design have distinct advantages when compared to single case designs. He emphasized that evidence that emanates from multiple cases is regarded as more compelling and this renders the overall study more robust. According to Denscombe (2007) when efforts is focused on one case study rather than multiple cases, there can be insights gained from an individual situation, which had not been discovered through the use of a broader research strategy. Yin (2003) opined that evidence from multiple cases is more convincing than single case since the researcher will get a broader view to support the solidity of the study. The use of multiple case studies for the present study was to gain an in-depth and insight into public relations practices of the universities selected for the study. Yin (2003) further believe that within-case analysis by comparing existing theories to empirical findings and a cross case analysis to distinguish similarities and differences and to draw conclusions based on the analysis gives a deeper understanding of the study.

However, multiple-case should not be equated with multiple respondents as the case might be in a survey kind of study. Multiple case designs normally follow replication logic as opposed to a sampling logic commonly used in a survey which requires an operational enumeration of the entire universe or a pool of potential respondents and then a statistical procedure for selecting a specific subset of respondents to be

44

surveyed (Yin, 2003). The replication logic is very much similar to what pertains in experimental research where an effort is made through a series of experiments to replicate initial findings (Yin, 2003). The logic underlying multiple case studies is the same in that each case must predict similar results or predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons( i.e. theoretical replication).

Multiple case studies are the chosen research strategy where there appears to exist a need to carry out an exploratory study to ascertain the empiricism of theory (Yin, 2003). Since the study is exploratory, case studies were conducted at three private universities in Ghana namely Methodist university College, Ghana Telecom University College, and Regent University College. Within case study and cross case study were undertaken to give a better view on public relations practices in private universities in Ghana.

## 3. 2. TARGET POPULATION

All the thirty nine private universities within Ghana form the population of this study. Three were selected for the study using purposive sampling. These were Methodist University College, Regent University College and Ghana Telecom University College.

Methodist University College was chosen because it has successfully operated as a private university for the past ten years offering both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and has public relations unit. Therefore, its views and approaches would be influential to the study.

Ghana Telecom University College was chosen because it has operated for five years and also has a very active public relations unit. The university can give an insight to public relations practices.

Lastly, Regent University College was selected because it has been performing public relations activities for the past five years and will give a picture of how Ghanaian private universities use public relations to position private universities.

45

## 3.3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data was collected through personal interviews with the aid of an interview guide. Blaxter et al (2001) sees interview as a narrative method of collecting data and believes that interview provides a more in-depth insight into the study area. Through interview, the study is limited to fewer informants with rich information and also constitutes a learning process.

### 3.3.1. Development of Interview Guide

In designing the interview guide, the relevant theoretical construction in public relations practices were identified and incorporated into the open-ended questions. Since the interview guide was an open-ended, it served the exploratory purpose of the study.

The interviews guide was organized into four (4) main sections based on the themes for the study. The first section investigates public relations practices. Thus, the opinions of public relations managers were sought on the public relations practices in private universities in Ghana.

The second section focuses on the tools employed by public relations unit in their activities. The views of public relations managers were sought on the specific tools used when communicating with both internal and external publics.

The third section explored the good corporate image building of the private universities. The views of public relations managers were obtained on what they felt constituted good corporate image and whether public relations unit has succeeded in building good corporate image of the private university.

Final section dealt with the challenges faced by public relations unit of the private universities in their day to day activities. The opinions of public relations managers of the three private universities were obtained on the challenges faced by the unit.

46

### 3.3.2. Conducting the in-depth interview

According to Denscombe (2007) through interview, the research is limited to fewer informants with rich information sharing. Yin (2003) also argued that interview is the most important source when it comes to obtaining information within a case study. The researcher conducted an interview to obtain the primary data through the use of an interview guide. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees. The respondents were interviewed between 45 minutes to 1 hour and Interviews were purposive, conversational and loosely structured (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Interviews, which featured discussion on public relations practices were recorded, with participants' permission and transcribed.

### 3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data gathered for the study, the researcher employed the data analysis method proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Miles (1979) described qualitative data as "attractive nuisance" perhaps due to the difficulty in analyzing the final data. While lots of articles have appeared on the need to do qualitative research, only few have devoted enough questions. Eisenhardt (1989) echoes this view when she stated "analyzing data is the heart of building theory from case studies but it is both the most difficult and the least codified part of the process". Often much space is given in the literature about data collection methods but little space for data analysis thereby providing a big gap between the raw data and the conclusions. This view was echoed by Miles and Huberman (1994:12) who stated "One cannot ordinarily follow how a researcher got from 3600 pages of field notes to the final conclusion, sprinkled with vivid quotes though they may be. To close this gap, Eisenhardt (1989) as well as Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed a framework for data analysis which involves

1.    **Data Reduction**
2.    **Data Display**
3.    **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**.

The iterative process is illustrated in figure 2. The concept is to see data analysis as a flow process in which its components of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification interact with each other. This is illustrated in figure 2.

**Figure 3.1: Components of Data Analysis**
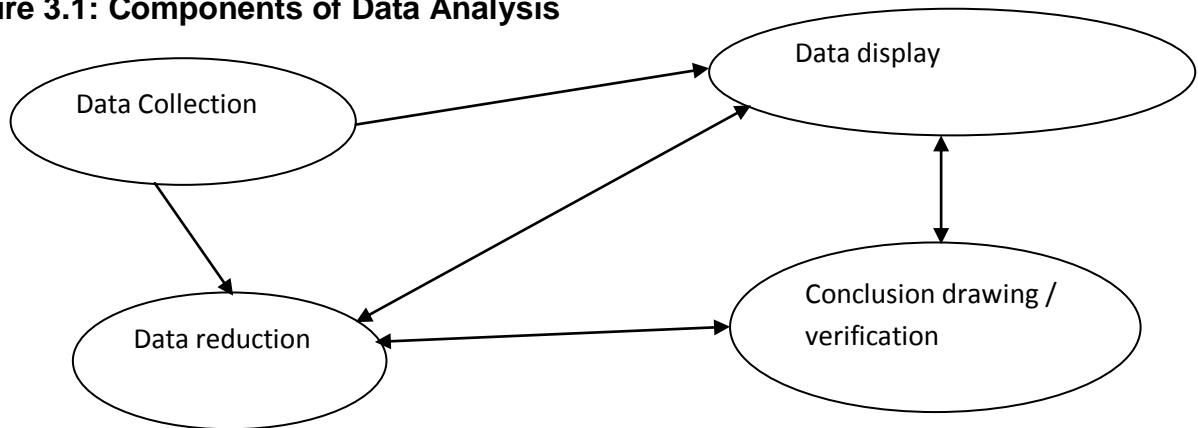


Source: Miles and Huberman (1994): 12

**Data Reduction:** This is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes and transcriptions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Accordingly, the authors argued that data reduction occurs even before the data collection begins, when the researcher decides which data must be collected perhaps based on a conceptual framework and a prior proposition. It continues during and after the fieldwork where summaries, coding, building up recurring themes and clustering as well as writing simple memos (Miles and Huberman, 1994) are used.

The essence is to reduce data overload so that sense and meaning can be drawn from the "3600" page field notes. They further believe that data reduction is better achieved by combining both quantitative methods using numbers and qualitative forms using words to ensure that the data that is collected is not abstracted from the context within which it is collected.

**Data Display:** According to Miles and Huberman (1994) data display is a visual format that presents information systematically. They argued that data displays

should follow a fixed sequence; building the format, entering data, drawing conclusions, writing analytic text and cycling onwards for revised or new displays. Data entry normally takes form of short blocks of texts , quotes, phrases, rating, abbreviations, symbolic figures labeled lines and arrows just to mention a few. The iterative sequence of their framework ensures a constant revision of the process to ensure that a better understanding emerged out of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) divided data displays into two main blocks namely:

1.    **Matrices**
2.    **Networks**

**Matrices** involve the crossing of two or more dimensions to see how they interact and are more suitable for variable analysis.

 **Networks** on the other hand are not dimensional but rather involve a series of nodes connected by links. They are noted to give the kind of narrative that gets chopped up analytically in matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994:239). Eisenhardt (1989), Yin (1994), Miles and Huberman, (1994), made a distinction between single case (within-case) display and cross-case (multiple cases) display or analysis. Within-case analysis involves detailed case study write-ups for each site or case. The aim of within-case analysis is to get the researcher to be intimately familiar with each case as a stand-along entity. The process enables the unique patterns of each case to emerge, providing a unique foundation for making cross-case comparisons feasible. Cross-case analysis involves searching for patterns across cases. Eisenhardt (1989) suggest three different techniques for doing cross-case analysis which are listed below:

- Select categories or dimensions and then look for within-group similarities coupled with inter-group differences. (e.g. Joint ventures vs. license agreements, successful vs. unsuccessful alliances)
- Select pairs of cases and then list similarities and differences between each pair. (e.g. Group cases into three or four for comparisons)
- Divide the data by data source (e.g. observation, interview, questionnaire)

49

The overall objective of the cross-case analysis techniques is to force researchers to go beyond initial impressions through the use of structured and diverse lenses on the data (Eisenhardt, 1989). She also argued that apart form developing a theory which fits the data, such detailed analysis and display improves the chances of the researcher to capture the novel findings hidden within the data.

**Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** The third and the last component of their framework as the name suggests, is conclusion drawing and verification. Usually, conclusions are drawn by observing patterns, looking at contrasts, clarifying relationship and building coherent understanding. Eisenhardt (1989) also postulated that in the conclusion phase of a theory building research, the key is to compare emergent concepts, theory, or hypothesis with the extant literature. This will also include asking what is similar to, what does it contradict and why. Sometimes, to be able to draw valid conclusions, especially for hypothetic deductive based research, one may have to measure constructs and verify relationships.

From the discussions above, one can argue that data analysis is a difficult and a challenging process employing various techniques to achieve its objectives. As Robson (2000), argued, data analysis process is an art and not a science, a practice enhanced through learning by doing.

### 3.4.1. Data analysis for the study

As already stated, the research aims at understanding public relations practices within the context of private universities in Ghana. The study also relied on multiple case studies to provide the empirical bases to help answer the research questions.

There was also an attempt to do both within-case and cross case analysis as suggested by Eisenhardt (1989). Within-case analysis was achieved through a detailed write-up of each case normally within twenty-four hours after the personal interview. As such the researcher became personally familiar with each case as a stand alone entity i.e., public relations practices, tools employed to disseminate

information, corporate image building activities and the challenges faced based on personal interview as well as opinions of public relations officers of three private universities. The detailed knowledge of each case facilitated cross-case comparisons in order to determine differences and similarities among the cases. The evidence from the cross-case comparisons was used as the bases for the theoretical generalization. Data display took the form of vivid quotations from informants which was appropriate to excite display and also made some points clear.

### 3.4.2. Ethical Considerations

The researcher deemed it very important to adhere to ethical principles and considerations. Firstly, the principle of voluntary participation was adhered to. The approval of participants was sought for the study. Additionally, participants were made aware of the purpose and objectives of the study. Their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were protected and guaranteed.  All textbooks, magazines journals and other materials as well as authorities read were fully acknowledged to avoid intellectual dishonesty such as plagiarism claims.

### 3.4.3. Limitations of the Study

The thesis examined only three private universities within Greater Accra Region of Ghana with reference to public relations practices. Comparing this with other regions of Ghana, the study had a relatively small scope. It would have been better to spread the research study to many private universities nationwide to give a better representation but this was not done. Thus, the study cannot be generalized to other private universities.

### Summary

The chapter highlights the research design, data collection and data processing which helped to achieve the objectives of the study. Areas emphasized by the study includes research design, research strategy, case design, population, data collection methods, data analysis techniques which includes data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. Ethical considerations that affected the study as well as the limitations of the study

## CHAPTER FOUR

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.0. INTRODUCTION

This study proposes to use Miles and Huberman (1994) data analyses discussed in chapter three. In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the personal interviews from the three private universities. This would then be followed by the discussion section i.e. Within Case and Cross Case Analysis. The last section would be shifted to conclusions drawing and verification.

### 4.1. CASE ONE: METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA (MUCG)

Missionaries of the Wesley Mission Society arrived in Ghana in 1835 and founded the Methodist Church. Since then, The Methodist Church has been involved in the provision and development of education at basic, senior secondary and teacher training levels. The Methodist Church Ghana is convinced that with her unique record and experience in the provision and development of quality basic, secondary and teacher education in the country, it can also make a contribution to the solution of the problems of offering education at the tertiary level.

At the 36th Annual Conference of The Methodist Church held in Cape Coast (1997), the then President of the Conference, Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Asante Antwi in his inaugural speech mentioned among the visions of the Church, the establishment of a Methodist University in Ghana. Prior to this, a number of Methodist academics, notably in Calvary Society in the North Accra Circuit had been discussing the possibility of establishing a Methodist University.

