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**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

**INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTEGRATED
COMMUNICATION IN UNIVERSITIES: A STUDY OF THREE UNIVERSITIES IN
GHANA**

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PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF PHD IN
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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

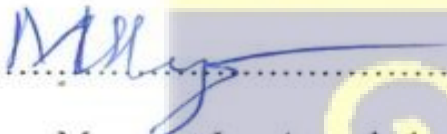
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the outcome of research I conducted personally under supervision for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies at the University of Ghana; that it has not been previously presented to any university for any degree; and that all sources used or quoted have duly been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.



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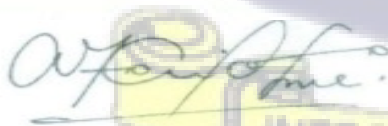
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ABSTRACT

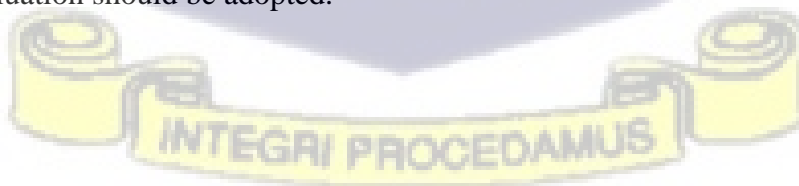
Scholars in the field of organisational communication acclaim integrated communication (IC) for its ability to unify all communication efforts, avoid fragmentation and ensure efficiency in managing communication in today's organisations. Although integrated communication aids organizations to have consistency in their communication effort, create continuous stakeholder experience and build organizational confidence and loyalty, there is virtually little or no studies on the use of integrated communication in universities in the Ghanaian context. This study was therefore driven by the scanty literature on the use of integrated communication in higher educational institutions, particularly universities. With systems theory as its foundation, the study explored internal stakeholders' perceptions about the use of integrated communication in three universities in Ghana, namely Central University, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and University of Ghana using mixed methods.

The multiple-case study mode of enquiry, which allows the combination of different methods for data collection and analysis, was employed. A total of five focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted in the three universities for academic staff and senior staff. In addition, Level 400 students were surveyed from the three universities for their views on integrated communication in their respective universities in order to draw comparisons between the focus group data and survey data. Additionally, a qualitative content analysis was carried out to examine consistency in the deployment of some institutional visual symbols, and the results were compared with the FGD and survey data. Using semi-structured interview guides, a total of six (6) in-depth interviews were also conducted for one representative each from top management and the public relations/public affairs units in the institutions to interrogate their perceptions about IC and how they contributed to its implementation to validate the data gathered from the FGDs and survey.

These methods largely helped to triangulate the data garnered from the different sources to meet the overall objective of making recommendations for effective IC management in universities in Ghana.

The study found that none of the three universities had a well-developed mechanism for the implementation of integrated communication. The institutions' practice of some sort of IC was impaired by fragmentation at the level of communicating institutional policies and departmental collaboration. In spite of this, the top management and PR representatives of each institution seemed satisfied with their communication based on their perception that enough efforts were being made for a successful IC, though this did not reflect the perceptions of the internal stakeholders. Generally, the findings did not confirm the systems theory which advocates a holistic approach to communication for mutually beneficial outputs.

The study recommends that universities should minimise one-way communication, manage internal communication to avoid conversation fragmentation and adopt vigorous communication programmes that engage management and other internal stakeholders for mutually beneficial relationships. Again, universities should designate PR directors as the champions of IC processes to control and manage all factors that make integrated communication effective. Top management should also be committed to IC and lend its full support for the success of the implementation process. Additionally, sufficient budget should be allocated for IC programmes and periodic evaluation should be adopted.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all my loved ones, especially my dear husband, Emmanuel Ameyaw-Buronyah, my children, Danso (Abeam), Asantewaa (Krobea) and Kwarteng (Amaniampong) as well as my parents, Nana Ntiamoah Boateng II (late) and Madam Elizabeth Akyaa Osei and my late grandmother, Madam Comfort Egyirankwe.



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Finally, I thank my late father, Nana Ntiamoah Boateng II, for sowing the seed of higher education in me at a tender age; my mother, Madam Elizabeth Akyaa Osei, and my siblings for their tremendous support. To my wonderful husband, Ameyaw-Buronyah and my kids, Abeam, Krobea, Amaniampong and Amobea, I say: “Well done. I am sincerely grateful for your immense support and patience in accommodating my competing roles of wife, mother, student and public servant during this long journey.” God bless you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION..... i
ABSTRACT..... ii
DEDICATION..... iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v
TABLE OF CONTENTS vi
LIST OF FIGURES AND CHARTS..... xi
LIST OF TABLES xii

CHAPTER ONE 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1
1.0 Introduction..... 1
1.1 Background of Integrated Approach to Communication by Universities 2
1.2 The Evolutionary Definitions of Integrated Communication (IC) 7
1.2.1 Working Definition of Integrated Communication..... 10
1.2.2 The Scope of Integrated Communication 12
1.2.3 Dominant Themes and Constructs of IC..... 13
1.3 Overview of Institutions Selected for the Study 14
1.3.1 Central University 15
1.3.2 Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) 16
1.3.3 University of Ghana 17
1.4 Statement of the Problem..... 19
1.5 Research Objectives 22
1.6 Research Questions 23
1.7 Significance of the Study 24
1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms 25
1.9 Organisation of the Study 27
1.10 Summary 28

CHAPTER TWO 29
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 29
2.0 Introduction..... 29
2.1 Origin of the General Systems Theory 30
2.1.1 Definition of System 31
2.1.2 System Characteristics 32
2.1.2.1 The Emergent Properties and Synergy of a System..... 32
2.1.2.2 Open and Closed Systems..... 33
2.1.3 Tenets of the Open Systems Theory 34
2.1.3.1 Hierarchical Ordering 34
2.1.3.2 Permeability and Interdependence 35
2.1.3.3 Holism..... 35

2.1.3.4 Feedback	36
2.1.3.5 Homeostasis	36
2.1.3.6 Self-regulation.....	37
2.1.3.7 Entropy and Requisite Variety	37
2.1.3.8 Equifinality and Common Finality	38
2.1.4 Criticisms of Systems Theory	39
2.1.5 Relevance of the Systems Theory to Institutional Communication.....	40
2.1.6 Systems Theory and Integrated Communication.....	44
2.2 The Evolutionary Integrated Communications Model	46
2.2.1 Stages of the Integrated Communications Model.....	47
2.2.1.1 Awareness Integration Stage.....	47
2.2.1.2 Image Integration Stage	48
2.2.1.3 Functional Integration Stage.....	48
2.2.1.4 Co-ordinated Integration Stage.....	49
2.2.1.5 Customer-based Integration Stage	49
2.2.1.6 Stakeholder-based Integration Stage.....	49
2.2.1.7 Relationship Management Integration Stage	50
2.2.2 Criticism of the Evolutionary Communications Model.....	51
2.3 Summary	51
CHAPTER THREE	52
LITERATURE REVIEW	52
3.0 Introduction.....	52
3.1 Attributes of Integrated Communication	52
3.1.1 Internal Communication Management	53
3.1.2 Co-ordination of Internal Communication.....	56
3.1.3 Strategic Consistency in Communication.....	59
3.1.3.1 Synergy in Communication	61
3.1.4 Image Management.....	63
3.1.5 Stakeholder Integration and Relationship Management.....	69
3.1.5.1 Categorisation of Stakeholders	71
3.1.5.2 Identifying the Internal Stakeholders of Universities.....	72
3.1.5.3 Stakeholder Integration through Interactivity and Brand Contact Points.....	75
3.1.6 Cross-functional Collaboration.....	79
3.1.6.1 Open Communication and Knowledge Sharing	80
3.1.6.2 Nurturing a Team Spirit.....	82
3.1.6.3 Gradual Integration of New Ideas.....	82
3.1.6.4 The Role of Differentiation.....	83
3.1.7 Alignment of IC and the Strategic Focus of Institutions	84
3.1.7.1 The Nexus between IC and Institutional Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan.....	85
3.1.7.2 Employee Involvement and Communication of Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision.....	87
3.2 Barriers to IC Implementation	89

3.3 Distinct Factors for the Implementation of IC	91
3.3.1 Technology	91
3.3.2 The Availability of a Communication Expert.....	92
3.3.3 Availability of a Communication Strategy	96
3.3.4 The Endorsement of Top Management.....	98
3.4 Summary	99

CHAPTER FOUR..... 101

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 101

4.0 Introduction.....	101
4.1 Philosophical Underpinnings	101
4.2 Research Design.....	104
4.2.1 Definition of Case Study.....	106
4.2.2 Selection of the Appropriate Case Study Design and Cases.....	108
4.3 Phases of Data Collection	109
4.3.1 The Field Work	111
4.3.1.1 Profile of the Study Location	111
4.3.2 The Study Sites	112
4.4 Methods Employed for the Collection of Data	112
4.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	115
4.4.2 Individual In-depth Interviews.....	117
4.4.3 Content Analysis of Visual Symbols	118
4.4.4 The Survey Approach	119
4.5 Sampling Techniques and Instruments Used.....	120
4.5.1 Respondents of the In-depth Interviews	121
4.5.2 Participants of the Focus Group Discussions.....	122
4.5.3 Units of Analysis.....	124
4.5.4 Respondents of the Survey.....	125
4.6 Data Analysis	127
4.6.1 Analysis of Data from the In-depth Interviews.....	128
4.6.2 Analysis of Data from the Focus Group Discussions	128
4.6.3 Analysis of the Survey Data	129
4.6.4 Analysis of the Data from the Content Analysis	130
4.7 Ethical Considerations	130
4.8 Challenges and Limitations of Study	131
4.9 Summary	132

CHAPTER FIVE 133

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS..... 133

5.0 Introduction.....	133
5.1 Profile of Interviewees, Participants and Respondents.....	134
5.2 Co-ordination of Internal Communication.....	136

5.2.1 Channels for Co-ordinating Internal Communication	138
5.2.1.1 Inconsistencies with Electronic Communication.....	141
5.2.2 Timely Release of Information	146
5.2.3 Consistency of Communication and Image Management	149
5.3 Stakeholder Integration and Relationship Management	156
5.3.1 Interactivity with Stakeholders	157
5.3.2 Mediated feedback and Related Challenges	161
5.3.3 Stakeholder Support.....	164
5.4 Cross-functional Collaboration.....	166
5.4.1 Open Flow of Communication.....	169
5.5 Institutional Strategic Plan.....	172
5.5.1 Development of the Institutional Strategic Plan	173
5.5.1.1 Input from Internal Stakeholders	175
5.5.2 Communication of Strategic Plan	178
5.5.3 Mission and Vision Campaign.....	185
5.5.4 Achievement of Strategic Goals	191
5.6 The Implementation of IC.....	197
5.6.1 Placement and Roles of the Communication Expert	197
5.6.2 Availability of Communication Strategy	202
5.6.3 The Use of Technology.....	203
5.6.4 Support from Senior Management.....	204
5.7 Summary	207
CHAPTER SIX	208
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	208
6.0 Introduction.....	208
6.1 Internal Communication and Relationship Management for Stakeholder Output.....	209
6.1.1 Co-ordination of Internal Communication and Internal Stakeholders' Output	209
6.1.2 Integration of Internal Stakeholders and Relationship Management.....	213
6.2 Strategy Communication for the Achievement of Institutional Goals.....	218
6.2.1 Stakeholder Involvement in Strategy Development	218
6.2.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions about Strategy Communication	221
6.2.3 Stakeholders' Contributions to the Achievement of Strategic Goals.	225
6.3 PR Influence on the Implementation of IC	229
6.4 The Place of Social Media in the Implementation of IC	234
6.5 Management Support and Influence on the Implementation of IC.....	235
6.6 Summary	238
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	241
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	241
7.0 Introduction.....	241
7.1 Key Research Findings	242

7.1.1 Perspectives about Internal Communication and Stakeholder Relationship	242
7.1.2 Perspectives on Cross-functional Collaboration.....	244
7.1.3 Perspectives on Strategy Development and Communication	245
7.1.4 Perspectives on the Implementation of IC	245
7.2 Implications for Practice	247
7.3 Implications for Theory	251
7.4 Recommendations.....	253
7.4.1 Recommendation for further Studies.....	256
7.5 Contributions to Knowledge	256

REFERENCES.....	257
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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED EMPLOYEES OF THE UNIVERSITIES.....	303
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SAMPLED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITIES.....	305
APPENDIX III: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED MEMBERS AT THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITION IN THE UNIVERSITIES	310
APPENDIX IV: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED WORKERS AT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	312
APPENDIX V: CHECKLIST FOR GATHERING DATA ON THE USE OF UNIVERSITY SYMBOLS.....	314



LIST OF FIGURES AND CHARTS

Figure 2.1: The Evolutionary Integrated Communications Model.....47

Figure 3.1: Massey’s Theoretical Paradigm of Organisational Image Management65

Figure 3.2: Strategy Communication Pyramid87

Figure 4.1: Data Collection Circle.....110

Figure 5.1: Level of Satisfaction with the Timely Communication of University Policies..... 149

Figure 5.2: Level of Satisfaction with information Flow in the University172

Figure 5.3: Management’s Involvement of Students in Drawing up Strategic Plan177

Figure 5.4: Awareness of the University’s Strategic Plan.....183

Figure 5.5: Accessibility of the Institutional Strategic Plan.....184



LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Profile of Focus Groups Sessions.....123

Table 4.2: Samples Drawn from the Institutions126

Table 5.1: Response Rate of the Survey135

Table 5.2: Students’ Most Reliable Source of Information by Institution145

Table 5.3: Respondents’ Impression about Internal Communication146

Table 5.4: Summary of Findings on the Use of Visual Symbols150

Table 5.5: Views about the Consistency in Institutional Symbols and Colour Schemes155

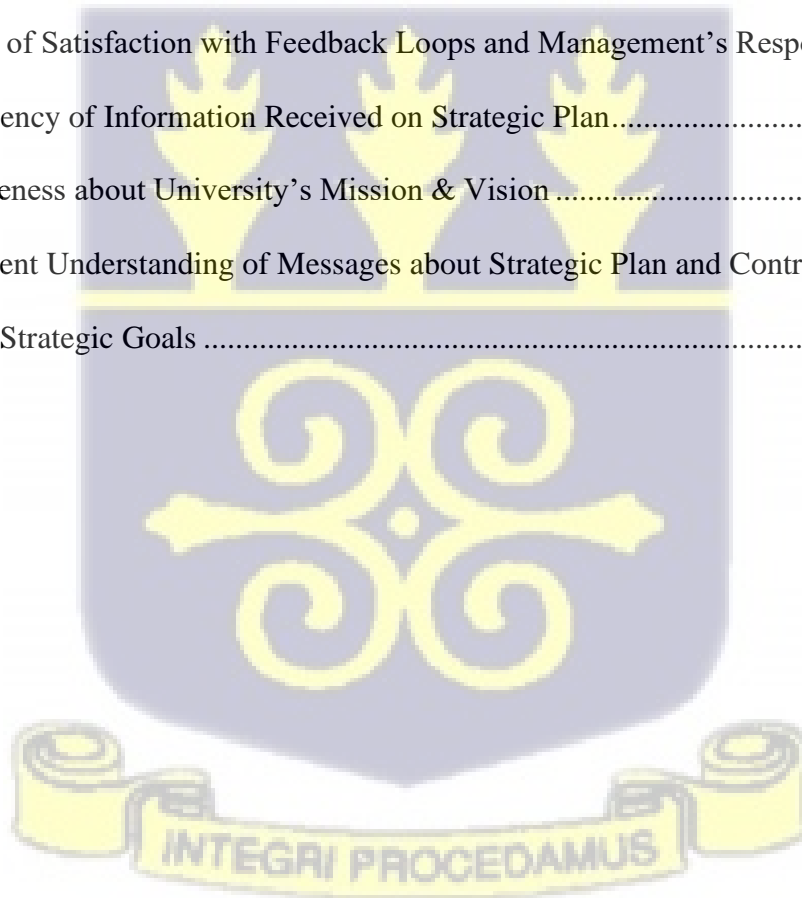
Table 5.6: Consistency in the Use of Visual Symbols to Promote Institutional Image.....156

Table 5.7: Level of Satisfaction with Feedback Loops and Management’s Responsiveness.....164

Table 5.8: Frequency of Information Received on Strategic Plan.....184

Table 5.9: Awareness about University’s Mission & Vision191

Table 5.10: Student Understanding of Messages about Strategic Plan and Contribution to the Achievement of Strategic Goals 196



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

Universities in contemporary times operate in a rapidly changing environment and are increasingly recognising that fragmentation of the communication responsibility does not help them to progress in such a dynamic environment (Wilsea, 2018; Barker, 2013; Edmiston-Strausser, 2009). Though segmenting a complex task such as communication into fragments makes each piece more manageable, it denies institutions the benefits of integration (Gronstedt, 1996). Angelopulo and Schoonraad (2003), therefore, advocate an integrated approach to communication. Integrated communication (IC) is a management discipline that emphasises the holistic co-ordination of multiple communication functions around institutional needs (Endaltseva, 2015; Smith, 2012a). The IC concept has gained recognition as a paradigm that ensures order in a communication landscape which is characterised by the proliferation of media channels and fragmented stakeholders (Smith, 2012a; Kitchen & Burgman, 2010; Christensen, Firat & Cornelissen, 2009). It is believed that through its ability to unify institutional messages, symbols and procedures, IC enables the achievement of organisational strategic intent, creates a positive image and sustains long-term relationships between institutions and their publics (Barker, 2013; Christensen *et al.*, 2009; Duncan, 2002).

Over the years, IC has been viewed with different lenses by scholars including Tindall and Holtzhausen (2012), Niemann (2005), Massie and Anderson (2003) and Gronstedt (2000), and they all collectively consider it as a paradigm that is strategically aligned, consistent, comprehensively integrated and mission-driven to augment the impact of corporate

communication efforts. Since this paradigm adopts a holistic communication approach, scholars such as Niemann-Struweg (2014) and Schutte (2009) believe that IC adopts an all-inclusive approach to communicate organisational strategic policies in a manner that builds long-lasting relationships with both internal and external publics. The question, however, remains inadequately answered whether higher educational institutions such as universities engage in the communication activities associated with IC such as the effective co-ordination of communication, the management of institutional image and stakeholder relationship.

It is pertinent to note that with the proliferation of media channels in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the integration and co-ordination of messages from different sources that aim at portraying a single image to all stakeholders have become simultaneously more important and difficult to achieve (Barker, 2013; Kitchen & Burgman, 2010). This suggests that, for IC to thrive in institutions such as universities, tenacious efforts are required. This study, therefore, focused on how Public Relations units and top university management contribute to the success of IC in three universities in Ghana; how the internal stakeholders, including students and staff perceive integrated communication efforts in these universities, and, how their perceptions drive their contribution to the achievement of institutional strategic objectives.

1.1 Background of Integrated Approach to Communication by Universities

Literature indicates that the integrated approach to communication has been influenced by universities' quest to project themselves to attract potential students (Melewar & Akel, 2005). According to them, education and training have become a global business pushing universities to develop standards that are similar to consumer goods marketing. Universities are part of the business sphere because they operate with almost the same prominence that marketing enjoys in

corporate organisations. Consequently, van Wyk (2005, as cited in Mulder, 2008) coined the terms “corporate universities” and “corporatisation” to describe the business landscape of university education (pp. 9-10). Based on the corporatisation of universities and other higher educational institutions, one college president stated that higher education has moved from the Golden Age to the Age of Survival (Sevier, 1997) which is characterised by keen competition. Universities are, therefore, developing a set of unique characteristics and implementing strategies to claim their share of the student market using various communication approaches such as integrated marketing and integrated marketing communication as the best integrated communication approaches that will ensure their survival in the competitive landscape (Schuller & Rasticova, 2011; Edmiston-Strauser, 2009).

Schuller and Rasticova (2011) also affirm that marketing communication in universities has been the research interest of several scholars who emphasise strategic marketing, integrated marketing (IM), university marketing and IMC as the ideal paradigms for creating a successful university brand and enhancing communication between the universities and their stakeholders. As a result, using marketing tools to improve the identity, image, reputation and brand of universities is considered a key factor in attracting new students who are the main target group of the services offered by universities (Schuller & Rasticova, 2011).

Among the integrated communication tools, IM and IMC seem to be the ones that are mostly used by universities. Literature points to the fact that IM (which basically ensures consistency in promotional messages and the strategic alignment of all marketing communication activities) was the component of integrated communication concept adopted by universities and other institutions of higher learning in the early years that communication integration was conceived. Within the higher education landscape, IM emerged around the late 1990s following

the publication of debates on the value of integrated marketing in the *Currents Magazine* in 1998 (Lauer, 1998) and discussions at regional meetings of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) in 1999 (Morris, 2003). Consequently, IM became an addition to the higher education lexicon in the late 1990s (Sevier, 1999). Morris (2003) reiterated that publications by academics honed the understanding of marketing techniques and how colleges and universities effectively applied these techniques to advance their institutions in the 21st century. The competitive environment then compelled many private universities to scramble for students using integrated marketing (Morris, 2003) premised on administrators' belief that IM would help attract quality students and faculty, produce more satisfied alumni, build a stronger image and increase support from funding sources (Sevier & Johnson, 1999).

Though scholarship identifies IM and IMC as the two most widely accepted integrated communication paradigms by universities, there appears to be no consensus among scholars regarding the use of these two concepts. Some scholars claim that IM is often confused with IMC, though the two are not the same (Servier, 2000; Schultz, 1998). They explain that IM adopts a more holistic approach to organisational communication because it deals with the strategic issues of product, price and place as well as the tactical issue of promotion. Alternatively, IMC, which is considered as a subset of IM, focuses on the co-ordination of marketing messages and channels to be able to deliver product and service attributes to the customer (Foroudi, Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar & Foroudi, 2017; Morris, 2003; Schultz, Tannerbaum & Lauterbon, 1994).

Advocates of IMC believe that the concept has gained increased acceptance over the past few decades (Abdullah & Mohamad, 2015; Edmiston-Strausser, 2009). Universities have adopted the components of IMC including brand identity and awareness, image and reputation management and positioning statements to increase effectiveness in their communication. However, it remains

unclear how the IMC paradigm is structured in the strategic management approaches of institutions of higher Education (IHEs) including universities (Edmiston-Strausser, 2009).

In Edmiston-Strausser's view, institutions, in their attempts to grow enrollment and academic programmes, have become increasingly fragmented internally. Consequently, functions have become compartmentalised as some departments operate without any knowledge of other parts of the institution and their core business. Additionally, professionals tend to compete for the limited institutional resources instead of pooling such resources and considering themselves as part of a comprehensive system working toward common objectives. In support of this claim, Abdullah and Mohamad (2015) point out that traditional structures in institutions emphasise independence based on professional expertise rather than interdepartmental co-operation which is essential for integrated communication.

Abdullah and Mohamad (2015) further enumerate some of the barriers to the successful implementation of IMC in HEIs such as universities. In their view, many career educators perceive HEIs as educational service providers which should not be corrupted with business orientation such as IMC. In addition, the lack of knowledge and appropriate training in IMC together with the right attitude in adapting to marketing and institutional change augment the reasons for the unsuccessful implementation of IMC in institutions. Rigid institutional structures hardly leave any room for the effective practice of IMC in institutions as aptly captured by Rhodes (2006) who explains that:

Structural reform remains elusive in the academic culture. The structural imbalance between goals, tasks and resources seems to have shown little improvement since 1966. The rigidity of departmental structures continues to limit the ability of college to adapt and respond to

new circumstances. Any change tends to be laboriously incremental, with a significant time lag between the decision to make it and the ability of the institution to carry it out. (p.18)

Alluding to this observation, Edmiston-Strausser (2009) condemns the conservative attitude which impinges on institutions' implementation of the different paradigms of integrated communication. He indicates that, rather than establishing an integrated communication, it is more typical of institutions to develop separate offices to address admissions marketing, public relations, alumni relations, sports marketing, publications and internet services. Willsea (2018), in supporting this claim states that institutions are rarely wired for IMC. She identifies four major barriers to the implementation of IMC in universities as: 1. departmental silos, 2. the lack of alignment that allows internal buy-in to enable different departments to articulate the university brand, 3. the absence of proper systems for collecting and analysing data for effective communication and 4. the lack of understanding of the IMC concept. These observations indicate that though institutions have adopted the IM and IMC paradigms, these are not being well implemented at the global front. According to Pitman (2000), this is due to the fact that universities naturally remain focused on teaching and research with the administrative tasks existing mainly to facilitate these aims.

The literature confirms that similar to the global university education landscape, universities in Ghana employ various marketing communication activities such as advertising, sales promotion and personal selling to promote their programmes. For instance, Dorkenoo, Nyarko, Agbemeva and Asimah (2015) contend that public tertiary institutions spend a lot of money on advertisements to disseminate information to their publics, including prospective students. Private universities also rely heavily on advertising, public relations, personal selling and other marketing communication tools to publicise the "institutions and their products in the form

of academic programmes and courses to the public, especially prospective students and/or their families” (Bamfo & Atara, 2013, p.269). Another issue identified is the lack of integration of the marketing communication tools employed by universities in Ghana (Bamfo & Atara, 2013; Adiko, 2020). Based on this observation, the authors recommend that “integrated marketing communications should effectively be institutionalised, while investing more in advertising” to publicise universities and their academic programmes (Bamfo & Atara, 2013, p.276).

Some studies conducted in Ghana also tend to focus on the integration of information and communication technologies in the curricula of the different levels of education (Gyaase, Gyamfi & Kuranchie, 2019; Edumadzie, 2016). As a result, there is little or no emphasis on the central tenets of IC which are the co-ordination of internal communication, cross-functional collaboration, stakeholder integration and the communication of strategic plan. The current study explored how universities use IC to manage their internal communication and stakeholder relationships. The following section deals with some definitions of IC, its scope, constructs and the working definition adopted by this study.

1.2 The Evolutionary Definitions of Integrated Communication (IC)

Though there are conflicting views regarding when IC was first developed and used, Niemann (2005) indicates that the concept has been in use since the 1990s but has gained more recognition since 2000. Since its development in the 1990s, the concept of IC has attracted various definitions in various fields as an educational movement (Hutton, 1996), a unifying business practice (Burnett & Moriarty, 1998) and a management philosophy (Cornelissen, 2000).

Scholarship categorises the definitions of IC into five evolutionary eras spanning the early 1990s to 2018. The definitions of the early 1990’s considered IC as the co-ordination of various

communication tactics. According to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, integrated communication is "... a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines ... to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact" (Cited in Duncan, Caywood & Newsom, 1993, p.13). This definition emphasises co-operation among various communication disciplines to ensure that there is maximum impact and consistency of messages. As a result, other scholars of this period conceptualised IC as "the integration of various communication vehicles and tactics within a specific communication campaign" (Niemann, 2005, p.93). The description of IC in this era supports Duncan's (1997) idea of synergy which he defines as the strategic co-ordination of corporate messages to yield a greater effect, compared to the independent operation of communication departments (such as advertising, public relations, marketing, *et cetera*) which sometimes results in conflicting messages. Another dimension of the definitions of the early 1990s focused on the strategic control of all messages for purposeful dialogue to influence the behaviour of stakeholders.

According to Niemann (2005), "integrated communication is the strategic co-ordination of all messages (internally and externally) to create dialogue between the customer and the organisation, which will attitudinally and behaviourally move the customer towards brand loyalty" (p.95). The definition extends from the emphasis on external communication which was associated with the 1980s to include internal communication as key to the success of IC. The introduction of "dialogue" adds another aspect to the communication process. That is, an advocacy for two-way communication between the organisation and its stakeholders.

The period, 1996 to 1998 saw definitions that emphasised cross-functional integrative processes and the management of healthy and beneficial relationships with stakeholders. Writing in this era, Duncan (1997) and Harris (1998, as cited in Niemann, 2005) conceived of integrated

communication as the process of strategically controlling all messages and encouraging cross-functional collaboration and purposeful dialogue to nourish relationships with stakeholders. Scholars of this era, thus, conceptualised integrated communication as a unified effort by various departments which interdependent on one another in their communication efforts to be able to manage mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders.

The period from 2000 to 2003 mentions strategic management as key in the IC process. Researchers such as Gronstedt (2000) and Shimp (2000) advocate for combined efforts at the managerial level and cascading through all levels of the organisation to nurture stakeholder relationships. Gronstedt (2000) defines IC as “the strategic management process of facilitating a desired meaning of the company and its brands by creating unity of effort at every point of contact with key customers and stakeholders for the purpose of building profitable relationships with them” (p.8). By this definition, Gronstedt (2000) offers an expansive approach to the IC process as it aligns with the systems thinking of merging efforts from all points of contact. Additionally, he challenges organisations to get well acquainted with their values and services as key to fostering long-term relationships with their stakeholders.

Writing during this era, Duncan (2001) offered a definition that combined ideas from earlier definitions by different authors stating that integrated communication is “a cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them” (p.8).

From 2004 to 2010, scholars focused on organisational publics as the driving force of the IC process (Kliatchko, 2008; Gregory 2007; Schultz, 2007). Kliatchko (2008) defined IC as “an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and

results of brand communication programs” (p.140). The combination of stakeholders, content, channels and evaluative element in one definition indicates that audience research is necessary to determine the appropriate message and channels of communication.

Scholarship, from 2011 to 2018, emphasised the addition of the organisational strategic intent to IC (van Baalen & Mulder, 2016; Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Barker, 2013; Kehinde, 2011). To Barker (2013), IC is: “The coordination of the functions, processes and actions of the organisation in support of the corporate brand, to ensure the organisation’s strategic intent is achieved, so as to maintain long-term sustainable relationships with stakeholders” (p.104). The strategic intent guides the purposeful use of communication and enjoins all stakeholders to direct their varied activities towards the achievement of organisational mission and vision (van Baalen & Mulder, 2016; Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Barker, 2013). Its inclusion in the definition confirms IC as a holistic framework that leads an organisation to its intended goal.

Taken together, the above definitions mention key tenets that make integrated communication happen, such as the effective co-ordination of communication activities, stakeholder integration, cross-functional collaboration, promotion of institutional strategic intent and management support. To give true meaning to efforts at mainstreaming the key tenets of IC in universities, there is the need for an ecosystem that opens up the space for effective interactions among institutional stakeholders.

1.2.1 Working Definition of Integrated Communication

Based on the definitions of IC above, the following statement serves as the working definition for this study:

Integrated communication is the strategic management and co-ordination of communication activities at every contact point of an institution to create and nourish mutually beneficial relationships through purposeful dialogue, collaboration and unified efforts by management and all stakeholders for the achievement of institutional strategic intent.

The above definition presents IC as a holistic framework for co-ordinating communication activities for the benefit of both the institution and its publics. The process requires the strategic use of multiple media to manage all forms of communication (including messages, symbols, images, procedures and all other communication points of the institution) through an integrated approach. True communication integration can be achieved when management and internal stakeholders interact effectively and work together toward the achievement of institutional desired goals. The definition, therefore, projects two-way communication with stakeholders as well as horizontal and vertical integration (that is, collaboration across departments and hierarchical units). Such extensive collaboration is required to avoid fragmented messages that can lead to misunderstanding on the part of internal publics. It also ensures that messages at all points of communication convey a consistent impression about the institutional image, mission and vision to sustain the publics' loyalty and ensure long-term beneficial relationships.

To achieve success in the integration process, internal communication is as relevant as external communication (Niemann, 2005; Nash & Nash, 2002). It is for this reason that the working definition emphasises horizontal and vertical integration for internal customer service, co-operation of the internal publics and teamwork among employees to make external communication consistent and effective. Whereas horizontal integration is important for interdependence across departments, vertical integration empowers employees to facilitate communication between management and the external publics. With the strategic objective of the

institution as the driver of the IC process, the internal stakeholders must constantly be educated and oriented to work in sync with management decisions to project the institution as unified in its strategic intent.

1.2.2 The Scope of Integrated Communication

Given the broad perspective of the concept, IC should be perceived as communication management using a multilevel approach namely micro, meso and macro levels that pertain to the organisation (Barker, 2013; Vos & Shoemaker, 2001). Integrated communication at the micro level is internal and occurs at the operational level employed to enhance the co-ordination of different communication materials issued by the organisation. An instance is ensuring synergy in the tones used in organisational publications and press releases (Schutte, 2009). According to Vos and Shoemaker (2001), integration at the operational level builds a consistent and clear image of the organisation. The micro/operational level is associated with the daily issues that affect the organisation through its publics (Grunig, 1990). Consequently, the organisation's publics need to be identified and segmented at this level. The survival of this level, therefore, rests on proper planning, implementation and evaluation of communication campaigns and other public relations programmes (Barker, 2013; Classen & Vewey, 1998).

Classen and Vewey (1998) indicate that the meso level, also known as the group level, refers to the management level of communication. Integrated communication at the meso level is, therefore, concerned with synchronising the different domains of communication policy in the organisation (Vos & Shoemaker, 2001). It involves a continuous interactive relationship between the departments involved in corporate communication which leads to a holistic integrated approach for the effective management of the organisation's overall communication efforts (Schutte, 2009;

Kitchen & Schultz, 2001). The meso level requires the existence of a single subsystem which functions independently and bears the responsibility of integrating all communication activities in the organisation (Classen & Vewey, 1998).

Integrated communication at the macro level transcends internal communication to encompass the external environment and, therefore, proposes communication management at the strategic level (Barker, 2013; Schutte, 2009). It involves environmental scanning to assess trends that can affect the organisation's relationship with its stakeholders, and the alignment of communication with the organisation's overall strategy to enhance its strategic positioning (Barker, 2013; Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005; Vos & Shoemaker, 2001). Decisions at the macro level determine the organisation's mode of communication with its publics as well as the management style and general direction of the organisation (Classen & Vewey, 1998).

The above discussion highlights IC as a broad-based approach that unifies communication activities across different levels of the organisation to maximise communication impact on institutions. Given the multidimensional nature of integrated communication, the communication manager requires access to all relevant pieces of information needed to communicate feedback to the relevant subsystems. Operating from the management level ensures timely access to information, effective co-ordination as well as clarity and consistency of communication to all relevant areas of the institution.

1.2.3 Dominant Themes and Constructs of IC

Based on the explanation of the IC concept, this section deals with the attributes of IC which form the basis of the dimensions investigated. Integrated communication, in this study, does not refer to marketing communication per se; it covers a wider scope than marketing communication. Drawing

from scholars including Smedescu and Elisabeta (2017), van Baalen and Mulder (2016), Gronstedt (2000) and Duncan and Caywood (1996), the IC concept is used mainly to refer to:

- the co-ordination of internal communication activities by creating synergy in vertical and horizontal interactions for effective external communication;
- consistency in the communication of messages and visual symbols to promote institutional image;
- leveraging information communication technologies to facilitate the process of integrated communication;
- cross-functional collaboration;
- stakeholder integration and management of stakeholder relationships;
- the effective communication of institutional strategic plan to drive institutional strategic goals;
- active support of top/senior management and the empowerment of communication staff to lead the integration process.