When the President learnt about this, he invited and held discussions with some of them. Subsequently and in pursuance of the President's vision statement, a Tertiary Education Advisory Council was set up by the President to consider and plan the establishment of a Methodist University College. The plans and decisions of the Council were approved at the Methodist Church 37th Annual Conference held in Sunyani in 1998.

In August 2000, The Methodist University College Ghana (MUCG) was granted accreditation by the National Accreditation Board and started academic work in October, 2000. In October, 2002 MUCG was affiliated to the University of Ghana.

This part of the chapter presents the write-ups of personal interview conducted on public relations practices at Methodist University College Ghana. The section consists of the following: Section 4.1.1 presents the results of the personal interviews conducted on public relations practices. Section 4.1.2 presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit. Section 4.1.3 presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit and the final section 4.1.4 also presents the results the interview conducted on the challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.

### 4.1.1 PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES

This part presents the results of the personal interviews conducted on public relations practices at Methodist University College Ghana.

**What is the position of Public relations officer in the university and whom do you report to?**

At Methodist University College Ghana, the public relations officer occupies middle level management position. The unit has five employees and under the business development office. The public relations officer reports directly to the business development manager who then reports to the president of the university. When asked whether reporting to the head of business limit their roles,   this is how the interviewee put it:

*"We are not a department on our own and have a limited operational space and share resources with other units in the university".*

**What type of cooperation does the public relations unit have with other departments of the university?**

    **(a) If very cordial, what makes you think so?**

    **(b) If not cordial, what makes you also think so?**

Since the public relations unit forms part of the administrative unit of the university, the unit works jointly with other departments and plays a pivotal role in the day to day activities of the university. Additionally, the unit liaises with other heads of departments when organizing social and academic programs for students. Interviewee states:

*"The unit enjoys cordial relationship with the management of the university based on the common understanding that we are building a first class university".*

**Does the public relations officer participate in decision making at the management level?**

At MUCG, interviewee expressly affirmed that public relations unit participates in decision making at Management Advisory Committee. He explained that there are three decision making bodies in the university. These are The Council, The Executive Committee and The Management Advisory Committee. Interviewee commented:

*"Though, we are represented at the management advisory board which is the third highest body but it is not the highest body in the university where final decisions are made and the role of the unit is still limited when it comes to communication of information".*

**Does the public relations unit have a representative on council meetings?**

The interviewee explained that the highest decision making body in the university is the Council but public relations unit is not represented to disseminate timely and accurate information within and outside the university. As the respondent explained:

*"The overall objective of the university is to inform and educate the general public on the activities and programs of the university through timely information delivery to help build relationships with stakeholders".*

**What makes public relations unit of the university very important?**

Public relations is an important tool in running the university. The unit communicates directly with both internal target groups and external publics. The public relations unit is seen as crisis manager, relationship manager and communications ambassador in the university. As the interviewee puts it:

*"This makes the practices of the public relations very unique because of its role as the mirror of the university in the face of the public".*

**In your view, what are the key public relations roles in the university?**

Public relations unit performs the following key functions within the university. It is the only unit that markets the university internally and externally. It serves as liaison between the university and other universities. The unit also performs fundraising and sponsorship activities as well as selling the agricultural produce of the university. Additionally, the unit should be responsible for organizing events like graduation and matriculation ceremonies, publicizing students and staff achievements, media relations, church relations, managing corporate reputation, communications planning, delivering information, building positive image as well as relationship building. As interviewee contends:

*"The unit performs multi dimensional functions within and outside the university".*

## 4.1.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

This section presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit at Methodist University College Ghana.

**What types of public relations tools does the university use to communicate with its internal and external publics?**

The most common internal tools used by public relations unit in relationships building within the university are notice boards, emails, memos and the internet. The tools used for external communications with the publics to build relationships and image by the public relations unit include the print media, television, radio, billboards, brochures, speeches, websites, exhibitions and press releases.

**Which type(s) tool(s) is widely used by public relations?  Which type(s) are not widely used and why?**

The university's website is the widely used and important public relations tool which the unit puts much effort on. This channel is useful to inform, educate and build relations with the publics of the university.

The tool which is least important and not widely used by the public relations unit is press conference. The public relations unit believes those press conferences are organized when there is crisis at hand to deal with. As interviewee contends:

*"The unit has not employed this tool since the unit is very proactive on crisis issues".*

**Which publics do you interact with frequently in the university?**

Within the university, the public relations unit interacts frequently with the students and staff both academic and non academic. The unit interacts with students, academic and non academic staff through the notices, memos, websites and forums on academic programs. The unit considers the internal employees as the primary public of the university of which the success or failure of the university depends.

**Which types of relations are you using in your public relations activities in the university?**

Virtually, the unit uses all the relations such as employee relations, media relations, corporate relations, public affairs and community relations. The interviewee

56

emphasized that the use of each of the relations depends upon the target audience and activities being undertaken by the unit in the university.

**Which type of relations is the most or least dominant in the activities of public relations in the university and why?**

The unit put more focus on employee relations as the most important relation since they are the immediate public and their activities may affect the university negatively when not handled well. Interviewee states:

*"Employees represent the face of the university and their activities may affect the image of the university outside".*

The next important relations is media relations. This is seen as a means to reach the general public and give enough publicity to the university. Public affairs is another important communication strategy the unit employs to communicate with various government institutions and decision makers in the country. The least dominant but still important relation is community relations. The unit believes that its contributions to community relations is not effective and has not been used to its advantage.

### 4.1.3. CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING

This presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit at Methodist University College Ghana.

**Has public relations succeeded in building good corporate image of the university? What make you think so with such issues as money making venture, unqualified lecturers, and unqualified students?**

Relationship building helps build corporate image of the university. The unit adopts various means to build the relationships with the publics. The unit provides information to the public through websites; organizes outreach programs to educate senior high school students on academic programs, invitation of media houses and the community to functions of the university like graduations and anniversaries.  On

the issue of the university being a money making avenue, the interviewee stated and I quote:

*"The university is not a commercial venture because fees are not even enough to cover running costs such as salary, transportation, fuel and utility. Therefore, the university relies on Methodist Church for financial support".*

The interviewee also explained that the university admits students to pursue a degree program based on the national accreditation board's guidelines for admission which is not different from the state university's entry requirement of aggregate 24.

The interviewee further explained that the university employs lecturers with M.Phil and PhD in their respective subject areas to lecture in the university and believes that this has helped advertise the name of the university. The publics have made the university a preferable choice and evidence is seen in increase in students' enrollment. As an interviewee voiced out:

*"We have succeeded in building the corporate image of the university because of good relationship we have with the society at large".*

**How do you build relationships with students, parents and employers?**

Students are the main customers of the university so the unit gets involved with SRC programs and coordinate alumni activities during their week's celebration. The SRC is also represented on congregation and matriculation committees to contribute their quota. In building relationships with students, the university's website and events is used. When asked the type of information and how often the website is updated, this is what the interviewee has to say:

*"We place on the website announcements, academic programs, departments, total number of students, total number of academic staff with their qualifications and general information for the general public and the website is updated as and when there is information to supply to students".*

To build relationships with parents, the unit invites them to attend and grace special events of the university such as congregations and matriculations to make them feel part and parcel of the university.

To build relationship with employers, the unit invites corporate organizations such as insurance firms, mortgage companies, banks to educate students about their activities and products. This is helping to bridge the gap between the industry and the university.

**Do you think trust plays a role in corporate reputation building?**

The reputation of a university is measured during a long period of time. Since the establishment of the Methodist University College Ghana ten years ago, it has succeeded in building a strong and stable corporate reputation. The trust and reputation developed by public relations unit of the university can be seen as a complement to the quality education, competent lecturers, authenticity of academic certificate, and discipline of teaching staff. The university delivers on it promises and this has resulted in a positive development in the students and the public towards trusting the university. As a respondent puts it:

*"We believe that if trust is managed correctly between the university and the publics as a trustable and credible partner, the university's reputation will be secured also in the future".*

**Do you think that with the current image, the university can withstand the current competitive environment?**

The university has earned a credible image for itself through the unique academic programs it offers and ten years experience in running a tertiary institution with well trained students, qualified staff both academic and non academic as well as morally and spiritually discipline, the university can face the competitive nature of the private universities in Ghana.

**Does the public relations unit have any community relations program in place? If yes, what role[s] does the public relations unit play in such community-support activities?**

The respondent mentioned that community support activities such as donation of items, provision of grants for community development and seminars on topical issues are the ways through which the public relations unit can maintain effective community relations but the extent of engaging in such community relations activities by the unit is not hopeful. The only community support activities that the unit is involved occasionally are blood donations and clean-up activities.

**What do you think should be the core role of public relations in private universities in Ghana?**

The interviewee believes that the core role of public relations is to disseminate information within the university and to the external publics. Therefore, dissemination of information within the university or outside help builds relationships. The interviewee emphasized:

*"Both internal and external publics are the two main entities we have with different branches".*

### 4.1.4. PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

This section also presents the results of the interviews conducted on the challenges faced by public relations unit of Methodist University College Ghana. The study explored views on budget, staff, office space and recognition.

**Does the unit have a budget in place?**

Though, Public relations unit of the university is performing very creditably but not without a challenge. The unit is facing budget constraints to organize marketing activities to reach the larger populace of the country.

**Does the unit have qualified staff?**

The unit is manned by competent personnel who are well versed with public relations activities. This has very strong and energetic graduates to handle public relations issues at any point in time and disseminate information as and when necessary.

**Does the unit have office space?**

The unit does not have its own department to carry out public relations activities effectively. The operational space to carry out public relations activities is limited. There is also the challenge of limited resources in general. For instance, the unit shares a vehicle with the registrar's office which to a large extent does not help the unit to undertake programs successfully.

**Is the unit recognized within the university?**

Though the unit is not represented at the highest decision making body in the university i.e. council but management, heads of department and staff recognize the function being played both within and outside the university. The unit is seen as pivotal in the day to day running of the university.

**4.2. CASE TWO: REGENT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

The Regent University College of Science and Technology (elsewhere referred to as Regent-Ghana) is located in Accra, Ghana. It was registered in September 2003 as a company limited by guarantee. It received accreditation to operate as a tertiary institution in 2004, and in January 2005, it started its maiden lectures with about 30 pioneer students at its maiden campus, the Trinity Campus, Mataheko. Currently, it has three other satellite campuses, located at Dansoman, Lartebiorkoshie, and Graphic Road. Plans are underway to construct its purpose-built, main campus at the McCarthy Hill. The University College has three Schools, namely, the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS), the School of Informatics and Engineering (SIE), and the School of Research and Graduate Studies (SRGS). The School of Research and Graduate Studies currently offers four postgraduate degree programmes, namely, Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Science in Statistics, Master of Divinity, and Master of Theology. The MBA programme is jointly offered by Regent

University College and the Maastricht School of Management. The School of Research and Graduate Studies provides oversight to all postgraduate programmes. There is also the Language Centre and a newly established Centre for Academic Writing.

Locally, Regent-Ghana is currently affiliated to the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the Trinity Theological Seminary. Its international partners are Deggendorf University of Applied Sciences, (Germany), Lulea University of Technology (Sweden), Acadia University (Canada), Wheelock College (USA), University of Applied Sciences Umwelt Campus, Birkenfeld, Germany. Regent University is also a Member of the Conference for Heads of Private Universities, Ghana.

This part of the chapter also presents the write ups of personal interviews conducted on public relations practices at Regent University College. The section consists of the following: Section 4.2.1 looks at the interviews conducted on public relations practices. Section 4.2.2 presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit. Section 4.2.3 presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit and the final section 4.2.4 also presents the results of the interviews conducted on the challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.

## 4.2.1. PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES

This part presents the results of the personal interviews conducted on public relations practices at Regent University College.

**What is the position of the Public relations officer in the university and whom do you report to?**

At Regent University College, public relations is seen as an integral part of the structure of the university. The Public relations manager occupies a management position and the department has staff strength of ten employees who are actively involved in public relations activities both within and outside the university.

Employees involved in public relations activities are located at the public affairs departments headed by public relations manager and reports directly to the president and the CEO of the university.

**What type of cooperation does the public relations unit have with other departments of the university?**
   **(a) If very cordial, what makes you think so?**
   **(b) If not cordial, what makes you also think so?**

Public relations department is fully recognized by all the departments of the university. It is seen as an indispensable and a competitive tool in the university. The university sees public relations as communication tool that also support the office of the registrar, participate in students matriculations and orientation ceremonies, responsible for the production of brochures to help disseminate information. It is therefore regarded as the mouthpiece and lifeline of the university. The overall communication policy, which controls the image within and outside the university, lies in the domain of the public relations department. This has served as a conduit to build cooperation and cordial relationship between the unit and other departments of the university.