Each of these attributes is broadly discussed in Chapter Three to provide a better understanding of how it contributes to the IC concept.

1.3 Overview of Institutions Selected for the Study

This research investigated three universities in Ghana namely, Central University (CU), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and University of Ghana (UG). The next section provides the background of each of these universities.

1.3.1 Central University

Established in 1988 as a pastoral training institute, Central University (CU) has undergone a lot of phenomenal expansion to become the largest private university in Ghana. The name Central University was derived from the name of the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) which founded the University, and it is a reflection of the Christian Gospel to human life and spiritual transformation. In June 1991, it was renamed Central Bible College and in 1993, the name was changed again to Central Christian College. The College later upgraded its programmes to the baccalaureate level, and in line with national aspirations, expanded its programmes to include an integrated and practice-oriented business school, and named Central Business School. To reflect its new status as a liberal arts tertiary institution, the university was re-christened Central University College in 1998 and affiliated to the University of Cape Coast. The then National Accreditation Board accredited it as a tertiary institution. “In January 2016, the University College received its long-awaited Presidential Charter to become an autonomous and a fully-fledged university as Central University” (Central University, 2023).

In terms of location, it has stretched from its initial Dansoman campus, in Accra Central which hosts the School of Theology and Missions, to three more campuses that house the different programmes run by the university. Currently, it has two main campuses located at Mataheko (in Accra Central) and Miotso (along the Tema-Aflao Road). The establishment of the Miotso Campus saw the relocation of a greater part of the university away from the central part of Accra. This campus, often referred to as the permanent campus, is about 58 kilometres away from Accra Central. It accommodates three schools and two faculties, the central administration, student hostels and other important facilities. In addition to the Mataheko and Miotso campuses are other satellite campuses including the Dansoman and Kumasi campuses.

The University has also expanded its curriculum to cover diverse academic programmes organised under different schools and faculties. Currently, CU has more than six (6) schools/faculties, including the School of Theology and Missions (STM), Central Business School (CBS), the School of Applied Sciences (SAS), School of Pharmacy, School of Research & Graduate Studies (SRGS), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and Faculty of Law (FOL). Together, these schools/faculties run more than 23 undergraduate programmes and seven graduate programmes (Central University College, 2013) that cut across disciplines including Theological Studies, Law, Civil Engineering, Nursing, Pharmacy, Architecture, Accounting, Finance, Human Resource Management, Marketing, Communication Studies, Economics, English Language, French and many more. Against the backdrop of an increasingly competitive tertiary education environment, it became necessary for CU to develop a long-term strategic plan that would enable it to improve its competitive edge and ensure sustainable growth. Based on its strategic objectives, CU is committed to strengthening its operations to ensure that all staff members and other stakeholders are working towards the achievement of its goals.

1.3.2 Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA)

The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) was founded in 1961 as a joint Ghana Government/United Nations Special Fund Project (www.gimpa.edu.gh). It was originally called the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), established as the key strategic institution to develop the public administrative systems and to train public servants with administrative and professional competence to plan and administer national, regional and local services. In 1999/2000, GIMPA was among a group of 200 public sector organisations in Ghana earmarked under the World Bank-funded Public Sector Reform Programme to be taken off

Government Subvention. GIMPA was subsequently selected under the National Institutional Reform Programme to be transformed, notably to be self-financing. Subsequently, GIMPA was taken off Government Subvention in 2001 (GIMPA, 2022). This, however, does not imply that the Institute is completely autonomous; it is accountable to the Government of Ghana in many respects, making it a quasi-public university.

The Institute has four campuses located in Accra, Tema (both in the Greater Accra Region), Takoradi (in the Western Region) and Kumasi (in the Ashanti Region). Its main campus, popularly known as Greenhill, is about ten kilometres away from Central Accra and close to the main campus of the University of Ghana. Currently, GIMPA has not only become a fully-fledged public university, but also a highly acclaimed institute, recognised in Africa and around the world, offering master's and executive master's degree programmes in business administration, public administration, development management, governance and leadership in addition to undergraduate programmes. The academic programmes offered by GIMPA are run by four schools namely, Business School, School of Public Service and Governance, Faculty of Law and School of Technology. The Institute is committed to offering programmes in leadership, management, technology, public and business administration for persons employed in the public and private sectors, civil societies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote the use of information technology as an essential tool to increase competitive advantage and enhance output for national development.

1.3.3 University of Ghana

The University of Ghana (UG) is the premier and largest public university in Ghana. It was founded as the University College of the Gold Coast by an ordinance on August 11, 1948 upon the

recommendation of the Asquith Commission on higher education in the then British colonies. The University College, at its inception, had the primary purpose of providing and promoting university education, learning and research. For the first thirteen years of its establishment, the University College depended on two institutions in Great Britain, the Inter-universities Council and the University of London, for guidance on its broad policy and the approval and control of degree regulations. In the 1960-1961 academic year, the then College Council petitioned the Government of Ghana for legislation to constitute the University College into a fully-fledged university with the mandate to award its own degrees. Following this request, the Government appointed an International Commission to examine the issue at stake. Upon the recommendation of the Commission, the University of Ghana was established by an Act of Parliament (Act 79) on October 1, 1961 (University of Ghana Diary, 2015).

The University has undergone significant changes since it invited a Visitation Panel in 2006 to review its processes in the pursuit of its core mission of producing world-class human resources. Based on the recommendations of the Visitation Panel, UG revised its mode of business and the mode of relationship with its different publics, especially students. Additionally, UG took steps to reform its structure with a view to becoming more effective and efficient in the delivery of its programmes and other activities (University of Ghana Strategic Plan, 2014). In the area of governance, UG has made considerable efforts in restructuring the university management based on recommendations by the Visitation Panel. In addition, the University adopted the collegiate system of governance in 2014 to ensure the decentralisation of its academic and administrative processes. Currently, UG runs on four colleges namely College of Basic and Applied Sciences, College of Education, College of Health Sciences and College of Humanities with more than 39 schools, institutes and centres organised under these colleges. In addition to these, about 23

colleges/institutes hold affiliation with the university for the purposes of enrolment, teaching and the award of degrees and diplomas (University of Ghana Diary, 2020). Again, six (out of the 46) Colleges of Education in Ghana received affiliation status with the University of Ghana in 2019, in line with comprehensive reforms within the teacher education sector, to run Bachelor of Education programmes (University of Ghana Diary, 2020).

About ten years prior to the collegiate system in 2014, UG restructured its administrative section into administrative directorates and units. Currently, there are eleven (11) of such directorates and units in the University. Through its academic and administrative units, UG is committed to achieving its vision of becoming a world-class research-intensive university over the next decade in order to serve the growing needs of Ghana, the Sub-region and the global world.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Integrated communication has been acclaimed by scholars and communication practitioners such as Endaltseva (2015), Niemann-Struweg (2014), Barker (2013) and Kitchen and Burgman (2010) as an approach that can promote synergy, cohesion, co-ordination and consistency to avoid fragmentation in organisational communication. Angelopulo and Barker (2005) affirm that institutions that want to have a competitive edge must consider IC as an essential paradigm for achieving their strategic goals. The engagement of internal stakeholders in the IC process significantly enhances the implementation of the paradigm, according to scholars (Schuller & Rasticova, 2011). There is an exponential amount of literature on integrated communication practice in organisations to support these claims, though some scholars argue that the implementation of IC in organisations is saddled with rigid organisational structures, ego problems

and managerial challenges as well as unclear definition and measurement procedures (Kliatchko, 2009; Schultz & Schultz, 2003; De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2001).

In spite of its popular acclaim, IC has not been implemented successfully in higher educational institutions such as universities. This has become increasing concern for scholars in the field of institutional communication. For instance, the literature shows that scholars including Wilsea (2018) and Edmiston-Strasser (2009), who investigate integrated communication in higher educational institutions such as universities and colleges, have identified challenges to the implementation of IC. They argue that though IC has gained increased acceptance over the past few decades, the extent of its integration into the strategic management approach of higher educational institutions has not been well understood. For example, despite the fact that many American colleges teach integrated communication, the literature suggests that far fewer number of colleges actually practise what they teach (Schuller & Rasticova, 2011; Edmiston-Strasser, 2009). Though models have been developed to drive the integrated communication process, some scholars still decry the unsuccessful implementation of the concept in institutions (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Edmiston-Strasser, 2009; Walt, 2006). It is, therefore, unclear how communication processes are structured in universities and whether institutions have advanced to the effective integration of communication processes (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009). What this suggests is that there is the need for a comprehensive agenda to drive the management of IC in institutions.

As indicated earlier, studies conducted on integrated communication in higher educational institutions in Ghana have tended to focus mainly on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching, learning and research at different levels of education (Gyaase, Gyamfi & Kuranchie, 2019; Edumadzie, 2016), though ICT is just an enabler of IC. In addition, the recent competition and crave for student enrolment that has characterised

the educational landscape have generated numerous studies on IMC in universities which lay much emphasis on the use of marketing communication tools by universities and the influence that IMC has on stakeholders' satisfaction, and, its consequences on enrolment, corporate branding, corporate marketing and related disciplines. Apart from Adiko (2015) who investigates the effects of IMC strategies on brand performance in three private universities, hardly any literature can be sourced on integrated communication practice in universities in Ghana regarding the place of stakeholders in the IC process.

Scholarship, however, projects the value of stakeholders (especially internal stakeholders) in the IC process (Slaba, 2015; Schuller & Rasticova, 2011), and universities by their nature, have so many constituents including students, employees and other stakeholders. There is, therefore, a growing need for these institutions to adopt an effective way to communicate with their multifaceted stakeholders to avoid fragmentation. For instance, there is a general consensus in the literature that, internal stakeholders have to be integrated into the communication process and educated on the goals and aspirations of universities to ensure effective engagement with external stakeholders (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Edmiston-Strausser, 2009). As indicated by Niemann-Struweg (2014), Schuller and Rasticova (2011) and Edmiston-Strausser (2009), universities have not done much to enhance synergy and consistency in their communication procedures to be able to turn their internal stakeholders into ambassadors.

In view of this, the literature offers very little empirical direction on how universities should involve internal stakeholders in their integrated communication efforts. Similarly, a scanty part of the literature focuses on certain aspects of integrated communication in universities without referring to the different strands that ensure effective IC with internal stakeholders (Adiko, 2015;

Edmiston-Strausser, 2009). Addressing these shortfalls would give universities much-needed insights to help them identify the different strands that promote IC.

Again, apart from the study by Adiko (2015) which examines brand performance in three universities in Ghana, existing literature mainly deals with individual higher educational institutions and the way they market themselves to enhance enrolment (Abdullah and Mohamad, 2015; Dorkenoo et. al., 2015; Bamfo & Atara, 2013; Schuller & Rasticova, 2011). Consequently, there is a gap in the literature on the practice of IC in universities and stakeholder engagement in the process. To fill this gap, this study investigated the practice of IC in three different universities in Ghana: private, quasi-public and public. Focusing on how the internal stakeholders of these universities perceived IC in their respective institutions and how their perceptions helped them to contribute to the achievement of institutional goals offers a more nuanced understanding of the IC process. The findings from these different universities would augment the body of literature on integrated communication.

1.5 Research Objectives

As indicated earlier, contemporary universities need to co-ordinate and integrate their communication programmes in order to communicate effectively with their publics. In view of this, institutions need to evaluate their communication activities to ensure synergy in all their efforts to reach out to their various publics. An integrated approach to communication offers the opportunity for holistic communication, given its ability to align institutional symbols, messages and procedures with the institutional strategic vision/mission in a manner that is appealing to all institutional stakeholders.

The primary objective of this study, therefore, was to investigate the opinions of internal stakeholders of the three selected universities to make recommendations on how to improve the management of integrated communication in universities in Ghana. To achieve this overarching objective, the study sought to:

1. examine internal publics' perceptions about internal communication and its role in managing institutional relationship with stakeholders;
2. explore internal stakeholders' opinions on the communication of institutional strategic plan and how this is linked with their contributions to the achievement of institutional strategic goals;
3. assess the roles of PR practitioners and how these informed the implementation of IC in their institutions; and
4. investigate how top management's understanding of integrated communication is linked with its support for the implementation of IC in the institutions.

1.6 Research Questions

In spite of the enduring efforts to implement the concept of IC, scholars are doubtful that communication practitioners have been successful in applying the concept in their institutions. In addition, the lack of internal stakeholder involvement in the IC process to push institutional agenda leaves a gap in the scholarly literature. This research was guided by the following questions in effort to provide answers that might meet the objectives set for this study and help to fill the gap in literature:

1. In what ways will internal communication and relationship management in the institutions be linked to the performance of internal stakeholders' roles?

2. What are the ways in which the communication of institutional strategic plan connect with internal publics' contributions to the achievement of institutional strategic goals?
3. How do the roles of PR practitioners intersect with PR strategies for the implementation of integrated communication in their institutions?
4. How does top management's understanding of integrated communication link with its support for the implementation of IC in an institution?

Addressing the above questions offered insights to stakeholder engagement in the IC process as well as the different factors that facilitate the process.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Gayeski and Woodward (1996) note that while most organisations' communication systems and interventions are not yet integrated as defined, there are a number of examples that demonstrate that the integrated model of organisational communication can be applied in diverse settings. This claim is supported by Luck and Moffat (2009) who believe that integrated communication is suitable for diverse forms of organisations operating in different environments thereby suggesting that, integrated communication has a lot of relevance for institutions. Literature also indicates that there is a shift in management's evaluation of both internal and external communication. Top management increasingly focuses on the measurement of return on communication investments, that is, the results of investments made in communication programmes (Niemann, 2005). Consequently, communication practitioners are obliged to determine and quantify what funded communication programmes have accomplished and the benefits they bring to an organisation (Smith 2012b; Yawstrow, 1999).

It is for these reasons that research into integrated communication in universities becomes vital. In Ghana, as in other parts of the world, it is common to find universities with satellite campuses. The ability of a university to co-ordinate its communication efforts to meet diverse interests is both imperative and a competitive advantage. This study was designed to enable management obtain feedback on current communication in the respective institutions. The study provided a framework for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of internal communication and sensitise practitioners to improve their communication efforts. With the kind of synergy that IC advocates, the study shows how IC helps to align management and employee ideas for the achievement of the strategic intent of institutions. The recommendations made at the end of this study are useful to all universities and higher educational institutions.

This research also makes contribution to scholarship in two-folds. First, it engages data derived from internal stakeholder experiences of integrated communication in the three institutions and, through the analysis of the data, enhances the body of literature in the area of integrated communication. Second, the study expands the theoretical assumptions of the systems theory and the evolutionary integrated communications model by adapting them to the study of integrated communication practices of three different types of universities.

1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

This section deals with the operational definitions of some key terms in the study.

Synergy

‘Synergy’ involves message integration through consistency, interactivity and mission communication (Moriarty, 1994). ‘Synergy’, thus, refers to co-ordinating various messages about

the institutional mission to ensure that one thread holds all communication components together to present a unified image about the institution.

Communication Czar

For the integration of communication to be effective, one of the main prerequisites is to appoint a person or a team to be specifically responsible for the process. The duty of this person/team is to co-ordinate communication actions and efforts; ensure clarity and accuracy, and relevance of information; align communication with the strategic focus of the organisation; ensure the free flow of information among stakeholders for maximum impact, and, ensure management support for the process of integration (Angelopulo & Barker, 2005). In this study, 'Communication Czar' is the term used to refer to the communication expert who is responsible for managing all the above duties with competence.

Internal Stakeholders

'Internal stakeholders' in this research refers to the internal constituents or internal publics of the universities selected for this study with particular reference to academic staff, middle-level or senior staff, students, senior management (top management) and PR practitioners whose views were investigated to establish the procedure for integrated communication in the institutions. In this study, 'stakeholders' is usually interchanged with 'publics' which refers to the same group of people.

Universities

'Universities' in this study basically refers to public, private and quasi-public universities which are accredited, for the purposes of awarding degrees, with specific reference to the Central University (CU), GIMPA and the University of Ghana (UG).

1.9 Organisation of the Study

Chapter One of this study is the introductory chapter which spells out the background of the study, the evolutionary definitions and the working definition of IC. The chapter also discusses the scope covered by the IC approach and explains the IC construct. In addition, Chapter One deals with the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, and, operational definition of key terms.

In Chapter Two, the theoretical assumptions of the study are discussed. The main theory that underpins the study as well as the model that supports discussions are explained and related to the institutional context.

Chapter Three deals with the literature review. Studies relating to the IC concept are discussed in this chapter and key discussions on the obstacles to the implementation of IC are discussed as well.

In Chapter Four, the methodology for this study is discussed, beginning with the philosophies that guided the choice of methods. In addition, the sampling procedures together with the different methods used for data collection and data analysis are explained. Also, key in this chapter is the description of the study areas.

Chapter Five focuses on the presentation of findings. The data generated from this study are presented using descriptive statistics for the survey and narratives supported by quotes for the interviews and focus group discussions. The data are also triangulated to identify similarities and differences between the quantitative and qualitative findings in addition to drawing comparisons among the three universities.

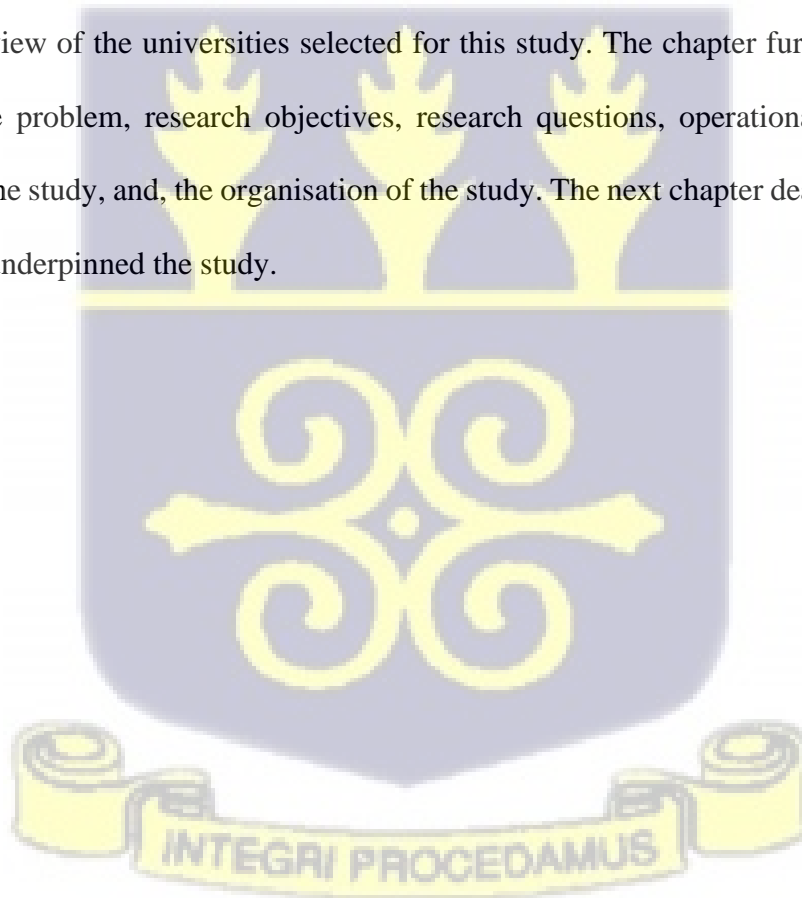
In Chapter Six, the research findings are discussed pointing out the ways in which the themes covered in the literature and the theoretical underpinnings are reflected in Ghanaian

universities. In-depth analyses of the qualitative data are done to identify meaningful patterns pertaining to the practice of IC in the institutions selected for this study.

Chapter Seven of this study presents the conclusions drawn, the implications to theory and practice as well as recommendations for the implementation of the integrated communication paradigm in higher educational institutions.

1.10 Summary

This chapter dealt with the introduction to the entire study. Key issues discussed included the background of the study, the definitions of integrated communication, its scope and constructs as well as an overview of the universities selected for this study. The chapter further presented the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, operational definitions, the significance of the study, and, the organisation of the study. The next chapter deals with the theory and model that underpinned the study.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Theory, according to Rubin and Babbie (2017) and Wimmer and Dominick (2014), presents a systematic view of phenomena using a set of interrelated statements to explain the relationships among concepts and aspects of social life. Reeves, Albert, Kuper and Hodges (2008) reveal the important roles that a theory plays in all stages of the research process including the composition of the research design, research questions, the selection of relevant data, the interpretation of data, and, the explanation of causes or influences. Flowing from the above, the present study was guided by the systems theory propounded by von Bertalanffy (1947). The systems theory is one perspective that has dominated theoretical discussions in the field of integrated communication. Van der Walt (2006) believes that systems theory provides the basis for the symbiotic relationship that exists between an organisation and its constituent units. Both the systems theory and integrated communication emphasise the need for unifying efforts by a system and its constituents for mutually beneficial outputs. The systems theory was, therefore, chosen as a relevant framework for this study to guide the investigation of the degree to which integrated communication creates a symbiotic relationship among the internal stakeholders of the institutions studied.

The discussions in this chapter include the development of the systems thinking, its tenets, limitations as well as its application to the study of communication (in general) and integrated communication (in particular). In addition to the systems theory, the study was supported by Duncan and Caywood's (1996) evolutionary integrated communications model. This model

explains the stages in the integrated communication process and could be used to evaluate an institution's current stage of IC.

2.1 Origin of the General Systems Theory

In response to the increasing fragmentation and duplication of scientific and technological research and decision-making during the nineteenth century, and the first half of the twentieth century, an Australian biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, propounded the general system theory (GST) (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). Von Bertalanffy conceived the scientific world of that period as a world of chaos calling for efforts to shape it into an organised world upon which scientific thoughts would rest. According to him:

There exist models, principles and laws that apply to generalized systems or their subclasses irrespective of their particular kind, the nature of the component elements, and the relations or “forces” between them. We postulate a new discipline called General System Theory. ... In this way, the exact formulations of terms such as wholeness and sum, differentiation, progressive mechanization, centralization, hierarchical order, finality and equifinality, etc., become possible terms which occur in all sciences dealing with “systems” and imply their logical homology. (Von Bertalanffy, 1947, as cited in Klir, 1972, p.411)

Von Bertalanffy considered the principles of organisation and co-ordination associated with the various levels of the natural systems in his first statements dating from 1925 to 1926 (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). During this period, Alfred Whitehead and Paul Weiss were developing similar theories that focused on integration, coherence and consistency in the natural sciences. Led by von Bertalanffy, the three scientists developed a general theory of systems to explain how the

different parts of living things work together to complete a particular task. The GST, thus, originated in the natural sciences (Biological Sciences) as the organismic phenomenon due to efforts to understand sets of objects, the relationship between those objects as well as the relationship between sets of objects and their environments (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). These beliefs made the systems thinking widely accepted and by the 1960s, was recognised as a scientific basis for theory construction at the multidisciplinary level.

2.1.1 Definition of System

A system has been defined in various ways. Miller (1995) for instance conceives of a system as “... a set of interacting units with relationships among them” (p.17). More specific definitions offered include Klir (1972) who defines the concept as “a set of elements standing in interaction among themselves and with the environment” (p.417). Mele, Pels and Polese (2010) also define the term as an assemblage of objects united by some form of regular interaction or interdependence. The key words in these definitions, “relationships”, “interrelations”, “interactions” and “interdependence” strongly emphasise that systems’ components must not be considered in isolation. For purposes of this study, Ackoff’s (1981) definition of system is adopted. According to him, a system is a set of two or more interrelated elements with the following properties:

1. Each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole;
2. Each element is affected by, at least, one other element in the system;
3. All sub-groups of the elements have the first two properties.

A system, then, refers to a set of things that affect one another within an environment and forms a larger pattern that is different from any of the parts. Obviously, Ackoff’s (1981) definition supports

the notion that to derive a better understanding, elements of the social system need not be studied in isolation. Their interrelations with one another and their environment are equally worthy of investigation. The systems thinking, thus, advocates a holistic approach to understanding social phenomena in consonance with the Aristotelian dictum of the whole being more than the sum of its parts.

2.1.2 System Characteristics

Scholars such as Laszlo and Krippner (1997) identify different characteristics of the systems theory. Two of these characteristics which are relevant to the study of IC in institutions are explained in the following sections.

2.1.2.1 The Emergent Properties and Synergy of a System

As suggested by the Aristotelian definition, a system is a divisible whole structurally, but functionally, is an indivisible unity with emergent properties. An emergent property, according to Laszlo and Krippner (1997), is marked by the appearance of novel characteristics exhibited on the whole ensemble but not by the system components in isolation. By this explanation, the authors suggest that the emergent properties are lost when the system breaks down to its components. Again, when a component is detached from the whole, that component itself loses its emergent properties. The notion of emergent properties leads to the concept of synergy in that the behaviour of the system results from the attention on the synergistic and complex inter-relationship among its constituent parts. A detached component, thus, forfeits the synergistic relationship enjoyed by other constituent parts. This characteristic of systems theory forms the basis for measuring the universities' attempts at adopting institutional policies and strategies in an integrated manner.

2.1.2.2 Open and Closed Systems

Depending on the degree of interaction with its environment, a system could be open or closed. A closed system hardly interacts with its environment because it does not accommodate adequate exchange of information or matter (Mele, *et al.*, 2010). Since closed systems do not facilitate/encourage the exchange of information, they are prone to atrophy. At the very fundamental level, an open system, unlike the closed system, interacts with its environment. Von Bertalanffy maintains that closed systems thinking was inappropriate to the study of biological phenomena because biological systems interact with their environment, grow and survive (Ansari, 2004).

Gregory (2000) uses three key terms to explain the closed and open perspectives. These are mechanistic system (sometimes called closed system), organismic and adaptive systems (which refer to open system). Mechanistic or closed system, according to her, advocates equilibrium and works to counteract any disturbances to restore the original state. Gregory (2000) indicates that in the organismic model, units work together to impact one another in a reciprocal manner making the system, as a whole, responsive to environmental changes. The objective of the organismic system is survival and to achieve this, the system adjusts to maintain balance internally and with its environment. The system receives input from the environment and exerts some impact on it; predicts and influences change in order to arrive at its desired goals or objectives. In addition, feedback received from its internal units causes adjustments in the systems structure and processes. Thus, unlike the mechanistic system, the focus under this model is not on equilibrium, but on change, though the main aim is to achieve an overall balance.

According to Gregory (2000), the adaptive component of open system was propounded by Buckley (1967) as a progression from both the mechanistic and organismic systems. Buckley

(1967) particularly laid emphasis on adaptive feedback as the foundation for purposeful feedback indicating variety, tension and the desire to develop are very essential to the adaptive system. Under this paradigm, interaction between the system and the organisation is not mechanical. Rather, it is an ongoing cyclical process where the development of shared meaning and mutual understanding is vital to each participant in the system. The adaptive process could, therefore, be associated with networking and knowledge sharing among institutional internal stakeholders.

Katz and Kahn (1978) applied the open system theory to organisation's ability to adapt to changes in environmental conditions. They considered the organisation as a system which imports matter, energy and information from the external environment and transforms them into products and services. A system's openness is, thus, measured by the amount of energy, matter and information it is able to exchange with the environment (Mele, *et al.*, 2010). The following section places more emphasis on the discussion of the open systems theory which is relevant to this study as it investigated the integration of communication activities by institutions.

2.1.3 Tenets of the Open Systems Theory

The literature shows that open systems operate in relation to suprasystems (or super systems) and subsystems which are arranged in a manner that contributes to the systems' survival through unrestricted interactions (Mele *et al.*, 2010). Such interactions are characterised by the main tenets of the open systems perspective which are expatiated in the following sections.

2.1.3.1 Hierarchical Ordering

Hierarchical ordering signifies that an institution comprises a larger system and its individual parts (such as the administration and academic units, or management and staff, students, et cetera).

Systems components either belong to the super system (such as management) or a subsystem (including staff and students) which interrelate (Miller, 2009). Since system components are structured in levels, it is necessary to co-ordinate the interactions between subsystems as well as how subsystems interact with the super system (Wu, 2013).

2.1.3.2 Permeability and Interdependence

Permeability refers to the degree to which a system is open to facilitate the flow of information between the super systems and subsystems (Dibble & Gibson, 2018). At its fundamental level, a system is characterised by input-transformation-output processes. The open system engages in a constant exchange by sourcing inputs (such as information) from the environment and transforming them into outputs which are returned to the environment. Such constant exchange of information between super systems and subsystems is facilitated by the system's permeable boundaries (Miller, 2009; Farace, Monge & Russell, 1977) and the whole process requires the interdependence of system components to ensure the successful co-ordination of the communication efforts.

2.1.3.3 Holism

The notion of holism echoes the Aristotelian definition of system to suggest that a system is “more than the sum of its parts” (Miller, 2009, p.62). According to Senge (1990), since systems thinking is a framework for seeing wholes, it is suitable for acknowledging interrelationships and patterns of change. The systemic perspective, thus, posits that a social phenomenon cannot be fully comprehended simply by breaking it up into elementary parts and reforming it. Though one could begin with the analysis of the elementary components, in order to understand the phenomenon

fully, it has to be observed from a holistic perspective (von Bertalanffy, 1968, as cited in Mele, *et al.*, 2010). Premised on this perspective, an institution is regarded as a holistic system characterised by a high degree of integration between its supra-systems and subsystems. Caldwell (2012) affirms that the ability to see an institution holistically as an integrated system enables individual workers to locate their daily activities within the shared vision of that institution. Consequently, institutions through an integrated system, can create awareness for a common sense of purpose and direction and the collective development of a shared vision.

2.1.3.4 Feedback

Another tenet which is worth elaborating is the notion of feedback. Feedback enables a system to engage interactive communication. Ansari (2004) identifies two types of feedback namely feed forward control and error-control. Feed-forward control is anticipatory in nature where the system anticipates future occurrences and proactively takes corrective action before any damage occurs. Error-control feedback is reactive in nature and allows the system to take corrective actions after errors have already occurred.

2.1.3.5 Homeostasis

Homeostasis is a system perspective that refers to information exchanges between a viable system and its external environment, allowing the system to maintain a state of equilibrium over time (Mele *et al.*, 2010). It is mainly concerned with the feedback process which helps the system to adjust in order to achieve equilibrium (Covington, 1998). Organisational systems consider the compatibility between system actors (consonance) and ensure harmonic interactions between them (resonance). Consonance and resonance, according to Mele *et al.* (2010) can be achieved through

effective integrated communication and can also contribute to the equilibrium of the system as well as the fulfilment of the supra-system's expectation. The ability to ensure effective interactions between system actors fosters feedback which is a central characteristic of viable systems (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Christopher, 2007). Homeostasis maximises a system's chances of survival and growth within its environment while seeking to achieve equilibrium.

2.1.3.6 Self-regulation

While feedback is necessary for a system's survival and growth, it is also important for the system to regulate feedback that is received. Self-regulation shows the adaptive mechanism that allows the system to keep itself under a balanced condition through information exchange with the outside world (Beer, 1975, as cited in Mele *et al.*, 2010). In support of this principle, Barlie and Polese (2010) state that every organisation must be viable enough to create its own internal environment to respond effectively to external stimuli at all levels. The system needs a self-organising mechanism that enables it to align its internal complexity with the complex environment (Maturana & Varela, 1975). It is for this reason that Mele *et al.* (2010) position the organisation as a system at the micro level and its environment as a system at the macro level. Following this perspective, management analyses the structure of the micro system and that of the macro environment and undertakes the necessary actions for survival.

2.1.3.7 Entropy and Requisite Variety

A system exhibits entropy if it has the capacity to integrate and sustain its subsystems and grow while preventing chaos within its internal structures. While the integration of subsystems is essential for the system to be operational, the system must simultaneously find a level of

differentiation that aligns with its external environment. This is because the processes of integration and differentiation help to determine the relationship between employees and managers (Pugh & Hickson, 2007; Lawrence & Lorch, 1967).

The idea of differentiation aligns with the property of requisite variety which refers to the diversity of the internal operations of the system and how these can be used to address the complications in the system environment. Ashby (1958) originally used the law of requisite variety to argue that living systems need to develop and sustain sufficient systemic diversity in order to accurately sense variety in their surroundings. According to Warren (2004), the law of requisite variety deals with feedback which allows a system to adapt, while responding to external stimuli. Christensen *et al.* (2008), therefore, indicate that the law of requisite variety requires systems processes (such as information sharing and exchanges) to be as unequivocal as the inputs they seek to manage activities. These properties help to address how institutional internal stakeholders combine their diverse expertise to work for the common good of their institution.

2.1.3.8 Equifinality and Common Finality

The ability of system components to tread different paths to reach the same final stage is what Katz and Kahn (1978) and Miller (2009) refer to as equifinality. Given the complexity and diverse nature of the activities performed by system actors, coupled with dynamic interactions, there is the need for a mechanism that will synchronise all the activities to direct the system towards its desired goal. The more system actors realise they have a common goal, the better everyone contributes towards the attainment of that goal.

Von Bertalanffy (1962, as cited in Mele et al., 2010) coined the term *common finality* to extend this debate. According to him, common finality is necessary for a system's survival

inasmuch as it considers the organisation as a set of parts that are organised, managed and are interacting with each other to reach the same final goal. Based on this goal-seeking mission, Infante, Rancer and Womack (1997) referred to a system as being teleological in nature, implying that, a system is usually designed to reach certain end points or destinations.

Put together, the above tenets give a complete picture of how a system integrates its components and maintains order to achieve its goals. To work in harmony within its environment, institutions must exhibit these tenets. It is important to note, however, that the dynamic behaviour of individuals underlies the importance they attach to their institution's activities (Polese, 2010). This, therefore, requires a thorough examination of social relationship dynamics and individual conditions which could encourage or undermine a system's survival (Gatti, Biferali & Volpe, 2009, as cited in Mele, *et al.*, 2010). Without an integrated system of communication, some system actors could remain apathetic with no interest in the achievement of a system's goals.

2.1.4 Criticisms of Systems Theory

In spite of the stability and consistency it offers, the systems theory comes with some criticisms. Hudson (1999) and Hunter (1999) offer one of the most forceful criticisms of systems theory, the problem of assumed equilibrium. They explain that, many of the interpretations of systems theory are tainted with assumed equilibrium which refers to the tendency to overemphasise system maintenance and functions, making the theory limited in dealing with the complexities associated with change, growth and directions for practice. Vasili (2010) also argues that when each set of actors brings a different set of goals and values to bear on the system, the problem of optimising the common good becomes completely difficult.

Hiorland and Nicolaisen (2005) suggest that the systems theory escapes from reality and seems to dismiss the inevitability of the conflict implicit in the existing structure of an institution as well as its control system. Systems such as institutions are characterised by communication and other competing departments which engage in turf wars that could undermine integration and co-ordination of efforts.

Another criticism against systems theory is resistance to change. According to Laszlo and Krippner (1998), systems design is participatory in nature, given that people have to actively apply their skills to socially and ecologically design sustainable systems. This is because a significant social change such as integrated communication can occur only if those who are most likely to drive the change actively participate in implementing it. Institutional change emanates from and incorporates human beings who are the most critical factor in social systems. Consequently, departmental heads who may resist change and continue to operate as independent functional silos can challenge the effective implementation of a holistic paradigm such as integrated communication.