**Does the public relations officer participate in decision making at the management level?**

At Regent University College, the public relations manager participates in decision making at the university and is given a seat at the academic board meetings which comprises all heads of department and the second powerful body in the university apart from the council.

**Does the public relations unit have a representative on council meetings?**

The interviewee explained that the public relations department at Regent University College does not have a representative at the council meetings which is the highest decision making body of the university. Therefore, they receive reported speeches which do not help to communicate accurate information to the publics.

**What makes public relations unit of the university very important?**

Communication is the lifeblood of very organization. The flow of information within the university hinges on public relations. Therefore, without effective public relations department the information flow within and outside the university will be distorted and will affect relationship building approach of the university. This makes the public relations unit indispensable in the university. As interviewee put it: "Public relations is pivotal when it comes to communication within and outside the university".

**In your view, what are the key public relations roles in the university?**

The key public relations functions within Regent University College covers public relations activities such as daily communication between the university and it publics, media relations which is one of the important functions of public relations. Media publicity is not a goal in itself but it should be viewed as a medium to reach the university's publics. Moreover, positive image-building activities i.e., production of brochures, magazines and newsletters, preventing image damage, crisis managing, relationship building, organization of public lectures, matriculation and graduation ceremonies as well as protocol needs of the university to build image, inform and educate public about the programs and services rendered by the university are also functions performed by the unit. As the interviewee echoed:

*"Our functions are many and depend on the issues at hand".*

**4.2.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS**

This section presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit at Regent University College.

**What types of public relations tools does the university use to communicate with its internal and external publics?**

In communicating with the publics, public relations at Regent University College utilizes a number of tools to reach out and build relations with both internal and external publics. The most important public relations tool for communicating with both internal and external publics is the university's website where information is displayed

every day for the publics. Notice boards as well as seminars are also important tools used for disseminating information internally to staff and students. Literature such as leaflets, folders and booklets are also used to give information about the university to the general public. Corporate advertising, television programs, exhibitions, press releases are additionally used as tools of communication.

**Which type(s) tool(s) is widely used by public relations?  Which type(s) are not widely used and why?**

The most common public relations tools used by Regent University College are image building activities like university's website, notice board and television. The tool which is not widely used but still important in Regent University College's communication approach is the press conference. The public relations department believes that press conferences are usually employed when there is image damage but the unit is always working hard to prevent image damage to the university. Therefore, press conferences have never been used.

**Which of the publics do you interact with frequently in the university?**

The unit interacts frequently with the students, academic and non academic staff of the university. The unit interacts with the publics to find out their views on issues affecting the progress of the university. On the issue of how the unit interacts with the internal public, the interviewee responded:

*The unit interacts through notice boards, meetings, memos and the university's website".*

**Which types of relations are you using in your public relations activities in the university?**

The unit employs most of the relations and includes employee relations, media relations, corporate relations, public affairs, financial relations and community relations. The use of each of the relations is based on the activities to be undertaken by the unit. It could be a combination of both employee relations and media relations. But financial relations and community relations are hardly used. The community

65

relations is being handled by other departments within the university. We are not too deeply involved in this area. As the interviewee puts it:

*"The unit only provides media coverage when we are informed"*

**Which type of relations is the most or least dominant in the activities of public relations in the university and why?**

Employee and students relations known as 'Internal information' is an important relation within the university. Media relations is also used to get editorial space in the media to influence and inform potential investors, students and stakeholders. Still important relation in Regent University College's communication strategy is the public affairs, which has to do with the communication with various governmental institutions and decision makers. Additionally, corporate relations are also important since it focuses on building the image and reputation of the university. This is achieved through trust building by delivery what the university promises.

The least dominant but important relation is the community relations. It is least important since the university manages this relations by a department in the university called Education Support Department. The public relations department only arranges for media coverage in such activities. Public relations is an important tool for the university when communicating and maintaining relations with the university's publics.

## 4.2.3. CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING

This presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit at Regent University College.

**Has public relations succeeded in building the good cooperate image of the university? What make you think so with such issues as money making venture, unqualified lecturers, and unqualified students?**

Looking at the intangibility nature of university education, public relations play an important role in building corporate image leading to good reputation building. A

66

strong company image, which took years to build, may be destroyed in just a few weeks or months. Therefore, communicating and maintaining relations with both internal and external publics through our website, educational programs and the media. Interviewee contended:

*"The University has succeeded in building the corporate image through communication and maintenance of effective relationships with both internal and external publics as we deliver what we promise".*

The respondent vehemently stated that the university can never be a money making venture and does not employ unqualified lecturers and students grades are verified from the West African Examinations Council. The interviewee mentioned that such issues are all misconceptions but the university is being monitored by the National Accreditation Board as well as the affiliated universities in Ghana (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the Trinity Theological Seminary) and international partners and emphasized:

*"The university will not compromise on any action that will tarnish the image of the university".*

**How do you build relationships with students, parents and employers?**
Regent University College, the most important relationship building is the use of sponsorships. The university has in place a scholarship package for needy but brilliant students to further their education within and outside Ghana. They are also involved in events such as matriculation and graduation programs.

In building relationship with parents, the university usually invites parents and the community to participate in the university's programs such as graduation ceremonies. Information is always disseminated through brochures, leaflets and flyers. This has helped to strengthen positive values and trends amongst the publics towards the university.

In building relationship with employees, the unit invites occasionally top business executives to lecture students on businesses dynamics and how corporate organizations and individuals develop their businesses thereby imparting entrepreneurial skills to the students. Public relations unit also collaborates with corporate institutions and monitors the performance of students in their work places. As the interviewee puts it:

*"This is a two way communication between the university and the employers to foster better understanding".*

**Do you think trust plays a role in corporate reputation building?**

Corporate reputation building is one of the key areas that public relations departments at Regent University College considers very important. Because attracting and maintaining qualified employees as well as students is based on the institutions image. Public relations activities initiated by Regent University College help develop trust with both internal and external publics. The most important trust building activities is the contact with potential and existing students, media and stakeholders. One of the advantages with good public relations is that it can deliver what it promises. Activities regarding public relations should first of all be used to handle positive issues, but also if needed to deal with negative issues. The university believes that active initiatives with public relations activities can change corporate reputation in a short period of time. The interviewee pointed out that through trust and reputation building, public relations department achieves competitive advantages over other private universities and has helped in generating new students.

**Do you think that with the current image, the university can withstand the current competitive environment?**

The university has earned a positive image. The university is perceived as prestigious, excellent, cutting edge in terms of ICT, engineering oriented programs and has created a market niche for itself. The respondent echoed:

*"The University is the first private engineering university that offers unique programs and this has given us a competitive edge over other private universities in Ghana".*

68

**Does public relations unit have any community relations program in place? If yes, what role[s] does the public relations unit play in such community-support activities?**

Community relations programs are organized by the education support department of the university. The public relations department only participates where media coverage is involved. The unit liaises with the media to make sure the activities of the department is given adequate media coverage. But I must emphasize that the unit does not have community relations program in place.

**What do you think should be the core role of public relations in private universities in Ghana?**

In Regent University College, the public relations department considers the image building as the core role of the department. Public relations department believes that media relations and other functions of public relations facilitate information dissemination to both internal and external publics to help build understanding and cooperation which in the long run build the universities image.

## 4.2.4. PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

This section also presents the results of the interviews conducted on the challenges faced by public relations unit of Regent University College. The study explored views on budget, staff, office space and recognition.

**Does the unit have a budget in place?**

Every system has it own challenges of which the public relations department of Regent University College is no exception. But the most challenging issue facing public relations department is delay in monies being released on time to carry out public relations activities. There has also been a budget cut which does not help the department.

**Does the unit have qualified staff?**

The unit has qualified personnel who are performing creditably to ensure that the best is achieved. Since our staff are all qualified to take up assignment, there is perfect cooperation in our working environment.

**Does the unit have office space?**

The unit has a very big and spacious office well furnished and this facilitates our work effectively. As the interviewee contends:

*"We are a department on our own and do not share office with other units".*

**Is the unit recognized within the university?**

The unit is performing its functions as the mouthpiece of the university. We are also interfacing between the university and outside world. The unit is recognized within the university. The unit takes part in day to day running of the university and is visible in all university's programs.

## 4.3. CASE THREE: GHANA TELECOM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The College has its roots in Ghana Telecom's flagship Training Centre, which was one of a kind in West Africa. It was first used as a Royal Air Force (RAF) Training School during the Second World War and subsequently handed to Cable and Wireless to train Telecommunications Technicians for British West African Countries (i.e., Ghana, Nigeria, SierraLeone, and The Gambia).

The Training Centre progressed rapidly through deregulation and privatization to become the main source of teaching and certification in Telecommunications Engineering for Ghana Telecom employees as well as other institutions in Ghana and West Africa.

In 2005, Ghana Telecom's management upgraded the infrastructure and equipment to modern standards in preparation for converting the training centre into a university for telecommunication and multimedia engineering and information technology.

On November 01, 2005 GTUC was granted authorization to continue its preparation for accreditation from the National Accreditation Board (NAB). On March 30, 2006 GTUC was given accreditation and registered in terms of regulation 12(1) of the Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) regulations 2002,L.I. 1700.

This part of the chapter presents the write-ups of personal interviews conducted on public relations practices at Ghana Telecom University College. The section consists of the following: Section 4.3.1 looks at the interviews conducted on public relations practices. Section 4.3.2 presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit. Section 4.3.3 presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit and the final section 4.3.4 also presents the results of the interviews conducted on challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.

### 4.3.1. PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/ PRACTICES

This part presents the results of the personal interviews conducted on public relations practices at Ghana Telecom University College.

**What is the position of Public relations officer in the university and whom do you report to?**

At Ghana Telecom University College, public relations manager occupies management position.  The staff strength of the department is three which comprise of Head, Assistant and a Secretary. The unit reports directly to the president of the university and has its own department. According to the interviewee, reporting to the president of the university does not affect the role of the university as the respondent puts it:

*"The unit reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer of the university whom every unit should report to"*

**What type of cooperation does the public relations unit have with other departments of the university?**

    **(a) If very cordial, what makes you think so?**

    **(b) If not cordial, what makes you think so?**

Generally, there has been cordial relationship between heads of department and the public relations department. Though, there exists cordial cooperation with other department, but are what management thinks about public relations is not what the department believes should be the professional way. In view of this, the public relations officer sees the department as not being as proactive as they want it to be. As the interviewee emphasized:

*"The objective of the unit is to be more proactive and actively shape the image of the university, instead of using public relations to act when question, arise from the public".*

**Does the public relations officer participate in decision making at the management level?**

Despite the fact that public relations officer occupies a management position within the university, the department is not represented at management decision making board. When asked whether it limits the functions of the unit or not, this is what interviewee has to say:

*"We need to communicate information, decisions and policies but the unit receives reported information which affects the nature and quality of information the unit sends across to the publics".*

**Does the public relations unit have a representative on council meetings?**

The interviewee opined that the unit is not given a seat at the council meetings which is the highest decision making body of the university. The only member of the council is the president of the university and the registrars act as secretary to the council. The unit receives proceedings of the meeting from the secretary to the council when the need arises. This affects the information the unit sends across to those who may need it.

**What makes public relations unit of the university very important?**

Interviewee from Ghana Telecom University mentioned that the practice of public relations is very important in building relationships within and outside the university. The interviewee further stressed that public relations act as an active force for corporate image building of the university and without an effective and vibrant public relations unit, building relationships and managing misconceptions about the university will be difficult.

**In your view, what are the key public relations roles in the university?**

Public relations department within Ghana Telecom University performs a lot of functions. But the following are considered the key functions within the university. The public relations manager should be responsible for all internal communications. Furthermore, the dissemination of information of the activities of the university should be the ultimate goal of the department. Also, the unit should manage the university's website, plan event such as congregations, matriculations and advice management on communication issues. Additionally, the unit should design and place advertisement in the mass media. The unit should serve as a key player in crisis management and image research to find out the perception of the public about the university. Interviewee confirmed that the functions of the unit are very broad.

### 4.3.2. PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

This section presents the results of the interviews conducted on the tools used by public relations unit at Ghana Telecom University College

**What types of public relations tools does the university use to communicate with its internal and external publics?**

Public relations department of Ghana Telecom University emphasizes the importance of utilizing every possible tool in their public relations activities. Any type of tool(s) used at what time depends on the type of activity. The tools used to contact internal publics include email, notice boards and the university website. In dealing with the external publics, tools employed are radio and newspaper, the university's brochures, leaflets, flyers, folders, the university website, and press releases.

**Which type(s) tool(s) is widely used by public relations?  Which type(s) are not widely used and why?**

The university's website is widely used to build relationships with both internal and external public since it has a wider coverage. The interviewee explained:

*"Through the website, the university is gaining more importance in the minds of the public".*

The tool which is not widely used is the television. It is not used frequently by the public relations department due to its associated cost. Exhibition is also not used widely by the university. The department uses the tools that can provide value in the public relations activities.

**Which of the publics do you interact with frequently in the university?**

The public within the university that the public relations department interacts with frequently comprises students, staff and media. They are considered as the immediate publics of the university. These publics form the micro constituent of the university.

**Which types of relations are you using in your public relations activities in the university?**

The university's publics are very important to public relations department. The unit uses all the relations ranging from employee relations, media relations, and corporate relations to public affairs except community relations. All the relations used are described as very important when performing the public relations roles in the university.

**Which type of relations is the most or least dominant in the activities of public relations in the university and why?**

All relations that involve the university's publics are very important to public relations department. But employee relations, corporate relations and media relations are described as very important when considering the fact that Ghana Telecom

74

University has a lot of public. Therefore, maximum effort is spent on internal employee relations, corporate relations, and media relations to be able to build shared values within and outside the university. On the other hand, community relations is not given as much time and energy as compared to internal relations. When asked why the unit is not involved in community relations, the interviewee stated:

*"The institution is still young and structures are still evolving".*

### 4.3.3. CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING

This presents the results of the interviews on image building approaches by public relations unit at Ghana Telecom University College.

**Has public relations succeeded in building good corporate image of the university? What makes you think so with such issues as money making venture, unqualified lecturers, and unqualified students?**

Interviewee hinted that in building a good corporate image is an ongoing process but at this period the university is very much on course. The public relations department has adopted a number of strategies in building the corporate image of the university. The public relations have developed a website for the university where information is made available to let the public know the activities of the university. Public relations liaises with other units within the university to ensure that good standards are maintained in terms of academic performance. The department also involves the media in all the university's activities such as graduations, matriculations and seminar participation. This has given the university a competitive advantage over other private universities.  As the interviewee puts it:

*"The university has chopped significant success over the years and this has resulted in an increase in students' enrolment".*

The respondent further maintains that the university is not an avenue for money making but rather an institution providing quality tertiary education to students. The

interviewee also debunks the idea that the university employs unqualified lecturers as well as admitting unqualified students. The interviewee states:

*"The university is being monitored by the National Accreditation Board and the affiliate universities and cannot afford to break the laid down criteria to give the university a negative publicity".*

**How do you build relationships with students, parents and employers?**
Relationships' building is a core function of the public relations unit of the university. The unit believes that an internal relationship is important because it has an influence on the external publics.

The unit builds relationships with students through students' representative Council which serves as a mouthpiece of the students' body and also a primary stakeholder of the university. The students serve as agent of marketing for the university. Public relations department sometimes works closely with the SRC public relations officer when organizing a week-long activity for students. The unit places SRC programs on the university's website to enable them disseminate information to the alumni and the general public and also keeps them informed of events in the university.

The unit also builds relationships with parents by inviting them to special university's events on campus and their wards are also given value for money through quality education. This has changed the attitude of parents towards the university.

Additionally, in building relationship with employers, the unit invites business executives referred to as prestigious lecturers from corporate organizations to lecture students from time to time based on interpersonal communication between the unit and corporate organization. This has deepened the relationship between the university and employers. Interviewee was quick to add that employers are also given invitation to events on university's campus.

76

**Do you think trust plays a role in corporate reputation building?**

Ghana Telecom University College believes that most central part of public relations activities is based on trust with the publics. Public relations department believes that trust is not always developed by how much you are seen in public occasions, but how you deliver your promises to build and maintain relationships with the publics of the university. Since the public relations department is being manned by qualified, confident and inspiring personnel, the university has been able to build trust through the performance of graduates in their work places. This has resulted in building good corporate reputation within the public. As the respondent puts it:

*"A good reputation is not possible to build if management does not work towards the same objectives of the public relations department".*

**Do you think that with the current image, the university can withstand the current competitive environment?**

The public relations department believes that the university has a strong image. They argue that the university has a strong image based on the unique educational programs they offer such as Telecom Engineering and Strong Computer Engineering Department. It is also regarded as the only specialized Telecommunications University in Ghana. This has given the university a competitive advantage over other private universities.

**Does public relations unit have any community relations program in place? If yes, what role[s] does the public relations unit play in such community-support activities?**

The public relations department does not have a well structured community relations program in place. The department occasionally helps install computers for JHS and SSS Schools without charging a fee. But community relations activities are not actually part of the university's priority.

**What do you think should be the core role of public relations unit in private universities in Ghana?**

Public relations department at Ghana Telecom University College believes that the core role of public relations unit in private university in Ghana is to market the university to the outside world. The marketing of the university is critical and broad and encompass image building, relationship building and delivering value to the existing customers of the universities who are the students. Finally, public relations should integrate communication strategies throughout the entire university in the daily work at all departments.

### 4.4.4. PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

This section also presents the results of the interviews conducted on the challenges faced by public relations unit of Ghana Telecom University College. The study explored views on budget, staff, office space and recognition.

**Does the unit have a budget in place?**

Finance has been a problem in undertaking public relations activities. The unit does not have its own budget in place and this affects the unit.

**Does the unit have qualified staff?**

The department is being manned by qualified, confident and inspiring personnel. Interviewee states:

*"We are three in number and two of us are master's degree holders whilst the other is a degree holder".*

**Does the unit have office space?**

Public relations is a department on its own. We have enough operational space to carryout our activities. It is well furnished with all the needed facilities. As interviewee emphasized:

*"This has never been a problem to the department".*

**Is the unit recognized within the university?**

The unit is also not represented on any of the three powerful decision making bodies in the university and this has affected the unit to function very effectively. Additionally, there is lack of appreciation and recognition by management on the activities performed by the unit. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the unit is well recognized within the university.

## 4.5. WITHIN CASE ANALYSES

*Introduction:*

In this part of the chapter, the study presents the analyses of the empirical data gathered through the personal interviews conducted with the three private universities namely Methodist University College Ghana, Regent University College and Ghana Telecom University College. Results are compared to existing theories in public relations practices brought up in the conceptual framework based on the literature review. First, within case analyses was conducted in the three private universities. Additionally, cross case analysis was also conducted by comparing the three cases for similarities and differences of public relations practices.

## 4.5.1. CASE ONE: METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA

This section will be discussed based on the themes in the conceptual framework. The section will consist of the following:

 I.  Public relations roles/practices within the university.
 II. Tools utilized by public relations unit of the university.
III. The impact of the public relations activities of the university.
IV. The challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.

## I. PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES

This part looks at qualitative and thematic analysis links to the evidence in the literature to which public relations practices within the university were investigated.

At MUCG, interviewee conceded that public relations officer occupies a management position. This practice supports the view of Belch and Belch (2001) that public

relations is a management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. In addition, there is sufficient evidence in the literature that public relations is a basic function of a modern school's management (Tianping, 2003). This shows that the unit is well recognized within the administrative setup of the university.

At MUCG, the public relations officer reports directly to the business development manager. Jefkins (2000) describes the ideal structure of the public relations department as independent and directly responsible to the chief executive officer. Grunig et al (2006) also asserted that integration of the public relations function into other areas means that this function cannot be managed strategically. This means that public relations functions are limited. This practice does not support the views of Jefkins (2000) and Grunig et al (2006) that public relations should have its own department.

At MUCG, interviewee expressly stated that the public relations unit works jointly with other departments and form part of the administrative unit of the university. The unit therefore, plays a pivotal role in the day to day activities and has cordial relationship with the management based on the common understanding that they are building a positive image of the university (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004).  Thus, the collaboration between heads of department and public relations unit definitely has implications for relationship building (Bruning and Lambe, 2008).

One argument in the literature in favor of the fact that senior public relations administrators should be involved in institutional decision making at colleges and universities (Peyronel and Ławniczak, 2000) As a consequence, public relations manager is believed to be given a seat on management advisory committee meetings and involved in decision making. This practice therefore supports the views of Peyronel and Ławniczak (2000) that public relations officer should be involved in management decision making.

Similarly, with regard to public relations unit being represented on council meetings, there is evidence in the literature that a seat should be reserved at the corporate boardroom tables for public relations executives and involving them in strategy development is a logical first step for corporate reputation building (Nakra, 2000). It is contended in the literature that this makes an organization more transparent and enables stakeholders to appreciate its operations more clearly and facilitate a better reputation (Dolphin, 2004)**.** This practice does not support the view of Nakra (2000) that public relations unit should be given a seat at corporate boardroom.

There is sufficient evidence in the literature that public relations is an important tool in running the university and it communicates directly to internal target groups and external publics which is an important function to the university (Bruning and Lambe, 2008). This view is shared by Clow and Baack (2007) that public relations focuses on a variety of internal and external stakeholders including employees, stockholders, public interest group, the government and society as a whole. MUCG public relations unit practices are tied to building relationships with both internal and external stakeholders.

The literature on public relations emphatically mentions preventing or reducing image damage, creating positive image-building activities, auditing corporate social responsibility, managing corporate reputation, identifying stakeholders, counseling, communications planning, publicizing students and staff achievements, creating credibility, delivering information, building positive images and relationship building as some of the functions performed within the university (Clow and Baack, 2007; Kotler, 2003; National School Public Relations Association, 2010). This view is shared by Newson and Carrel (2001) that public relations practice is an art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which serves both organizations and the public interest. Most of the public relations functions performed at MUCG are found in literature.

## II.  PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

This section examines the qualitative and thematic analysis links to the evidence in the literature to which the tools used by public relations unit within the university were investigated.

The responses to this question indicated that notice board; emails, memos and the website are the internal tools utilized by the public relations unit.  Print media, television, radio, billboards, brochures, speeches, website, exhibitions and press releases are also external tools utilize. The interviewee was certain that website was used as both internal and external tools. This observation brought to fore the argument in the literature that there are three types of public relations tools, controlled, uncontrolled and semi-controlled (Well et al, 2005 and Belch and Belch, 2001). Public relations unit is utilizing most of the tools provided in the literature.

The most widely utilized and important public relations tool for relationship building which the unit puts much effort on is the website. This channel is useful to inform, educate and build relations with both internal and external publics as well as source of reputation building (Wright and Hinson, 2010). Therefore, MUCG public relations unit view on website as relationship building tool is in line with the literature.

The interviewee states that the least and not widely used tool in the unit is press conference and believes that press conferences are organized when there is crisis to be managed. This position is clearly out of keeping with literature (Palmer, 2000) thus, press conferences are used when a major event is to be announced and an opportunity for two-way dialogue between the organization and the media. MUCG public relations unit view does not support Palmer (2000) view that press conferences are used for two-way dialogue between the organization and the media.

At the MUCG, interviewee was of the opinion that integral to the university's communication are both students and employees. That is both academic and non academic staff are the first recipient of the university's information. A close analysis in the light of the literature suggests a strong view that internal publics are important

and organizations must not underestimate them (Clow and Baack, 2007).  Therefore, the interpretation of this response is backed by literature.

Wells et al (2005) describe different types of public relations that refer to as relationship with different stakeholders which are; media relations, employee relations, corporate relations community relations, public affairs relations and financial relations. It can be seen that MUCG public relations unit identifies the same relations categories described in the literature.

The public relations unit put a premium on their employees' relations, media relations and public affairs. There is substantial evidence for this in the literature (Dortok, 2006; Well et al, 2005). Therefore, employees' relations, media relations and public affairs are considered as the most trusted information sources about an organization. The important role of community relations in building relationship with the community in the literature cannot be overemphasized (Leeper, 2004; Post, Preston, and Sachs, 2002; 2002; Wilson, 2004). Thus, participation in a community is both a right and a responsibility. Therefore, the importance placed on community relations by public relations unit does not support the literature.

## III. IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

This part also looks at qualitative and thematic analysis of corporate image building approaches of public relations activities and evidence links to the literature.

The public relations unit at MUCG has contributed to the image of their university in three distinct ways. One, contribution of website to image building,  organize outreach programs to educate senior high school students on their academic programs and finally invitation of media houses and the community to functions of the university like graduations and anniversaries. As a matter of fact, all these contributions are positive image building as evidenced in the literature (Clow and Baack, 2007) it has been argued in the literature that, an organization have many images, but not just one and each target audience is affected by its own interest and contacts (Pickton and Broderick, 2005).

The question of the university being money making avenue, employing unqualified lecturers as well as admitting unqualified students triggered some insightful responses from the interviewee which was not within the theoretical parameters of the study. As interviewee explained:

"The university is not a commercial venture because fees are not even enough to cover running costs such as salary, transportation, fuel and utility. The university relies on Methodist Church for financial support. Additionally, the university does not admit anybody to pursue a degree program but is guided by the national accreditation board's guidelines for admission which is not different from the state university's entry requirement of aggregate 24.

The interviewee further explained that the university employs lecturers with M.Phil and PhD in their respective subject areas to lecture in the university and believes that this has helped advertise the name of the university and has succeeded in building the corporate image.