2.1.5 Relevance of the Systems Theory to Institutional Communication

Despite its inadequacies, scholars attach a lot of importance to the systems theory given its value to a plethora of disciplines. For instance, Laszlo and Krippner (1998) note that though systems theory grew out of organismic biology, it soon branched into various humanities disciplines. As indicated by the lead proponent, Von Bertalanffy (1972), the system laws manifest themselves as analogies of laws that are formally identical but pertain to quite different disciplines. He writes:

It is a striking fact that biological systems as diverse as the central nervous system, and the biochemical regulatory network in cells should be strictly analogous. ... It

is all the more remarkable when it is realized that this particular analogy between different systems at different levels of biological organization is but one member of a large class of analogies. (Von Bertalanffy, 1947, as cited in Klir, 1972, p.413)

Following this belief, the biologist recommended the application of the theory to other academic disciplines (Miller, 2009). Miller's (2009) conceptualisation of a system as "an assemblage of parts or components" reflects in the institutional system where these components may refer to the people/groups/teams and the departments that constitute the institution (p.59).

Consequently, several communication scholars approved the systems perspective for the study of communication (Miller 2009; Contractor, 1994). Littlejohn (2001) affirms that the general systems theory has been an immensely useful tool in the communication discipline in that the theory is designed to capture the means by which various phenomena can be viewed holistically as a set of interacting forces. The connection between systems theory and institutional communication is captured by Lai and Lin (2017) as follows:

Systems theory has influenced and spawned theory and research development in organizational studies since the 1960s. Seeing a parallel between biological and human social systems, systems theory places dual emphases on organisations' relationships and interdependence among components of the system as well as the organisation-environment relationships. The structure and patterns and relationships of a system emerge from interactions among the components, thus each system is unique.

The systems perspective facilitates the distinction between institutions with open systems and those with closed systems. According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), organisations with “open systems exchange inputs and outputs through boundaries that are permeable” (p.181).

Those with closed systems have impermeable boundaries that inhibit the exchange of information in their environments. Cutlip *et al.* (2006) argue further that closed systems, by their nature, resist external change, while open systems are responsive to changes in the environment. In the open systems theory, the decision-maker works for the system’s survival by analysing the structure of the system and the environment and modifying the borders between them.

Gregory (2000) extends the analysis on open and closed systems by aligning these perspectives with Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of Public Relations: press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication. The press agency model uses propaganda to obtain publicity from its target audience, whereas the public information model employs persuasive communication in reaching out to its publics. These two models are considered one-way communication because they attempt to change the behaviour of the target publics and not that of the originating organisation (Gregory, 2000). According to Gregory (2000) and Grunig and Hunt (1984), communication practitioners who use the press agency or public information model of communication operate in a closed system as they mainly focus on the production of high calibre information materials for the purpose of persuading the publics. Cutlip *et al.* (2006) also argue that practitioners who operate in the closed system use reactive public relations programmes which are only activated when the system is disturbed. Such practices push PR practitioners towards a functionary or technician role which disallows them from being part of the decision-making body or the dominant coalition that determines institutional goals.

In Gregory's (2000) view, the two-way asymmetrical model characterises the organismic system approach because its aim is to change the attitudes and behavior of publics but not to change the institution. This model, therefore, employs research to plan messages that can influence the publics to behave in the desired manner. Feedback derived from this communication effort is used to moderate messages to make them more effective rather than initiate change.

Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical model of communication is the one that aligns with the adaptive/open system approach in that it proposes attitudinal change by both the institution and its publics through the use of dialogue (Gregory, 2000). The authors' notion of a dominant coalition which determines institutional decisions and desired goals fits well with the adaptive model where the control centre decides the goal parameters and how these will be attained. Under this system model, communication practitioners fulfill both the functional and management roles in that they plan and manage communication programmes, counsel and form part of the dominant coalition which makes policy decisions. Cutlip *et al.* (2006) add that communication practitioners who operate in an open system are proactive. Consequently, they ensure effective communication, maintain long-lasting mutual relationships by helping both the institution and its publics to adapt and adjust to the fluid environment.

Arguments developed here indicate that, institutional systems that have a relatively limited set of interactions with the environment are often termed as closed, whilst those with a high level of interdependence with their environment are considered open systems. In Corlett's (n.d.) view, however, there are no institutional systems that are absolutely closed; there is always some level of interaction with the environment because the institution's boundary must be tight enough to enable it to focus on accomplishing its mission. On the other hand, it must be loose/open enough to facilitate a robust exchange of ideas with its environment. It is the institutional boundary's

quality of permeability that enables it to retrieve feedback from its environment for effective adaptation (Corlett, n.d.).

2.1.6 Systems Theory and Integrated Communication

Advocates of IC such as Angelopulo (1994), Tushman and Nadler (1999) and Mele *et al.* (2010) align the systems theory with integrated communication. For instance, Angelopulo (1994) notes that an integrated communication management requires the organisation to be considered as a system within an environment in which there is dynamic exchange. The systems approach places integrated communication management in relation to subsystems in the institution and demonstrates the interdependence of these various subsystems and how the communication manager unites them for a common purpose (Classen & Vewey, 1998).

Angelopulo (1994) explains further that integrated communication management within the systems perspective has two dimensions. The first emphasises the mode by which communication enables the institution to interact actively with its environment for the mutual benefit of the two. The systems approach from this angle ensures proactive and reactive engagement of the institution and its publics. Accordingly, this requires communication managers to gather information and effectively distribute it to institutional publics. The second dimension focuses on the functional role of integrated communication management. In this functional role, the communication manager influences management decision by identifying potential problems and opportunities in order to distribute relevant information to both management and institutional stakeholders.

Some scholars such as Chikere and Nwoka (2015), Classen and Vewey (1998) and Hodge and Anthony (1991) view integrated communication in line with the adaptive/open systems perspective. They assert that the institution, as an open system, receives inputs from the

environment, processes the information, delivers output into the environment and provides channels for feedback. In this process, communication managers are considered as boundary-spanners and systems managers not only because they facilitate open communication in the institution, but also for functioning as mediators between the institution and its publics as well as dealing with the complex relationship inherent in the institution (Classen & Vewey, 1998; Hodge & Anthony, 1991). In line with the above observations, White and Dozier (1992) maintain that the information required by the dominant coalition to make decisions resides with boundary spanners/communication managers who frequently interact with the institution's environment to gather, select and relay information to senior management.

Another group of scholars indicate that an institution which has an open system makes the necessary formal and informal arrangements to ensure that its people and core activities are guided by an articulated strategy (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Tushman & Nadler, 1999). The articulated strategy, also known as communication strategy, is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of IC (Massie & Anderson, 2003). In this regard, information sharing is directed by the strategy which strengthens vision and mission communication and helps to achieve institutional goals. For this reason, Walt (2006) campaigns for the sensitisation of all employees to become aware that the organisation is an integrated framework because employees' actions and decisions affect the various parts of the institution.

Obviously, institutions that lean towards the adaptive/open systems approach embrace the two-way symmetrical communication model to facilitate their IC efforts. Christensen *et al.* (2008) illustrate how institutions can build open and self-reflective cultures through corporate values programmes designed to foster consistency in institutional messages and behaviours through quality services and interactions. In their view, institutional openness and diverse inputs from

employees facilitate rich horizontal and vertical exchanges. “Such an approach to integration presupposes a high degree of openness, reciprocity and trust that allows information to flow freely in the organisation” (Christensen *et al.*, 2008, p.436). Conversely, when people are managed and controlled in a top-down manner, they hardly feel impelled to bring new ideas and suggestions to bear on the institutional processes (Bijlsma-Frankema & Koopman, 2004). Based on the explanations above, the systems theory was employed to guide the assessment of integrated communication practices in the three Ghanaian universities in order to make recommendations that will enhance the effective application of the concept.

2.2 The Evolutionary Integrated Communication Model

A fully integrated strategy would permit every communication activity to contribute to the success of the corporate mission (Duncan & Caywood, 1996), and, the evolutionary integrated communication model developed by Duncan and Caywood (1996) depicts this claim. The authors indicate that several dimensions of integration identified from two national studies involving advertisers form the foundation of this model. The model presents the stages through which integrated communication travels to get to a desirable point. Graphically, the model may be represented as a set of concentric circles made up of the seven stages moving from the first stage of ‘awareness’ progressively to the final stage of ‘relationship management integration’ as indicated in Fig. 2.1 (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, p.22). Each of the seven stages of the framework exhibits elements of the previous stage and builds on the previous experience. However, each organisation finds the stage that suits its current communication system and environmental situation. Consequently, the level of integration at any stage of the model could be tested for the existence of the traits this framework claims exists at that stage.

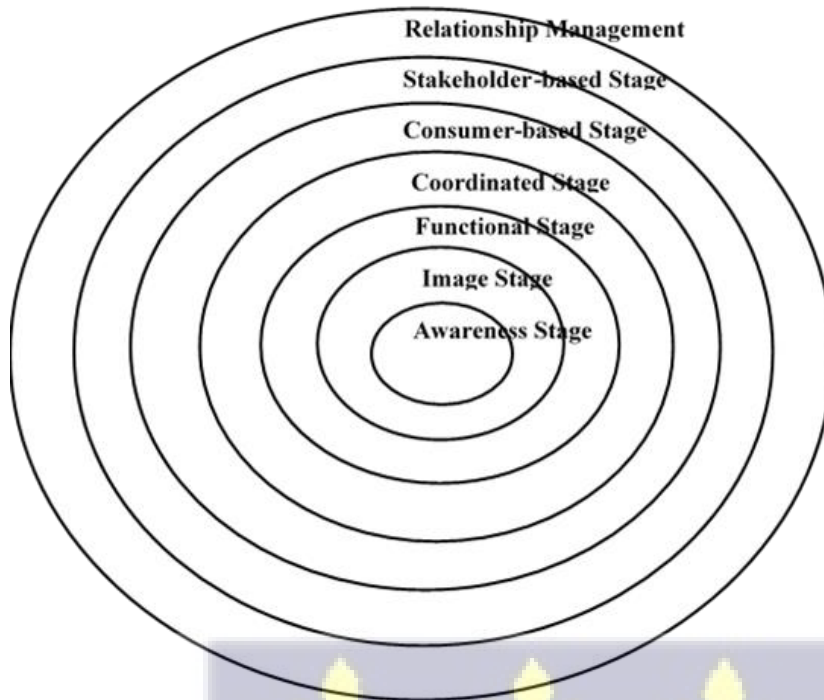


Figure 2.1: The Evolutionary Integrated Communication Model

2.2.1 Stages of the Integrated Communication Model

The stages of integration as displayed in the model recognise that new management systems and processes take time to develop, make use of available resources and adapt to the changing environment (Duncan & Caywood, 1996) as expatiated below.

2.2.1.1 Awareness Integration Stage

The awareness stage awakens the institution to changes in the environment and consequently reinforces the opportunity for developing an integrated management and communication system. This idea is based on the belief that the diversity of environmental factors demands new institutional strategies to communicate with stakeholders and to establish new relationships with them. As a result, the awareness integration stage is very important in institutional integrated communication process.

2.2.1.2 Image Integration Stage

This second stage of the integration process acknowledges the value of having a consistent message, look and feel in institutional communication. Duncan and Caywood (1996) affirm that the corporate image as reflected in corporate symbols such as the logo, can be an important element of consistency. Similarly, the tone of the message and the quality of the message production across media are very cardinal in the process of integration. Porcu, Barrio-Garcia and Kitchen (2012) confirm that consistent communication through one voice represents the core of integration as it implies a clear delivery of coherent messages through all communication tools. The focus of this stage of integration is its ability to overcome some of the most evident aspects of unco-ordinated communication efforts. This stage, therefore, provides an opportunity for communication managers and other actors in the integration process to collaborate and work to ensure consistency in communication and avoid fragmentation and duplication of work.

2.2.1.3 Functional Integration Stage

The third stage of integration moves the process to a greater degree of co-operation among the traditionally separate areas of communication responsibilities (Duncan & Caywood 1996). At this stage, the process focuses on a strategic analysis of strengths and weaknesses of each of the functional communication areas (that is public relations, advertising, marketing etc.). Strategic exercises may be conducted to gather comprehensive data on the strengths and weaknesses across functional areas after which a combination of promotional tactics is developed to suit institutional needs (Hunter, 1999; Duncan & Caywood, 1996).

2.2.1.4 Co-ordinated Integration Stage

This stage deals with the reduction of barriers to integration through communication efforts. The communication departments develop a communication programme that guides the integration process. This stage is also characterised by a database on customers to track feedback from customers as a key objective in the integration exercise. The customer database includes contact information and details of forms of communication the customer responds to (e.g. advertising, direct mail, seminar, etc.).

2.2.1.5 Customer-based Integration Stage

This stage reveals much progression in the integration process as each step of integration is mastered. At this stage, only the fully targeted consumers are reached with the most effective and precise media. The consumers are rediscovered and their contact points with the brand and company, carefully uncovered through quantitative and qualitative research (Fortini-Campbell, 1992, as cited in Duncan & Caywood, 1996). Carefully collected behavioural data about the customer helps the integrated strategy for consumer orientation. Porcu *et al.* (2012) add that an active attempt to understand what consumers want to see or listen to as well as the time, place and preferred means of communication offers a holistic approach to augment customer relationships. This stage also examines customer loyalty and pays particular attention to holding and building the correct customer-base.

2.2.1.6 Stakeholder-based Integration Stage

At this stage, the institution moves beyond merely promotional communication activities to a broader spectrum covering integrated communication. According to the proponents, IC, at this

stage, transcends communication with customers to reach out to other stakeholders including employees, the government, the community and the press. The process begins with a careful stakeholder identification involving the varied individuals who are considered important to the success of the institution. It is followed by the assignment of each stakeholder group to staff or managers who monitor and track stakeholder activities that are relevant to the institution. This stage, according to the authors, demands a fully integrated corporate communication function led by public relations.

2.2.1.7 Relationship Management Integration Stage

This stage suggests that a full IC programme must consider two-way communication as an indispensable element in the management process. Integration should, therefore, not remain with the communication department but must be guided by a well-developed IC strategy that combines the efforts of management and communication professionals for mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders. This stage, therefore, combines efforts from all the other stages to establish IC as a suitable framework to be incorporated into management. Consequently, this stage should position “communication professionals at the management table and redefine their roles from staff to management” to enable them to effectively manage stakeholder relationships (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, p.33).

The authors add that the model has no intended hierarchy. As institutions begin to adopt the integrated framework, they proceed to redefine their strategies and objectives. An institution which gages integration as a laudable management approach needs to analyse its situation and the stage of integration that fits the situation. Though organisations may not immediately implement the strategies of every stage of the integration process, organisations must note that “each stage of

integration provides a useful ‘value-added’ dimension to the process of complete integration” (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, p.33). Each phase actually contributes to the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of a fully integrated communication plan as the appropriate programme for total relationship management in an organisation.

2.2.2 Criticism of the Evolutionary Communications Model

A major criticism of the evolutionary communication model is that it hardly refers to the strategic intent of the organisation as a core element of integrated communication (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler, 2007). The model mentions the organisation’s strategic purpose towards the end of the paradigm (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler, 2007). However, the model devotes attention to important issues including image management, cross-functional collaboration and stakeholder relationship management, which are major factors of the concept of IC, makes it suitable for the study of stakeholder perceptions of IC in institutions.

2.3 Summary

The Chapter dealt with the theory and model on which this study was premised. Largely, the origin of the systems theory which underpinned the study was traced. In addition, the theory was defined and its characteristics, processes and tenets, discussed. Though the Chapter mentioned the criticisms against the theory, it also discussed the synergy between systems theory and institutional integrated communication making systems theory an appropriate paradigm for the study. Duncan and Caywood’s (1996) evolutionary integrated communication model which presents seven stages of IC was also discussed. The next chapter deals with a review of available literature on integrated communication.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews studies that have been conducted in the area of integrated communication to show how the current study fits into the existing body of knowledge (Maxwell, 2005). In line with Stern's (2007) opinion on literature review, the chapter provides a critical and in-depth evaluation of previous research projects to ascertain their contributions to the current study.

Though the IC approach has been well acclaimed by scholars since its inception, literature dealing with empirical studies on this approach is rather scanty (Endaltseva, 2015). Examples of studies backed by empirical data are Mulder's (2008) investigation of integrated communication as a form of communication in the University of the Free State (UFS) and Adiko's (2015) study on integrated communications strategies on brand performance in three private institutions in Ghana (which are elaborated in sections of this chapter). In spite of the scanty empirical literature, there is an exponential amount of literature on the conceptual perspectives of IC which deals with the attributes of IC as well as the implementation of the approach. This chapter chronicles the conceptual studies conducted on IC as well as some empirical studies on aspects of the IC approach.

3.1 Attributes of Integrated Communication

It is evident that some authors use different terminologies to describe integrated communication (Schultz, Patti & Kitchen, 2011). For example, Frandsen and Johansen (2015) refer to IC as strategic communication; Cornelissen (2014), as corporate communication, whereas Barker and

Angelopulo (2006) call it communication integration. This notwithstanding, van Baalen and Mulder (2016) indicate that these similar terms include some of the attributes of IC. Hence, stringent efforts should be made to focus on the attributes of the concept of IC when discussing it. The characteristics of integrated communication include internal communication management, strategic consistency, image management, stakeholder integration and cross-functional collaboration (van Baalen & Mulder, 2016; Kantanen, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Moriarty, 1994). The following section deals with these attributes in detail.

3.1.1 Internal Communication Management

The management of internal communication is cardinal to the success of integrated communication. Welch and Jackson (2007) consider internal communication as the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within an organisation. They believe that internal stakeholders must be segmented in a manner that recognises interrelated dimensions of internal communication such as downward and lateral communication. Such dimensions work in tandem with the direction and content of communication. Discussing the direction of internal communication, Stauss and Hoffman (2000), reveal that it is usually skewed towards one-way or asymmetrical communication (also known as vertical or downward delivery) at the expense of the two-way symmetrical mode advocated by Grunig *et al.* (2002) or horizontal communication upheld by Clampitt (2000) and Tourish and Hargie (2004).

The content of internal communication refers to what is communicated. For instance, Smidts, Pruyn and van Riel (2001) describe the content of employee communication as information about employee roles, organisational issues (such as goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements) and personal contributions. With regard to this

dimension of internal communication, scholars emphasise the role of clear, consistent and continuous communication in building employee engagement (Saks, 2006; Kress, 2005). Consequently, Welch and Jackson (2007) stress the need for internal corporate communication managers who can design communication to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and the understanding of its evolving aims.

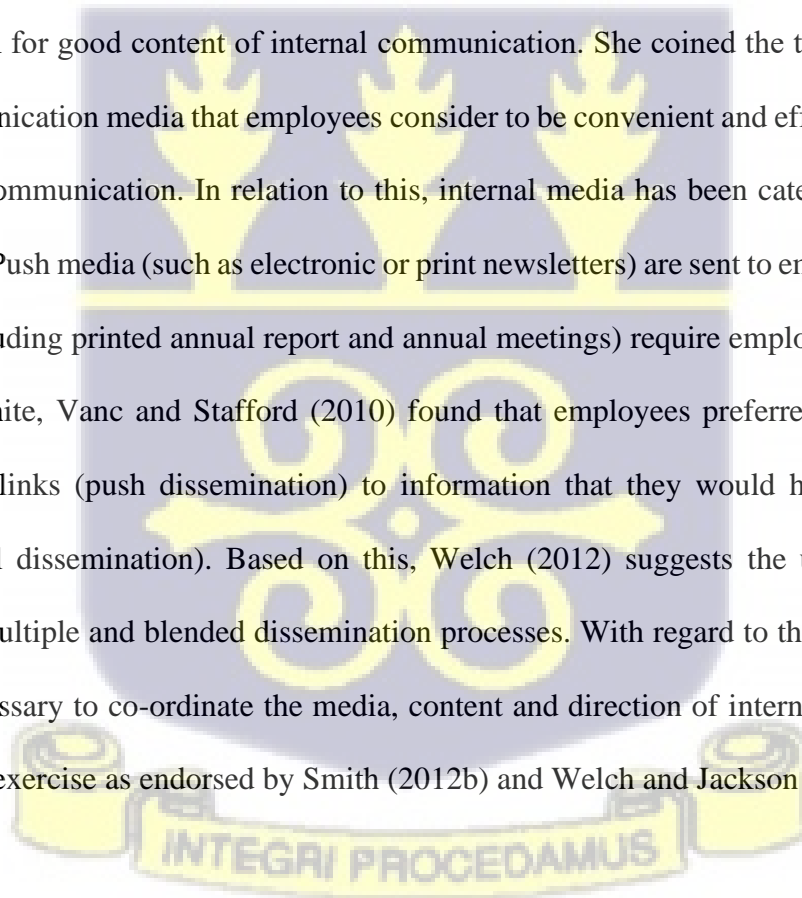
The excellent research by Grunig *et al.* (2002) recommend dialogue or two-way symmetrical communication as an essential role of the communication manager, given that two-way symmetrical communication is a model of public relations which guides the managers to balance the interests of an institution and its publics. Following this background, scholars consider the two-way symmetrical model as ideal for internal communication in all types of organisation as it urges practitioners to be loyal to employees and other publics or stakeholders of the institution.

Welch and Jackson (2007), however, differ from this orientation based on their belief that it would be unrealistic for internal communication to be conducted principally as a dialogue. They reiterate that “except in very small organisations, it is a practical impossibility for senior managers to meet and discuss issues with all employees” (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.187). Consequently, one-way communication to all employees is both unavoidable and necessary because it is appropriate for message consistency. In this case, Welch and Jackson (2007) suggest the use of mediated communication which involves media such as internal newsletters, external news release and organisational web communication. Internal mediated communication can be considered symmetrical if its content meets the employees’ need to know rather than management’s need to tell (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Grunig *et al.*, 2002). Internal mediated communication could, however, be underpinned by upward communication through supervisors and heads of

departments who can dialogue with senior management, with regard to employee needs (Tourish & Robson, 2006).

Grissom (2019), however, cautions institutions to beware of conversation fragmentation which results from communication across a multitude of channels/media and applications that are not integrated. As a consequence of this, the conversations only become alive among the people who created them with the majority of the publics having difficulties in tracking relevant information. Welch and Jackson (2007) therefore indicate that, research into employee preferences for channel and content of internal communication is essential.

Welch (2012) provides a bridge between the advocacy for appropriate media and the recommendation for good content of internal communication. She coined the term “usability” to describe communication media that employees consider to be convenient and efficient in exposing the content of communication. In relation to this, internal media has been categorised into push and pull media. Push media (such as electronic or print newsletters) are sent to employees, whereas pull media (including printed annual report and annual meetings) require employees to search for information. White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) found that employees preferred information via email or direct links (push dissemination) to information that they would have to search for themselves (pull dissemination). Based on this, Welch (2012) suggests the use of media that accommodate multiple and blended dissemination processes. With regard to the views expressed above, it is necessary to co-ordinate the media, content and direction of internal communication for effective IC exercise as endorsed by Smith (2012b) and Welch and Jackson (2007).



3.1.2 Co-ordination of Internal Communication

To better understand the role of internal communication in the IC process, it is important to deal with the co-ordination of communication activities. According to Schutte (2009), co-ordination has the objective of harmonising various facets of the communication functions of an organisation. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013) emphasise the critical need for co-ordination in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of all communication efforts and programmes. The co-ordinated integration stage in Duncan and Caywood's (1996) model attests to the reduction of barriers to the IC process. In view of this, Smith (2012) calls for the holistic co-ordination of multiple communication activities as part of the IC process, for the benefit of achieving measureable objectives. Co-ordination, thus, relies heavily on validated and accurate information and involves a deliberate effort to synchronise communication activities in order to build a team spirit and give staff a clear direction to present consistent messages to stakeholders. This, according to Akrani (2011), ultimately helps all organisations to achieve their objectives and increase efficiency.

Though earlier conceptions of IC considered the co-ordination of a limited set of communication parameters that provide message clarity and consistency, later conceptualisations addressed a wider spectrum of co-ordination involving employees, customers and other stakeholders in the integration process (Duncan, 2005; Balmer, 2001). Unfortunately, many organisations do not appreciate the essence of co-ordinating their communication activities to derive comprehensive and consistent messages. As Kokemuller (2019) and Belch and Belch (1998) point out, some organisations fail to recognise that co-ordination leads to the consistent and effective communication of organisational messages.

Van Riel (1995, 2001) proposes three paradigms that can aid the co-ordination of communication, namely common starting points, common operational systems and co-ordination

agents. He indicates that, it is useful to establish common starting points to create clear priorities as well as ensure balance in the communication process, given that, common starting points inspire all units/subsystems to begin at the same level and move in tandem with the organisational communication policy jointly developed by the units. Common operational systems support the common starting points in their effort to introduce accepted techniques for co-ordinating communication activities. Barker and Angelopulo (2006) indicate that common operational systems deal with explicit directives for the implementation of communication projects. Consequently, organisational subsystems, through adherence to the operational systems, jointly help to integrate communication to achieve a common goal.

Van Riel (1995) further categorises three different agents (persons/groups) who can co-ordinate communication, namely: an individual person, a steering committee and adhoc meetings. According to him, the category involving an individual person adopts the centralisation process in which one person is solely charged to oversee all communication activities. Co-ordination by a steering committee involves representatives from all the communication departments who manage communication activities and see to the implementation of IC in the course of its work. Co-ordination through adhoc meetings occurs when a committee, usually comprising communication managers, is tasked to interact frequently and co-ordinate communication activities in a professional manner.

There are varying views from empirical studies conducted on internal communication as a requirement for integrated communication in institutions. With the systems theory as her basis, Walt (2006) examined employee perception of internal integrated communication in International Colleges Group (ICG), Cape Town, using in-depth interviews and survey. Findings from her in-depth interviews revealed that employees considered internal communication to be inadequate and

often as an afterthought. As a result, the majority of employees learnt about ICG values because it was a performance appraisal requirement, but not because the institution made a conscious effort to sensitise the employees about the values. Additionally, the intranet which served as a centralised information source was unidimensional, difficult to navigate and had little useful information. However, the survey results revealed that employees generally subscribed to the institutional newsletter which they considered to be an excellent tool of communication. Though Walt's (2006) research results enhance scholarship on communication with internal stakeholders, the study fails to address the co-ordination of internal communication which is cardinal to integrated communication as indicated above. Findings on this aspect of integrated communication could have made the study more insightful. This study sought to address this gap by examining how the selected Ghanaian universities enhanced IC through the co-ordination of internal communication.

In her study of integrated communication in the University of the Free State (UFS), Mulder (2008) found that due to the lack of proper co-ordination, there was division between internal stakeholders who wanted to maintain the old culture of UFS as a traditional Afrikaans university and those that believed in a transformed university with a more integrated culture. The lack of a shared organisational culture augmented racial differences in the institution. Mulder's (2008) study at the UFS also revealed that employees reported meetings as a major channel of communication with management. They, however, complained that rather than incorporating their inputs at meetings into the institutional decisions, they were merely ignored or unacknowledged. This compelled employees to withdraw from such communication processes as they felt unimportant and marginalised.

Collectively, the arguments projected in the studies above indicate that when properly managed, internal communication can advance the ideals of integrated communication. Basically,

both management and employees must be integrated in the internal communication process to ensure a departure from the one-way communication approach that favours management. This calls for the co-ordination of both messages and channels in the communication process. Du Plessis and Thomson (2013) reiterate that, co-ordination is fundamental in managing the other antecedents of integrated communication including strategic consistency, image management, stakeholder integration and cross-functional collaboration which are expatiated in the following sections.

3.1.3 Strategic Consistency in Communication

One of the key ideals of co-ordination in integrated communication is consistency. Though messages could be targeted at different audiences, there should be one thread that holds them together to ensure that the audiences receive consistent information at all times. Previous scholarship suggests that consistency is an underlying factor that runs through all other antecedents for integration (Thorson & Moore, 1996; Moriarty, 1994). For example, Moriarty (1994) observed that consistency is required for image building because it helps to integrate all relevant information from different sources in order to avoid distortion in communication. She further found that an image that holds together is one whose various communication components are carrying the same message. Moriarty's (1994) claim aligns with van Riel's (1992) notion that the final picture created in the recipient's mind should not be marred by internal contradictions but should be consistent.

With its persistent call for alignment and consistency, IC has developed a growing intolerance towards differences and discrepancies in corporate communication such that managers increasingly feel the need to eliminate, reduce or reject anything that departs from integrated consistent behaviours (Christensen & Langer, 2009). Scholarship, therefore, encourages all organisations to regard consistency as a necessary ideal to pursue in the IC process in order to deal

with the current communication landscape which is characterised by message clutter, media fragmentation and critical stakeholders, and, create coherent messages for a good impact on stakeholders (Christensen *et al.*, 2008; Cornelissen & Lock; 2001; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000; Alberg, 1990).

Though scholars such as Elhers (2002) and Duncan and Moriarty (1997) prefer the term, strategic consistency, their explanation is in line with the above. To them, strategic consistency emphasises the co-ordination of both visual and verbal messages at every contact point of an organisation in order to earn appreciable images, positions and reputations in the minds of stakeholders. Duncan and Everett (1993) suggest that managers should control such contact points through which stakeholders are exposed to the organisation. For this reason, Christensen *et al.* (2008) suggest the central co-ordination of communication to ensure conformity in messages and avoid fragmentation.

All the above views point to the belief that consistency is necessary. Creating strategic consistency, where communication is centrally co-ordinated, is even more important for the fundamental core values, business philosophy and corporate mission. While the central control of messages appeals to some managers, it sometimes frustrates customers especially when they receive prepared and repeated written or recorded responses from employees who attend to their concerns. According to Christensen *et al.* (2008), “such message command also calls for extensive control and regulation procedures that add to stifling bureaucracies” (p.430). As a result, the literature associates strategic consistency with synergy in communication as explained in the following section.

3.1.3.1 Synergy in Communication

Synergy in communication ensures that the strategies used for sending messages are co-ordinated or interwoven in a manner that makes communication more consistent and impactful (Moriarty, 1994). In general, synergy, originating from the Greek words *Sunergos* (which means *working together*) and *Synergia* (meaning *co-operation*), refers to the combined efforts of two or more parts of a system such that the output is greater than the efforts of the individual parts (Rouse, 2006). Mulder (2008) adds that it is the duty of the communicator to manage the interactions between the organisation and its stakeholders in a synergistic manner because synergy guarantees that the messages communicated to stakeholders have one voice, one look and one feel as indicated by Duncan and Caywood (1996).

The significance of synergy lies in the fact that IC is not only premised on the information an institution sends out to stakeholders (that is planned messages), but also relies heavily on any other contacts or experiences that stakeholders have with the institution (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). Previously, the traditional communication mix, which relied heavily on planned messages (including advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling), was used to persuade the stakeholder group (Mulder, 2008). Increasingly, all types of organisations are realising that to achieve synergy, communication with stakeholders cannot only be based on planned messages. Rather, it must incorporate the total sum of contacts that stakeholders have with the organisation to determine their response to planned and controlled communication programmes.

Based on this, scholars such as Takalani (2015), Dahlen, Lange and Smith (2010) and Duncan and Moriarty (1997) endorse Duncan's (1994) message typology as an appropriate paradigm to consider in creating synergy and strategic consistency. The typology identifies four

types of messages that an organisation needs to be aware of in order to influence integrated communication. These are planned, inferred, maintenance and unplanned messages. Scholars have drawn distinctions between planned messages and the other types of messages. For instance, Dahlen, *et al.* (2010) and Duncan and Moriarty (1997) claim that planned messages are deliberate communication activities that are disseminated through public relations, advertising and other communication approaches. Inferred messages are the impressions stakeholders have about the organisation, including their experience with management or perceptions about a brand. Maintenance messages are communication materials that are prepared to primarily help employees respond to publics' concerns. Unplanned messages involve employee gossip, investigation by journalists and announcements by stakeholder advocate groups (Takalani, 2015; Duncan & Moriarty, 1997).

Moriarty (1994) found that unlike planned messages which draw the attention of communication professionals, the wide range of inferred, maintenance and unplanned messages hardly attract attention. Yet, these messages are essential or even more important than planned messages, with regard to creating synergy in communication. To buttress this point, Takalani (2015) maintains that unplanned communication activities are the major determinants of the attitudes and behaviors of stakeholders. These activities include word-of-mouth communication which is particularly significant because an individual who testifies to a personal experience serves as an objective source of information (Takalani, 2015; Dahlen *et al.*, 2010). In effect, creating synergy and strategic consistency in the integrated communication process involves all the types of messages in the typology.

According to Mulder (2008), the ultimate aim of strategic consistency is to combine many communication techniques in order to present a unified message with feedback mechanism that

stimulates two-way communication, while creating synergy to ensure that all internal stakeholders speak one language and serve as the embodiment of organisational values. Consequently, “the right mix of tools should be selected in order to ensure both message consistency and maximum communication impact” (Takalani, 2015, p.93). In ensuring strategic consistency in communication, synergy enables stakeholders to form a holistic and vivid image about an institution. The following session deals with image management in detail.

3.1.4 Image Management

Image has the connotation of a picture and, therefore, suggestive of how people view a particular object. Corporate image refers to the immediate picture that the public creates about an organisation or how an organisation is perceived by its environment (Maric, Pavlin & Ferjan, 2010; Gray & Balmer, 1998). Scholarship shows different dominant traditions with regard to the management of institutional image (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). One school of thought holds the view that there is an urgent need for coherence and consistency when projecting an institutional image (Hussain & Ferdous, 2014; Kantanen, 2012; Grunig *et al.*, 2002). The slogan for this school is “one look, one voice” or “one sight, one sound” in the communication process. The aim of the school is to achieve consistency in the integration of both visual/graphical forms of expression (such as logos, designs, fonts) and messages or more content-related elements of communication in a manner that appeals to stakeholders (Torp, 2009). Consequently, the messages communicated must be complementary and non-contradictory (Pickton & Broderick, 2005). This tradition reiterates the image integration stage in Duncan and Caywood’s (1996) integrated communication model which projects the ideals of strategic consistency and synergy in communication.

Another tradition considers organisational image as a duality because it is the product of discourse between an organisation and its diverse publics (Massey, 2015; Erden, 2013). This school of thought seems to be influenced by Cheney and Vibbert's (1987) belief that an image is "something projected by an organisation and something interpreted by others" (p.176). Secondly, the school is influenced by Moffit's (1994) notion that organisational image is the "shared meanings, attitudes, knowledge, and opinions of organisational stakeholders, influenced, at least, in part by strategic communications emanating from the organisation" (p.166).

A third orientation regards organisational image as the way organisational members believe others see their organisation or the way organisational elites would like outsiders to see their organisation (Whetten, Lewis & Mischel, 1992; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). To the fourth cohort, organisational image is a consequence of community pressures expressed about a negative organisational image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). This tradition holds the view that it is only when organisational members feel that the organisational identity is threatened by a negative image that they take note of the pressure and redefine their strategy to restore a positive image. Together, these traditions confirm that image is co-created by both an organisation and its stakeholders. The views expressed highlight the critical role of image management in institutional integrated communication processes and the fact that both institutions and their stakeholders need to work together to achieve consistency and success in image management.