At the MUCG, interviewee established that building good relationships with students, parents and employers help obtain favorable publicity, build up a good corporate image and heard off unfavorable rumors and stories (Kotler, 2003). Interviewee conceded that relationship building is a core function of the public relations unit of the university (Tianping, 2003). The interviewee echoed that the unit build relationships with students through SRC by inviting students to  serve on congregation and matriculation committees and participate in the events and also the use of the university's website(Clow and Baack, 2007; Moore and Kalupa, 2007)

The interviewee also mentioned that in building relationship with parents the unit invites them to participate in special events on campus to change their attitude towards the university. There is argument in the literature that public relations objectives focus on creating credibility, delivering information, and building positive images include involving people with the brand, company or organization through events and other participatory activities (Wells et al, 2005)). Therefore, in building

relationship with parents, invitation to events such as matriculation and congregation are very important (Moore and Kalupa, 2007).

This question raised a very exciting response from the interviewee. The interviewee explained that relationship with employers' hinges on the cordial relationship established since the establishment of the university and this had led to build trust between the university and organizations such as insurance firms, mortgage companies, banks to educate students about their activities and products. There is sufficient evidence in the literature that good relationship building is grounded on trust between an organization and its public (Kotler, 2003). Thus, the idea of relationship building is grounded on trust between the university and employers.

There is considerable evidence in the literature that communication becomes a vehicle used by an organization to initiate, develop, maintain and repair mutually productive relationships (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). Therefore, the importance of building relationship with students, parents and employers is necessary to head off unfavorable rumors about the university.

This question raised a very interesting response from the interviewee. The explanation was that in building relationship with employers, the unit invites business executives referred to as prestigious lecturers from corporate organizations to lecture students from time to time. Interviewee further stated that this is based on interpersonal communication between the unit and corporate organization. Thus, literature on public relations postulated that relationship attitudes play a role in interpersonal communication relationship-building (Bruning and Lambe, 2008).

Some scholars and practitioners argue that trust play a role in relationship building and once public trust is lost, it becomes very difficult and sometimes impossible to regain it. These findings have a solid theoretical source in the literature (Huang, 2001; Kent and Taylor, 2002).

In the literature, it is argued that corporation's reputation is extremely vulnerable and managing it is as important as promoting the organization's products (Clow and Baack, 2007).

Interviewee clearly states that the unit has promoted the university through the unique academic programs its offers and ten years experience in running a tertiary institution and this has enhanced a positive image, reputation management and persuasion efforts of the university (Jo, 2003; Palmer, 2000). Thus, with the credible image of the university such as the unique academic program like Agribusiness and the first private university to offer degree in agriculture, the university can face the competitive nature of the private universities in Ghana.

Information gathered from interviewee confirms that community relations programs are very important for an organization to be ethical, accountable, and reactive to the needs of society and inform the general public about these activities to help enhance the firm's image (Clow and Baack, 2007). Arguments suggest that participation in community-support activities are both a right and a responsibility as evidenced in the literature (Leeper, 2004; Wilson, 2004). Thus, the importance placed on community-support activities by public relations unit does not support the literature.

Interviewee believed that the core role of public relations unit in private universities in Ghana is to dissemination information to both internal and external publics. Interviewee explained that the university has only two publics' which constitute their stakeholders. This is in support of the literature that a stakeholder is a person or group that has a vested interest in the organization's well-being (Clow and Baack, 2007).

## IV. PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES
This section analyses and reports qualitative data on challenges face by public relations unit that affects its activities and links the evidence to the literature.

There is considerable evidence in the literature that public relations still captures a small portion of the overall marketing budgets of most firms ( Kotler et al, 2005). This supports the literature that public relations capture a small portion of the marketing budget to organize public relations activities as an important brand building tool at MUCG.

An analysis from the interviews point irrefutably to the fact that  an effective public relations depends on setting specific objectives that are capable of evaluation, integrating public relations function into the organization and selecting the right personnel to carry out the public relations function  (Lancaster and Jobber, 2006). This point to the reality that the unit is manned by competent personnel who are well versed in public relations activities is in support of the literature.

The greatest importance is attached to public relations role in academia, but a relatively reduced role in commercial organizations. (Kotler and Mindak, 2000). Interviewee explained that the unit shares a vehicle with the registrar's office and under business development department which limits the functions of the unit (Grunig et al, 2006). Thus, integration of the public relations function into other areas means that this function cannot be managed strategically. Public relations unit supports the argument in the literature that the unit has limited operational space and affects its functions.

Interviewee conceded that though the unit is not represented at the highest decision making body in the university i.e. council, management sees public relations unit and it functions as pivotal in all universities programs and functions. This is evidence in the literature that  public relations function will be useful only if management wants it and if management perceives this function as not something crucial for the company, then this function will not have a strategic position in the company and its contribution will be small (Cutlip et al, 2006). Therefore, public relations functions are recognized by management and thus support the literature.

## 4.5.2. CASE TWO: REGENT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

This section is based on qualitative and thematic analysis of data gathered through the interviews conducted at Regent University College. Like what has been done in case one, the section will be discussed based on the themes in the conceptual framework. The section will consist of the following:

 I.   Public relations roles/practices within the university.

 II.   Tools utilized by public relations unit of the university.

 III.   The impact of the public relations activities of the university.

 IV.   The challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.


## I.   PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/ PRACTICES

This part looks at qualitative and thematic analysis links to the evidence in the literature to which public relations practices within the university were investigated.


Interviewee affirmatively confirms that public relations officer occupies a management position (Wells et al, 2005; Belch and Belch, 2001). This observation brought to the fore the argument in the literature  that an ideal structure of public relations department is independent and directly responsible to the chief executive officer of an organization (Grunig et al, 2006; Jefkins, 2000). Thus, in the light of the responses point to the fact that public relations manager is well recognized in the university and support the literature.


Responses to this question by interviewee indicate that Public relations department has cordial relationship with other departments of the university. Interviewee emphasize that the other departments see public relations as communications tools that also support the office of the registrar, participates in students matriculations and orientation ceremonies, responsible for the production of brochures to help disseminate information. Thus, public relations is seen as management of communication and relationships to establish goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Leges and Simkin, 2003; Jobber, 2001). Therefore, public relations unit enjoys cordial relationship with other departments and serves as indirect promotional tool for the university (Palmer, 2000).

There is sufficient evidence in the literature that senior public relations administrators must be involved in institutional decision making at colleges and universities (Peyronel and Lawniczak, 2000). This shows that public relations manager participates in decision making at management level. Thus, the unit is given a seat at the academic board meetings which comprises all heads of department and the second powerful decision making body in the university.

At Regent University College, interviewee expressed the view that to create positive image building, the department can send out messages, and highlight on positive image building activities (Clow and Baack, 2007). The interviewee explained "we are to communicate information but we are not represented at council meetings where all final decisions are made and receive reported speeches". This practice does not support Nakra (2000) view that public relations department should be given a seat at corporate boardroom and take part in strategic decision making.

Interviewee shares the view that the import placed on public relations as communication tool and lifeblood of very organization is evidenced in the literature (Lancaster and Jobber, 2006; Dolphin, 2004). Thus, the flow of information within the university hinges on public relations. As argued, without effective public relations department, the information flow within and outside the university will be distorted and will affect relationship building approaches of the university (Leges and Simkin, 2003; Jobber, 2001).

Interviewee stated that key public relations functions  covers public relations activities such as daily communication between the university and it publics, media relations, positive image-building activities i.e., production of brochures, magazines and newsletters, preventing image damage, crisis management, relationship building, organization of public lectures, matriculation and graduation ceremonies as well as protocol needs of the university to build image, inform and educate public about the programs and services rendered by the university. Similarly, most of the key functions mentioned above are described in the literature (Clow and Baack, 2007; Pines, 2000).

## II.  PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

This segment concentrates on the qualitative and thematic analysis links to the evidence in the literature to which the tools utilized by public relations unit within the university were investigated.

The university's website is considered as an important public relations tool for communicating with both internal and external publics (Clow and Baack, 2007). In addition, notice boards as well as seminars are also considered as an internal tool in disseminating information to staff and students.

Well et al (2005) have presented a model with three types of tools, controlled, uncontrolled and semi-controlled. Interviewee mentioned that the unit is utilizing all possible tools from the categories to build relationship with both internal and external publics. Thus, literature such as leaflets, folders and booklets, corporate advertising, television programs, exhibitions, press releases are utilized to give information about the university to the general public (Lancaster, 2005).

The most common public relations tools used by Regent University College are image building activities like university's website, notice board and television. Interviewee put it "These tools do play an important role in acting as the interface between the university and publics and this strengthens our image". This theme is established by the literature (Well et al, 2005)

Interviewee confirmed that press conference as public relations tool has less been utilized by the university (Belch and Belch, 2001). The unit believes that press conferences are usually employed when there is image damage to an organization. Therefore, the public relations unit view on press conference being less utilized by an organization is in line with the literature.

The interviewee mentioned students, academic and non academic staff as the publics the unit interacts with frequently in the university. Analyzed against the literature, there is reason to believe that publics interact frequently encompasses any

group of people who are tied together however loosely, by some common interest or concern and who have consequences for an organization (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004). Therefore, the public relations unit supports the literature that publics interact with frequently in the university consists of all those who are affected by the direct or indirect consequences of activities of the university.

In the case of Regent University College, the public relations unit utilized most of the relations described and referred to as 'relationship with various stakeholders' (Wells et al 2005). The unit explained that most of the relations described in the literature can be found in the public relations activities of the university.

Interviewee explained that their outfit considers employee and students relations known as 'Internal information', media relations, public affairs and corporate relations as important relations within the university. As put by the interviewee: "Employee relations, media relations, public affairs and corporate relations are most dominant in our activities in the university. The importance of these relations to the university has a firm theoretical basis in the literature (Dortok, 2006; Well et al, 2005).

According to interviewee, community relations activity is least important since the university manages this relation by the Education Support Department. Thus, integration of the public relations function into other areas means that this function cannot be managed strategically, because it cannot move communication resources from one strategic public to another as an integrated public relations function can (Grunig et al, 2006). The literature on public relations does not support the idea that public relations function be managed by other departments.

## V.  IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

This part of the chapter analyses and discusses report evidence on corporate image building approaches of public relations practices.

Interviewee from the Regent University College believed that a strong company image, which took years to build, may be destroyed in just a few weeks or months

(Clow and Baack, 2007). Interviewee contends that website, educational program and the media are the strategies employed to help educate and build the image of the university. There is considerable evidence in the literature that companies with extensive corporate communication strategies were more likely to have strong reputations (Hutton et al, 2001). Thus, once companies focus on managing relationship with its publics; the more likely they were to have a strong reputation. Above points to the fact that public relations unit has succeeded in building the corporate image of the university.

The respondent vehemently states that the university can never be a money making venture, does not employ unqualified lecturers and also does not admit unqualified students. As interviewee echoed, "this is a misconception". Some scholars also believe that  the objectives of public relations is to manage misconception so that unfounded opinions do not tarnish the image or operations of an organization and also to make changes in the public's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to a company, brand, or organization (Jobber, 2001; Well et al, 2005).

The view expressed by the interviewee that in building relationship with students, sponsorship package and events play a vital role is in line with the literature (Palmer, 2005; Moore and Kalupa, 2007). Thus, sponsorship involves investment in event or cause in order that an organization can achieve objective such as increased in awareness level, enhanced reputation and the image of an organization. Therefore, the public relations unit using sponsorship package and events such as matriculation in building relationship with students is in line with the literature.

In building relationship with parents, interviewee mentioned that the university usually invites parents and the community to participate in the university's programs such as graduation ceremonies. Thus, information is disseminated through brochures, leaflets and flyers .This strengthens and provides positive information to the society (White and Park, 2010).

When asked how the unit builds relationship with employers, the question triggered some insightful responses from the respondent. The view expressed was that the university occasionally invites top business executives to lecture students on business dynamics and how corporate organizations and individuals develop their businesses. Further, the unit collaborates with corporate institutions and monitors the performance of students who are working with them. As the interviewee puts it:

"This is a two way communication between the university and the employers to foster better understanding". This is evidenced in the literature (Pirozek and Heskova, 2003). There is evidence in the literature that corporate reputation is extremely vulnerable and extremely valuable hence, good reputation is hard to build and cannot be bought (Clow and Baack, 2007). Accordingly, credibility is a key in establishing trust (Merenda, 2004)). Thus, establishing trusting relationships is important objective in public relations. Interviewee believed that most important trust building activities is the contact with potential and existing students, media and stakeholders. It is argued in the literature that trust is a crucial factor which influences relationships between publics and organizations (Huang, 2001). This means trust is a foundation of relationship building. Therefore, the university believes that relationship building by public relations is based on establishing trust with the publics of the institution.

Interviewee pointed out that the university has good corporate reputation because it is perceived by the public as prestigious, excellent, cutting edge in terms of ICT, engineering oriented programs and has created a market niche for itself (Dolphin, 2000). Thus, the good corporate reputation of the university has won them competitive advantages in the market of the private universities in Ghana.

Literature on public relations states that a company's wealth and its license to operate are influenced by its relationship with stakeholders (Post, Preston, and Sachs, 2002; Bruning and Ledingham, 2000)). Therefore, for an organization to disseminate positive information and quickly react to any negative publicity or views that are expressed must monitor constantly what is going on around the organization (Clow and Baack, 2007). Wilson (2004) indicates that participation in a community is

93

both a right and a responsibility. Therefore, the Public relations unit does not support the literature that participation in community activities is both right and responsibility.

The view held by Interviewee was that the core role of the department is to build image of the university. This is in line with the literature that the role of public relations professional is to build strong company image through public relations activities (Clow and Baack, 2007).

Public relations department believes that media relations and other functions of public relations facilitate information dissemination to both internal and external publics help build understanding and cooperation which in the long run build the private universities' image. There is sufficient evidence in the literature that the practice of public relations should help an organization interact with the social and political components of its environment that affect the ability of the organization to accomplish its goals (Grunig and Grunig, 2006).

## VI.  PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

This section analyses and report qualitative data on challenges faced by public relations unit and evidence linked to literature.

Interviewee admitted that every system has it own challenges of which the public relations department is no exception. But the onerous challenge facing the department is delay in monies being released on time as well as budget cuts. It is argued in the literature that public relations still captures only a small portion of the overall marketing budgets of most firms (Kotler et al, 2005). Thus, the unit supports the literature that public relations budget forms a small portion of the overall marketing budget to carryout effective public relations activities.

This question received affirmative answer from the respondent. As the interviewee voiced out:  "We have qualified employees who are performing very creditably to ensure that we build the university's image". This has sufficient evidence in the literature that employees are potentially powerful channels of communication to

94

people outside of the organization and can either enhance the firm's reputation or damage it (Clow and Baack, 2007).

The interviewee answered and confirms that the unit has a very big and spacious office well furnished. As the interviewee contends: "We are a department on our own and does not share office with other units". There is evidence in the literature that if public relations officer is placed at the marketing, advertising or sales promotion department, his or her functions will be strictly limited (Jefkins, 2000). Once public relations has its own department, then the unit is well established within the university.

Interviewee replies that though the unit is not represented at the highest decision making body within the university but we are recognized as the mouthpiece and information source of the university. This is reechoed in the literature that one of the functions of educational public relations professionals is to serve as information station (National School Public Relations Association, 2010; Newson and Carrell, 2001).

## 4.5.3. CASE THREE: GHANA TELECOM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The last section looks at the qualitative and thematic analysis of data gathered through the interviews conducted at Ghana Telecom University College on public relations practices. Like what has been done in the first two cases, the section will be discussed based on the themes in the conceptual framework.

I.   Public relations roles/practices within the university.

II.   Tools utilized by public relations unit of the university.

III.   The impact of the public relations activities of the university.

IV.   The challenges faced by public relations unit of the university.

## I.  PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES

At Ghana Telecom University College, interviewees concede that the public relations manager occupies a management position.  There is considerable evidence in the literature that public relations is a management function practiced by a wide range of

organizations and helps establish and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000; Wells et al 2005). It is contended in the literature that public relations officer reports directly to the chief executive officer of an organization (Jefkins, 2000). The argument above points to the fact that public relations manager occupies a management position in the university and in support of the literature maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics.

Interviewee confirms that generally there is cooperation existing between the public relations unit and other departments and this is based on the fact that they are all dealing with the same public whose activities may affect the university. This idea is reechoed in the literature (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004)). Thus, the departments and the public relations unit are dealing with both students and employees whose actions affect the image of the university. Thus, in the light of the responses point to the fact that public relations and other departments share the view that they are building the image of the university.

The response to this question was negative. The interviewee stated categorically that the unit is not given a seat on management decision making committee. This practice does not support the views of Peyronel and Ławniczak (2000) that public relations officer involved in management decision making.

The interviewee in answering this question opined that the unit is not given a seat at the council meetings which is the highest decision making body of the university. The literature on public relations practices emphatically mentioned that reserving a seat at the corporate boardroom table for public relations executives and involving them in strategy development, would be a logical first step for corporate reputation building (Nakra, 2000). Since the public relations unit is not given a seat at corporate boardroom does not support the literature.

Interviewee contends that practice of public relations is very important in communicating within and outside the university and helps in building relationships (Bruning and Ledingham, 2000). Interviewee further stressed that the unit acts as an active force for corporate image building of the university and without an effective and vibrant public relations unit, building relationships and managing misconceptions about the university and its products will be difficult. There is evidence in the literature that public relations officer manages misconception (Jobber, 2001; Well et al, 2005).

The interviewee acknowledges that the key functions performed by the unit are many and encompasses delivering internal communication, management of university's website, event planning, advising management on communications issues, designing and placing advertisements in the mass media, crisis management and image research to find out the perception of the public about the university. Most of the key functions described are found in literature (Clow and Baack, 2007).

## II. PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

This section examines the qualitative and thematic analysis links to the evidence in the literature to which the tools used by public relations unit within the university were investigated.

According to interviewee, the tools used to contact internal publics include email, notice boards and the university website and external public are radio and newspaper, the university's literature (brochures, leaflets, flyers, and folders), and press releases. These tools utilized are described in literature (Belch and Belch, 2001; Lancaster, 2005 Well et al, 2005). It was deduced from the responses that the university's website is a very important tool for both internal and external communications.

The most widely used tool according to interviewee is the website. This channel is used because it has a wider coverage helps educate both internal and external publics (Clow and Baack, 2007). Thus, the university puts information they desire on

the Internet. Therefore, the public relations unit views the website as a source of university's information for relationship building.

The tool which is not widely used is the television. The interviewee believed that television is not used frequently by the public relations department due to its cost. Lancaster (2005) argued that television as a medium of communication stand the chance of achieving a high level of impact on customers or publics due to its visual nature. Thus, the university will be able to erase any erroneous impressions after going on the television. In addition, the respondent aired that exhibition is also not used widely by the university. As explained by interviewee, " We know that exhibition is an opportunity to gather technical information, offer explanations and provide all the necessary information that can inspire confidence and trust in an organization by the customer or the targeted public (Lancaster, 2005).

At the Ghana Telecom University College, interviewee expressly states that students, staff and media are the groups that the unit interacts frequently in the university. There is sufficient evidence that public relations activities involve the internal publics i.e. employees and external publics for instance media referred to in the literature as stakeholders (Clow and Baack, 2007).   Bruning and Ledingham (2000) mention that the direction of an organization is affected by relationships with the key publics in its environment. Consequently, it bestows on public relations unit to build relationships with stakeholders to build the image of the university.

From the case of Ghana Telecom University College, interviewee mentioned employee relations, media relations, corporate relations and public affairs as the most frequently used relations in public relations activities except community relations. All these relations mentioned can be found in literature (Wells et al, 2005).

With regard to Ghana Telecom University College, employees' relations (both academic and non academic staff), corporate relations and media relations are considered as the most important relation in the university. This is evidenced in the

98

literature (Dortok, 2006; Well et al, 2005). Therefore, the importance placed on employee relations by public relations unit supports the literature.

On the issue of least dominant relation, interviewee commented that community relations is not given as much time and energy as compared to internal relations. This is how interviewee puts it: "The institution is still young and structures are still evolving". But literature on public relations emphasized that participation in a community is both a right and a responsibility of an organization (Wilson, 2004). Also in the literature, there is sufficient evidence that socially responsible firms are more likely to thrive and survive in the long term (Clow and Baack, 2007).

### III. IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

This part also looks at qualitative and thematic analysis linked to the evidence in the literature to corporate image building of public relations practices.

Interviewee at Ghana Telecom University College hinted the public relations professionals in building strong company image adopted a number of strategies such as the use of the university's website and involving the media in the university's activities (Clow and Baack, 2007).  One argument in the literature is that it takes a great deal of time to build a favorable image for a corporation but only slip to create a negative public impression (Wells et al, 2005). Interviewee contends that despite the fact that corporate image building is an ongoing process; the university is very much on course.

Respondent further disproves the idea that the university is an avenue for money making but rather an institution where quality tertiary education is provided. The interviewee also debunks the idea that the university employs unqualified lecturers as well as admitting unqualified students.

Interviewee conceded that relationship building is a core function of the public relations unit of the university (Tianping, 2003). The unit states that they build relationships with students through The SRC by inviting them to participate in the

university's programs, sharing information on its website and also using the website to disseminate information to the alumni on SRC week-long program. According to (Clow and Baack, 2007) the internet has opened an entirely new venue for people to vent emotions, which can be devastating to a company's reputation. Therefore, through information sharing, reputation is built among the university's students.

The unit also mentions that in building relationship with parents they are invited to special events on campus to change their attitude towards the university. There is argument in the literature that public relations objectives focus on creating credibility, delivering information, and building positive images include involving people with the brand, company or organization through events and other participatory activities (Wells et al, 2005)). Thus, events provide information that often induces a change of mind (Moore and Kalupa, 2007). Therefore, in building relationship with parents, invitation to events such as matriculations and congregations are very important.

This question raised a very interesting response from the interviewee. The explanation was that in building relationship with employers, the unit invites business executives referred to as prestigious lecturers from corporate organizations to lecture students from time to time. Interviewee further states that this is based on interpersonal communication between the unit and corporate organizations. Thus, literature on public relations postulates that relationship attitudes play a role in interpersonal communication relationship-building (Bruning and Lambe, 2008). As interviewee stresses employers are also given invitation to events on universities campuses (Moore and Kalupa, 2007).

At Ghana Telecom University College, interviewee was of opinion that good relationship building is grounded on trust between the organization and its publics (Kotler, 2003). There is sufficient evidence in the literature that trust is a crucial factor which influences relationships between publics and organizations and without trust, management and publics will not be able to communicate and cooperate well (Huang, 2001;  Taylor, 2003). Corporate relations program is to strengthen the trust that stakeholders have in the company (Nakra, 2000). Thus, the unit believes that

trust is not always developed by how much you are seen in public occasions, but how you deliver your promises to build and maintain relationships with the publics of the university.

Interviewee believes that the university has built a strong image for itself based on the unique educational programs offered such as Telecom Engineering and strong Computer Engineering Department. It is also regarded as the only specialized Telecommunication University in Ghana. Interviewee emphasized that through positive public relations activities such as delivering what the university promises students such as quality education and interpersonal relationship with corporate business executives, the unit believes that the current image is positive. There is evidence in the literature that the role of public relations professional is to build strong company image through public relations activities (Clow and Baack, 2007). Thus, with the current image, the university can withstand the current competition in the delivery of tertiary education in Ghana.

Community-support activities are regarded as obligations that an organization has to be ethical, accountable, and reactive to the needs of society (Clow and Baack, 2007; Leeper, 2004)). Since community relations activities are not actually part of the university's priority, the public relations unit does not support the literature that community relations is the obligation that the unit has towards the community.

Public relations department at Ghana Telecom University College believes that the core role of public relations unit in private universities in Ghana is to market the universities internally and to the outside world. There is one argument in the literature that public relations director should serve as a spokesperson for the organization and overseer of the entire public relations program (Newson and Carrell, 2001). As interviewee further explained that the marketing of the university is critical and broad.

## IV.  PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

This section analyses and report qualitative data on challenges faced by public relations unit and evidence linked to literature.

Interviewee concedes that finance is considered as an important means to carryout public relations activities effectively but there is evidence in the literature that public relations still captures a small portion of the overall marketing budgets of most firms (Kotler et al, 2005). In addition, there is evidence in the literature that higher educational institutions need to develop public relations capacities (Heskov and Piroẑek, 2003). This reinforces the interviewee's idea that the unit is facing financial constraints.

The insight generated on explanation of this question was profound. The answer was in the affirmative. In the literature, there is sufficient proof that setting specific objectives that are capable of evaluation and integrating public relations function into the organization requires the right personnel to carry out the public relations functions (Jobber, 2006). Therefore, the unit using very qualified personnel to man the office supports the literature.

One argument in the literature in support of the practice of public relations is the fact that public relations officer should not be placed at the marketing, advertising or sales promotion department,  in order not to limit the functions of the unit (Jefkins, 2000). Since public relations is a department on its own and has a very big operational space, it is in line with the literature (Grunig et al, 2006).

It appears there is lack of appreciation, recognition by the university towards the public relations unit. There is considerable support for this in the literature (Cutlip et al, 2006). Thus, the public relations function will be useful only if management wants it and if management perceives this function as not something crucial for the company, then this function will not have a strategic position in the company and its contribution will be small.