Mason (2014) and Garbett (1988) indicate that all types of organisation must strive to sustain their image effectively through dialogic interactions with their stakeholders, in order to maximise their success. In line with this thinking, Massey (2015) cautions organisations to communicate strategically to foster a positive image to be able to promote desirable characteristics.

Massey (2015) further points out the need for an organisation to develop its image based on its mission and overall purpose. His argument aligns with Garbett's (1988) thinking that

Although the company image portrayed must reflect reality, it is entirely possible as well as desirable to select and promote those characteristics that harmonize with the strategic plans of the company. The characteristics should also be those deemed desirable by the publics important to the company. (Garbett, 1988, p.7)

On this note, Massey (2015) attributes an organisation's image to a collaborative social construction between the organisation's top management and the multiple publics. He explains that in this collaborative relationship, a particular interpretation of the organisation's image may be projected by top management, though that interpretation must in turn be endorsed by the various stakeholders. The implication is that stakeholders may perceive or form an image not intended by the organisation. On this basis, Massey (2015) proposes a three-stage process by which organisational image can best be managed as shown in Fig 3:1.

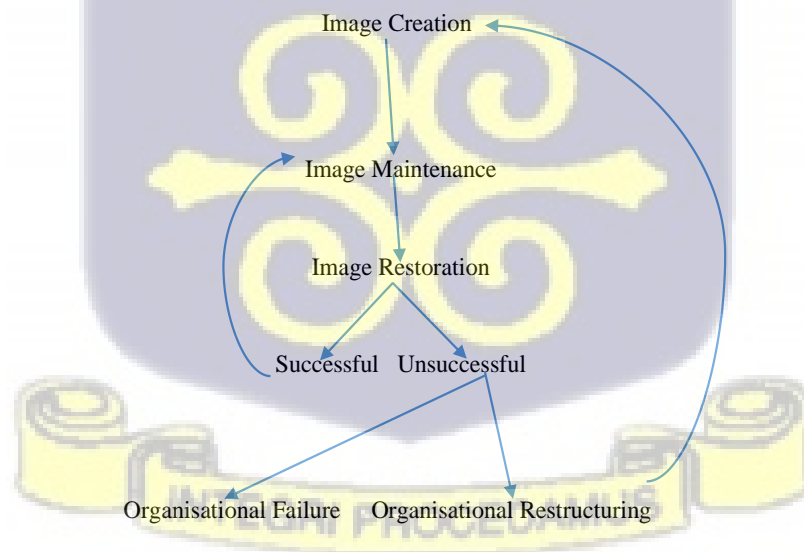


Figure 3.1: Massey's Theoretical Paradigm of Organisational Image Management

The first stage, image creation, is common with a newly established organisation which creates an image of itself to various stakeholders. Garbett (1988) had already expressed the difficulty associated with this stage because most people might have a certain amount of skepticism of the unknown. As a result, the organisation must work continuously to maintain its image through consistent communication with its stakeholders (Gilpin, 2010; Massey, 2010). The image maintenance stage is dialogic such that the organisation seeks feedback from stakeholders to adjust its communication strategy accordingly. The danger associated with this stage is that while the organisation strives to influence publics' perceptions, the stakeholders form their own ideas about the image of the organisation. Consequently, failure to monitor and adjust to stakeholders' feedback threatens effective image management.

According to Massey (2015), not all organisations experience the image restoration stage because it occurs when there is some sort of crisis. However, given the magnitude of crises, this stage is necessary (Mitroff & Alpaslan, 2014). An organisation that moves to the image restoration stage needs to adopt strategic consistency in its communication procedure to restore a positive image. If the organisation achieves success at the restoration stage, it needs to return to the maintenance stage to manage the restored image. If unsuccessful, the organisation needs to restructure itself by developing a new identity or by merging with another organisation to restore the process. This implies that image management is a cyclical, rather than a linear process.

Perhaps the main challenge to image management is that sustaining its effectiveness is constantly in a flux due to the changes in organisational environment (Massey 2015). The dynamic environment challenges both the organisation and its stakeholders with a host of variables including technology and contemporary social issues. Fariaa and Mendes (2013) also note that the key problem for organisations lie in their ability to understand environmental changes to

continually adjust the organisation's image in expectation of positive perceptions. Preliminary work by Garbett (1988) reveals that the multiplicity of stakeholder demands challenges an organisation to manage its image strategically to satisfy its stakeholders.

Some studies conducted on institutional image show the amount of attention that institutions devote to the integration of visual or graphical symbols to improve their image. For example, Hussain and Ferdous (2014) drew on literature related to how the implementation of a holistic integrated visual brand identity touch point (IVBIT) programme could improve the services of universities. They investigated different visual symbols including institutional logo, website, signage, business cards, presentation slides, letterheads, color scheme and typography to establish that a consistent and holistic IVBIT programme enables universities to create a positive image among their various stakeholders. The study also provided examples of universities that successfully employed identified visual symbols to make their service delivery more tangible to their stakeholders. The weakness of this study is that the researchers made many claims about the large extent to which the integration of visual symbols could influence the perceptions of university stakeholders. However, there was no empirical evidence to support the claims, a gap that this study sought to address.

Through individual in-depth interviews, Kantanen (2012) found notable differences between stakeholders' perceptions about their university image in three universities in Finland. According to her, management perceived that the image of the University of Kuopio reflected its research intensiveness, international networks and innovative approaches. The other stakeholders (including students, advisory board members and the media) agreed with management on research intensiveness and internationalization, but also added that the university had been committed to its mission of ensuring the well-being of stakeholders. The research also revealed that management

at the University of Lapland had been successful in portraying itself as a regional university. Its commitment to the region was acknowledged by stakeholders resulting in its invitation to all activities connected with regional development. The other stakeholders perceived the university as very dynamic and development-oriented, courageous, extremely important, popular and appreciated.

At the University of Turku, Kantanen (2012) discovered that management perceived the institution to be very conservative and protective. Though attempts had been made to create a more dynamic and flexible image, these had been based on the university's long traditions. The university's history and conservativeness had however, contributed to its trustworthiness. To the stakeholders, the University of Turku was among the best in Finland for its high-quality education and international recognition in multidisciplinary research. Though Kantanen's (2012) study made useful discoveries about stakeholders' perceptions of institutional image, the main weakness was its failure to address the role of consistent communication in creating the images of the universities. Her findings would have been stronger if she had attended to how communication was coordinated to arrive at the images perceived by the interviewees.

Amiso's (2000) study examined how the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) used integrated community campaign to redeem its image and enhance student enrolment. UTSA had previously suffered negative press coverage that highlighted internal turmoil. The primary objective of the campaign was to enhance the University's image as the leader in education and research on Hispanic issues in South Texas, while pursuing its goal of increasing enrolment. One useful finding of the study was that UTSA designed activities to achieve synergy, consistency and desired effects in its integrated community campaign. The University's office of communication, rather than alluding to the string of negative media coverage, emphasised its quest to fulfil its

strategic goals, which included its commitment to increasing minority enrolment, especially Hispanics. Though the integrated community campaign only increased enrolment by a slight margin, it revealed the lag in internet development and the minimal use of multimedia to communicate with stakeholders of the University. Based on these findings, the University developed a strategic communication initiative to address issues.

Taken together, these studies give examples of the different strands of image creation and management such as ensuring consistency in communication for a positive image and developing strategies to create an image or to restore a tarnished image. The eventual outcome of good image management is a lasting reciprocal relationship between an institution and its stakeholders given that, stakeholders identify with and remain loyal to institutions that engage in consistent communication (Barker & Angelopulo, 2006). The following section mainly deals with the relationship management in the integration process.

3.1.5 Stakeholder Integration and Relationship Management

Literature suggests that reciprocal relationships exist between an organisation and certain groups or individuals known as stakeholders (Egil, 2003) or publics. These individuals or groups are considered to have a stake or claim in the outcome of organisational decisions. As indicated by Freeman (1984, 2004), stakeholders refer to any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of organisational objectives. He suggests that there is the need for integrated approaches to deal with multiple stakeholders on multiple issues. Though Freeman (2004) framed stakeholders as elements of corporate strategic planning, his main focus was to demonstrate the importance of engaging stakeholders for the mission and purpose of the organisation. Freeman's (2004) thinking, consequently, suggests that better relationships with stakeholders yield positive

impact on communication integration in an organisation (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). It is for these reasons that Duncan and Caywood (1996), at the stakeholder integration stage in their communication model, call for a careful stakeholder identification and integration.

Briola (2015) found that stakeholder integration is vital to achieving IC goals because it is directly related to the concept of teamwork. Consequently, it breeds respect among team members, team solidarity and cohesion which encourage effective performance and the realisation of goals. Yang and Taylor (2014) stress that integrated communication emerges from relationship building and team interaction which involves negotiations between institutions and their stakeholders who exist in a dynamic cultural ecology. Ensuring effective integrated communication, thus, entails the inclusion of both internal and external stakeholders in the integration process. As Shin (2013) puts it, an institution can only reach true integration when all of its communication efforts have a focus on communicating the corporate values in a way that reaches all stakeholder groups with impact. Other scholars such as Pride and Ferrel (2014) and Baran, Galka and Strunk (2008) also suggest that such focal communication leads to commitment from both the institution and its publics, leading to a mutual achievement of goals and a feeling of fulfilment for both parties.

In view of the above, stakeholder relationship is considered as part of management function (Egil, 2003). Barker (2013) coins the term strategic integrated communication (SIC) to explain the importance of acknowledging the value of diverse stakeholder interests and strategically managing them for the mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships. She maintains this process should be information driven, interactive and should focus on consistency in brand messages, knowledge creation and sharing. Hawrysz and Maj (2017) concur in stating that institutions that manage their stakeholders in a mutually beneficial manner derive useful information to make decisions towards the achievement of institutional goals.

3.1.5.1 Categorisation of Stakeholders

Scholarship classifies stakeholders into different categories such as primary and secondary, internal and external, active, passive and neutral stakeholders (Hawrysz & Maj, 2017; Driessen, Kok & Hillebrand, 2013). Hawrysz and Maj (2017), however, explain that the classification overlaps because many people may belong to several groups at the same time. Managers are, therefore, encouraged to identify the various groups with different Stake in an organisation in order to satisfy everybody's interest for a long-term mutual relationship (Hawrysz & Maj, 2017; Welch & Jackson, 2007). Hawrysz and Maj (2017) also believe that stakeholders of institutions that share information demonstrate positive behaviours which yield multiple outcomes such as employee commitment and loyalty.

The present study focused on different groups of stakeholders that belong to both the primary and internal categories. According to Clarkson (1995, as cited in Alexander and Parsons, 2005), primary stakeholders are those whose continuous participation is vital for the survival of the institution because as Driessen *et al.* (2013) explain, primary stakeholders hold long-term relationships with the institution. Clarkson (1995) includes, in this segment, shareholders, employees, customers and suppliers as well as government and communities. Supporting these views, Slaba (2015) refers to primary stakeholders as those who have a reciprocal and direct exchange/relationship with the institution. Though they have divergent interests, primary stakeholders share a common risk because they are the ones most affected when the institution faces a threat. This category includes employees, shareholders, customers, students, suppliers, government and communities (Slaba, 2015; Clarkson 1995).

Similar to primary stakeholders, internal stakeholders are considered important. Freeman (2010) emphasises that internal stakeholders must be considered as the conduit through which

managers reach external stakeholders. As the name suggests, internal stakeholders are those inside the institution and by Slaba's (2015) classification, many of the internal stakeholder groups fall within the primary category.

3.1.5.2 Identifying the Internal Stakeholders of Universities

Mainardes, Alves and Raposo (2010) indicate that the stakeholders of a university are both diverse and difficult to quantify, though each may exert greater or lesser influence over the institution and represent some degree of importance to the institution. Consequently, the management of institutions must clearly define their stakeholders, their priorities and their respective importance to the institutions (Lam & Pang, 2003).

According to Slaba (2015), public and private universities distinctively identify stakeholders that are most important to them, though private universities consider it necessary to communicate with their key stakeholders more than public universities. She mentions students, the media and the education ministry as the stakeholders that are most important to public universities, yet her explanation of those that private universities consider as key is not clear. Other scholars including Marshall (2018), Sin and Amaral (2017), Beerkens and Udam (2017) and Mainardes, *et al.* (2013) have developed a tall list of universities stakeholders. This includes students (as customers), parents, teaching and research staff, university rectors, university administrative staff, research and development partners, national government together with policy makers and/or regulatory agencies such as the education ministry and accreditation body, donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), vendors and suppliers, competitors and graduate employers as their major stakeholders.

Savga, Krykliy and Kyrychenko (2018) indicate that the best way to identify university stakeholders is by classifying them into different categories. Slaba (2015), for instance, classifies the stakeholders of public and private universities into four groups namely: primary internal stakeholder group, primary external stakeholder group, secondary internal stakeholder group and secondary external stakeholder group. She asserts that the primary internal and external stakeholder groups are crucial for the survival of the universities and are, therefore, the most important stakeholder groups for universities. Again, the primary stakeholders including customers/clients (students), employees, the community, government agencies, shareholders, suppliers and investors have reciprocal and direct exchange relationships with their institutions. Secondary stakeholders, on the other hand, do not have frequent and direct exchanges with the institution. Typical of these stakeholders, they depend on the institution when it comes to the realisation of their goals, aims and needs but the institution is not crucially dependent upon them.

Burrows (1999) is, however, against the use of the external/internal approach due to the difficulty in ascertaining where some stakeholders really belong. According to him, students, for instance, can be considered as external stakeholders prior to admission and as internal stakeholders after enrolment. In spite of this observation, Savga *et al.* (2018) insist that the internal and external stakeholder category is the best and most commonly used approach in identifying the stakeholders of universities, though additional classification criteria such as the level of responsibility, financial ties, location and types of interests also exist.

Based on the external and internal classification, Savga *et al.* (2018) have developed two groups of university stakeholders. These are external stakeholders (comprising employers, employers association and alumni) and internal stakeholders (made up of academic staff, administrative staff, institution-level management, management at the departmental level and

students). Although the list of external stakeholders developed by Savga *et al.* (2018) is not extensive enough, it provides a clue to the people/groups that fall in the external category. In this study, the main focus is on internal stakeholders and their perceptions about integrated communication in the universities selected for the study. The internal stakeholders specifically are students, academic staff and administrative staff.

Slaba (2015) identifies four internal stakeholder groups of private and public universities as faculty (academic staff)/employees, current students, management and marketing/public relations staff and defined these groups as primary internal stakeholders. She found that the primary internal category of university stakeholders is crucial for the survival of the university and bears the risk and investment connected to the university. In line with her classification, employees, students, senior management and public relations staff are given prominence in this study, among the many stakeholders of universities. Employees and students serve as the lens through which management and communicators' dedication to the IC process is measured.

Slaba's (2015) research also revealed slight differences among stakeholder groups of the two types of institutions. In both cases, current students and alumni were found to be good advocates or carriers of positive word of mouth (WOM), though current students were considered as primary internal stakeholders, while alumni were primary and external. Though both private and public universities prioritised prospective students, this category was included in the external stakeholder group, whereas current students were regarded as the current customers who were considered to be in close relationship with both types of universities.

In Slaba's (2015) study, employees who fell within the primary internal stakeholder category were assigned the same priority levels by both private and public universities due to their strong opinions in the daily business of the institutions. This suggests that employees require great

recognition in the communication processes of universities as well. Based on this belief, Christensen *et al.* (2008) point to the “many different voices and types of wisdom” that employees can exhibit in the organisational setting. Smith’s (2012) study also reveals that through their different voices and wisdom, employees demonstrate their skills and expertise to prove their worth in the integration process. Management is, therefore, called to maintain a flexible communication approach to garner employee involvement in the integration crusade in order to elicit employee satisfaction, knowledge sharing and influence on organisational decisions (Smith, 2012).

In line with the above, Fiala, Prokop and Zivelova (2012) assert that in dealing with the primary internal stakeholders, it is important not only to pay particular attention to communication but also to focus on inter-organisational trust which enables the stakeholders to be directly involved in the organisation’s performance. To achieve this, Niemann-Struweg (2014) proposes that the integration of stakeholders should take place through brand contact points and interactivity between the organisation and its stakeholders and integration at the brand contact point. Literature on these two factors is, therefore, essential in enhancing the understanding of stakeholder relationship.

3.1.5.3 Stakeholder Integration through Interactivity and Brand Contact Points

Moriarty (1994) suggests that interactive communication facilitates dialogue and builds sustainable relationships. Interactivity is the process by which stakeholders are integrated into the organisation such that they become an integral part of the planning and development process (Niemann-Struweg, 2014). She identifies two perspectives of interactivity namely, stakeholder and organisational perspectives. From the stakeholder perspective, interactivity means accessibility, recognition, responsiveness and accountability, whereas the organisational perspective lays

emphasis on the ability to listen, speak and modify behaviour based on feedback from stakeholders. Given the necessity of feedback in interactive communication, Niemann-Struweg (2014) calls on organisations to “place as much emphasis on receiving messages as it does on sending them” (p.189).

Both Niemann-Struweg (2014) and Moriarty (1994) align with the systems perspective of feedback which Ansari (2004) refers to as feed-forward control. Moriarty (1994) suggests that interactivity needs a system for handling questions, responses and other stakeholder-initiated communication in addition to programmes for stimulating such interaction. Based on this, Niemann-Struweg (2014) advocates two-way symmetrical communication as a proactive and critical vehicle for interactivity. The two-way symmetrical communication includes communicating the right information, interpreting the client and public to one another, getting management to understand the viewpoints of employees and neighbours and vice versa (Grunig, 1992, p.289). The two-way symmetrical communication is, thus, a departure from using persuasive messages to win stakeholders’ favour. Rather, it is an avenue for engaging in an incessant process of listening and dialoguing to achieve mutual understanding (Niemann-Struweg, 2014).

Again, both Niemann-Struweg (2014) and Moriarty (1994) agree that research and stakeholder database, coupled with the use of new (social) media, increase two-way symmetrical communication with stakeholders. Databases and new media technologies, according to them, sway organisational communication programmes from the mass media to two-way communication systems that truly support dialogue with stakeholders. Niemann-Struweg (2014) highlights the collection of stakeholder data at each contact point. She also directs attention to the use of new media for the efficient communication of information to enhance the long-term purposeful dialogue which is mutually beneficial to both the organisation and the stakeholder. Johnson,

Cramer, Benman and Post (2003) concur that dialogue is the tool for consensus because it facilitates the co-creation of decisions by the organisation and its publics.

Andriof, Waddock, Husted and Rahman (2002) add that mutual and responsive relationships establish a context for transparency and accountability. They, therefore, admonish organisations to depart from managing stakeholders for immediate profit and rather engage in long-term mutual relationships. Consequently, Pitt (2014) states that engaging in dialogue with stakeholders does not only reinforce the relationship with them but also enables the organisation to identify areas of potential development.

Morsing and Schultz (2006), however, go beyond stakeholder dialogue by using the terms, stakeholder involvement strategy, stakeholder information strategy and stakeholder response strategy to advance the debate on interactivity. Stakeholder involvement strategy deals with persuasion where both the organisation and stakeholders seek to persuade each other. By this strategy, the organisation is expected to engage in concurrent negotiations with stakeholders to keep abreast of their expectations and how these can influence organisational decisions. Stakeholder information strategy assumes that stakeholders are influential in terms of their support and loyalty to the organisation or their opposition thereof. As a result, the stakeholder information strategy, which adopts the one-way model of communication, has the purpose of communicating objective information about the organisation. It does not have a persuasive intent. Therefore, organisations adopting this model of communication engage extensively in press relations programmes and employ brochures, magazines, facts, numbers and figures to inform its publics.

The involvement strategy also concurs with the stakeholder response strategy which advocates the investigation of stakeholders' expectations through opinion polls. Though both strategies employ two-way communication, the involvement strategy adopts the two-way

symmetrical model whereas the response strategy depends on the two-way asymmetrical model. The involvement strategy, therefore, suggests that organisations should engage frequently and systematically in dialogue with stakeholders in order to understand and adapt to their concerns to promote positive support and explore mutually beneficial actions to achieve desired goals (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Conversely, the response strategy uses a predominantly one-sided approach as the organisation has the sole intention of changing the attitudes and behaviours of its stakeholders by convincing them to buy into its values.

Though brand contact points have been extensively discussed, it is worth mentioning under this section because of the role they play in stakeholder relationships. Brand contact points also offer good avenues for the integration of stakeholders (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Moriarty, 1994). Moriarty (1994) found that every contact point that a stakeholder has with an organisation is a communication opportunity. A totally integrated communication programme must, therefore, account for all types of messages delivered by an organisation at every point where a stakeholder comes into contact with the organisation. This author argues that though some contact points just happen, others are created, such as a special event or press conference. Niemann-Struweg (2014) proposes that the following should be considered for the effective management of stakeholder relationship:

- The contact points that are most suited for capturing stakeholder feedback
- The cost of controlling messages sent and collecting stakeholder data at each contact point
- The contact points that can be used to facilitate purposeful dialogue.

What the above discussion implies is that interactions with stakeholders can occur through different avenues. However, the two-way symmetrical paradigm seems to be the preferred choice for interactivity. Roll (2006) also cautions that, since it is difficult for an organisation to manage

all contact points, there is the need to adopt cross-functional planning to ensure that all controlled touch points communicate the same set of organisational values.

3.1.6 Cross-functional Collaboration

Evidence from literature shows that turf wars, conflicts and functional silos/differentiation hamper the smooth operation of integrated communication (Beck, 2017; Kitchen & Burgman, 2010). Usually, the structure of an organisation creates such functional divisions and silos. Cross-functional collaboration has, therefore, become the advocacy of many scholars because it enables employees to break out of their silo to collaborate and work in teams to advance the ideals of IC. Beck (2017) refers to cross-functional collaboration as the means by which a group of people with different expertise or people from different departments across a business work together toward a common goal. Niemann-Struweg (2014) sees the cross-functional approach as an avenue by which organisations work collectively in planning and monitoring stakeholder relationships. Cross-functional collaboration also refers to the free flow of information or communication across organisational functions, business units, departments or geographical regions (Gronstedt, 2000). Kahn (1996) had earlier coined the term cross-functional integration to explain two strands of the cross-functional process namely, interaction and collaboration. According to him, interaction relates to formal processes (which involve meetings, the exchange of documents, scheduled conference calls and memos), whereas collaboration involves informal procedures in which employees from different departments interact and support one another to move their activities towards the achievement of institutional goals.

In support of the generally accepted view that cross-functional collaboration ensures effective integrated communication, Rosenau and Wilson (2006) maintain that a well-defined

cross-functional structure enables all departments to point their communication activities to the same direction using the corporate values as the driving force. Simonsen (2010) subscribes to the same view in arguing that when all business functions or departments have a shared set of values and an overall goal to achieve, internal conflicts between departments are reduced because all attention is focused on achieving the ultimate goal. Drawing on a range of sources, van Baalen and Mulder (2016) also point out the need to use cross-functional collaboration to ensure that all controlled touch points of the institution communicate the same set of institutional values. This enables the institution to create a corporate focus which ultimately enables it to advance its strategic goals.

Smith's (2012b) study shows the nexus between integrated communication and cross-functional communication first by identifying three factors that influence integrated communication namely: creativity, knowledge sharing and employee influence on institutional decisions. Of these three, knowledge sharing is considered to be the most critical component of cross-functional collaboration. The ensuing section expatiates knowledge sharing together with other factors that facilitate cross-functional collaboration.

3.1.6.1 Open Communication and Knowledge Sharing

Beck (2017) found that being ignorant of co-workers' roles creates a barrier to cross-functional collaboration. To solve this problem, institutions should increasingly engage in open communication for effective cross-functional collaboration. Gronstedt (2000) holds the view that world-class organisations, "go to great lengths to encourage informal communication across management ranks, and departments. They create an atmosphere of open communication by

eliminating the caste system of corner offices, special parking spaces, titles and dress codes” (p.38).

To enhance open communication, Gronstedt (2000) emphasises that organisations must declare freedom of speech and offer employees the time, training and means to exercise this freedom. He further encourages the integration of both vertical and horizontal communication into the cross-functional process. This is based on his belief that the vision of a world-class organisation evolves from a process of bottom-up communication and an on-going dialogue among employees of all ranks. Gronstedt’s (2000) findings at Hewlett-Packard (HP) highlight the need to break barriers to ensure effective collaboration across departments. He discovered that the CEO of HP held on to an egalitarian philosophy which put everyone on an equal level and facilitated a free flow of communication. To enhance this philosophy, the HP CEO adopted intranet communication to ease information sharing because “intranets and other internal computer networks play an increasingly important role in opening up the internal floodgates of information” (Gronstedt, 2000, p.19).

An open communication system fosters informal interactions which enable employees to “talk through stuff and make sure they are all on the same page” (Smith, 2012b, p.605). Gronstedt (2000) and Smith (2012b) jointly demonstrate that open communication encourages mutual respect and trust among collaborators. Drawing on this, Gomulia (2015) reveals how the culture of openness across the organisation cultivates the culture of respectful and constructive criticisms among employees. The views expressed by these scholars are in tandem with the open communication paradigm projected by the systems theory as a key factor in integrated communication. The general consensus created is that if management makes the institutional goals

publicly visible, it facilitates information sharing and enables employees to know the institutional priorities and how their work contributes to the broader goals set by the institution.

3.1.6.2 Nurturing a Team Spirit

With the classical belief that functional disciplines, silos or departmental lines engage in turf wars and conflicts, one can anticipate the difficulties in maintaining a spirit of collaboration among disciplines. Scholarship gives enough indication that a spirit of collaboration creates the sentiment that employees can work better when they work together as a team. For example, Smith (2012b) found that team spirit moves employees to consider each other as partners in a manner that enables them use varied skills and strategies to accomplish the same goal. This view is consistent with the property of equifinality in the systems theory which refers to the ability of systems components to tread different paths to reach the same final stage (Miller, 2009; Katz & Kaln, 1978). Beck (2017) observed that when employees collaborate through team spirit it helps them to uncover insights that were not previously considered to produce desirable outcomes.

3.1.6.3 Gradual Integration of New Ideas

The successful implementation of the cross-functional process requires significant changes in an organisation. Beck (2017) confirms that cross-functional collaboration introduces new methods of doing things leading to changing work habits. Habits are hard to break in spite of the fact that old habits draw back the opportunity to be more efficient. According to Kitchen and Burgman (2015), employees who are used to their organisational structure are likely to perceive that, change is unnecessary. This may result in the retrogression of IC implementation. Given the general resistance to change, Beck (2017) cautions that new ideas/habits must be integrated slowly to allow

the collaborators to ease into the new process gradually. Beck (2017) also recommends the appointment of a champion to signal gentle reminders at short intervals in order to ensure effective integration.

3.1.6.4 The Role of Differentiation

Cornelissen and Lock (2001) argue that advocates, in promoting cross-functional collaboration, seem to consider “integration” as the opposite of “differentiation” or “division” which is said to result in turf wars and conflicts, fragmentation in communication and conflicting messages. That is, rather than encouraging how the competencies in the different fields can be blended to achieve a unified goal, IC advocates endorse a platform that enables practitioners to have a more general overview and understanding of all communication disciplines. Cornelissen and Lock (2001), however, draw attention to the fact that, the organisation of the communication function thrives on achieving a balance between “integration” and “differentiation” where an adequate amount of “differentiation” is needed to maintain a balance or an appreciable degree of world-class expertise (Cornelissen & Lock, 2001, p.428). They, however, lament the extent to which the critical role of differentiation is usually ignored in the integration process. Christensen *et al.* (2008) concur in stating that a great extent of integration and identification with the organisation results in a reduction in diversity and denies the organisation the luxury of tapping expertise from different perspectives provided by employees, varied educational, social and professional experiences. In line with this, Torp (2009) writes:

It is important that integration not be perceived as necessarily being synonymous with assimilation and homogeneity. If companies (or institutions) are to maintain their flexibility and competitiveness and employees are to retain their personal

freedom, integration must be seen as a question of coordinating and harmonizing the different actors and competencies in such a way that the creative potential of each individual and discipline is not lost. (p.202)

Workman, Homburg and Conner (1998) discovered that a balance between integration and differentiation is achieved through horizontal co-ordination mechanisms which facilitate cross-functional collaboration. However, Christensen, *et al.* (2008) have vigorously challenged the widely accepted view that horizontal communication facilitates cross-functional communication. According to them, the “lack of horizontal communication is often a structural problem manifested in job descriptions, professional affiliations and departmental structures that pigeon-hole employees into narrow roles with little overlap and little insight into the functions and concerns of their colleagues” (Christensen, *et al.*, 2008, p.426). When employees are assigned to different and probably competing departments, they have limited incentive to communicate and learn from each other. Though horizontal processes are essential to overcome the barriers of specialisation and hierarchical structures that prevent managers from keeping to their silos (Christensen, *et al.*, 2008), these processes are hardly prevalent in organisations. In view of the above discussion, the cross-functional collaboration appears to be an ideal design indicating how integrated communication should be practised. The current study, therefore, sought to investigate how this ideal manifests in the selected institutions selected.

3.1.7 Alignment of IC and the Strategic Focus of Institutions

Scholarship suggests that the communication of institutional strategic plan, together with mission and vision campaign, is very critical in the IC paradigm (Massie & Anderson, 2003). This is because IC activities are ideally based on the strategic intent of every institution. Niemann-

Struweg (2014) describes the relationship between the two in stating that IC is the driver of the strategic intent of the organisation and, therefore, the institution's mission and vision should be woven into the strategic plan and should drive all communication efforts and institutional objectives. Scholars such as Miller (2014) and D'souza *et al.* (2011) have dedicated attention to creating the interconnection among institutional vision, mission and strategic plan as explained in the following sections.

3.1.7.1 The Nexus between IC and Institutional Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan

According to Miller (2014), a vision seeks to outline where an organisation is headed and the values that guide its journey. It communicates the organisational future purpose and what it exists to achieve. Consequently, the vision statement is the foundation on which the core beliefs or values of the organisation rest. Since it is woven around the organisational purpose and values, the vision statement often influences the organisational culture and expectations and thus gives direction to employees.

The scope of an organisation's mission transcends that of the vision. Due to this, a large body of literature has been dedicated to the relevance of mission statement in the development and communication of the organisational strategy (Kantanen, 2012; Karami, 2009). Kantanen (2012) indicates that mission statement communicates the organisational measurable objectives, goals and how the vision will be accomplished. Gallup (n.d.) considers organisational mission as a vital element which provides a consistent guide for strategic decisions and defines the organisation's purpose and reason for existence. It also serves as the blueprint by which people within the organisation evaluate their actions and how this helps to achieve the organisational goals (Miller, 2014). Toftoy and Chatterjee (2004) assert that an organisation's mission is a statement of purpose

that distinguishes its business, identifies its scope of operations, embodies its philosophy and reflects the image it seeks to project. For these reasons, Alavi and Karami (2009) maintain that without a concrete statement of organisational mission, it would be difficult to set and communicate clear organisational goals and strategies.

Other scholars have variously linked the essence of mission statement to the role of organisational members. For instance, Klemm, Sanderson and Luffman (1991) assert that mission statement helps organisations to motivate staff to improve performance for the achievement of organisational purpose. Moriarty (1994) considers mission statement as a fundamental aspect of all corporate communication activities, which contributes to the organisation's financial success and elicits commitment from all of its stakeholders. Baetz and Bartz (1998) also indicate that mission statement is a platform that provides organisational members with a meaning for their existence. They, therefore, recommend senior management initiative of effective vision and mission campaigns with the support of middle management.

Literature further projects organisational mission and vision as the strategic drivers of the organisational strategic plan because the strategic objectives and goals are derived from them (Miller, 2014; Antonis, 2005). Miller (2014) maintains that, creating the organisational strategy is the final step in the communication process, meaning that the vision and mission statements are critical precedents. An organisational strategic document or plan includes both short and long-term goals and in addition, explains how those goals will be achieved. Not only is it focused on present actions, it also spells out the outcomes expected to be able to achieve the mission.

An institutional mission statement also provides a sense of direction and serves as a tool when institutions of higher education (such as universities) set their agenda, make decisions and prioritise their activities (D'souza, Clower, Nimon, Oldmixon & Van Tassel, 2011). As Kantanen

(2012) indicates, a university's mission statement and key strategic documents reflect its identity including its reason for existence, values and domain of operation. The above discussion gives enough evidence that many institutional activities revolve around the mission and strategic intent of the institution. Accordingly, the discussion creates a good platform for investigating stakeholders' engagement in the development and communication of institutional strategic plan, and how this fosters their contribution to the achievement of the overall mission.

3.1.7.2 Employee Involvement and Communication of Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision

The communication of an institution's strategic plan, vision and mission should be clear, succinct, consistent and continuous to drive employees to buy into it. Embarking on such a robust campaign ensures that stakeholders live the mission in their daily jobs (Walt, 2006). Dean (2015) recommends three facets for the effective communication of strategic plan, namely, *clarity and alignment, engagement of employees and reinforcement of strategy*. He graphically demonstrates the communication of the strategic plan, mission and vision as indicated in Fig 3.2.



Figure 3. 2: Strategy Communication Pyramid

The pyramid lists the important elements required for a careful communication of the strategic plan. To communicate a strategy effectively, it must be clearly and explicitly defined and aligned with its vision, mission statement, goals and core values. In addition, attainable and measurable action plans should be set throughout the strategic planning process so that employees and stakeholders understand how their work contributes to the overall institutional strategy.

Noting the commitment derived through employee involvement in the strategic planning process, Dean (2015) suggests that staff should be engaged right from the initial stages to make contributions throughout the development process. Continuous engagement, according to him, ensures that employees are conversant with any innovations that develop and recognise the strategy as the roadmap for achieving institutional goals. To reinforce employee engagement, management should keep educating and inspiring employees with the strategy through traditional media (such as meetings and newsletters) and electronic or social media (such as email and WhatsApp). Based on these recommendations, Dean (2015) condemns the use of one-way (top-down) correspondence for communicating the strategy.

Gallup (2017) through its famous 12-question survey on employee engagement identified a gap in the communication of mission statement. Though the study confirmed that mission statement remains a core reference point and a compass for organisational direction, decision-making and communication, its importance was sometimes overlooked due to busy daily activities. The study further discovered that while two-thirds of senior managers in a typical organisation strongly agreed that their organisational mission made them feel their job was important, less than one-third of front-line workers felt the same way. Based on this finding, Gallup (2017) recommendeds effective communications for addressing the frontline deficiency. The Gallup (2017) research, again, revealed that high performing organisations were characterised by an

ability to ensure consistency between mission, strategy and shared employee behaviours, implying that, unless employees know their core mission, specifically support the intention expressed in the mission and act to accomplish that mission, the organisation will fall short of realising its strategic intent. Gallup's (2017) recommendation is that though top management and strategic teams work hard to develop a mission statement, it is important for the head of communication to be included in this development process, because, a good mission statement relates to key stakeholders, especially employees and customers who are the focus of PR interactions through IC processes.