## 4.6. CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

In this part of the analysis, the three cases of Methodist University College Ghana, Regent University College and Ghana Telecom University College were compared with each other for similarities and differences of public relations practices, tools utilized, the impact of public relations activities and the challenges faced by pubic relations unit.

Table **4.1** analyzes public relations practices of the three private universities.

### TABLE 4.1 PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES

| PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/ PRACTICES | Methodist University College Ghana | Regent University College | Ghana Telecom University College |
|---|---|---|---|
| Position of Public Relations Officer | | | |
| *Management position* | *YES* | *YES* | *YES* |
| *Reports directly to CEO* | *NO* | *YES* | *YES* |
| *Report to divisional head* | *YES* | *NO* | *NO* |
| *Cooperation with other departments* | *Cordial* | *Cordial* | *Cordial* |
| *Participate in management decision making* | *YES* | *YES* | *NO* |
| *Represented on council meetings* | *NO* | *NO* | *NO* |
| *PR  is seen as important in the university* | *YES* | *YES* | *YES* |
| Key Public Relations Roles | | | |
| PR  roles to be performed in the universities | *Similar views* | *Similar views* | *Similar views* |

*Source: Field Data; 2011*

From the cross analysis of table 4.1, it can be observed that all the three private universities seems to be quite similar in the issues of public relations in the

103

universities. All the three universities public relations managers are occupying management positions. It could also be seen that whilst Public Relations Managers at Regent University College and Ghana Telecom University College reports to the chief executive officer of the university, public relations officer at Methodist University College Ghana reports to head of division.

Additionally, none of the public relations managers is given a seat at council meetings which is the highest decision making body in the university. All the public relations managers have similar views on what should be the public relations functions within the universities.

Table **4.2** analyzes public relations tools utilized by public relations unit of the three private universities.

**TABLE 4.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS**

| **PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS** | Methodist University College Ghana | Regent University College | Ghana Telecom University College |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Internal tools to communicate with publics* | *Notice  board, emails, memos, website* | *Notice boards, seminars, website* | *Email, notice boards, website* |
| *External tools to communicate with publics* | *Print media, television, radio, billboards, brochures, speeches, websites, exhibitions, press releases* | *Literature, corporate advertising, television, exhibitions, press releases* | *Radio, newspaper, literature, website, press releases* |
| *Tools  widely used* | *Website* | *Website, notice board, television* | *Website* |
| *Tools  not  widely used* | *Press conference* | *Press conference* | *exhibition* |

| Publics interact with frequently in the university | Students, employees | Students, employees | Students, employees, media |
|---|---|---|---|
| Types of relations used | | | |
| Employee relations | YES | YES | YES |
| Media relations | YES | YES | YES |
| Corporate relations | YES | YES | YES |
| Financial relations | YES | YES | YES |
| Public affairs | YES | YES | YES |
| Community relations | NO | NO | NO |
| Most important relations | Employee relations, corporate relations, media relations, public affairs | Employee relations, corporate relations, media relations, public affairs | Employee relations corporate relations, media relations |
| Least dominant relations | Community relations | community relations | Community relations |

**Source: Field Data; 2011**

In the analysis of table 4.2, it can be seen that all the public relations managers consider the relations with students and employees very important in the universities. The common tool used for both internal and external communication is the university's website. The universities are also similar regarding relations with the key publics. All the universities consider community relations as the least dominant relations.

It is also clear that both Methodist University and Regent University does not widely employ press conferences in their public relations activities, Ghana Telecom

105

University also does not widely use television and exhibition in public relations activities

It is apparent from the above that all the three private universities utilized most of the tools available but differences can be found in how each university attached importance to the tools.

Table **4.3** analyzes the corporate image building approaches of the three private universities.

**TABLE 4.3 IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES**

| **CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING** | Methodist University College Ghana | Regent University College | Ghana Telecom University College |
|---|---|---|---|
| Building Good Corporate Image | | | |
| *PR succeeded in building good corporate image* | *YES* | *YES* | *YES* |
| *PR strategy in building image* | *Website, outreach programs, media* | *website, media educational program,* | *Website, media* |
| *university considered as place of money making* | *NO* | *NO* | *NO* |
| *Employing unqualified lecturers* | *NO* | *NO* | *NO* |
| *Admit unqualified students* | *NO* | *NO* | *NO* |
| Strategies adopted by PR in building relationships | | | |
| *Students* | *Website, events* | *Sponsorship, event* | *Website, events* |
| *Parents* | *Event* | *Event* | *Events* |

106

| Employers | Sharing business ideas | Sharing business ideas | Sharing business ideas, event |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trust play a role in corporate reputation building | YES | YES | YES |
| Can the university withstand the current competition | YES | YES | YES |
| PR role in community-support activities | NO | NO | NO |
| The core role of PR | Information to internal and external publics | Information to internal and external publics | Marketing the university internally and externally |

**Source: Field Data; 2011**

From the table 4.3, it is believed that public relations units of the three universities have been able to build the corporate image of their respective universities. It was realized from the analysis of corporate image that the universities were not a place of money making, do not employ unqualified lecturers and finally do not admit unqualified students. Also when analyzing the corporate image, the three universities are to a large extent using the same public relations strategy or tool in building image.

In building relationships with students, parents and employers, the public relations units of the three universities seem to adopt similar programs in their relationship building approaches.

Regent University College believes that a strong company image, which took years to build, may be destroyed in just a few weeks or months. The issue of trust is emphasized and public relations units of the universities believe that trust plays a role in building relationships. The main role of public relations at the universities is similar and believes it should be the marketing of the university to both internal and external

107

publics.  It can be seen that all the universities do not consider community relation programs as important.

Table **4.4** also analyzes the challenges faced by public relations unit of the three private universities.

**TABLE 4.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES**

| **PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES** | Methodist University College Ghana | Regent University College | Ghana Telecom University College |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Inadequate Budget* | YES | YES | YES |
| *Lack of qualified personnel* | NO | NO | NO |
| *Office space* | NO | YES | YES |
| *Recognition and appreciation* | YES | YES | NO |

*Source: Field Data; 2011*

From the cross case analysis of table 4.4, it could be observed that the three universities are similar in financial challenges facing the public relations units. The point where the universities differ is office space, recognition and appreciation of the public relations activities. Whiles public relations is occupying a very big office with enough space at Regent University College and Ghana Telecom University College, Methodist University College doesn't have enough operational space for public relations activities.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with summary of findings and general conclusions reached in the study. The section also includes recommendations and directions for future research.

## 5.1. SUMMARY

Public relations plays a major role in shaping corporate image, provide timely information to the publics in order to court goodwill for the various organizations. The role of public relations in higher education, especially private universities has not been well researched. The need to address this research gap motivated the current study. The aim was to investigate the strategic roles, tools used, and the challenges faced by public relations unit of the private universities in Ghana and to determine whether they have succeeded in building good corporate image in the selected universities. Personal interviews were conducted with public relations managers of three private universities in Ghana.

## 5.2. MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings will be discussed in relation to the objectives of the study.

**Objective 1: To identify public relations roles or practices in private universities.**

Public relations in private universities are expected to perform certain roles for the university to function effectively (Clow and Baack, 2007). After a thorough study, the following issues came to light.

- ❖ The study revealed public relations managers occupy management positions in the universities, 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.

- ❖ The study further revealed that the key public relations roles or practices of public relations are similar in communicating with the publics of the

109

universities. The roles or practices performed by the unit include media relations, building positive image, organization of events such as matriculations and graduation ceremonies, and delivering information to both internal and external publics.

❖ The study again revealed that public relations units of the private universities studied have succeeded in building cordial relationships with other departments in the universities and this has strengthened internal communications among public relations and the departments within the universities. The study showed that most important publics who receive first hand information from public relations were employees and students of the universities. Public relations believes that employees and students represent the face of universities outside and are the source of supplying newsworthy information to the media and the general public.

**Objective 2: To identify public relations tools utilized by public relations in private universities.**

There are wide ranges of public relations tools available and suitable for use by public relations. The tools adopted by public relations depend on the promotional objectives that public relations unit wants to achieve (Palmer, 2005; Well et al, 2005). The study has revealed the following tools used by the three selected private universities.

❖ It has emerged from the study that in building relationships and communicating with both internal and external publics of the universities, the public relations unit utilizes the university's website which is the most widely used public relations tool in the universities. It was observed that that the website was updated as and when the need arises.

❖ The study in addition revealed that the least dominant relations of public relations is community relations. This function was not deeply undertaken by public relations of the universities. It is believed that when handled effectively, it will bridge the communication gap between the universities

and the surrounding communities and enhance free publicity and image building.

❖ The study yet in addition showed that specific public relations tools considered not widely used by the public relations of universities are press conferences and exhibitions. These when embarked upon could bring public relations units face-to-face with the publics and the media and serve as platforms to provide all the necessary information that can inspire confidence and trust in universities.

**Objective 3: To identify if public relations in private universities has succeeded in building corporate image of universities**

Public relations unit is expected to build good relations with universities various publics through public relations activities to obtain favorable publicity, build up a good corporate image and kill off unfavorable rumors, stories, and events about the institutions (Kotler, 2003). The following issues emerged after the study.

❖ It has emerged from the study that community support activities may be some of the means to build relationships but not effectively pursued by the public relations of the universities. This could be said to have a negative impact on the image of the universities.

❖ The study brought to light that universities are not avenues for money making, do not employ unqualified lecturers and do not admit unqualified students. The study also showed that private universities are being monitored by National Accreditation Board's requirements for employing lecturers and admitting students.

❖ The study revealed that trust plays a role in reputation building and is given very high priority by the public relations of the universities. The study also showed that trust is a crucial factor which influences relationships between publics and organizations and serves as a foundation for relationship building.

**Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by public relations in private universities.**

Public relations are very important to an organization carrying out day-to-day communications to those who, for whatever reason, interact with the institution. Thus, public relations functions are very crucial and strategic for development of an institution. Therefore, public relations require resources to function as an important brand building tool (Kotler et al, 2005). Like the other three objectives above, the study has also discovered the following challenges faced by public relations of the universities.

❖ The study revealed that the public relations of private universities are not adequately resourced in terms of staff and logistics to enable public relations to perform effectively. This certainly will limit the ability of the public relations to perform effectively.

**5.3. CONCLUSIONS**

From the study, it could be concluded that even though public relations practices are recognized in the universities, they are not accorded the recognition they deserve. As they are not represented on the highest decision making bodies, "Council", they may not be able to communicate timely information to the publics. The lack of recognition also manifests itself in lack of resources to keep the unit operational and functional.

**5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are made.

❖ The study recommends that public relations of the universities studied should be adequately resourced in terms of staff, logistics and also giving them the due recognition to enable public relations contribute effectively in disseminating information in building the corporate image of the university. In addition, public relations should have its own department and operate as an independent body to enable it contributes to organizational effectiveness.

❖ The study further recommends that public relations of the universities should be represented on council meetings and also be part of the decision-making team at top management level to disseminate timely and accurate information. In this case, it would enable management to communicate to their publics who are strategic constituents of the universities and whose actions may affect the universities either negatively or positively.

❖ The study furthermore recommends that exhibitions and press conferences should be held occasionally by the public relations units to bring the universities face-to-face with their target audiences. This will enable the universities to explain and provide all the necessary information that can inspire confidence and trust and also serve as an opportunity for a two-way dialogue between the universities and their publics.

❖ In spite of the above, the study recommends that public relations of private universities must ensure existence of well functioning alumni and old students associations to complement public relations' efforts as a channel in the building of corporate reputation.

❖ Nonetheless, the study recommends that public relations of the universities should have community support programs in place such as voluntary work, donation of items, provision of grants for community development, seminars on topical issues affecting the community and scholarships to brilliant but needy students to maintain effective community relations for free publicity and build image of the universities.

❖ Again, since the internet has become a very powerful source of supplying information in the past decade, public relations tools such as universities websites should be seen as very important when communicating with both internal and external publics of the universities. Additionally, accurate information should be put on the websites for their publics to help achieve positive outcomes.

❖ The study yet again recommends that public relations of the universities should put in place a comprehensive educational program on television, radio and in second cycle institutions to educate the public and debunk the idea that the universities are avenues for money making but rather a place where quality education is imparted to students.

❖ The study finally recommends that the public relations of the universities should get involved in inter-universities competition to showcase the quality products of the universities. The universities must deliver on their promises such as offering quality education in a competitive academic environment. This will go a long way to attract and influence stakeholders' perceptions about private universities in Ghana. In this way, the universities will be seen as trustworthy within tertiary educational sector.

### 5.4.1.  Recommendations for Further Research

❖ Since the private universities have not done much with regard to the role that public relations should play in the functioning of the universities, it is recommended that further study should be conducted into other strategies which the universities are putting in place to correct the wrong impression about the role and mission of private universities in nation building.