Moriarty (1994) also discovered that high level PR counsel is needed both to figure out the mission strategy and to create buy-in throughout the institution. Conversely, institutional programmes will rarely be successful if employee engagement is ignored and the strategy is imposed from top management without total commitment from stakeholders such as employees.

3.2 Barriers to IC Implementation

In spite of its popular acclaim, the implementation of IC has been saddled with a lot of setbacks. According to Christensen *et al.* (2008), the IC approach, together with its underlying communication principles, is fundamentally valid and ideal but difficult to practise. Barker (2013) found that the complexity and difficulty of testing IC in practice was due to “a lack of empirical studies to support it” (p.106). Kitchen and Burgman (2015, 2010) summarised the most pressing barriers to integration which include turf battles and functional silos, subcultures within different communication departments, fear of change, media fragmentation and the lack of strategic vision and cross-functional managerial skills.

Van Baalen and Mulder (2016) also established that, a lack of interest from internal stakeholders could be one of the biggest barriers to the implementation of IC. Percy (2014) had

earlier noted a rigid organisational culture and employee resistance to change which could halt the implementation process. Regarding the resistance to change, Perkins, Algren and Eichorn (2011) explain that some institutions are more set in their ways and, therefore, are resistant to the new practices introduced by IC. Mortimer (2012) adds that some institutions understand the strategy and approach required for the implementation, but feel ill-prepared about how the concept should be implemented. Other scholars such as Dean (2015) believe the implementation problem arises from the lack of employee involvement in institutional processes resulting in poor commitment. To buttress the above points, Ang (2014) argues that, though IC provides a wide range of advantages, the implementation often results in internal conflict and disparity.

As Edmiston-Strasser (2009) points out, the implementation problem is due to the increasing fragmentation of the internal structures in higher educational institutions such as universities. According to him, institutions are rapidly becoming compartmentalised and operating without any knowledge of other parts of the institutions. Rather than establish a concerted communication strategy that guides all communication activities, the institutions develop separate offices to address admissions, media and public relations, alumni and development, publications and creative services. Edmiston-Strasser (2009) cautions that such a mindset must change to achieve true integration.

The above views demonstrate that the implementation of IC has setbacks. Van Baalen and Mulder (2016) suggest that the barriers identified should be considered as challenges that can be resolved to be able to implement the IC paradigm. This current research examined the resources and strategies used to implement IC in the selected universities.

3.3 Distinct Factors for the Implementation of IC

As explained above, cross-functional collaboration has been identified as an enabler of collaboration among all institutional units and a driver of IC. Additionally, other factors including stakeholder integration, image management and internal communication management facilitate the IC programme. Aside these, literature highlights some other pre-requisite conditions for the successful implementation of IC (van Baalen & Mulder, 2016; Nieman-Struweg, 2014; Kitchen & Burgman, 2010; Kitchen, Kim & Shultz, 2008; Niemann-Struweg & Grobler, 2007) which include technology, the existence of a communication expert, the availability of a communication strategy and the endorsement of top management which are expatiated below.

3.3.1 Technology

Technology has the capacity of making communication faster, more mobile and easier to connect to fragmented stakeholders (Kitchen & Burgman, 2015; Kitchen, 2005; Dewhirst & Davis, 2005). Though technology is believed to disperse media exposure due to the proliferation of communication channels and media forms, it has proven to be a necessary incentive for successful IC due to convergence which enables it to transmit information via diverse channels and media forms (Kitchen & Burgman, 2015). Consequently, technology, through convergence, enables institutions to reach out and connect to their otherwise fragmented stakeholders.

Mulhern (2009) discovered that, technological advancement departs from the one-way traditional communication and affords all types of organisations and their stakeholders' interactive communication through diverse media. In support of this finding, Lee, Lee, Park and Cameron (2010) maintain that the media landscape empowers communicators to generate and communicate content via varied online communication channels including social media, blogs and content

communities. Central to technological advancement, social media is fast becoming a key instrument that allows direct engagement with publics (Place, Smith & Lee, 2016) and consequently, makes stakeholder integration easier. Earlier research established the interactive qualities of social media as a tool for fostering and maintaining relationships (Sweester, 2010; Keller, 2009) and for enhancing institutional reputation (Lee & Park, 2013).

Scholarship further establishes that a database created for information and relationship management offers more opportunities than any of the communication components (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Reich, 1998). They, therefore, recommend a blend of both traditional communication techniques and interactive media for effective relationship management and IC programme.

3.3.2 The Availability of a Communication Expert

Researchers have used different terms to describe the calibre of communication expert required for the implementation and management of IC. Moriarty (1994) used the term “communication czar” to refer to someone who will not only take charge of planned messages but also be capable of controlling inferred, maintenance and unplanned messages (incidental communications) which are usually ignored by organisations. According to Moriarty (1994), the sphere of influence of the communication czar transcends communication by all the traditional communication departments to cover interaction across departments. Moriarty (1994), however, laments that it is probably unrealistic to get a communication czar given the extent of responsibility.

Gayeski and Woodward (1996) came up with the title “Renaissance communicator” which they refer to as an integrated and strategic archetype responsible for “developing and implementing communication rules and tools to enhance the communication, comprehension, acceptance and

application of information in ways which help to achieve an organisation's goals" (Gayeski & Woodward, 1996, p.2). Niemann-Struweg (2014) provides an in-depth plan for the effective operation of the office of the renaissance communicator. The first pre-condition is the availability of sufficient budget. This is, however, subject to the perceived importance of communication in the organisation. Sufficient budget can easily be facilitated if the renaissance communicator is part of the dominant coalition and if top management integration occurs. The next pre-requisite is that the renaissance communicator must deeply understand the core competencies which involve organisational characteristics such as resources, capabilities or strengths. Thirdly, the incumbent should be able to ensure strategic consistency in all communication activities to achieve unity of effort. Additionally, the renaissance communicator must be capable of facilitating cross-functional planning that integrates the communication activities of different departments such that messages communicated to stakeholders are well planned and managed. The last pre-condition, according to Niemann-Struweg (2014), is the ability of the renaissance communicator to ensure zero-based planning which involves the avoidance of all prejudices that could hamper effective integration. Unfortunately, Niemann-Struweg (2014) and Gayeski and Woodward (1996) also report that, there are hardly any real-life examples of renaissance communicators because many communication professionals consider it a long and difficult process to work outside institutional silos for new cross-functional skills to gain credibility with management.

Some scholars have been modest enough in defining the suitable expert for the implementation of IC (Classen & Vewey, 1998; Lubbe, 1994; Hodge & Anthony, 1991). Lubbe (1994) for instance, endorses public relations as a communication management role/function, indicating that the public relations head should function at the management level to facilitate the IC process. Hodge and Anthony (1991) also use the term 'boundary spanners' to refer to

communication managers or public relations practitioners who perform a boundary role functioning as the liaison between the organisation and its diverse stakeholders. The boundary spanning role enables the communication manager to receive inputs from the environment, process the information, deliver outputs to the environment and provide feedback loops to facilitate interactive communication between the organisation and its environment. By this, the boundary-spanner or communication manager operates as a systems manager and management's communication arm, with expertise to deal with the complex relationships inherent in the organisation through effective communication management (Classen & Vewey, 1998).

Classen and Vewey (1998) likewise define the communication manager as an opinion leader and change agent who functions at the macro, meso and micro levels of the organisation. They indicate that at the macro level, the communication manager monitors environmental changes to make recommendations to management and also influences attitudes and perceptions of target audiences through corporate image creation. At the meso level, the manager influences the perceptions of key internal audiences, conveys their needs to management and also offers advice to other subsystems regarding these audiences. The communication manager, at the micro level, sets objectives and determines target publics and implements communication programmes.

The above-mentioned scholars provide classical evidence to explain the acceptance of public relations as a key subsystem for integrated communication activities and the strategic processes of organisations. Without the public relations or communication manager's input about trends and developments in the environment, meaningful strategies can hardly be constructed and the organisational strategic intent would rarely be implemented effectively (Classen & Vewey, 1998; De la Rey, 1994). There has been an increasing amount of literature to support the above claim. For example, DeSanto (2011) states that:

Public relations should or can contribute to the organization's overall goals and objectives ... as the conscience of the organization (social responsibility and reputation management), the organization mouthpiece (media relations), the environmental scanner (issues management or environmental interpreter), or ... the boundary spanner. (p.13)

Caywood (2012) also maintains that integration's heavy dependence on the wide range of organisational stakeholders requires public relations "experience and skill in the use of various communication-based strategies and tactics" such as environmental scanning, boundary spanning and stakeholder management (p.8).

Smith and Place (2013) conducted a qualitative research on public relations' use of social media and found that practitioners who used social media enhanced their expertise in stakeholder integration and relationship management. This study aligns with others which discovered that social media is an excellent tool for maintaining positive relationships and for increasing organisational reputation (Lee & Park, 2013; Sweester, 2010). Together, the studies complement the original point made by Duncan and Caywood (1996) that integration prioritises direct response as a mechanism for relationship cultivation (which is facilitated by social media).

The nexus between integration and public relations power has extensively been investigated by scholars (Place, Smith & Lee, 2016; Berger & Reber, 2006; Caywood, 1997). Preliminary work by Caywood (1997) points out that integration ultimately increases public relations power and decision-making opportunities. Place *et al.* (2016), through a survey of 110 public relations professionals, found that practitioners working in IC environments perceived the PR department as having more responsibility for communication management decisions than the marketing department. The study by Place *et al.* (2016) also complements Smith and Place's

(2013) study in suggesting that expertise in social media influences public relations power in integrated environments due to the value of social media in relationship cultivation.

Place *et al.* (2016), however, point out that “social media remains a technical consideration reserved for those with expertise rather than a managerial consideration” (p.28). Additionally, social media may present an in-group/out-group effect whereby those “in the know (including practitioners) may be separate from those who are not” (Place *et al.*, 2016, p.28). This creates a disconnection between public relations and other sub-groups in the organisation. It is, therefore, necessary to have a communication strategy that guides the communication processes of the organisation.

3.3.3 Availability of a Communication Strategy

For the IC programme to be successful, it is necessary to have a communication strategy in place. The availability of a communication strategy has been prescribed due to the varied functions the strategy performs. In their evolutionary integrated communication model, Duncan and Caywood (1996) recommend a well-developed integrated communication strategy for the effective management of stakeholder relationships. Again, as indicated earlier in this chapter, IC activities ideally focus on the strategic intent of every organisation. In view of this, Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2007) emphasise that the communication objectives embedded in the communication strategy should align with the goals and strategic intent of the organisation for the smooth-running of the IC process. Massie and Anderson’s (2003) study demonstrate that, developing a communication strategy with objectives that align with the organisational strategic objectives, vision and mission facilitates the IC process. According to them, Contact 20/20, a communication strategy instituted by a global organisation, measured up to the ideals of integrated communication.

With this strategy, the organisation was guided to align its communication activities with its business plan for the achievement of strategic goals. Contact 20/20 further co-ordinated the media channels and synergised the organisation's internal and external communication to avoid fragmentation.

To Gagnon and Michael (2003), such alignment procedures are very essential for the growth of the institution. Gagnon and Michael (2003) believe that the communication strategy ensures clear, consistent and effective communication of institutional strategic intent, places all publics on a level playing field, guides them to buy into the mission and vision of the institution and directs their daily activities towards the achievement of the goals. Duncan (2001) had earlier established that aligning the institutional mission with the communication processes provides a focus for all employees.

Other scholars confirm that the strategy determines the value of each communication channel used in the integration process (Barker, Valos & Shimp, 2011) and guides the strategic management of the institution (Smith & Taylor, 2004). In support of this, Aakar (2012) adds that, the communication strategy, by identifying the suitable channel for each stakeholder group, facilitates relationship building. Van Baalen and Mulder (2016) have also established that the strategy helps to identify the most effective communication platforms and enhances the vertical and horizontal levels of interaction. Together, these arguments show that the communication strategy serves as the blueprint that guides the integrated communication process. Consequently, an institution with a communication strategy equips its stakeholders with a well-defined reference point for engaging in the IC process and for evaluating the process to establish success or failure.

3.3.4 The Endorsement of Top Management

Christensen *et al.* (2009) argue that the field of integrated communication has matured and expanded from a limited and specialised activity to an organisation-wide issue, a concern that currently spans beyond functional and disciplinary confines. Integrated communication has, therefore, been endorsed as an endeavor which involves the whole institution, beginning with top management and cascading through the institution (Niemann-Struweg & Grobler, 2007). This opinion is premised on Argenti, Howell and Beck's (2005) belief that integration cannot be accomplished by middle managers or those at the lower ranks of the institution. Rather, there must be total commitment from top management to remove the possible barriers which hamper integration.

Commenting on the importance of top management's involvement in the IC process, Kitchen and Burgman (2015) maintain that "if commitment to communication integration is only manifest at the tactical level ..., senior managers will probably not dedicate resources to the programme because they will not be directly involved in the implementation" (p.37) and thus, might not acknowledge the benefits of IC in strategic management. Though some scholars attribute the role of top management in the IC process to the influence it has on the placement of the communication manager as well as resource and budgetary allocation for the integration (Kitchen & Burgman, 2015; Niemann-Struweg, 2014), other schools have challenged this view. For instance, Grigorescu and Lupu (2015) discovered that the managers of the organisations in Southern Romania were undecided about the implementation of IC due to budgetary constraints.

Van Baalen and Mulder (2016) indicate that top management needs adequate knowledge to provide support for the successful implementation of all stages of the IC process because the integration process causes a lot of change which often results in confusion and the alienation of

staff who struggle to adapt to the change. Therefore, it is only when top management fully understands how the change will be implemented that the integration strategy can be communicated to other internal stakeholders. In support of the above views, Niemann-Struweg (2014) identifies various ways by which top management can help with the integration process. First, since mission communication has been endorsed as a key factor in the IC process, top management is regarded as the architect that “serves to set the example for the integration of the mission in all communications of the organisation. Integration by the CEO/top management implies that the mission of the organisation is consistently communicated to all levels of the business” (Niemann-Struweg, 2014, p.188). Also, top management should make a conscious effort to embrace integrated communication as an important driving force in the organisation. Niemann-Struweg’s (2014) assertion here seems to respond to Schultz’s (1993, p.5) report that, some of the difficulty in integration is a result of organisation’s failure to recognise IC as a necessary tool for their overall success.

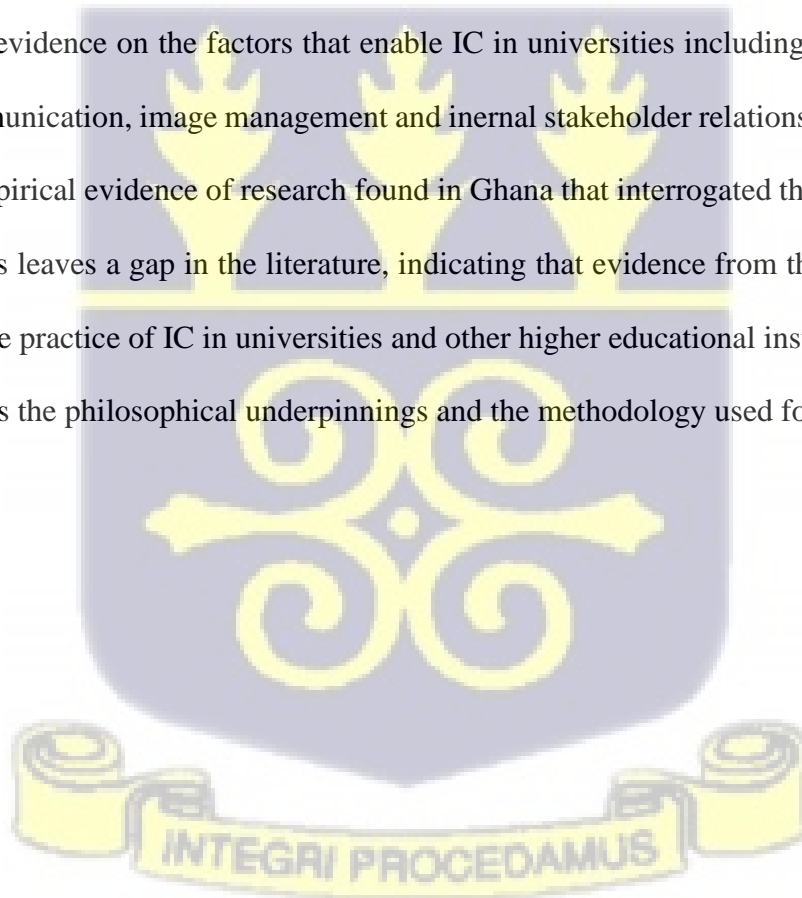
While it is necessary for top management to show evidence of its engagement in all communication efforts, Niemann-Struweg (2014) further tasks management to facilitate an open organisational culture for the free flow of information at the horizontal and vertical levels to enable the organisation to learn from its environment. This guarantees teamwork at every level in the integration process (Hickman, 2010). What this implies is that, top management has to be deeply involved in engineering all the antecedents that make IC happen.

3.4 Summary

This chapter dealt with a range of literature and research that addressed questions of integrated communication. Specifically, it discussed the antecedents of the IC approach, the barriers to the

implementation of IC and the factors that are relevant for the implementation of IC. It is clear from the literature that, to avoid fragmentation in the IC process, an institution needs a communication strategy which serves as a blueprint for the process and places all stakeholders on a level playing field to be aware of the paths to tread for the attainment of institutional strategic goals. Additionally, the literature shows the kind of symbiotic working relationship advocated by the systems perspective for the success of IC.

It is noted that the greater part of the literature reviewed was authored by scholars from Western countries and South Africa; implying that the schools of thought that define the field of IC seemed to lack a Ghanaian perspective. Also, the literature reviewed generally showed scanty or no empirical evidence on the factors that enable IC in universities including the co-ordination of internal communication, image management and internal stakeholder relationship. Additionally, there was no empirical evidence of research found in Ghana that interrogated the practice of IC in universities. This leaves a gap in the literature, indicating that evidence from this study serves as a compass for the practice of IC in universities and other higher educational institutions. The next chapter examines the philosophical underpinnings and the methodology used for this research.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate internal stakeholders' perceptions of integrated communication in three universities in Ghana. This chapter describes the philosophical underpinnings adopted for the study, the research design and the sampling procedures used. It also explains the data collection and analysis procedures. The chapter further explains the rationale for the selection of particular institutions and respondents for the study, and discusses its ethical considerations, challenges faced during the research and solutions found.

4.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

Many of the early methodologies of research in the social sciences attempted to replicate the techniques of the 'hard sciences' which mainly followed the positivist approach (Barillaro, Metz, Perran & Stokes, 2009). Barillaro *et al.* (2009) note further that with the relative movement from these techniques into the realm of qualitative research, the range of research options have grown considerably. This study was underpinned by Cupchik's (2001) constructivist realism, a philosophy that combines two research traditions: constructivism and positivism. The ensuing paragraphs describe the research approaches rooted in constructivist realism.

According to Jakobsen (2013), two main philosophical and epistemological traditions, positivism (realism) and constructivism, have basically determined the search for knowledge. Positivism (which is characterised by quantitative research) generally refers to the philosophical position that emphasises empirical data and scientific methods based on the orientation that the

world consists of regularities that are detectable (Jakobsen, 2013; Miller, 2002). Consequently, a researcher can adduce knowledge about the real world through objective observation and the use of logical and rational approaches. The positivist, thus, seeks to explain, predict, control and describe phenomena to draw inferences based on the belief that human actions can be explained through causal relationships.

On the other hand, the constructivist philosophy, which orients towards qualitative research, holds that, knowledge is constructed through experiences. Consequently, individuals or groups construct their own reality leading to multiple interpretations of social phenomena (Guba, 1990). Reality, under this paradigm is, therefore, considered as a social construction that is created when people interact (Sarantakos, 1993). As von Glasersfeld (2001) points out, constructivism denies the belief that reality can be adduced outside personal perspectives. As a result, the constructivist employs methods that are largely exploratory in measuring reality.

The two epistemological positions (the positivist and constructivist) stem from fundamental ontological differences between realists (positivists) and social constructivists. Miller (2002) asserts that realists conceive the social world as constituted by immutable laws that enforce causality in social life. Alternatively, the social constructionist perceives reality “as an intersubjective construction that is created through communicative interaction” (Miller 2002, p.25). In this view, “social reality is not a fact or sets of facts existing prior to human activity.... it is [created] through our words and other symbols, and through our behaviours” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1992, as cited in Miller, 2002, p.25).

According to Cupchik (2001), the two approaches bring distinctive qualities to the research process. The constructivist (qualitative) approach, being holistic in orientation, treats the phenomenon as a whole system and searches for patterns that lie within its bounds. This tradition

incorporates as many episodes as possible to appreciate the ways that different parts of a structure affect one another. It reflects an emphatic understanding of contexts and offers exhaustive and coherent accounts of the dynamics of social processes. On the other hand, the positivist (quantitative) position fractionates social phenomena and reduces them to simpler and less analogous models.

Cupchik (2001) recognises similarities between these two approaches. He indicates that both the positivist and constructivist positions are deconstructive when it comes to unfolding episodes in the critical world because in dealing with data, both traditions break the flow of events in the social world and selectively examine actions, utterances or individual behaviours as their object or subjects of inquiry. Consequently, Cupchik (2001) proposes an alternative ontology, *constructivist realism*, which accommodates both positivism and constructivism and the methods they subtend. He notes that a reconciliation of the two concepts (constructivism and positivism) can only be achieved by eliminating the arbitrary boundaries and assumptions that separate them. As a result, the two approaches could be considered as complementary views of the social world. Constructivism through its qualitative approach derives a rich source of data, while positivism, through its quantitative procedure involves precision and yields statistically significant effects. This, according to Cupchik (2001), implies that richness can enhance precision because the in-depth account encompasses more information, while a focus on precision can lead to a clarification of basic concepts. “The potential interplay between the two approaches implies that they share many qualities in common as part of the research enterprise” (Cupchik, 2001, p.29).

Against this background, the present study was underpinned by the constructivist realism world view (proposed by Cupchik, 2001) which seeks to demonstrate the complementary roles of quantitative and qualitative methods in the investigation of social phenomena. The approach rests

on the assumption that social phenomena exist in natural communities and can be observed and named by members of the communities. Although the study is largely qualitative in approach, it involves a quantitative method to triangulate and strengthen the findings.

4.2 Research Design

Every type of empirical research has an implicit research design (Yin, 2009). Determining an appropriate research design is, therefore, very essential. As indicated by Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018), choosing the appropriate research design is one of the most important decisions a researcher makes after formulating the research topic, objectives and questions. Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) had earlier described research design as a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting observations. These suggest that an appropriate research design can be developed based on the research questions, objectives as well as the philosophical assumptions.

Though the main theory underpinning this study (the systems theory) is quantitatively inclined, Kitchen and Burgman (2010) argue that adopting the quantitative method for investigation into integrated communication leaves very little room for in-depth analysis. Consequently, the study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. Again, this research, being a perception study, makes constructivist realism very appropriate. In spite of the varying opinions regarding the appropriate methodology for perception studies, many scholars seem to settle on a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods (Kakulu, 2016; Harpe, 2015; Stufflebeam, 2006). According to Stufflebeam (2006), no single research method can answer all the questions on the nature of perceptions because every method has some peculiar limitations. Additionally, human perceptions deal with some fundamental questions on meaning, truth and the logical

relations among ideas, concepts and theories which cannot be resolved through quantitative studies alone. To buttress this view, Kakulu (2016) indicates that the use of quantitative procedures such as survey or structured interviews (questionnaires) in isolation primarily limits the perceptions of respondents. By using questionnaires which largely consist of close-ended questions, the investigator somewhat controls the research and thereby undermines the philosophy behind perception studies. Harpe (2015) asserts that if there is not much knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated, it would be more appropriate to use qualitative methods which enable interviewees/participants to unearth issues that the researcher might never have considered. However, the use of survey (questionnaire) would be suitable if there is adequate information about the phenomenon being researched.

Against this background, scholars such as Harpe (2015) and Kakulu (2016) advocate a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for perception studies in order to gather multiple sources of data on the phenomenon being investigated. Consequently, this study employed the case study research approach because it aligns with the constructivist realism philosophy and the protocols recommended for perception studies which accommodate a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Though case study has mainly been described as a versatile form of qualitative enquiry which is most appropriate for a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of a complex issue (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006), it also accommodates a quantitative research method such as survey. For instance, Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998) affirm that the case study research design combines qualitative data collection and analysis methods (mainly concerned with words and meanings) with quantitative methods (which deal with numbers and measurements).

Case studies could be limited to one bounded case such as an individual, a group, an event, an entire programme, an issue or a concern (Creswell, 2007). Consequently, unlike quantitative research methods such as survey, case studies usually focus on a relatively small sample size which prevents researchers from generalising one case to another due to the different contexts in which they may occur. For this reason, Creswell (2007) indicates that “the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue” (p.74). Also, unlike other modes of enquiry such as experiment, case study offers the advantage of conducting research within the context of its use; that is, within the context in which the activity takes place (Yin, 1994). This helps to explain the complexities of real-life environments.

Based on the above explanations, the case study research method was adopted as the appropriate design for the current perception study. Under this mode of enquiry, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, qualitative content analysis and survey in the three universities sampled in order to gather multiple sources of evidence on the issue under investigation.

4.2.1 Definition of Case Study

Though case study, as a mode of enquiry, has gained many definitions and descriptions across literature, Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills (2017) indicate that three notable scholars, Yin, Stake and Merriam, offer the most commonly used definitions and explanations. Yin (2003, 2018) defines case study as an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-world context using multiple sources of data. Yin’s (2003) definition focuses on the scope, process and mode of enquiry as well as the importance of context to case studies. Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) add that the case study research

approach is used to garner an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. The central tenet of the case study method is, thus, to explore and understand a phenomenon in its natural context. As Yin (2018, 2003) observed, case study is an umbrella term which integrates other orientations and protocols. Thus, given its multiple sources of evidence, Yin (2018) indicates that this mode of enquiry lends itself to triangulation.

Unlike Yin (2003), Stake (1995) emphasises the object of study (the case) rather than the method employed in case studies. According to him, case study research “is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p.xi). Merriam (2009) defines case study as “... an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”, (p.40) thereby combining elements of Yin’s (2003) and Stake’s (1995) definitions as she maintains a focus on the object of study (the bounded system or the case) as well as the extent of analysis required.

The varied definitions are premised on the scholars’ differing philosophical and epistemological positions. Yin is believed to be oriented to the realist or post-positivist perspective (which aligns with the objective mode of enquiry); Stake aligns with the constructivist or interpretivist philosophy, while Merriam maintains a pragmatic constructivist approach to case study research (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, Yin relies on the quantitative mode of enquiry, while Stake adopts the qualitative approach to research. Though Merriam rests at the centre by drawing on the elements of both methods, she is more inclined towards the qualitative approach (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). The diversity of philosophical approaches explained supports the choice of the constructivist realism philosophy (which accommodates both qualitative and quantitative methods) for the present study. The study adopted a philosophical stance that is close to Merriam’s orientation to case study research.

4.2.2 Selection of the Appropriate Case Study Design and Cases

Scholars in the field of qualitative research have identified different genres of case study including exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case study (Universal Class, 2020; Yin, 2018 & 2003; Zaidah, 2007; Tellis, 1997; McDonough & McDonough, 1997); intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study (Karlsson, 2016; Grandy, 2012; Crowe et al., 2011; Creswell, 2007; Rhee, 2004; Stake, 1995); single-case and multiple-case designs (Yin, 2018, 2009) and particularistic, descriptive and heuristic case study (Merriam, 1988). Tight (2010) and Stake (1995) suggest that selecting an appropriate design of case study must be based on the research question in order to achieve precise results and make specific recommendations. Guided by the above suggestion, the researcher adopted the multiple-case study for this study.

Yin (2018, 2009) notes that a multi-case study uses data gathered from different study sites to explain the phenomenon under investigation. The multiple-case design is similar to Stake's (1995) collective case study. Scholarship, therefore, refers to the multiple-case design as collective, multi-case, multi-site or comparative case study (Universal Class, 2020; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Drawing attention to some of the advantages derived from multiple-case studies, Yin (2009) states that "the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being robust" (p.53). Additionally, multiple-case design allows the researcher to study different sites simultaneously or sequentially in an attempt to generate a broader appreciation of the issue under investigation (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Yin (1995, 2009) cautions that generalisation of results, from either single-case or multiple-case study, is made to theory and not to populations.

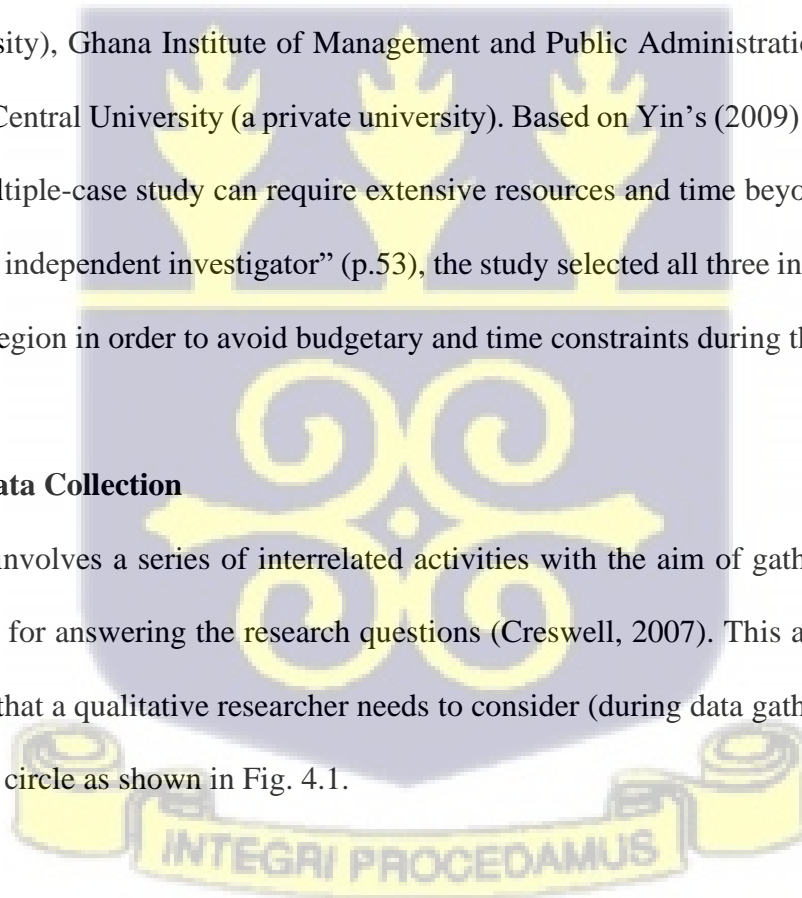
The selection of cases was based on Creswell's (2005) suggestion that in choosing a case to study, it is necessary to consider the purposive sampling procedure. He particularly singles out

the purposive maximal sampling procedure which means that the researcher has to select cases that show different perspectives on the issue being investigated. Additionally, the study considered case sites that were accessible based on the caution that “the availability of suitable case study sites may be restricted, as business and other organisations are not always willing to partake in case study research” (Darke, *et al.*, 1998, p.274).

The study selected three universities located in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana to investigate the perceptions of their internal publics about the practice of integrated communication. One basic criterion that served as the basis for the selection of cases was whether the sampled university was a public or private institution. The institutions selected were University of Ghana (a public university), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (a quasi-public institution) and Central University (a private university). Based on Yin’s (2009) assertion that “the conduct of a multiple-case study can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student or independent investigator” (p.53), the study selected all three institutions from the Greater Accra Region in order to avoid budgetary and time constraints during the investigation.

4.3 Phases of Data Collection

Data collection involves a series of interrelated activities with the aim of gathering information that is necessary for answering the research questions (Creswell, 2007). This author presents the multiple phases that a qualitative researcher needs to consider (during data gathering) in the form a data collection circle as shown in Fig. 4.1.



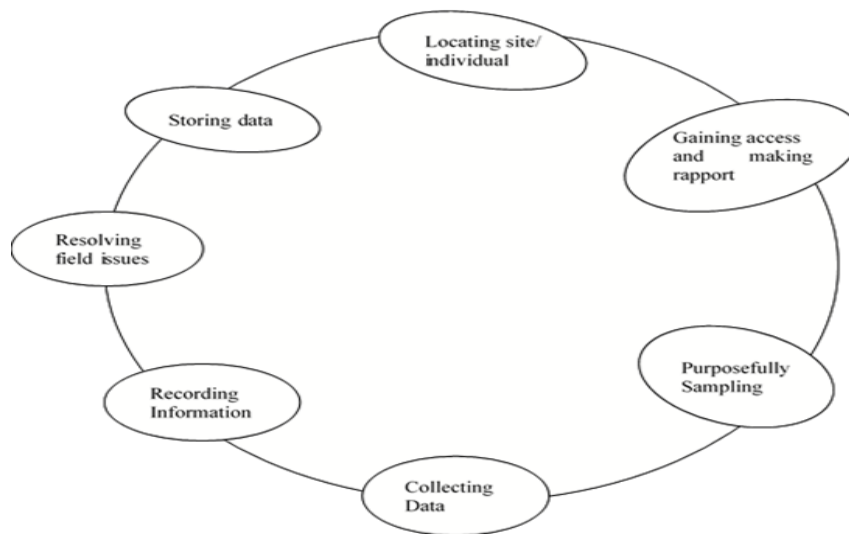


Figure 4. 1: Data Collection Circle

Though Creswell begins with the location of a site or an individual, he cautions that an investigator may begin at another entry point in the circle. Identifying the site and people to study is considered an important step in the process. Creswell (2007) further deems it necessary to strategise access to the study site and to establish rapport with the participants in order to garner good data from them. The next important step in the process is to conduct a purposeful sampling of the site and individuals who can best inform the researcher about the research problem under investigation.

The process continues with the adoption of the appropriate data collection approaches, the recording of data and the resolution of field issues which may include problems such as having inadequate data, loss of information or a premature termination of the field work. The process ends with the development of strategies for data storage to avoid damage or loss. Based on Creswell's (2007) suggestion, the current researcher began the data collection process with the purposeful sampling of study sites and individuals and then followed with the other steps in the circle.

4.3.1 The Field Work

Three universities in the Greater Accra Region were purposefully selected for this study. This section describes the study location and sites, with particular attention to the profile of the study location and sites and the rationale for selecting each study site.

4.3.1.1 Profile of the Study Location

As already mentioned above, this study was located in the Greater Accra Region. Of the 16 administrative regions in Ghana, the Greater Accra Region is the smallest, occupying about 1.4 per cent of the total land area of Ghana (Greater Accra-Government of Ghana, 2019) and accounting for 16.3 per cent (4,010,054) of Ghana's total population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The Region is the seat of Ghana's capital city and the most urbanised region in the country with about 87% of its total population living in urban areas (Songsore, 2009). The Greater Accra Region is divided into 16 administrative districts and shares common boundaries with the Eastern Region, Volta Region, Central Region and the Gulf of Guinea. In terms of transportation, it has different highways connected to its different districts as well as different regions in the country. Additionally, the Region hosts the international airport in the country which offers flights to different destinations in the country, the African continent and other continents.

The Greater Accra Region was selected as the study location for obvious reasons. Out of over 81 accredited universities in Ghana, the Region hosts more than 25, representing about 30% of the total number of accredited universities in the country (National Accreditation Board, 2018). Some of these institutions are fully-fledged private or public universities; some are affiliated to other universities (university colleges) and others are local campuses of foreign universities (World Scholarship Forum, 2019). This means that the Greater Accra Region offered a diversity

of universities from which the researcher could select the specific study locations. In addition, its location, coupled with other facilities and the many study options offered by its tertiary institutions attract a large number of students from different countries.

4.3.2 The Study Sites

Though the Greater Accra Region hosts a lot of universities/university colleges which could possibly qualify as study sites, the researcher purposively selected Central University, GIMPA and University of Ghana (all profiled in Chapter One) for apparent reasons. Central University was selected mainly because it is the largest private university in Ghana, whereas GIMPA was chosen because it is a quasi-public university and the University of Ghana, because it is the premier and largest public university in Ghana. As a result, whether a university was public or private determined the main selection criterion. These institutions were selected to determine if by their definitions as private, public or quasi-public, they would practise integrated communication in similar or different ways. Additionally, all the three universities offer business and social sciences programmes from which the survey respondents were sampled.

4.4 Methods Employed for the Collection of Data

The choice of methods for collecting data for the present study was guided by the information needed to address the research questions and governed by the following suggestions outlined by scholars such as Karlsson (2016), Wimmer and Dominick (2011), Yin (2009), Creswell (2007) and Stake (1995):

1. Objectives of the study
2. Availability of resources (including time, human and material resources)

3. Accessibility to the study site and respondents or participants
4. The use to be made of the results

Merriam (1988) suggests that all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing can be used in case study, though certain techniques are used more than others. Karlsson (2016) and Wimmer and Dominick (2011) establish this fact in a more explicit way. According to them, the methods used for data collection in a case study are mainly qualitative, though quantitative methods could also be included.

Yin (2018) identifies six sources of evidence for case study research as follows:

1. Documentation (including letters, emails, memoranda, diaries, calendars, minutes, reports, and press cuttings)
2. Archival records (such as budget, personnel records, maps, charts and research data)
3. Interviews (typically in-depth or semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, though structured interviews could also be used).
4. Direct observations (involving the observation of meetings, sidewalk activities, factory work and hospital or classroom activities)
5. Participant observation (such as serving as a staff member or a key decision maker in an organisational setting or being a resident in a neighbourhood)
6. Physical Artifacts (such as a technological device, a tool or instrument, an artwork or some other physical evidence).

Yin (2018) adds that data gathering in case study research is guided by the four principles listed below:

1. Using multiple sources of evidence
2. Creating a case study database

3. Maintaining a chain of evidence
4. Exercising care in using data from electronic sources of evidence, such as social media.

According to Yin (2018), “the principles are extremely important for doing high-quality case studies; are relevant to all the six types of sources of evidence and should be followed whenever possible” (p.113).

Flowing from the above considerations, the multi-methods approach to gathering data in a case study was adopted for this study. The following data collection techniques were, therefore, employed:

1. Individual in-depth interviews to examine the perceptions of university management and public relations or communication practitioners about integrated communication in the selected institutions and specifically determine their contribution in the IC process.
2. Focus group discussions to interrogate internal stakeholders’ perceptions about the practice of integrated communication in their respective institutions, and in particular, find out stakeholders’ level of involvement in the IC process.
3. Survey (structured interviews) to investigate students’ views about integrated communication in the institutions.
4. A qualitative content analysis to determine the level of consistency in displaying institutional visual symbols.

Though the data collection techniques adopted for this study did not cover all the methods recommended by Yin (2018), efforts were made to vary the methods. This strategy was based on Yin’s (2018, 2009) belief that a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence in order to triangulate data. Tellis (1997) had earlier indicated that case study is a triangulated research strategy, whereas Stake (1995) identified

triangulation as the basis for ensuring accuracy and alternative explanations in a case study. In the subsequent paragraphs, the choice and use of each method are explained together with the justification for the selection.

4.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions (FGDs) have variously been described as ‘focus group interviews’, ‘group interviews’, ‘group depth interviews’, ‘group discussions’, ‘focused interviews’ or ‘focus groups’ (Frith, 2000, as cited in Amoakohene, 2004). Focus groups involve a set of people with common features whose knowledge and understanding are germane to the topic under investigation.

Focus group discussion (FGD) yields large amounts of qualitative data and maximises face-to-face contact between the participants and the researcher (Flynn, Albrecht, Shannon & Scott, 2018). As indicated by Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee (2018), focus groups use a relatively small sample in a group (of between eight to 12 participants). As a result, there should be more FGD sessions in order to explore greater depth and to corroborate the data sourced from the interactions at the different sessions. It is in line with this argument that Amoakohene (2004) proposed that, “in order to aid comparison, more than one group session should be conducted in various locations and with different samples of the population reflecting different group characteristics” (p.30). Krueger (1994) adds that FGD sessions must be run to a point where a clear pattern emerges through data saturation and subsequent groups produce no new information.

Priest (1996), as cited in Amoakohene (2004), identifies a major strength of focus groups as follows:

...the real advantage of a focus group is that the researcher can gather data on participants’ interaction with one another. A richer picture of how information is

processed and conclusions are drawn can be constructed in comparison to what can be understood from the narrower data produced in an interview situation. Participants may say things to one another that they would not bring up in a one-on-one conversation, such as arguments they consider persuasive and associations they make in response to others' comments. (p.35)

For the present study, focus group discussion was considered a necessary data collection method because FGDs enable group dynamics (May, 2011) as participants exchange their distinctive ideas. As Morrison (1998) put it, "it is the dynamic exchange between the individuals in the group that gives focus groups their special characteristics and strength as a research method" (p.168). The interaction between the moderator and participants in a focus group discussion aims at obtaining a wealth of qualitative data and gaining a deep understanding of participants' perceptions (Duggleby, 2005; Amoakohene, 2004, p.30). It is against this backdrop that FGD was selected as one of the data collection methods for this study.

In line with Amoakohene's (2004) proposal, six (6) focus group discussions were designed for this study. These consisted of two focus group sessions in each institution. However, a total of five (5) were carried out due to some constraints (explained in this Chapter). With the help of a semi-structured discussion protocol, the groups were guided to discuss and debate the practice of integrated communication in their respective universities. The discussions covered the following broad areas: general impression about internal communication; communication about the university's strategic plan, cross-functional collaboration and relationship management. The data gathered from the focus group discussions helped to answer research questions one and two stated as follows:

1. In what ways will internal communication and relationship management in the institutions be linked to the performance of internal stakeholders' roles?
2. What are the ways in which the communication of institutional strategic plan connect with internal publics' contributions to the achievement of institutional strategic goals?

4.4.2 Individual In-depth Interviews

In-depth interview, also known as intensive interview or semi-structured interview, is the most common qualitative research method research technique within the inductive research category (Yin, 2018; Morris, 2018). According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interview is useful when the researcher wants detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or wants to explore new issues in depth. It is characterised by the use of open-ended questions and enhanced by follow-up questions and probes in an endeavour to illuminate the understanding of the research topic. Morris (2018) maintains that in-depth interviews "provide valuable information for programs, particularly when supplementing other methods of data collection" (p.4).

In this study, six (6) in-depth interviews were conducted with members of senior management and officials of the public relations offices in the selected universities. This method was employed based on the general consensus that it generates rich and detailed data and affords the researcher access to interviewees' thoughts, reflections, motives, experiences, understanding, interpretations and perceptions on the topic under consideration (Morris, 2018). All the six interviews were conducted in English Language (which is the official language) and the sessions were held in the offices of the interviewees because they found it more convenient to grant the interviews in their offices. The data generated from the individual interviews was mainly used to answer research questions three and four listed below, though it also provided useful information

to triangulate data from the FGDs and the survey which were used to answer research questions one and two which are above:

3. How do the roles of PR practitioners intersect with PR strategies for the implementation of integrated communication in their institutions?
4. How does top management's understanding of integrated communication link with its support for the implementation of IC in an institution?

4.4.3 Content Analysis of Visual Symbols

As a method, content analysis is unique because it has both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002; Berg, 2001) and can be used in a deductive or an inductive way. Qualitative content analysis offers detailed reports using narratives, themes and sub-themes (Bengtsson, 2016), whereas quantitative content analysis presents data in summary form using frequencies, percentages or actual numbers (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002).

For this study, qualitative content analysis was employed to identify and describe selected visual symbols of the respective universities. Visual symbols, according to Wheeler (2006), can be used strategically and purposefully to create a positive image in the minds of stakeholders. Consequently, universities can integrate their visual symbols into a holistic integrated programme to make their service delivery more tangible to their stakeholders (Hussain & Ferdous, 2014). Through the qualitative content analysis employed, selected visual symbols of the three universities were assessed to determine their level of consistency and their impact on the internal stakeholders sampled for the study. The data collected through content analysis was used to partly validate data garnered from internal stakeholders to answer research question one:

1. In what ways will internal communication and relationship management in the institutions be linked to the performance of internal stakeholders' roles?

4.4.4 The Survey Approach

Based on Yin's (2018) recommendations about the multiple sources of evidence for case study research, structured interviews (survey) were conducted to support the data gathered for this study. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) had previously endorsed survey as a mode of enquiry that could be employed to garner data in case study research. Survey research is a quantitative approach that enables the researcher to collect data from a pre-defined group of respondents on the topic under investigation. The survey data for this study was obtained through the use of standardised procedures which sought to offer each respondent an equal chance of answering the same questions in order to avoid biased opinions that could influence the outcome of the study (Bhat, 2020).

Wimmer and Dominick (2011) distinguish between two major types of survey namely, descriptive survey and analytical survey. A descriptive survey attempts to describe or document current conditions, whereas analytical survey attempts to explain why situations exist, tests hypotheses and draws inferences. In this study, the descriptive survey approach was adopted to study the opinions of students about the practice of integrated communication in the three institutions selected for the study. The main aim for surveying students was to garner evidence on the spread of internal stakeholders' perceptions about integrated communication in the three universities. The survey approach, therefore, offered data which was triangulated with evidence from the FGDs and other data sources to answer research questions one and two listed above.

4.5 Sampling Techniques and Instruments Used

One main goal of research is to describe the characteristics of a population. However, it is usually not feasible to conduct a census (which examines every member of the population) at all times due to time and research constraints (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Salkind, 2010). Consequently, it is important for researchers to adopt a sampling technique which enables them to examine a portion of the entire population. Taherdoost (2016), Wimmer and Dominick (2011), Barratt (2009) and Reynolds, Simintiras and Diamantopoulos (2003) classify sampling techniques under two broad headings namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. These two sampling techniques distinguish between samples that can be generalised to the larger population and those that cannot. Probability (or random) sampling techniques, which offer each element in the population an equal chance of being selected (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), are used to draw samples that are representative of the entire population and yield results that can be generalised. Alternatively, non-probability (or non-random) sampling procedures are generally purposive, not representative of the population and produce non-generalisable results (Barratt, 2009).

This study employed a mixture of non-probability sampling techniques to select the institutions and individuals used as sources of evidence. This strategy was guided by Yin's (2018) recommendation that case studies should not follow the sampling logic which requires an estimation of the entire universe and a statistical procedure for selecting a subset of respondents to be surveyed. Sampling in this study was targeted at academic and administrative staff, management, public relations staff and current students whom Slaba (2015) considers as key internal stakeholders of universities. In addition, some institutional visual symbols were sampled. The sampling procedure and research instrument used for each segment of the study are explained in the following sections.

4.5.1 Respondents of the In-depth Interviews

A total of six (6) individual in-depth interviews were conducted in this study. One interviewee each was purposively selected from the senior management cadre of each institution. Specifically, the registrar of each university was selected as the representative of senior management (SMR) to grant an interview. The selection was based on the fact that the registrars were considered as the head of administration in each institution, thus, the custodian of all administrative processes and the one in charge of supervising the circulation of institutional policies and the discharge of administrative duties. As part of their supervisory roles, the registrars were bona fide officials for supervising integrated communication activities and were, therefore, considered capable of addressing issues on the topic under investigation. In addition, the researcher purposively identified one official from the public relations/public affairs department of each university for individual interviews based on their position of being at the centre of communication in their respective universities.

Customised semi-structured interview guides were developed to guide the interviews for the registrars and officials from the public relations offices (see appendices III and IV). The interview guides mainly comprised open-ended questions on a wide range of topics. As characterised by qualitative enquiry, the researcher used follow-up questions and probes throughout the data collection process. Consent was negotiated with interviewees at each level after which they signed consent forms before the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees because they considered these venues more convenient than other places that were suggested. The proceedings of the interviews were audio-recorded with the help of a research assistant who, in addition, took detailed notes on the discussions. To

ensure the functionality of the recorder, it was tested prior to each interview session through dummy interviews between the researcher and the assistant.

4.5.2 Participants of the Focus Group Discussions

In total, five (5) focus group discussions were conducted for this study, made up of two discussion sessions each at CU and UG and one at GIMPA. The participants for the discussions were purposively recruited through institutional stakeholder networks or leaders of the workers' unions. The groups were mainly composed of academic staff and senior staff (also known as middle management staff) who were purposively recruited based on their length of service. Consequently, the recruitment processes targeted employees who had worked for at least four years because that was a long enough period that would enable them to assess institutional IC to provide relevant information. The academic staff were selected because in the view of Labanauskis and Ginevicius (2017), they form a strong stakeholder group who share their opinions about the running of universities. Additionally, academic staff contribute immensely to implementing university policies through teaching and research. Due to their experience, information gathered from them was very valuable. The senior staff (including administrative assistants and front desk staff) were also included in the FGDs because by the nature of their jobs, they take a lot of instructions to help with the implementation of policy decisions. Their jobs also expose them to the majority of university publics which explains why they need to be adequately informed to release accurate information. This category of staff is usually referred to as institutional memory because, some of them work with the institution for the longest part of their life. Their reactions to the practice of IC in their respective institutions and their dynamic exchanges helped to illuminate the phenomenon under examination.

In line with the recommendation by Krueger (1994), care was taken to ensure that the participants in the groups shared similar characteristics such as age, status at place of work, social and class background. Beyond these common traits, some amount of heterogeneity was ensured by recruiting participants from different departments. Table 4:1 presents the participants of the FGDs.

Table 4. 1: Profile of Focus Groups Sessions

Name of Institution	Characteristics of FGD Group	Number of Participants
Central University	Academic staff (faculty)	8
Central University	Senior staff	6
GIMPA	Senior staff	8
University of Ghana	Academic staff	6
University of Ghana	Senior staff	8

Although focus groups “are said to be typically composed of between six to twelve (12) members ... and that a popular size for focus groups is eight people” (Amoakohene, 2004, p.29), the participants for this study ranged from six (6) to eight (8) members in a group. Based on Rabiee’s (2004) recommendation, the researcher took the necessary steps to over-recruit in order to have the generally accepted number of eight panel members in a group. However, for two of the groups, not all the staff recruited could turn up for the discussions. Additionally, plans were made to have three faculty (academic staff) groups, and three senior staff groups, but this proved futile due to the difficulty in recruiting participants as originally planned. This also explains why there were more senior staff groups than academic staff groups.

Each focus group session was held in a convenient office preferred by participants. The sessions were preceded by the necessary consent protocols and the communication of the ground

rules for the discussions. According to Crowe *et al.* (2011), care must be taken to ensure the anonymity of both case sites and individual participants (if agreed in advance) by allocating appropriate codes or withholding descriptors” (p.7). Based on this, the moderator assigned pseudonyms to the participants to assure them of anonymity. In spite of the confidentiality and anonymity assured based on Sim and Waterfield’s (2019) suggestion, this was quite problematic due to the moderator’s limited control over what participants might subsequently communicate outside the group.

All the discussions were conducted in English, based on the participants’ preference. In order to prevent fatigue on the part of participants, each session was managed to last for an average of 60 minutes. In line with a proposal by Nyumba *et al.* (2017), the moderator created a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for effective interactions and assured each participant of the worth of his/her contribution. This enabled participants to feel at ease in sharing ideas. Semi-structured interview guides, mainly consisting of open-ended questions were used. The moderator continuously probed participants through follow-up questions in order to explore the topic under investigation in greater depth and to achieve data saturation. The discussions were audio-recorded and with the help of a research assistant, detailed notes were documented on the general content of each discussion.

4.5.3 Units of Analysis

Sampling of the units of analysis was guided by Bengtsson’s (2016) opinion that the researcher has to determine whether a piece of material is “to be analyzed in its entirety or divided into smaller units” (p.10). For this study, the researcher examined selected visual symbols of the three universities in order to deepen the analysis on consistency in communication. The units of analysis

were mainly categorised as follows: the colour scheme of the institutions, institutional logos and the typography of the universities. These main categories were selected for the study because they were commonly distributed and could easily be addressed by the internal stakeholders. Sub-categories were developed to assess how these three visual symbols appeared on institutional signage, vehicles and stationery. The data collected through content analysis were used to illuminate those gathered from the FGDs, individual interviews and survey with regard to consistency in communicating visual symbols.

4.5.4 Respondents of the Survey

Similar to the selection of interviewees and FGD participants, a combination of non-probability sampling procedures was used to select respondents for the survey component. A two-stage sampling approach was employed. In the first stage, two programmes, namely business and social sciences were purposively selected to be included in the study. The selection was based on the fact that these programmes were offered by all the three institutions sampled for this study.

The second stage of sampling focused on students. Students were sampled because according to Slaba (2015), “current students represent current customers and are, therefore, considered to be an internal stakeholder group” (p.315). Level 400 students undertaking the two programmes were identified because they had stayed in their respective universities long enough to be able to assess the IC processes. The convenience sampling procedure was, then, employed to interview the students identified. The sampling literature associates convenience sampling with a number of criticisms/limitations including selection bias, high level of sampling error and the inability to generalise research findings (Saunders & Thornhill, 2012; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). However, this sampling approach was adopted because the data collected from the students

surveyed was not intended to be generalised to the larger populations. It was to seek the views of some students on the topic under investigation to corroborate the overall data gathered from other sources.

Again, Wimmer and Dominick (2011) identify four issues to consider when deciding on the use of a probability or a non-probability sample: namely, purpose of study, cost versus value, time constraints and amount of acceptable error. Of these four, the one that informed the choice of purposive and convenient sampling for this study was the purpose of study. By the “purpose of study”, they imply that non-probability sampling procedures are appropriate in situations where the research studies are not designed to generalise results to the population, but rather to collect exploratory data to design measuring instruments. The researcher and her assistant approached the students in the course of their lectures and administered the questionnaires after the necessary negotiation with lecturers and students. The samples drawn from the three institutions are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Samples Drawn from the Institutions

Name of Institution	Business Students	Social Science Students	Sample
Central University	60	23	83
GIMPA	12	75	87
University of Ghana	149	81	230
Total	221	179	400

A structured questionnaire comprising 24 main questions organised under five (5) sub-headings (that reflected the basic purpose of the research) and five (5) demographic questions was

administered to the respondents. The questionnaire was largely made up of close-ended questions, though a few open-ended questions were included to seek clarifications to certain answers. In line with Wimmer and Dominick's (2011) suggestions, the questions were clear, unambiguous and accurately communicated what was required of the respondents. The questionnaires were self-administered because the respondents were literate enough to read, understand and select their preferred answers to the questions posed.

4.6 Data Analysis

Case study research enables the discursive analysis of different data sets because it allows the researcher to pursue a combination of procedures (Yin, 2018) similar to the data collection process. Consequently, in case study analysis, the researcher is free to examine and categorise evidence in order to identify and critically review the themes that reflect the research topic. Yin (2018) encourages case study researchers to follow a general analytical strategy which involves the four techniques listed below:

1. Relying on theoretical propositions
2. Working your data from the 'ground up'
3. Developing a case study description
4. Examining plausible rival explanations.

Again, Yin (1994) encourages researchers to make every effort to produce an analysis of the highest quality by paying attention to the following:

1. Show that the analysis relied on all the relevant evidence
2. Include all major rival interpretations in the analysis
3. Address the most significant aspect of the case study.

Based on the above general analytical strategies, this researcher developed a descriptive framework which was used to identify the overall pattern that emerged from the data. The use of the framework gave credence to the overall findings. This study used the multiple data analysis techniques (explained below) which helped to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.

4.6.1 Analysis of Data from the In-depth Interviews

The data recorded from the six (6) in-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed using the inductive approach. The transcription of recorded version started after each interview during the data collection process and continued throughout the period till the end of data gathering. The transcripts were thoroughly read together with the field notes to enable the researcher to familiarise herself with the data and generate the initial codes. Secondly, all the transcripts were imported to NVivo 11, a computer-assisted qualitative software which is used to manage data collected through the qualitative approach. The responses were read again to identify emergent patterns, themes and ideas. Subsequently, the thematic coding approach was adopted to categorise the responses under the emergent themes (Robson, 2011) as might be relevant to the research questions. Codes that shared similarities were grouped under the same theme(s). The data were presented under the themes in the form of narratives. Direct quotes were also used to add credibility to the narratives. The responses were interpreted around the themes noting similarities and differences from within and across institutions.

4.6.2 Analysis of Data from the Focus Group Discussions

The study adopted the within-case analysis technique for the focus group discussions conducted in each institution. The audio records, transcripts and field notes were examined in order to

generate detailed case study write-ups that reflected within-group similarities and differences. This analysis was supported by the cross-case analysis technique by which the similarities and differences among the different cases (institutions) were presented. In operational terms, all the data recorded from the focus group discussions were transcribed and analysed using the inductive approach. The researcher read all the transcripts generated from the five (5) focus group discussions, line-by-line, noting the emergent patterns, themes and issues with the help of a code book. The responses from the FGDs were then coded, noting similarities and differences within each case and across cases. All transcripts were imported to NVivo 11, which was used to manage the FGD data. Though the NVivo software could not complete the analysis on its own, it served as an able assistant and reliable tool that facilitated the coding and classification of the large amounts of data garnered from the focus groups (Yin, 2018) into themes and sub-themes. It also enabled the researcher to avoid the drudgery associated with manual analysis. The data gathered from the FGDs were presented in the form of narratives and verbatim quotes from the FGD participants.

4.6.3 Analysis of the Survey Data

The survey data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Initially, the data were coded with the help of two research assistants who were carefully trained to assign codes to the responses on each questionnaire. With the help of an expert, the SPSS screen was designed to facilitate data entry. At the end of the data entry, the data file was cross-checked against the original record on the questionnaires to ensure that all responses had been correctly recorded. The results were presented using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and crosstabs to condense the data sets for easy interpretation. Bar charts were also used to graphically display part

of the data. The survey data were aimed at triangulating findings from the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and content analysis.

4.6.4 Analysis of the Data from the Content Analysis

With the qualitative content analysis, the placement of the institutional logo as well as the use of colour scheme and typography on signage, selected stationery and vehicles were examined. Particular attention was paid to the positioning of institutional logo on stationery (such as letterheads and complimentary cards), vehicles and signboards. In addition, the use of institutional colours on stationery, vehicles and signboards was examined to determine consistency in colour shades and their similarity to institutional colours. With regard to the use of typography, the font type, font size and colour as used on stationery, vehicles and signboards were assessed.

The categories of visual symbols described above were analysed using a tick (✓) to show the existence of a category and a cross (X) to show the non-existence of a category. The data gathered from the qualitative content analysis were presented in tabular form to graphically show the differences in the institutions' deployment of visual symbols. The interpretation of the table showed how consistent or inconsistent an institution was in deploying the visual symbols selected. The graphical presentation was used to validate the perspectives of the internal stakeholders on the consistency of communicating the institutional visual symbols.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are very paramount in every research. In this study, the researcher followed both institutional and conceptual guidelines for the data collection. As required by the University of Ghana, the researcher initially applied for ethical clearance by submitting the research proposal

and data collection instruments to the University's Ethical Clearance Committee for review and approval. This practice is endorsed by Yin (2018) who indicates that case study researchers must seek approval from an institutional review board (IRB) because nearly all case studies are about human affairs and, therefore, require researchers to protect the human subjects. The board's review, according to Yin (2018), covers the objectives and design of the study and how the researcher plans to interact with those being studied, the protocols for the data collection instruments and plans to protect the human subjects in the study.

During the field work, the researcher sought consent from the interviewees, participants and respondents based on Sim and Waterfield's (2019) observation that "consent is a central concern in research using human participants" (p.3004). A consent form was completed by each interviewee and the researcher before the onset of each interview. For the FGD participants and survey respondents, the researcher negotiated consent verbally before administering the respective data collection instruments. Negotiating consent prior to gathering data at each stage of the research helped to legitimise the researcher's actions in the data collection process (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Again, it served to stimulate respect for both the researcher and research participants in a reciprocal manner. Additionally, the necessary steps were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants by ensuring that they were not placed in any undesirable position for participating in the research.

4.8 Challenges and Limitations of Study

Any academic research, such as this one, comes with its own challenges and limitations. This study could not draw inferences from the populations from which the respective samples were selected.

Since the study was largely qualitative, the findings and conclusions were limited to the analyses of the data gathered and literature reviewed.

Additionally, the study encountered a lot of postponements in conducting the focus group discussions. Recruits in some of the institutions could never honour their commitments, in spite of the numerous follow-ups. This explains why the study could not achieve or go beyond the popular size of eight for all the focus groups. It also explains why the researcher could not conduct the total number of six (6) FGDs originally intended for the study. Again, the groupings scheduled for the institutions could not be followed as initially planned. To resolve these challenges, arrangements were made to reschedule some of the discussions.

Some respondents of the survey and participants of the FGDs (especially, the senior staff) expressed fatigue with regard to participating in academic research such as this. This was due to a strong perception that their expectations of using findings from such academic research to improve their interactions with their respective institutional authorities are hardly met. Following this complaint, the researcher made conscious efforts to convince the research subjects to ensure active participation and commitment.

4.9 Summary

This chapter described how the study was conducted. It dealt with the methodology of this study beginning with the philosophy underpinning the research approach, the research design and cascaded down to the explanation of the multiple qualitative methods and the survey approach employed for gathering data. In connection with this, attention was also devoted to the sampling procedures, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations. The next chapter deals with the resenatation of findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

A fundamental strategy of case study research is the use of multiple sources of data to enhance data credibility as indicated by Yin (2003). For this study, data sources included individual in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and qualitative content analysis. Although the study principally employed the qualitative methods listed above, survey data were also collected and integrated essentially to validate and strengthen some of the findings from the qualitative methods and to reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon studied. Based on Baxter and Jack's (2008) suggestion, this chapter converges data from these multiple sources by weaving the various strands together.

According to Yin (2003) and Stake (1995), using a database improves the reliability of case study as it enables the researcher to track the various data sources. Based on this claim, data from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were managed by a qualitative analysis software (NVIVO 11). The data were systematically organised to show how the findings reveal the issues and themes that are relevant to the research problem. Prior to analysing the data, transcripts from these two approaches, together with the researcher's notes and memos were repeatedly reviewed to grasp interviewees and participants' views on the case. This was followed by a line-by-line coding in order to capture all the ideas expressed. The next stage of coding focused on sorting and integrating the themes and sub-themes that were identified using the NVIVO software. The findings from these two sources were presented by interspersing narrative with direct quotes from interviewees and participants.

The data gathered from the qualitative content analysis were presented with a cross-tabulation (crosstab) and narratives. Data from the survey component of the research were analysed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analyses were mainly conducted, and the findings were largely presented with crosstabs, charts and percentages. Offering a coherent interpretation to these disparate sources of qualitative and quantitative data added rigour to the study to provide a holistic picture of integrated communication in the various institutions.

It is also important to note that the findings from the various sources were organised according to the five broad themes of interest to this study, namely: the co-ordination of internal communication, stakeholder integration and relationship management, cross-functional collaboration, strategy communication and mission/vision campaign and the prerequisites for the implementation of integrated communication. These broad areas were unveiled through the perceptions of the internal stakeholders sampled for the study.

5.1 Profile of Interviewees, Participants and Respondents

As indicated in Chapter Four, in-depth interviews were conducted for a senior management representative (SMR) in each institution. Out of the three senior management representatives (SMRs), two were males (from CU and GIMPA) and one was a female (from UG). All of them held similar positions as the head of administration (the registrar) in their respective institutions. The SMRs from GIMPA and UG were in their mid-fifties, whereas the one from CU was in his early fifties. Additionally, the interviewees drawn from the public relations units were the heads of the PR units in their respective institutions. Out of the three PR representatives, two were

females (from GIMPA and UG) and one was a male (from CU). The PR representatives from GIMPA and UG were in their mid-fifties, whilst the one from CU was in his early forties.

Out of the five focus group discussions conducted, academic faculty (male) and senior staff (female) groups were conducted at CU, academic faculty and senior staff (both mixed) groups at UG and one senior staff (male) group at GIMPA. The participants drawn from the academic staff are usually referred to as academic senior members while those from senior staff category are referred to as administrative assistants.

The respondents for the survey were drawn from Level 400 students from CU, GIMPA and UG. The sample was composed of students undertaking business and social science programmes to whom structured questionnaires were administered. Table 5.1 gives a distribution of the response rate from each university.

Table 5. 1: Response Rate of the Survey

Name of Institution	Respondents from the Institutions		
	Sample	Response Rate	Percentage
Central University	83	81 (97.5%)	20.2%
GIMPA	87	85 (97.7%)	21.3%
University of Ghana	230	208 (90.4%)	52.0%
No Response	-	26	6.5%
Total	400	400	100.0%

Each of the institutions yielded a high response rate of 90% or above, though Central University and GIMPA achieved almost 100% response rate.

5.2 Co-ordination of Internal Communication

The study investigated the views of internal stakeholders about internal communication in their respective institutions. The findings show that the SMRs in all three universities claimed that there was effective internal communication in their respective institutions. Each of them indicated that the registrar was the major communicator of decisions from the highest decision-making bodies. Consequently, information from senior management, academic board and the council of the respective universities was communicated by the registrar. However, the head of public relations or public affairs of each institution was mandated to communicate certain types of information. Also, there seemed to be a consensus among all the three SMRs that the registrar was the focal person who co-ordinated communication activities in their respective universities. The registrars had representatives in the various sections of the university who complemented his/her communication efforts. This was summed up by the SMR at GIMPA who said:

As you know, in every university or tertiary institution, the Registrar is the major or key person who communicates information and he or she does this through the representatives at various levels of the institution. ... He has his representatives who distribute information.

The management representative at CU added that Deans and Directors assisted with the co-ordination of internal communication, especially the Director of human resource who dealt with staff issues. It was confirmed from the interviews held with the PR representatives at UG and GIMPA that the public relations outfits supported the efforts by registrars in co-ordinating the communication of information. The PR representative at UG, for instance, shared her experience as follows:

You know, we have different levels of governance structure so if it is coming from Council which is the ultimate, it is the registrar who co-ordinates. Even though we may be part of crafting the message, in terms of actually communicating it, it is the registrar. But because of emails, sometimes we would have to communicate it but in fact, we always have a proviso that this is coming from the registrar. Even though perhaps the director has drafted it, but it comes from the registrar.

The PR representative at GIMPA also indicated that her outfit had a team that collated information from management and various departments, discussed the content and “we rearrange with the person who is sending it out. ... We kind of guide them so that it is not offensive to anybody when we roll it out”. It was also found that the PR Unit at CU worked under the supervision of the registry (especially the Registrar and the Vice-Chancellor) to co-ordinate official communication in the University. He said:

Essentially, we work under the registry in general. ... If there is any official information that has to be disseminated to the university, we send it out on their behalf. ... [In addition,] our outfit co-ordinates inputs from other units and communicates the information to the University.

Based on the above submissions, it was realised that the Registrars were designated to co-ordinate communication by virtue of their positions as registrars and head of administration, though the PR outfits also played key roles in co-ordinating information flow from senior management.

5.2.1 Channels for Co-ordinating Internal Communication

The SMRs at CU and UG initially indicated that co-ordination mainly occurred between senior management and the PR offices in their respective institutions. The PR unit was at the centre of co-ordinating communication in these institutions, whereas the registrar played a similar role at GIMPA. The SMRs further reported that adequate information was communicated to the internal stakeholders on a timely basis. The SMR at GIMPA, who perceived that communication was key and vital for the governance and administration of the university, said:

Without adequate communication, people are left in a limbo and are compelled to draw their own conclusions. ... For me, I take it as a very serious driving force of the university system, so it has to be done in such a way that everybody is informed about every decision that is taken at any point in time.

The SMR at UG, however, expressed concern about stakeholders' complaints about information flow, though she also had the perception that a lot of information was circulated to the community.

She noted that:

There's a lot of information going out. However, many people complain of not knowing. So, we are not sure whether it is that they don't access the information or what, because there is a lot of information going out. Probably, if it is not effective, then we should consider the means of communication because the information is going out but somehow, we get complaints that it doesn't reach anybody.

Addressing the means for co-ordinating internal communication, the SMRs said they used multiple channels. Due to the complaints from internal stakeholders, they communicated information through both print and electronic media such as letters, notices, memos, newsletters,

institutional website, emails/intranet and WhatsApp. To enhance the media mix, copies of the print media such as notices and memos were usually scanned and dispatched to enable stakeholders to receive both the hard and soft copies of the same information. As indicated by the SMR at the GIMPA:

The academics will say that admins (administrators) are not doing their work but fortunately now, we have evidence because when we even send hard copies, we complement with email and most of the time, the emails save us because it has the time and date that the information was disseminated. ... They don't read, they don't also go to their mails to find out and all of that. So, it's a major challenge, while they try and accuse the administrators.

Similar to this submission, the SMR at CU mentioned that his institution had quite a robust system for co-ordinating internal communication because management tried as much as possible to send information down to the various employee groups through multiple media after decisions were taken. He, however, expressed worry because some employees failed to access both hard and electronic copies of policy communication. He said:

When memos go out, people who don't go to their offices, especially faculty, will never get the memos. And some don't like checking their mails so in such cases, they are not able to get information.

The PR representatives interviewed in the three universities agreed with the management representatives on the use of multiple communication channels for circulating information. For instance, the PR representative at UG mentioned the use of print, electronic and social media such

as memos, letters, emails, campus radio and television stations as well as twitter (which was being tested at the time of the research). The representative at CU said:

We also use multimedia in terms of videos, voice recorders, posters circulated through WhatsApp and other social media handles including Facebook, Instagram in addition to the internet and our official website and then we use paper for the traditional memos and reports.

In addition, the PR representatives mentioned general meetings, fora, student and employee associations (such as the Student Representative Council and Tertiary Education Workers' Union) as well as convocation (meeting of senior members comprising faculty and senior administrative staff) as some other media through which information was released.