❖ Since the study was conducted with only three private universities in Greater Accra Region, it is recommended that further study with more private universities in Ghana are looked into.

❖ In addition, future researchers interested in this area should also look at how public relations is currently funded by the private universities in Ghana.

# REFERENCES

Beavers-Moss, D. (2001). Credibility Enhancer, *Bank Marketing, May 2001*, 27-31.

Belch, G. E., and Belch, M. A (2001). Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective, Fifth Edition, Irwin/McGraw-Hill, New York.

Bentele, G. & Wehmeir, S. (2003). In Sriramesh, K. and Vercic, D. (Eds). Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research and Practice. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2001). How To Research, 2nd Edition, McGraw-Hill Education, United Kingdom.

Bruning & Ralston (2001). Using a Relational Approach to Retaining Students and Building Mutually Beneficial Student-University Relationships, *Southern Communication Journal, 66* , (4), 337 – 345.

Bruning, S. D. & Lambe, K. E. (2008). Linking Worldview, Relationship Attitudes, and Behavioral Outcomes: Implications for the Study and Practice of Public Relations, *Journal of Promotion Management, 14,(*3 & 4) , 139 – 151.

Chong, M. (2007). In Practice: The Role of Internal Communication and Training in Infusing Corporate Values and Delivering Brand Promise: Singapore Airlines' Experience. *Corporate Reputation Review, 10* (3), 201-212.

Clow, E. K. & Baack, D. (2007). Integrated Advertising, Promotion, and Marketing Communication, 3rd Edition, Pearson Education Inc., Upper Sandle River, New Jersey.

Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H. & Broom, G. M. (2006). *Effective Public Relations,* Pearson Education International, New Jersey.

Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). Effective Public Relations, 8th edition, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Denscombe, M. (2007). The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Research Projects, 3rd edition, McGraw-Hill Education, England.

Dewey, J. (1927). The Public and its Problems, Henry Holt and Company, New York. Dolphin, R.R. (2000). Is Corporate Communications a Strategic Function? *Management Decision 38* (2), 99-106.

Dolphin, R.R. (2004). Corporate Reputation – A Value Creating Strategy, *Corporate Governance 4* (3), 77-92.

Dortok, A. (2006). A Managerial Look at The Interaction Between Internal Communication and Corporate Reputation, *Corporate Reputation Review, 8* (4), 322-338.

Education reforms in Ghana (2002). *Report of the Education Reform Review Committee in Ghana*, Adwinsa Publications GH, Ltd. Legon-Accra.

Eisenhardt, K. M., (1989). Building theories from case study research. Academy of Management Review, 14:532-550.

Flodin, B. (2003). In Sriramesh, K and Vercic, D. (Eds). Global public relations handbook: Theory, Research and Practice. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Grunig & Grunig (2006). The Excellence Theory. In C.H. Botan and V. Hazleton (Eds), Public Relations Theory II, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A. & Dozier, D. M. (2006), "The Excellence Theory". In Botan, C. H. and Hazleton, V. (Eds) Public Relations Theory II, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, New Jersey.

Henderson, J. K. (2001). Educational Public Relations. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of Public Relations*, 535-542.

Hesková, M. & Pirožek, P. (2003). Approaches to And Instruments of Public Relations: Higher Education in the Czech Republic, *Higher Education in Europe, 28*,( 4) , 487 – 494

Huang, Y. H. (2001) OPRA: A Cross Cultural, Multiple-item Scale for Measuring Organization-Public Relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13* (1), 61-90.

Hutton, J.G. Goodman, M.B. Alexander J.B. & Genest, C.M. (2001). Reputation Management: The New Face of Corporate Public Relations? *Public Relations Review, 27*, 247-261.

Jefkins, F. Yadin, D. (2000). *Advertising 4$^{th}$ ed.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. ISBN 0-273-63435-6.

Jo Samsup (2003). The Portrayal of Public Relations in the News Media, *Mass Communication and Society  6 (*4), 397 – 411.

Jobber D. (2001). Principles and Practice of Marketing, 3$^{rd}$ Edition, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, London.

Kaverina, E. (2003). The Public Relations Strategy of Alexander Herzen State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg: The Dialogue between the Heritage and the Present of a university. *Higher Education in Europe, 28,* 455-459.

Kent, M.L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a Dialogic Theory of Public Relations, *Public Relations Review, 28*, 21-37.

Kotler, P. (2003). Marketing Management, 11$^{th}$ Edition, Prentice- Hall Inc., New Jersey, United States of America.

Kotler, P. &  Mindak, W. (2000). Marketing and public relations – Should they be partners or rivals? In M. FitzGerald and D. Arnott (eds), Marketing communications classics, Thomson, London.

Kotler, P., Wong, V., Saunders, J. & Armstrong, G. (2005). *Principles of Marketing,* 4th edition, Pearson Education Limited, U.S.A.

Lages, C. Simkin, L. (2003). The dynamics of public relations: Key constructs and the drive for professionalism at the practitioner, consultancy and industry levels. *European Journal of Marketing* 37, No. 1/2.

Lancaster, G. (2005). *Public Relations.* Retrieved December 28, 2010 from www.marketingmasters.co.uk/geoff/publicrelationshandout.doc.

Lancaster, G. &. Jobber, D. (2006). Selling and Sales Management, 7th Edition, Pearson Education Limited, United Kingdom.

Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S.D. (2000). Introduction: Background and Current trends in the study of relationship management. In J. Ledingham, and S. Bruning (Eds.), Public Relations as a Relationship Management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Leeper, R. (2004). In Search of a Metatheory for Public Relations: An argument for communitarianism. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oak, CA.

Leeper, R. V. & Leeper, K. A. (2001). Public relations as "practice:" Applying the Theory of Alasdair MacIntyre. *Public Relations Review*, 27(4), 67-79.

Malhotra, K. N. (2007). Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation, 5th Edition, Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Merenda, M. (2004). Multiply your public relations impact, *National Underwriter/Life & Heath Financial Services*, *108* (1), 7-8.

Miles, M. (1979). Qualitative data as an attractive nuisance: The problem of analysis. Administrative Science Quarterly, (24) 590-601.

Miles, M., & Huberman, H. (1994). Qualitative data analysis. Sage, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, CA.

Moore, F. H. & Kalupa, F. B. (2007). Public Relations: Principles, Cases and Problems, Surjeet publications, Kolhapur Road, Kamla, Delhi, India.

Mu-Li Yang & Wen-Bin Chiou (2010). A countrywide study on factors influencing the public relations practice in higher education in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 11 (*2), 223-233

Nakra, P. (2000). Corporate Reputation Management: "CRM" with a Strategic Twist? *Public Relations Quarterly 45* (2), 35-42.

National School Public Relations Association (2010). Educational Public Relations. Retrieved December 28, 2010 from http://www.nspra.org/getting_started

Newsom, D., Turk, J. V., & Kruckeberg, D. (2004). This is Public Relations: The realities of public relations, 8th edition, Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.

Newson, D. & Carrell, B. (2001). Public Relations Writing: Form and Style, 6th Edition, Wadsworth, Thompson learning Inc., U.S.A.

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

Palmer, A. (2005). Principles of Service Marketing, 4th edition, McGraw-Hill Education, United Kingdom.

Peyronel, A. & Lawniczak, R. (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), 25 – 35.

Philips, D. (2001). The Public Relations Evaluations, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 4*, 255-237.

Pickton, D & Broderick, A.  (2005). Integrated Marketing Communication, 2nd Edition, Pearson Education Limited, England.

Pines, W.L. (2000). Myths of crisis management, *Public Relations Quarterly, 45* (3), 15-17.

Pirozek, P. & Heskova, M. (2003). Approaches to and instruments of public relations: Higher education in the Czech Republic. *Higher Education in Europe, 4,* 487-494.

Post, J. E., Preston, L. E. & Sachs, S. (2002). *Redefining the Corporation, Stakeholder Management and Organizational Wealth,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Robson, C., (2000). Real world research. A resource for social scientists and Practitioner researchers. Blackwell.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data, Second Edition Thousand Oaks, Sage, CA.

Tengilimoglu, D., Yesiltas, M., Kisa, A. & Dziegielewski, S. F (2008). The role of public relations activities in hospital choice, *Health Marketing Quarterly, 24*, (3 & 4), 19 – 31.

Tianping, Y. (2003). On the development of schools' external public relations in China, *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 6,* (2 ), 185 – 191.

Vasquez, G., & Taylor, M. (2001). Research perspectives on "The Public," In R. L. Heath (Ed.),     Handbook of public relations, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Wells, W. Burnet, J. & Moriarty, S. (2009). Advertising: Principles and  Practice,  6th edition, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi.

White, C. & Park, J. (2010). Public Perceptions of Public Relations, *Public Relations Review 36 (4*), 319-324.

Wilcox, D. L., Ault, P. H., Agee, & Cameron, G. T. (2001). *Essentials of Public Relations*, Longman, New York.

Wilson, L. (2004). Relationships within Communities: Public Relations for the new century, In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Wilson, M.S & Gilligan, C. (2005). Strategic Marketing Management, CIM, 3rd Edition, Elsevier Butter worth-Heinemann, Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Wood, M. B. (2008). The Marketing Plan Handbook. 3$^{rd}$ edition, Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Wright K. D. & Hinson D. M (2010)**.** How New Communications Media are used in Public Relations: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Public Relations Journal 4* (3), 60-66.

Xavier, R. Johnston, K. Patel, A. Watson, T. & Simmons, P. (2005). Using evaluation techniques and performance claims to demonstrate public relations impact: An Australian perspective. *Public Relations Review,* 31, 417-424.

Yang, S. & Sung, M.  (2008). Toward the Model of University Image: The Influence of Brand Personality, External Prestige, and Reputation, *Journal of Public Relations Research, (20)*, 4, 357 – 376.

Yin, R. K.  (1994). Case study research: Design and Methods. SAGE Publications.

Yin, R. K.  (2003). Case Study Research: *Design and Methods, 3$^{rd}$ ed.*, Sage Publications Thousand Oaks, CA.

**Internet Sources**
http://gtuc.edu.gh/index.php?page=history
http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/MiniMe_HistoryOfPR.pdf
http://www.marketing masters.co.uk/geoff/publicrelationshandout.doc.
http://www.mucg.edu.gh/au_aboutas.html
http://www.news.myjoyonline.com/education/200911/38299.asp
http://www.regentghana.net/about/history.html

**APPENDIX**

**METHODIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GHANA**
**FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**
**(DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING)**
**TOPIC**
**"PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES: A STUDY OF SELECTED GHANAIAN**
**PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES"**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Kingsley Agyapong, an M. Phil (Marketing) final year student of Methodist University College Ghana. I am writing a thesis on the topic "Public Relations Practices: A Study of Selected Ghanaian Private Universities" I shall be very grateful if you could grant me an interview on the subjects listed below. I assure you of the confidentiality of any information provided.   Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**
**SECTION A**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES/PRACTICES**

1. What is the position of Public relations officer in the university and whom do you report to?

2. What type of cooperation does the public relations unit have with other departments of the university?

   (c) If very cordial, what makes you think so?

   (d) If not cordial, what makes you also think so?

3. Does the public relations officer participate in decision making at the management level?

4. Does the public relations unit have a representative on council meetings?

5. What makes public relations unit of the university very important?

6. In your view, what are the key public relations roles in the university?

**SECTION B**

**TOOLS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

1. What types of public relations tools does the university use to communicate with its internal and external publics?

   - Speeches
   - Sponsorships
   - Corporate Advertising
   - Press Releases
   - Exhibitions
   - Press Conferences
   - Corporate Websites
   - Notice Boards
   - Media (print and electronic)
   - Seminars
   - Literature (leaflets, folders, booklets)

2. Which type(s) tool(s) is widely used by public relations?  Which type(s) are not widely used and why?

3. Which of the publics do you interact with frequently in the university?

4. Which types of relations are you using in your public relations activities in the university?

   - Media Relations
   - Employee Relations
   - Corporate Relations
   - Financial relations
   - Community Relations
   - Public Affairs

5. Which type of relations is the most or least dominant in the activities of public relations   in the university and why?

**SECTION C**

**CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING**

1. Has public relations succeeded in building good corporate image of the university? What makes you think so with such issues as money making venture, unqualified lecturers, and unqualified students?

2. How do you build relationships with students, parents and employers?

3. Do you think trust plays a role in corporate reputation building?

4. Do you think that with the current image, the university can withstand the current competitive environment?

5. Does public relations unit have any community relations program in place? If yes, what role[s] does the public relations unit play in such community-support activities?

6. What do you think should be the core role of public relations unit in private universities in Ghana?

**SECTION D**

**CHALLENGES**

1. What are the challenges faced by public relations unit of the university? Are there any other challenges?

- Budget
- Lack of Qualified Personnel
- Office Space
- Lack of Recognition