The FGD participants in all three institutions supported some of the submissions made by the SMRs and PR representatives. For instance, they confirmed the use of multiple media for internal communication, though they differed on some of the issues raised. Some participants of the academic staff group at CU, for example, considered memos as their most reliable channel of communication as it remained the “official medium by which official things were communicated” and also gave “backing” to every form of communication. They also indicated their preference for the convergence of channels demonstrated by the dissemination of the memo in both hard and soft copies. As indicated by one participant:

The memos may sometimes come in one of two channels or perhaps even both channels that is the hard copy and then same memo sent through the intranet as an attachment. So, it's still the memo so once you open the intranet and you see a

memo attached then you see it is official and reliable information. So, the memo whether in a soft form or hard form is the most reliable.

Alternatively, other participants were in favour of the intranet which they considered as the fastest and most reliable medium. However, this depended on the availability of internet connectivity.

One participant among the senior staff at UG said:

I think intranet is the fastest and then very reliable. It is the most effective tool we use to communicate. ... I see that as very effective because the moment they are sent if you are connected to the internet, you can view that and begin to take a decision on that.

5.2.1.1 Inconsistencies with Electronic Communication

Whereas the SMRs and some participants appreciated the integration of various media for information dissemination, some participants of the FGDs noted some of the challenges associated with internal communication to include low patronage in intranet communication due to low internet connectivity. According to the senior staff group at CU, for instance, the University's network was usually off, though no arrangements were made to provide staff with data to enable them access the electronic communication via intranet/email. Participants thought they could not be held responsible for these challenges: Some of them intimated:

For the intranet, sometimes the system is off for a while so that one too, we cannot be held for not using it. So, it is difficult to choose even which channel of communication is the most effective. ...

You see the university has also not provided us with data that you can pin me on that because I didn't go on the net, I couldn't use it. It's my personal data so I choose

to be on or not to be on, you get it. And then with the memo, because it doesn't come early you cannot also hold me responsible for that.

While agreeing to a number of the issues raised by the female group, the academic staff group at the CU (academic staff) mentioned additional problems that were associated with the channels of communication including staff addiction to Yahoo and Gmail which resulted in the minimal use of the intranet system. Such internal publics were unconscious of the fact that the university considered the intranet as an official system of communication, so they missed a lot of information communicated by management.

Comparatively, the academic staff at UG desired communication via emails/intranet because "as soon as they send the message, within a few minutes, it would be in the mail." However, they criticised the frequent requests to change passwords which made the medium unattractive. Other participants complained about the difficulty in connecting to the Wi-Fi at certain places which they considered as a gap in internal communication. As one participant explained:

With the Wi-Fi connection, it is not accessible everywhere so it means that if you are at a particular place where there is no data or Wi-Fi you can't access the internet for any information. So, since they want to provide us with Wi-Fi they should try and make it efficient to use so that we can get access to information everywhere.

Additionally, the senior staff group at UG complained about the accessibility of information by some junior workers who were not computer literate. To them, a section of the junior staff could hardly read or write. Such people could not even attempt to access information via emails/intranet. The statement below, from one of the participants, is illustrative:

If everybody is to have access to the internet, like it would be a great medium of communicating effectively to the staff but because it is not everybody who is on it that is the loophole. Like he said, when I come to work, I make sure to check my mail to know what is going on because if you don't go there, you will not know what is happening. ... But let's come to our neighbours who cannot access the information or read. If the message is meant for everybody on campus, how will somebody who cannot access get that information?

This same concern was expressed by the senior staff at GIMPA where a participant explained that: "... for the general staff ... not everybody could read or write so you have to come to their level and explain things to them". For this reason, the majority of participants in the senior staff group at UG recommended the use of telephones for the communication of information via voice calls or SMS to make it accessible to many staff members. In this case, those who could not read would, upon seeing a text message, engage people to read and explain to them. Other participants in this group, however, disagreed, noting that the use of phone calls and SMS could only be employed at the departmental level as it could be cumbersome if adopted by the University. The senior staff at UG also concurred with other groups on the use of letters and memos as a very reliable means of internal communication. A participant who was very much against the use of SMS explained:

You can receive SMS; it can have the name of the person, but it could not necessarily be from the person so for me I hesitate a bit about them. But for the official letter, you may have a signature and stamp and I have seen for myself that it is coming directly from the person so that one I can trust it but for the rest I will hesitate a bit.

In spite of the confidence in hard copy letters, the senior staff participants at UG did not hesitate in enumerating the problems associated with them. Some indicated the undue delay of letters at the university's mail office, while others complained about the delivery of letters to wrong offices. The senior staff at GIMPA noted that the unclear definition of roles hampered the communication of institutional decisions. They were not sure whether it was the registrar, deans or the rector's responsibility to communicate information. As a result, "most at times, decisions taken at the top come to us as rumours". These attitudes delayed actions that were required to advance the work of the university.

While some participants complained about sourcing information via electronic means such as the intranet and website and welcomed print media such as memos and letters as the more reliable and authentic means of communication, the survey respondents generally considered the internet as their most reliable source of information about their respective universities. As illustrated by Table 5.2, more than half of the respondents from CU (56.8%) relied on information sent through the university website, emails or social media; three-quarters of the respondents from UG (75%) also relied on these media, whereas more than three-quarters of the GIMPA respondents (78.8%) depended on the same media. The university website had the highest patronage by students in all three universities with GIMPA recording the highest percentage of students (61.2%), followed by UG (49.5%) and CU (43.2%).

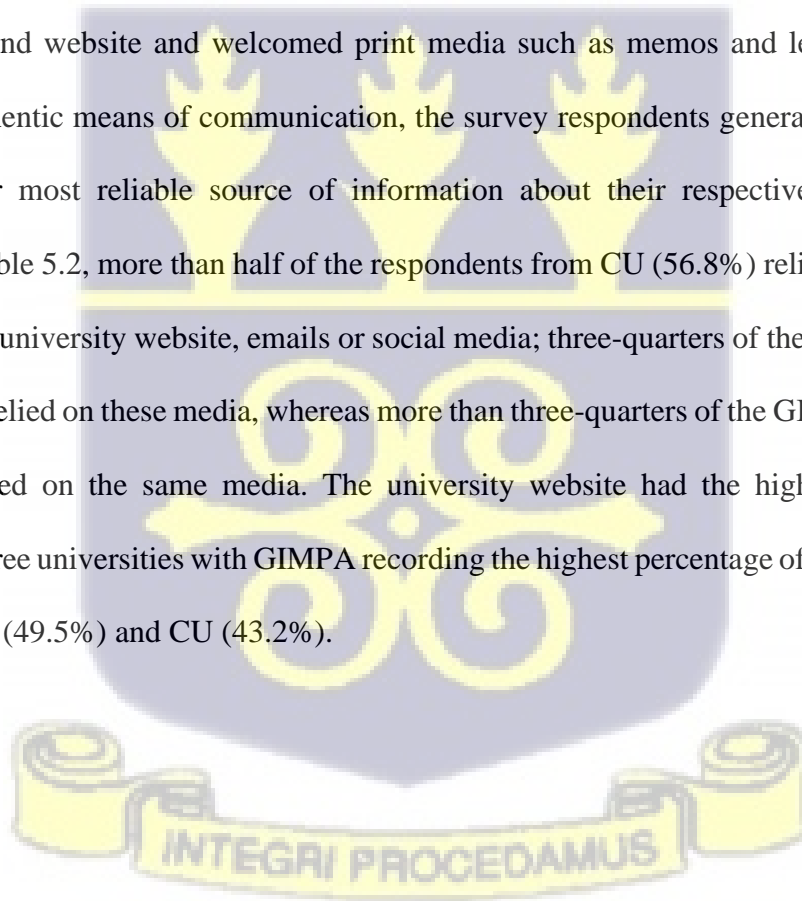


Table 5. 2: Students’ Most Reliable Source of Information by Institution

Students’ most reliable source of information	Name of Institution			Total
	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana	
Notice Boards	24	13	41	89
	29.6%	15.3%	19.7%	23.8%
University Website	35	52	103	179
	43.2%	61.2%	49.5%	47.9%
Emails/Internet	2	8	13	23
	2.5%	9.4%	6.3%	6.1%
Student Handbook	0	1	5	6
	0.0%	1.2%	2.4%	1.6%
University Brochure	2	2	0	4
	2.5%	2.4%	0.0%	1.1%
Newsletters	0	0	2	2
	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	.5%
University Events	3	1	0	4
	3.7%	1.2%	0.0%	1.1%
Television	1	0	0	1
	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	.3%
Social Media	9	7	40	56
	11.1%	8.2%	19.2%	15.0%
Grapevine	0	0	2	2
	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	.5%
No Response	5	1	2	8
	6.2%	1.2%	1.0%	2.1%
Total	81	85	208	374
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Another channel that students considered to be most reliable was notice boards for which CU recorded the highest percentage (29.6%), with UG recording almost a fifth of the sampled students (19.7%), followed by the GIMPA (15.3%). The print media such as the student handbook, university brochure and newsletters did not seem to be popular among the students probably because, these did not report news on current affairs in the institutions.

Table 5. 3: Respondents’ Impression about Internal Communication

Respondents’ Impression about Communication	Name of Institution			Total
	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana	
I get fully informed	3	11	12	26
	3.7%	12.9%	5.8%	7.0%
I get adequately informed	13	23	33	69
	16.0%	27.1%	15.9%	18.4%
I get fairly informed	41	23	104	168
	50.6%	27.1%	50.0%	44.9%
I only get limited information	12	11	36	59
	14.8%	12.9%	17.3%	15.8%
I hardly get informed	9	16	22	47
	11.1%	18.8%	10.6%	12.6%
No Response	3	1	1	5
	3.7%	1.2%	.5%	1.3%
Total	81	85	208	374
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The survey respondents were further requested to indicate their impression about internal communication in their respective universities. Interestingly, the respondents’ perspectives about internal communication in their various universities were different from the FGD participants’ impression as indicated in Table 5.3. At UG, the majority of respondents (71.7%) had a positive impression about internal communication, followed closely by respondents from CU (70.3%) and GIMPA (67.1%). Consequently, GIMPA recorded the highest number of respondents (31.7%) with negative impression, followed by respondents from UG (27.9%) and CU (25.9%).

5.2.2 Timely Release of Information

The various research participants had varied reasons for the untimely release of information. The SMR at CU, for instance, did not hesitate to mention the problems associated with timely

communication. According to them, the deans and heads of departments whom management depended upon to communicate policy decisions to their subordinates sometimes forgot to do so.

This called for a revision in the communication strategy and the use of additional media. He said:

We used to have problems with making policy and its communication with timeliness. But now, we are very careful. If it is something that is going to impact on people, by the time we are closing the meeting or within a week we would have generated the action point and communicated so that nobody will say we have taken many decisions that are impacting them and they are not aware. That's why we brought up the WhatsApp platform to make things better. The *Reporter* itself is quarterly so it is not a timely medium for communicating.

While the PR representatives also confirmed that the timely release of information posed a challenge, they attributed this challenge to the long protocols that information had to pass through before the final release. As explained by the PR representative at CU:

Part of the challenge is sometimes the timely release of information. You want to send something out but, of course, you have to clear with some of your superiors. ...we are more like a rallying point, so you want information from others to do what you want to do but sometimes, it doesn't come as quickly as you want.

The PR representative at GIMPA concurred as she narrated the drudgery associated with sourcing information. She indicated that, once information reached her office, her outfit ensured this was released to their stakeholders on time (on the same day). However, "the thing is how it gets to us. I think it is the procedure or process that takes a longer time".

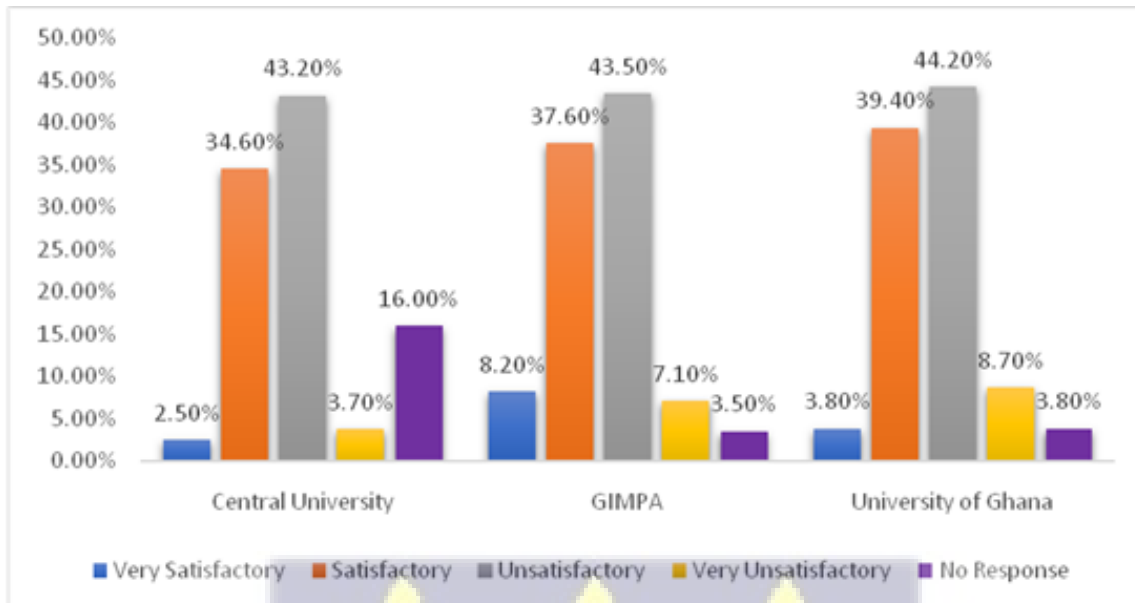
Some FGD participants also mentioned that the challenges associated with internal communication included the untimely communication of information. Information was said to be communicated at very short notices, resulting in the delay of the expected action. While agreeing with a number of the issues raised by the academic staff, the senior staff at CU mentioned additional problems that were associated with the means of communication by confirming the untimely release of memos. The academic staff at the UG backed the discussion on untimely release of information. As one participant put it:

Sometimes, you get an email. The email is a scanned document, and you check, and they want the information (response) the next day. ... You realise that the information has been on somebody's desk for so many years but does not get to you on time.

It was also discovered that in spite of their levels of satisfaction and good impressions about communication in their universities, the survey respondents concurred with the FGD participants on the issue of untimely communication. As illustrated by Chart 5.1, more than half of the respondents in UG (52.9%) and about half from the GIMPA (50.2%) indicated their dissatisfaction with the untimely communication of university policies, procedures and future plans, whereas almost three out every five of the respondents at CU (59.2%) were dissatisfied on the same issue. This gives a general indication that the three institutions fall short when it comes to communicating issues on timely bases.



Figure 5. 1: Level of Satisfaction with the Timely Communication of University Policies



5.2.3 Consistency of Communication and Image Management

Maintaining consistency in communication at the universities was investigated. With regard to verbal communication, it was gathered that the members of senior management were the main communicators in the respective universities. For example, the SMR at CU said:

In principle, the Vice-Chancellor is the main spokesperson. No matter how close the PR is to the VC, the VC is the key spokesperson. When the message comes out and there is trouble, we don't jump on the PR, we jump on the VC.

This spokesperson role was mostly delegated, and efforts were made to ensure that the intended messages were communicated as rightly captured by the PR representative at CU:

Because we are communicating on behalf of the University, the information that has to go out must be clear to the VC to ensure that we are saying the same thing

and it is one voice coming from the university. ... If you crosscheck your facts, you are sure that the information that is going out is in the form we want it to go out.

At GIMPA, the Registrar was the main spokesperson, whereas UG had two key persons: the registrar for management decisions and the director of public affairs in charge of communication to the media and external publics. Sometimes, the PR director also distributed memos/letters written by the registrar via the intranet. It was also gathered that in the case of CU and UG, messages were crafted and vetted by senior management before distribution.

The study also explored the deployment of some institutional visual symbols to determine how consistency was achieved. The findings were categorised under three (3) different sub-themes namely use of logo, use of colour scheme and use of typography. Using (√) for “Yes” and (X) for “No,” Table 5.4 offers a graphical presentation of the findings.

Table 5. 4: Summary of Findings on the Use of Visual Symbols

	Category	CU	GIMPA	UG
Use of Logo				
	Placement of institutional logo on signboards	X	X	X
	Placement of institutional logo on stationery such as letterheads and business cards	√	√	√
	Placement of logo on institutional vehicles	√	X	X
Use of Colour Scheme				
	Consistent use of the right corporate colours for institutional logo	√	√	X
	Consistent use of corporate colours on signboards	X	X	X
	Consistent use of colour scheme on institutional vehicles	X	X	X
	Consistent use of colour scheme on stationery (e.g. letterheads, business cards)	√	√	√
Use of Typography				
	Consistent use of typography on stationery	√	√	√
	Consistent use of typography on signboards	X	X	X
	Consistent use of typography on vehicles	X	X	X

It can be noted that only CU recorded equal numbers of yeses and noes (five out of ten each). Both GIMPA and UG recorded more noes than yeses, with UG recording the higher number of “No” (that is seven out of the ten categories) and GIMPA recording six out of ten. Out of the ten categories, all the institutions recorded “Yes” with regard to the placement of institutional logo on stationery, the consistent use of colour scheme on stationery and the consistent use of typography on stationery, indicating that all the institutions placed much value on ensuring consistency in the use of visual symbols on their stationery.

With regard to the placement of the logo, CU appeared the most consistent. It only recorded inconsistencies on signboards. At the other two institutions, especially UG, the placement of the logo on signboards and vehicles appeared inconsistent. For instance, at UG, some signboards had the institutional logo at the top middle part of the signage, while others had it at the top right side or left side.

Generally, the data revealed common practices among the universities in terms of the appearance of corporate colours on signboards and vehicles. UG appeared the most inconsistent among all the institutions with regard to the use of colour scheme because, it used different shades of yellow/gold and blue in its logo and on signboards and vehicles. In some instances, these colours were blended with red which was not an institutional colour. GIMPA and CU recorded the same number of consistency and inconsistency in their use of colour scheme and the inconsistencies were mostly discovered on their vehicles and signboards. All the three institutions documented the same number of consistency and inconsistency regarding the use of typography. Though all revealed consistency in their use of typography on stationery, they all used different font types and sizes on signboards and vehicles.

The study also crosschecked the findings in Table 5.4 by exploring the views of the interviewees and FGD participants on consistency in the communication of visual symbols. On this, CU and UG seemed to share similar experiences. The SMR at CU declared that the university recently did a major rebranding with respect to its logo and colours to avoid the complication associated with its old logo and corporate colours. He added that, since the university did not have many symbols, much attention had been dedicated to communicating the new logo and colours which were displayed on all visual images including stationery, souvenirs, vehicles, publications and signboards. He said: “we developed a document that guides everything we do; pictures, font sizes and types for various kinds of communication”. The PR representative confirmed the views expressed by the SMR, adding that CU was still evolving from a college to a fully-fledged university. Consequently, their visual symbols might have features of the old logo. However, “we now have a standard representation of all our symbols and colours so any unit that wants to use them consults us to get the correct versions”, he indicated. Additionally, the PR unit ensured that the right logo and colours were used in designing stationery for all units as well as souvenirs. Participants of the academic staff at CU expressed satisfaction with the rebranding exercise. One of them captured their sentiments as follows:

Our new logo is clearly embossed on our signboards, vehicles, university cloth and other souvenirs. If our vehicle is moving in town, it speaks volumes about the image of the school to people who see it. Our rebranding adds a lot to image enhancement in our community.

The group was, however, of the view that the University needed to educate the community very well about the new symbols and colours.

The SMR at UG admitted that there had not been consistency in the use of visual symbols at the University. In view of this, senior management set up a team which was tasked to brand the university. Management lately approved the team's proposal which had a goal to ensure consistency in the use of all the University's visual symbols on signage, vehicles, buildings, publications, souvenirs, stationery and ephemerals. This was confirmed by both the PR representative and the FGD participants at UG. Like her colleague at CU, the UG PR representative indicated that lately departments usually crosschecked with the Public Affairs Directorate to ensure that they were using the right versions of the institutional logo, colour scheme and other visual symbols. Also, the directorate was in charge of designing stationery, souvenirs and other ephemerals. The FGD participants at UG agreed that new signboards bearing "the same colour and the same design" were being mounted. Similar to the academic staff at CU, they appeared satisfied with the rebranding as indicated in the following statement: "if you work here and you are walking somewhere and you see the logos on vehicles passing, it gives you some sense of pride and joy because there is consistency".

Unlike CU and UG, the GIMPA SMR and PR representative had divergent views on the deployment of visual symbols. The SMR claimed that the registrar's office was in charge of providing the specs for designing letterheads and branding vehicles, signage, souvenirs and ephemerals. Contrary to this, the PR representative said the corporate affairs office was responsible for all these. She added:

We are the ones who design the signage, and with the use of all these typographies, logo, colours, we do samples, and it is discussed by management. ... For branding purposes, Corporate Affairs is developing something so that it will cut across board for image building.

It was, therefore, not clear which office was mainly in charge of ensuring consistency in the use of visual symbols at GIMPA. The FGD group at the institute expressed dissatisfaction about the deployment of university symbols. One participant announced:

Traditionally, our colour is blue with a green background. But our colours have not been consistent. Each and every activity that we hold has different colours. We are trying to see all our vehicles are having the logo and the university brand but apart from the bus, which is now very active on the road, no other vehicle has the inscription boldly written on it.

The views of the survey respondents regarding consistency in the use of institutional logo and colours were also sought. For them, the questions were limited to the use of these visual symbols on signboards and institutional vehicles. Similar to the FGD participants at CU and UG, the survey respondents from all the institutions expressed consensus on the consistency in the use of institutional logo on signboards and vehicles. Table 5.5 shows that more than three out of every five students in each institution agreed that there was consistency in the use of institutional logos on departmental signboards, with CU having the highest percentage of students (70.8%).

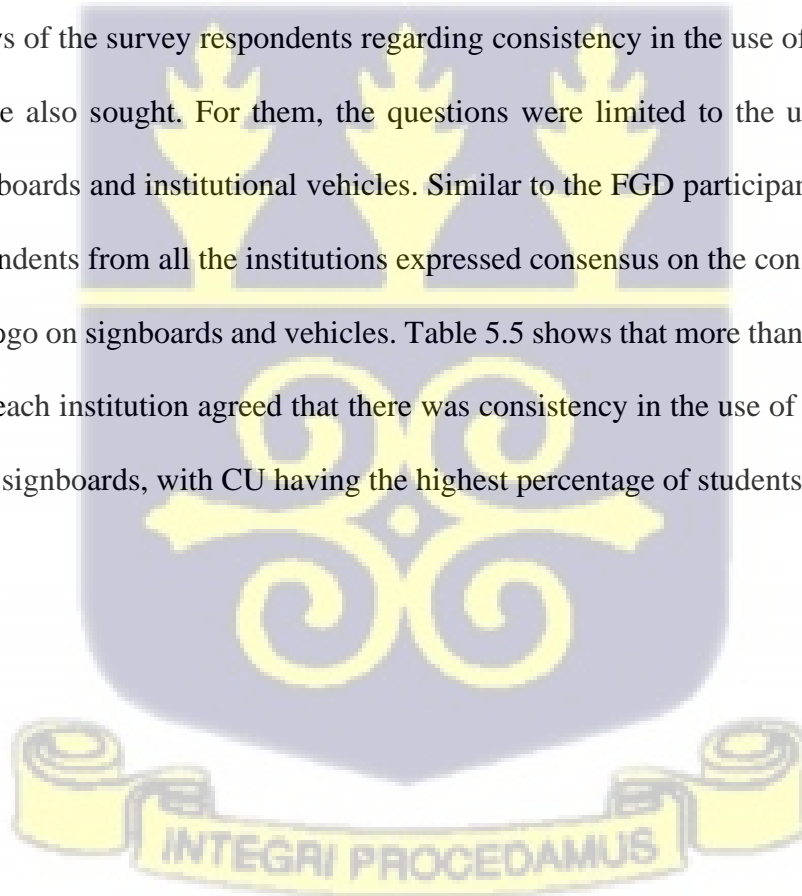


Table 5. 5: Views about the Consistency in Institutional Symbols and Colour Schemes

Name of Institution	Views about the Consistency in the Use of Institutional Logo on Departmental Signboards					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	
Central University	12 14.8%	41 50.6%	13 16.0%	1 1.2%	14 17.3%	81 100.0%
GIMPA	10 11.8%	46 54.1%	23 27.1%	2 2.4%	4 4.7%	85 100.0%
University of Ghana	28 13.5%	114 54.8%	54 26.0%	7 3.4%	5 2.4%	208 100.0%
Total	50 13.4%	201 53.7%	90 24.1%	10 2.7%	23 6.1%	374 100.00%

Name of Institution	Views about Consistency in the Colours Used to Emboss Institutional Vehicles					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	
Central University	11 13.6%	43 53.1%	9 11.1%	1 1.2%	17 21.0%	81 100.0%
GIMPA	6 7.1%	52 61.2%	20 23.5%	4 4.7%	3 3.5%	85 100.0%
University of Ghana	22 10.6%	112 53.8%	57 27.4%	11 5.3%	6 2.9%	208 100.0%
Total	39 10.4%	207 55.3%	86 23.0%	16 4.3%	26 7.0%	374 100.00%

Also, more than three out of every five students indicated that there was consistency in the use of institutional colours on vehicles. In this case, GIMPA recorded the highest percentage of students (68.7%). On the other hand, less than a third of the respondents from GIMPA and UG disagreed that their respective institutions were inconsistent in their use of these visual symbols, whereas CU recorded less than a fifth of the respondents disagreeing with this statement.

As to whether consistency in the use of institutional logo helped to promote institutional image, UG recorded the highest percentage of students (80.8%) saying they agreed, followed by GIMPA (69.4%) and CU (64.2%) as graphically shown in Table 5.6. In respect of how consistency

in the use of institutional symbols contributed to the promotion of institutional image, the survey respondents of CU and UG shared the same views as the FGD participants from the same institutions. The GIMPA respondents, however, differed from the FGD participants at GIMPA who perceived that there were inconsistencies in the communication of visual symbols.

Table 5. 6: Consistency in the Use of Visual Symbols to Promote Institutional Image

Name of Institution	Views about Consistency in Visual Symbols to Promote Institutional Image					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response	
Central University	15	37	14	0	15	81
	18.5%	45.7%	17.3%	0.0%	18.5%	100.0%
GIMPA	15	44	18	5	3	85
	17.6%	51.8%	21.2%	5.9%	3.5%	100.0%
University of Ghana	39	129	27	7	6	208
	18.8%	62.0%	13.0%	3.4%	2.9%	100.0%
Total	69	210	59	12	24	374
	18.4%	56.1%	15.8%	3.2%	6.4%	100.0%

5.3 Stakeholder Integration and Relationship Management

The study further investigated interviewees, participants and respondents' views about stakeholder integration and the management of stakeholder relationships in the three institutions. Data for the section were gathered from the interviews conducted with representatives of senior management and the public relations units, and, reinforced by the FGDs with employees and the survey of students. Generally, all the SMRs interviewed identified their internal stakeholders as students, academic staff and support staff (senior administrators, senior staff, and junior staff) whom they considered as the major stakeholders. The SMRs were also of the view that the senior management in their respective institutions communicated effectively with these internal publics.

5.3.1 Interactivity with Stakeholders

Though some of the interviewees confirmed that two-way communication was necessary for the mutual relationship with the internal stakeholders in the institutions, the findings from the stakeholders themselves did not reveal much to support this claim. Both the SMRs and PR representatives revealed various platforms for interactive communication with the internal stakeholders in their respective institutions. These included management meetings with stakeholders at different levels, heads of departments and staff union leaders. As the PR representative at UG explained:

We have for example convocation. The various employee associations also exist, they communicate management decisions, and the people are able to say what they think, and they have representation at the highest decision-making level, which is Council. I also think that there are departmental meetings, advisory boards, school management committees; I mean there are so many ways in which interactions can occur.

The meetings served as general fora for stakeholders to voice their views. It was also found that some of the SMRs and PR representatives measured the level of interaction by the amount of feedback received. For example, the PR representative at UG mentioned that it was not easy for her unit to track feedback directly from stakeholders. According to her, other units in the University might receive feedback on her unit's communication activities without sharing it. She claimed:

Unfortunately, Public Affairs we don't receive much. It may very well be other units are getting feedback, but they do not give us that information. They just come to ask us we want copies of a publication ...or where can I find it on the website.

And I am thinking that when they ask you and you tell them, they should be able to tell you that I gave it to this partner and because of that we have won this grant, or we have done this. But they don't come. ... The university business is still going on so stakeholders are happy with whatever we are doing that's why they will come to support the University, but we don't get direct feedback from the various units.

Similar to the PR representative mentioned above, the SMR at CU considered the feedback received as a mark of interactive communication. He revealed that the academic staff in his institution had both formal and informal feedback loops and explained the extent to which they could go to make their views known to management. He said:

The formalised feedback is often for faculty members in the university association. They would always want to have meetings with management to have their feedback on information that has been sent and there are also informal sessions where people walk to your office and tell you that they have seen this and that and this is what they are thinking about it. So, there is serious feedback that goes on.

Consistent with the submission by the SMR at the CU, the PR representative at the same university explained that the employees at their university, together with students, had different avenues for interacting with management. He said:

One of the key means by which most people interact with us is to write; some send emails and others show up in person at any of our campuses or the main office to communicate the gaps that they encounter. Assuming we say we are focusing on students' life and the students have a problem, they show up to tell us. ... Students have their own platform for interaction. Then we have support staff and senior

members on another platform, and we have a third platform not for interactions but official notices. And we have another one for everyone that is aside the official emails and all that.

These submissions depicted ideal situations for effective stakeholder relationship. However, the participants of the FGDs did not support the assertions made above. For instance, the senior staff at CU said there were no negotiations with staff on issues. Most often, management used the top-down approach to communicate with employees “because you are there and an issue is brought without staff consultation”. The academic staff at CU confirmed that management drew up some policies without stakeholder engagement. One participant recounted times when he personally made suggestions to management to involve employees in drawing up policies. However, his efforts proved futile. He explained:

There are certain times that I have expressed to management that these things let’s get stakeholders involved but management has its own perception about what that approach implies and the problems it can actually pose for their activities. So yes, there are certain times that some communication goes on but there are certain things I expect that some collaboration and interaction should take place bearing in mind stakeholders and by the time you realise it has been dropped. Management would want to do things knowing that it will be successful which doesn’t help optimise stakeholder collaboration.

Similarly, the participants at GIMPA (senior staff) thought management-employee relationship was not cordial, adding that they would rate management grade one (1) “on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest”. According to them, management was not responsive enough and

that it was the President of their (support staff) union who could “champion” issues for them on certain occasions. One participant in the group summarised his colleagues’ perception thus: “If the issue at stake is in management’s favour, they will collaborate; if not, they won’t do so”.

The academic staff at UG also considered internal stakeholder relationship at their institution to be basically unsatisfactory, though there were varied opinions regarding management at each level. For instance, management-employee relationship at the college level was “a bit alright” because once a while, they met with the provosts and college secretaries for discussions. However, they largely worked in a structured and rigid system where everyone must keep to their own place since the system made it “difficult for people to even come out to air their own views”. They perceived the system to be where professors were seen as top decision makers, and thus, when some faculty members attended certain meetings, they hardly made contributions for fear that they might “be seen to be supporting a so-called controversial view”. Even in instances that senior management consulted them to make decisions, “issues or concerns raised by staff are quashed in a way”. One of the participants summarised the group’s views as follows:

The system builds timidity in a way ... because it is like a chain of command ... and there are a number of levels you go through before reaching management. So, at whatever level, you are careful of whatever you are saying and who is present to the extent that if a message is coming from the Vice-Chancellor or Registrar, who are you a lecturer to talk? Because if you are not careful, your promotion is just at the corner ... so they will target you.

Generally, the FGD participants considered the relationship between management and internal stakeholders to be unfavorable. They were unhappy about the various levels or “chains of command” which delayed the free flow of communication.

5.3.2 Mediated feedback and Related Challenges

One dominant view that came up during the FGDs was the existence of mediated feedback. Participants of the FGDs generally revealed that management-employee communication was mainly through the top-down approach where employees received information through various media (including the heads of department) from top management. It was also discovered that there was hardly any reliable feedback loop through which employees could get back to management. According to the senior staff at CU, there were no suggestion boxes nor any device that would enable employees to register their concerns. The available feedback loop to reach management was through one's head of department (HoD) or a WhatsApp platform managed by the public relations unit. With the information sent through one's HoD, management could choose to respond or not and with regard to the WhatsApp platform, the public relations unit would seek approval before making one's concerns known to management.

The senior staff at UG affirmed that management-employee interactions were mediated mainly through departmental heads. They also identified a number of factors that militated against cordial relationships with their Head of Department (HoD) which made the interactions unattractive. For example, some heads usually listened to some staff at the expense of others. Some participants who were embittered by this attitude explained:

In some of our departments, the management-employee relationship sometimes is not cordial at all because some heads always listen to what an employee has said about someone and they always consider that person to be a very bad person without investigating. By so doing, it brings productivity down. So, I will say that it is not cordial at all. ...

I also think that they should listen to us very well They shouldn't listen to someone who will come and complain about their colleagues. That does not help with good relationship.

Other participants linked management-employee relationship to the trustworthiness of their superiors, with regard to their conditions of service. They complained about their superiors not being honest with them in the sense that they could engage them to work overtime and refuse to offer the right endorsement for their overtime claims. The majority of the participants agreed with the following submission:

For instance, you said I should come Saturday and Sunday and work, it is overtime but when you write it, he won't sign for you. Even the number of hours you are entitled to, he will reduce and give you what he or she wants. So, for the employer to do this to you, me the employee will not be happy, so automatically the relationship will not be cordial.

Not only were the above considered as challenges to management-employee relationship, some participants were also of the view that the rank system in the university did not bode well for interactions between management and employees:

With the categories we have in the university: junior staff, support staff, senior members, those at the top see themselves as equal so we beneath them think that cordial relationship is not there at all. So, in terms of employee and manager relationship, it is very bad because of the ranks we have here.

Consistent with the above view, the academic staff described the levels that their feedback had to pass through under the collegiate system at UG. Per their description, after receiving personal mails, one could not “cross the carpet and jump”. One had to respond to the mail through the Head of Department, the Dean and the Provost which delayed the processing of information. With regard to personal mails, one had to copy all or some of the office holders mentioned above. The worst scenario occurred when recipients ignored the appropriate levels and sent feedback on their personal accord. In such cases, the questions posed are: “why is the letter coming through you? Why didn’t you pass it through the appropriate channels (offices)”? The employees seemed to have various challenges in interacting with their superiors who were considered as representatives of senior management. As a result, the FGD participants were hesitant to commend management-employee relationship in their universities.

The survey respondents from all the three universities confirmed that there were limited feedback loops, adding that, management was not responsive to students’ feedback on university policies. A close examination of Table 5.7 shows that only 32.1% of CU respondents were satisfied with the feedback avenues provided for students’ interaction with management. For the respondents from GIMPA, 44.7% showed satisfaction whereas 42.8% of the respondents from UG indicated satisfaction with the feedback loop. In all cases, about half of the respondents showed dissatisfaction with the available feedback channels in their institutions. The CU recorded 53.1% of respondents; the GIMPA had 51.8%, while the UG revealed 51% of its respondents in this regard. More importantly, respondents gave similar indications with regard to management’s response to their feedback. Only about a third of the respondents from CU (32.1%) and UG (32.2%) showed satisfaction, whereas close to half of the GIMPA respondents (44.7%) indicated satisfaction. On the other hand, about three out of five respondents from UG claimed they were

dissatisfied, while a little more than half of the respondents from CU and GIMPA registered their dissatisfaction.

Table 5.7: Level of Satisfaction with Feedback Loops and Management’s Responsiveness

Satisfaction with feedback loop	Name of Institution			Total
	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana	
Satisfactory	26 32.1%	38 44.7%	96 46.2%	160 42.8%
Unsatisfactory	43 53.1%	44 51.8%	106 51.0%	193 51.6%
No Response	12 14.8%	3 3.5%	6 2.9%	21 5.6%
Total	81 100.0%	85 100.0%	208 100.0%	374 100.0%
Satisfaction with management’s responsiveness				
Satisfactory	26 32.1%	38 44.7%	67 32.2%	131 35.1%
Unsatisfactory	43 53%	43 50.6%	134 64.4%	220 58.9%
No Response	12 14.8%	4 4.7%	7 3.4%	23 6.1%
Total	81 100.0%	85 100%	208 100.0%	374 100.0%

5.3.3 Stakeholder Support

Some observations made by the FGD participants are worth pointing out. There was a general consensus that the implementation of management decisions was highly dependent upon stakeholder interactions. Participants maintained that once management engaged in dialogue with employees, they would consider themselves as part of the implementation plan and work with management to achieve success together. Some group members of the CU senior staff session explained:

What I believe is that if you are at the top, you still have to recognise yourself as one of us. You need to come to our level and let’s talk as families. Coming down

to our level doesn't mean we won't respect you so when you come and you talk to us, because we are at the implementation stage, we listen to whatever that you have to tell us. ... I also think there should be stakeholder discussion. Let's talk about it, let's see how best we can help the whole community so that the implementation of policies or communication will go down well with everybody. It will even help you in the long run because if things are better, you will earn a good name together with us.

Similar to the senior staff, the academic staff at CU believed that management interactions with employees on issues concerning the university would elicit their support to push institutional agenda. Participants explained further that stakeholder interactions could give employees the confidence to become vessels for communicating management decisions. They would also become tools for justifying, defending and protecting such decisions and make operationalisation easier. Without employee engagement, staff would not work wholeheartedly. A participant claimed:

When management does not get a certain level of cooperation and people are not pleased with it, it can create a certain attitude such that when new decisions are now being introduced, people will have some kind of paranoia about such things and it wouldn't help. ... One thing that management needs is support of its followership. But when an approach is used where followership would grumble, it may not elicit that optimum support. People will just lend their minimum support so as not to have issues with anybody.

The senior staff at UG, however recalled one occasion when they had a seminar to discuss some of the decisions by management, especially on the university's strategic plan. They expressed their

appreciation of that seminar and indicated that more of such seminars, to a large degree, would boost employees' morale to work in support of management's agenda.

5.4 Cross-functional Collaboration

The findings of this study did not reveal much about cross-functional collaboration in the universities. Data gathered from the in-depth interviews showed that cross-functional collaboration occurred between the registrar's office, the public relations units and other departments. The SMRs in the universities gave indication that the registrar's office was the hub of communication and all other units tapped information from that office to communicate to the publics. As the SMR at GIMPA said:

The Registrar is the focal person as much as communication is concerned but he has representatives in the various units. Then to complement his efforts, we have the corporate affairs and institutional units.

The SMR at UG also shared this view adding that being the secretary to the university council, the Registrar was mandated to communicate information from management, though the public affairs and human resource offices collaborated with the Registrar to communicate other forms of information. The SMR at CU, however, revealed a slightly different picture. According to him, their system required everybody to keep an open office to enable staff and students to access information from the offices of the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Deans, and Heads of Department to advance their work. All the PR representatives alluded to the statements made by the SMRs in their universities. The PR representative at UG mentioned that beside the Registrar's office, her office also worked in collaboration with the colleges to ensure that they followed the appropriate standards for communication. The PR representative at GIMPA also indicated that in

assisting the Registrar with communication, the public relations office worked with other units as a team. She explained:

We ensure that we are a team, not just from corporate affairs, but we work with the assistant registrars, the deans and the heads of units to ensure that what is going out is exactly what they mean to send out in terms of language and all that.

By this mandate, the units, in designing their communication materials were required to consult the PR unit to ensure the appropriate use of university colours and symbols. The PR representative at UG, therefore, wished there could be a Public Affairs co-ordinator in each college at her institution so that “whatever is done at the centre will be replicated within the colleges at the professional level”.

Based on the finding that the communication of institutional policies cascaded down to schools and departments through Deans and HoDs, the study sought to find out the perceptions of employees about cross-functional collaboration. In this regard, two broad issues emerged from the data gathered from the FGD participants. One of the issues was that there was hardly any collaboration among the departments in the different universities. Only a few participants in senior staff group at UG mentioned that there was a considerable level of collaboration across departments. Some of the group members, however, differed from this belief saying “when in need of information from another department to advance your work, you can go there severally and still not get it”.

The academic staff in the same university, who shared the belief that there was no collaboration among departments, brought up another dimension to the argument. The group members unanimously indicated that the departments were engaged in unhealthy competition. As one of the group members described:

There is unnecessary competition among departments because there's no proper platform to deepen collaboration towards the attainment of the university's strategic goals. ... Some departments do things secretly thinking that other departments will make better progress than them. ... However, the focus should be on interdisciplinary collaborations to advance teaching and research for the attainment of the university's vision.

This group attributed the lack of collaboration to an “ownership culture” that existed in the university. They explained that unlike other universities where all facilities belonged to and were managed by the institution, UG had a culture where departments owned facilities and they charged other departments that wished to use the facilities. “I think that ownership culture is creating tension and competition among departments”, one member declared. The group members believed that the “ownership culture” translated into keeping information to one's chest and so once that culture was discouraged, departments would be ready to collaborate. The senior staff at CU also shared the views expressed by the UG groups. The members gave indication that departmental collaboration was difficult in their institution. One of the participants explained that “sometimes you hear about a policy and then when you try to request, you will be tossed around but policies that will stop your benefits come very quickly”. The academic staff at CU, however, said it was a bit easy to collaborate with the departments that were close to one's office. This same view was shared by the senior staff at GIMPA. Thus, the general perception was that departmental collaboration was not very prominent in the universities.

“Collaboration on friendly basis” recurred in the FGD dataset. This came up strongly during the discussions with the FGDs at UG. The faculty (academic staff) at UG said collaboration was largely on personal grounds. One of the group members captured their views thus:

Naturally, you will have a friend in other departments, maybe on disciplinary grounds or church or any other grounds or bases. You are together based on friendly relations so you can get information if that person has it. You can also initiate a programme and work as a team.

Similar to the faculty group, the senior staff at the same university said it was “very easy to get information from our own colleagues”. This view was also expressed by the senior staff at GIMPA. The UG group members, were however, of the view that their university was very large which naturally made it impossible for staff to know all their fellow employees. As a result, “you shouldn’t have a relationship with a person before you can get information to advance the work of the University”. Taking the perspectives shared by the academic staff at CU and senior staff at GIMPA into consideration, it is realised that sharing information with departments close to one’s office boils down to friendly collaboration.

5.4.1 Open Flow of Communication

From the narratives of the SMRs, it could be deduced that there was open flow of information in the universities. Bureaucracy, according to the CU SMR, was very short and in addition, senior management did not “hide information unless it is very sensitive”. The view about the open flow of information surfaced in the interview with the PR representative at CU. He mentioned that it was easy for any member of staff to share ideas on policies communicated by management. He was, however, quick to add: “that doesn’t guarantee that what you say will be taken but at least, you can easily book an appointment with any of the senior members and share your views”.

The PR representatives at GIMPA and UG also claimed that their universities experienced open flow of information. By this, the representative at GIMPA meant that the information shared

on the institutional intranet generated feedback from the internal stakeholders. On the other hand, the PR representative at UG explained that various employee associations existed to facilitate two-way communication between management and staff. By virtue of their associations, the stakeholders had representation at the highest decision-making level (University Council) and boards and committees including advisory boards and school management committees where their views could be communicated. While the PR representatives appeared convinced that the platforms, they mentioned were good enough for open discussions and two-way communication, these did not seem to be adequate for open communication in the institutions. The submissions by the PR representatives, therefore, contradicted earlier claims by the FGD participants that their systems bred timidity.

The FGD participants expressed divergent views regarding the open flow of communication. For instance, some members of the faculty at CU thought there was free flow of information in their university, whereas others claimed that the free flow of information pertained to the platform of Central University Teachers Association (CUTA). Other members perceived that there were “monologue and dialogue”, meaning that both one-way and two-way flow of communication existed. As one member described: “some of the information is straight from the top (monologue), they don’t expect you to say anything. But for others, you can share your views (dialogue)”. Those who held the latter view believed that being the head, management had the right to take certain decisions without necessarily involving stakeholders or dialoguing with them. However, they should always keep the stakeholders informed about their decisions.

On the other hand, the senior staff at CU considered information to be what they termed as “stampeded”, implying that information was not easily accessible. Information was usually delayed or might not be communicated at all. Consistent with an earlier submission made by the

PR representative from CU, the senior staff added that in matters where staff expressed their views about issues, they could not guarantee acceptance or implementation by management. One of the participants claimed: “we try as much as possible to bring out our ideas but as to whether those ideas will be taken is a different matter”.

On the question of the open communication, one segment of the UG groups (the senior staff) indicated that information flow in their university was not commendable. This was attributed to the fact that certain types of information did not reach staff early enough; other pieces of information were not communicated at all to help staff to follow the university’s agenda effectively. While agreeing with the senior staff, the other segment (the academic staff) likened the university to a human being suffering from a mild stroke, with regard to information flow. One member gave a vivid description as follows:

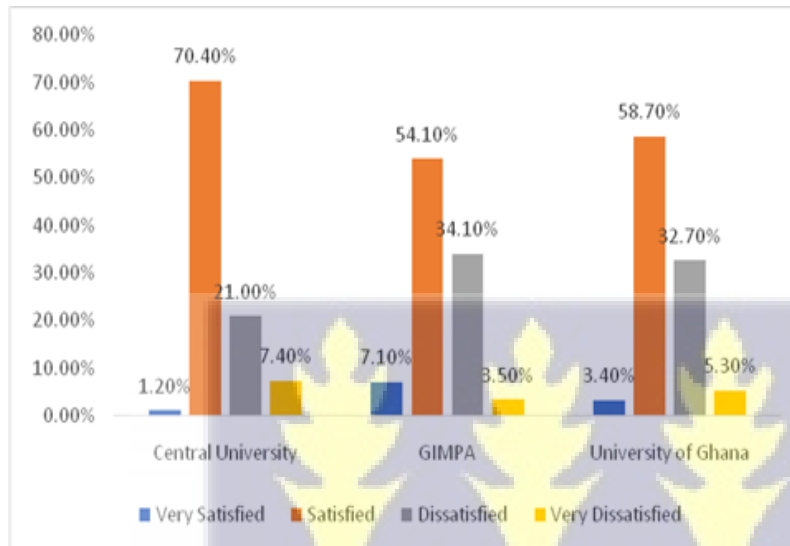
If I were to compare the university to a human being, I would say the university is someone who suffers from a mild stroke. It is not a deep stroke because when you talk about a mild stroke, the blood is still circulating, but is not the best. In order for the person to be so well, just clear all those fat tissues that impinge the blood flow, which is the information flow that I’m talking about. Once we clear untimely communication, hidden agendas and bureaucracies, this school will be better in terms of communication.

Unlike the results from the FGDs, a close examination of the survey data indicates that more than half of the respondents from each university were satisfied with the flow of information in their respective universities. The respondents’ level of satisfaction as indicated in Chart 5.2 highlights their impression about internal communication as shown in Table 5.3. The Central University had the highest percentage of respondents (71.6%) indicating their level of satisfaction

with information flow in their university. More than half of the respondents from UG (62.1%) were satisfied, similar to those from the GIMPA (61.2%).

While this gives a good impression of information flow to the student body in the various institutions, it is worth noting respondents' level of dissatisfaction with information flow as well.

Figure 5.2: Level of Satisfaction with information Flow in the University



Both UG and GIMPA recorded more than a third of respondents (38% and 37.6% respectively) registered their dissatisfaction with information flow in their respective universities, whereas CU had less than a third of its respondents (28.4%) indicating their dissatisfaction. This implies that information flow among the student populace was better at CU than the other two universities. Overall, the survey respondents (students) seemed more satisfied with information flow in the universities than the FGD participants (employees).

5.5 Institutional Strategic Plan

Having explored respondents' and participants' views about stakeholder relationship, the researcher further investigated the internal stakeholders' level of involvement in strategic planning

and communication as an example of integrated communication practice. Specifically, their perceptions about the development and communication of institutional strategy coupled with how these motivated them to strive for the achievement of the long-term goals of their respective institutions were explored.

5.5.1 Development of the Institutional Strategic Plan

The findings revealed that the three institutions seemed to have similar experiences in terms of the development of their respective strategic plans. All the interviewees, both at the management level and PR offices, said committees were set up to develop their institutional strategic plan. The membership of their strategic plan committees included stakeholders drawn from the academic departments, administrative and professional cadre and the external publics. However, none of the teams set up for this task involved representatives from the Public Relations office. The PR representative at UG claimed theirs was a participatory process of hearing, sharing, discussing and reviewing to develop the final template. The PR representative at the CU enumerated the membership of their team, indicating that he did not take part in developing the strategy:

At the time it was done, we had people from all kinds of backgrounds. We had the current Council Chair, members from judiciary, people from health, we had staff, deans and directors, the Registrar and some legal persons as well and then a few people who were not members of the University but were serving on our Council. ... In fact, then the PR wasn't a full directorate, it was just a unit under the registry, so I presume once the Registrar was there, it covered up but the PR wasn't there.

His situation was quite different from the PR representative at UG who was also not a member of the steering committee. However, the committee saw the need to engage her services and dragged her into the strategy development exercise. She recounted her experience:

In fact, there was a steering committee for the strategic plan. I am not a member, even though when they set it up, I was putting the strategic plan together. I would be called occasionally to tell them where I had reached because if you saw that book, I had to look at it, study it and say, look this one will be good; we should put this picture to translate whatever is texted and all that. They were surprised. ... But I wasn't generally a member. I think my colleague realised that the sort of discussion that was going on there, it would be good for me to come in attendance. So sometimes, my colleague who was the secretary and servicing the committee would just invite me. ... When they do it then they give it to me and say make sure you have designed it then and print it. In fact, when they saw the first thing, they liked it because I also looked at other universities and how they had done theirs and I said I want to do something similar for [this] university. So that is the proposal I took to them. I did it on my own non-designed way and I showed them before I started dealing with the printers. I think I attended about three of the committee's meetings

The PR representative from GIMPA could not even recall the composition of the team that developed their institutional strategic plan. On the question of the membership of the team responsible for the strategic plan, she had this to say: "That's going to be a tough question

because I'm not sure. I am not too sure, but I don't think I was involved. ... but there was a team that developed it".

The senior management representative in the same university gave a run-down of the people who handled their strategic plan and the processes the document was taken through for approval to confirm that the PR unit was not included in the development of the strategy. According to him, a sub-committee of the university's academic board, composed of "professors of strategic management", was constituted. The board developed the first draft which was interrogated by a larger body, a constituent of the academic board after which it was submitted to the academic board. He explained:

When it is endorsed by the academic board then it goes to some committees of Council for them to look at before eventually going to Council. There are actually two committees of the Council, in fact, that are responsible for looking at strategic document. That is, Policy and Strategy Committee and then Administration, Legal and Grievance Committee. So, they also have to interrogate before it goes to Council for their approval.

Through all these stages, the GIMPA SMR made no mention of engaging the PR unit. Consequently, the PR personnel were not considered as part of the people with the relevant expertise for developing a strategic plan in all the universities.

5.5.1.1 Input from Internal Stakeholders

With regard to internal stakeholders' involvement in the development of the strategic plans of the various institutions, the findings revealed diverse views from the internal stakeholders sampled for this study. For instance, the senior staff at CU indicated that their category of staff was not involved in developing the strategic plan of their institution. On the question of their contribution to the

development of their strategy, one participant said, “for senior staff, we don’t have a union ... so there was no negotiation and input from us at all”. This indicated that the private university, (CU) run a different system from UG and GIMPA which had Senior Staff Associations. The faculty at CU, however, said their representatives were involved in drafting the strategic plan. However, one member of the group was quick to contend that “I don’t remember that the person representing us ever met with us in any gathering to give us a gist of what was happening”. A cursory glance through the membership of the CU strategic plan committee also revealed that the representatives from academia were members by virtue of their positions as Deans of schools and faculties and not as delegates from the Central University Teachers’ Association (CUTA). This implies that some members’ belief about having a representative on the committee was only conjecture.

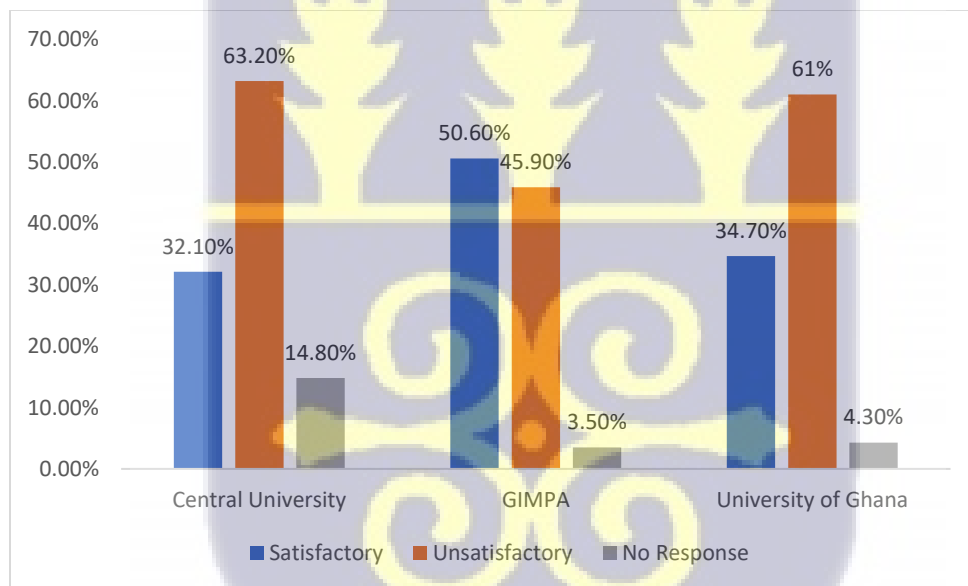
Some participants of the FGDs at UG had their union executives being part of the team that developed the institution’s policies such as the strategic plan, though they claimed their executives did not share any insights with them probably because they (the executives) were not privy to the details involved. With regard to their contribution to developing their institutional strategy, the senior staff from UG agreed with the following submission by one of the participants:

In decision making, management of this school do their own thing. Council takes their decision without involving any employee in their decision making so they formulate their policies like the strategic plan and put it out there. ... When we talk about the unions, they are there but the individual staff in the decision making is nil. Maybe through the unions, sometimes consultations happen. Sometimes too it doesn’t because we have been meeting quarterly and it is not everything our executives tell us.

The senior staff at GIMPA mentioned that their category of staff had very little to do with the development of the institutional strategic plan which confirmed the earlier submission made by the SMR of their university regarding the composition of their strategic planning committee.

As indicated by the survey data in Chart 5.3, opinions varied with regard to management's involvement of students in drawing up the strategic plans of the various institutions. Only GIMPA had about half of its respondents (50.6%) showing satisfaction with management's involvement of students. As many as 127 respondents representing 61% from UG were not satisfied with the level of consultation that took place before the development of their strategic plan.

Figure 5. 3: Management's Involvement of Students in Drawing up Strategic Plan



Similarly, about three out of every five respondents from CU (63.2%) were dissatisfied with negotiations made with students in developing their strategic plan. Thus, unlike those from GIMPA, the respondents from the public and private universities did not seem to be content with

their level of involvement in the development of important policies such as the strategic plan of their institutions.

5.5.2 Communication of Strategic Plan

The study further sought to explore perceptions about the effective communication of institutional strategic plan, in the light of some participants and respondents' claim that there were no adequate negotiations during the development of their respective strategic plans. Generally, varied opinions were expressed about how the various institutions' strategic plans were communicated, though there were a few instances where interviewees and participants had consensus. All the interviewees at both the senior management level and PR offices affirmed that the information on their respective strategic plans was communicated through various channels such as meetings, seminars, fora, abridged copies and the website. This was reinforced by the efforts of office holders including provosts, deans and heads of departments who were tasked to share and sensitise their staff about their institutional strategy.

In spite of the general consensus, each institution had a peculiar way of dealing with the effective communication of its strategy. For instance, the SMR at UG claimed that some employees knew about the strategic plan and used it. However, there was another segment of employees who had no idea about the source of the strategic plan or how to apply it. According to her, "they call it Registrar's strategic plan. So, it's like far away from them. So, we have strategies to deal with such employees".

GIMPA identified a problem with its strategic plan and took steps to develop a new one that could be communicated effectively. As explained by the SMR from the institution:

In 2017, we realised that our strategic plan was a little too verbose; there were too many things in it so it wasn't reader friendly. Going for the fact that we Ghanaians don't like reading, you now go and put a voluminous document in front of them that it is your strategic plan. It will not be user or reader friendly if I may put it. So, what we have tried to do this time around is to make sure that it is very brief and straight to the point, so that when you now state the various things that you are supposed to do at the university level, you give a broad strategic plan, then the schools will now pick it and break it down within the context of the framework of what has been given so that everybody will be involved.

Related to the challenge of dealing with inadequate readership was the problem of illiterate publics who needed to be dealt with to become part of the broader picture of the institutional framework.

The SMR at CU demonstrated how his institution brought such publics on board:

When the strategy was approved by council, we disseminated it to the Heads of Department, the deans and the directors and then we had a whole series of stakeholder meetings and then formed committees within the schools for implementation of the plan. So, at convocation, the VC laid out the key drivers of the plan and the deans and directors picked out relevant parts to implement. I also did the same thing because it is very broad and different strategies must be dealt with by different people. So at least at the senior levels, there is quite an understanding. I'm not sure if the typical junior staff is quite clear where we are headed and that's difficult for most organisations because they don't work at levels to understand the key strategies. What matters to them is to devolve it. So we make

junior staff know how what they are doing is contributing to the bigger picture. You don't explain the whole strategic plan because it is a waste of time.

According to the SMR and PR representative from UG, their institution designated some office holders as 'champions' for the sake of ensuring the effective communication of their strategy to enable all staff to work in sync with the achievement of the institutional goals. These champions included the vice-chancellor (VC), pro-vice chancellor, registrar, provosts, deans, directors and heads of departments. The SMR expressed how the champions worked with emphasis on the strategy she adopted as a champion:

With the strategic plan, when we did the action plan, there were champions. ... If you are a provost, today you have some things that you are supposed to work on, Registrar, VC and so on. So, there are champions so I have tried to do what I'm champion of. ... The VC is expected to be working on his, and also do it his own way and so on and so forth. So how do we communicate? I am open to suggestions, but I believe that if people can listen and react then we are all moving together. The strategy information cannot just be one way and hope that the communication will take place. For me that's how I see it. That's why I budgeted for the interactions.

This interviewee elaborated the interactions she budgeted for based on her knowledge that her university's internal publics had been made aware of their strategic plan but hardly knew what the whole strategy entailed. As she put it:

Last year when we had our Registrar's Conference, they (administrative staff) were aware there was a strategic plan, you know, but they don't know what is inside. For many people, they haven't bothered to go into the content. But they know there is

a strategic plan. ... So, I budgeted for a few interactions with staff and I did one with the professional group, admin professional group. My plan was to then move to another segment this year and then do it little by little. What became absolutely clear is that you cannot ignore the support, especially the support staff. They are the ones who tend to stay there long and have the institutional memory so if you just deal with the heads, the next one will come and they have to start all over again. So always we try when we have the admin professionals and some support staffs. It's a little effort at a time. As somebody said, if we had a lot of money, we could run twenty interactions and everybody would be on the same spot but we are doing it once a year, that is pretty slow but one hopes that it will catch there.

Among the FGD participants, strategy communication did not appear to be a popular thing. Almost all the groups had not had extensive information enough to be abreast with their institutional strategic plan. The academic staff at CU intimated that there was a big gap in communicating the strategic plan of their university because only a few people such as deans and heads of departments were given the abridged copies to share the contents with their staff. Occasionally, members heard dimensions of the strategy at general fora such as convocation and graduation ceremonies. Their experience was similar to that of the senior staff from the same university who only got to know about the strategy during its launch. They added that “afterwards, some of the top executives were given the whole document for people to know what was happening. But for what to do at every point in time, we don't know”. This group considered themselves at the implementation stage, thinking they had the right to know the details of the strategy “because we are on the field working to implement all that you are planning”. However, they were usually left in a limbo. Apparently, the management of CU equipped their heads of units

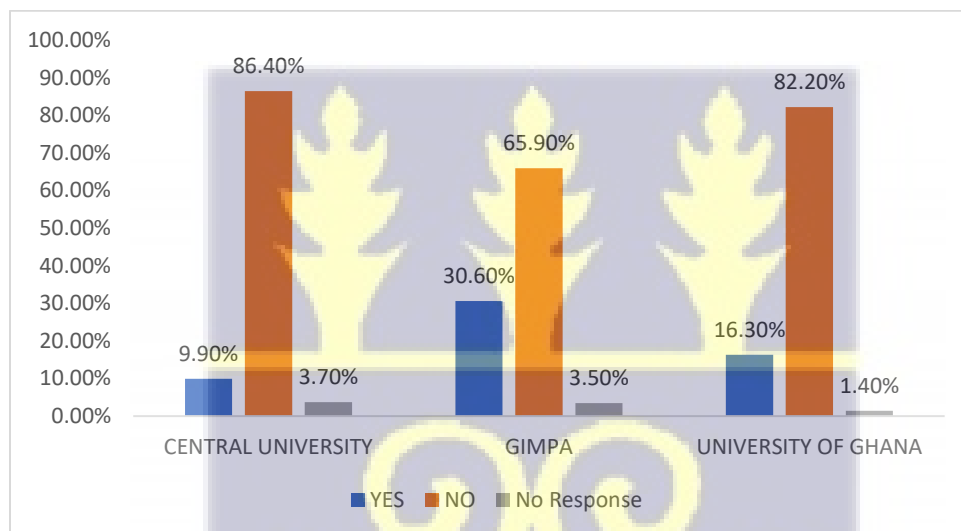
to assist with the communication of the strategy, but their effort did not match what pertained on the ground.

The participants in the senior staff at UG did not express different sentiments from their counterparts at CU. Consistent with claims by the SMR from UG, some group members exhibited their ignorance about the authorship of the strategic plan. The majority of group members believed that it was written by the then vice-chancellor and that they got to know about it from a meeting. Some group members also claimed they read about the strategic plan on their institutional website. Though all group members expected that their heads of department (HoDs), being part of management, would share information that they received about the University's strategy with them, this never happened. They, therefore, had the opinion that their HoDs did not "even care about employees".

The academic staff at UG, however, had a slightly different experience from the senior staff in the same institution, regarding the communication of their institutional strategic plan. Rather than rely solely on their HoDs for information on the institutional strategic plan, the faculty learnt about it through the university's website, convocation (staff meetings) and graduation ceremonies. Not all the members in the faculty group had comprehensive information about the strategy though. Some mentioned that one had to search thoroughly to find it on the university website and also the university did not provide frequent information on the strategic plan. The senior staff at GIMPA expressed a rather apathetic feeling. The members confirmed that the institutional strategic plan had been communicated to them through emails but it did not really matter to them. One member explained: "... the strategic plan which is the direction of the institute is there, but nobody cares about it ... because nothing motivates you to read it".

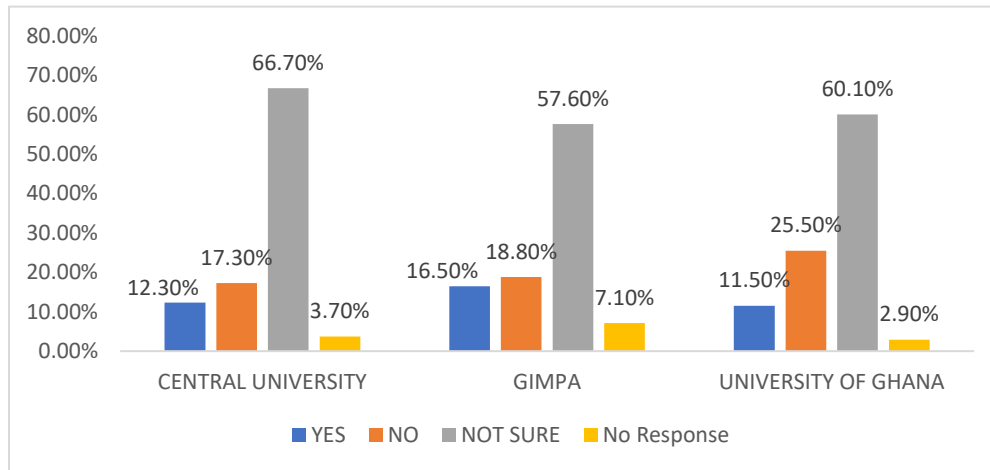
The perceptions of the survey respondents were worse than those expressed by the FGD participants. Asked about their awareness of the strategic plan of their respective universities, the majority of respondents indicated that they were not aware of their institutional strategy. As shown in Chart 5.4, more than four out of every five respondents at CU and UG (86.4% and 82.2% respectively) said they were unaware whereas 65.9% from GIMPA said they were ignorant about their institutional strategic plan. Of those who said they were aware, GIMPA recorded the highest percentage (30.6%).

Figure 5. 4: Awareness of the University’s Strategic Plan



The data gathered on the accessibility of the strategic plan confirmed the claims by respondents who said they were ignorant about the strategy. In each institution more than half of the respondents said they were ‘Not sure’ if their institutional strategic plan was readily accessible. Together with those who said ‘No,’ each institution recorded more than three-quarters of respondents who were uncertain about the accessibility of their strategic plan. Chart 5.5 illustrates the distribution of responses.

Figure 5. 5: Accessibility of the Institutional Strategic Plan



Similar to the FGD participants, the respondents also indicated that they hardly received frequent messages on the strategic plan of their universities. As many as 178 (out of the 230) respondents from UG rarely received information or did not receive information at all about the strategic plan. The Central University recorded 68 out of 81 respondents in the same situation. Even GIMPA which recorded the least had 57 out of the 85 respondents admitting this fact. Table 5.8 provides a graphic distribution of responses.

Table 5. 8: Frequency of Information Received on Strategic Plan

Frequency of information on strategic plan	Name of Institution			Total
	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana	
Very Often	1	8	9	18
	1.2%	9.4%	4.3%	4.8%
Often	9	14	17	40
	11.1%	16.5%	8.2%	10.7%
Rarely	40	39	98	177
	49.4%	45.9%	47.1%	47.3%
Not at all	28	18	81	127
	34.6%	21.2%	38.9%	34.0%
No Response	3	6	3	12
	3.7%	7.1%	1.4%	3.2%
Total	81	85	208	374
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Thus, as far as the communication of institutional strategic plan was concerned, the SMRs and PR representatives were not on the same page with the internal stakeholders who participated in this study. The results from the FGDs and survey confirm that the communication of institutional strategic plan was not done to the expectation of the internal stakeholders drawn from each university.

5.5.3 Mission and Vision Campaign

One would assume that the PR units in the various institutions would develop strategies to magnify the communication of their institutional strategy via mission and vision campaigns. However, some of the PR representatives mentioned that similar to the strategy communication, mission and vision campaign was a shared responsibility in their institutions. On the question of the strategies employed for mission and vision campaign, the PR representative from GIMPA did not have much to say. She only indicated that the PR and Human Resource (HR) units were in charge of communicating their institutional mission and vision:

Actually, let me be honest with you. It is not Corporate Affairs alone. It is HR. HR will send it out to staff. This is important that all staff have it on the tip of their fingers. ... Corporate Affairs will sort of disseminate it to the other publics.

The PR representative of UG expressed mixed sentiments when the same question was put to her. She maintained that mission and vision campaign should not be the sole responsibility of the PR Unit. Other offices should play a central role in communicating these values, especially because some units had developed their own strategic plans to reflect that of the university. More importantly, senior management should be at the centre of the campaign as they had the opportunity to interact with different publics. The quote below is illustrative:

I think that if you look at this question, it may not just be the role of corporate communications department or in this university, public affairs. This is four years since we started the vision. All officials are required to be involved in sharing and also communicating the university's mission and vision, but most colleges also have their colleges' strategic plans, and it translates from what the corporate vision and mission is. I do not think it is one department or directorate that has to do that. ... I think that above all or beyond even what people think, management should be the foremost communicator of our vision and mission because they have the opportunity to interact with people even at the international level and they also have the means to be able to attract things to the institution by the way they publicise our vision and mission.

This did not, however, imply that the PR unit would not be part of the publicity because "what public affairs will do, will be to ensure that in all our communication materials, ... we have the vision and mission of the university to serve as visible reminders". Such communication materials included brochures, calendars and diaries. According to her, one of such communication materials which could be circulated throughout the University was a mission and vision plaque. Unfortunately, this agenda could not be implemented extensively not only because of budgetary constraints, but also because it was not considered as a priority. She buttressed her point with the following explanation:

When we launched the strategic plan, we had a budget where we could do a mission and vision plaque so that we have it in all offices and lecture halls. We are not successful in getting approval for that because at the time senior management saw that it should rest with the various units of the university to do it so that they can

take it from their budget, so I think it's a question of budget. ... It is also because the institution has priority areas, and our priority is research and teaching. Though it is important to inform our stakeholders and our publics about us, I think on a scale where monies are needed for research and teaching, using monies to be producing plaques ... will be something else.

The PR representative at CU shared some of the sentiments of his counterpart at UG in respect of embossing the mission and vision in publications such as graduation brochures, annual reports and other related communication materials. The point of departure, however, was that the CU PR unit succeeded in circulating the mission and vision plaque across the university because “we were trying to make people understand what we stand for, so we did plaques. You will see it in every office”. The CU PR representative, unlike his colleague at UG, appeared to have support from senior management to carry out this agenda. This was reflected in a statement by the SMR at CU: “... in most of the offices including reception and admissions, we have done a plaque out of the mission and vision statements and framed it as a reminder to people”.

Another finding worth reporting is the development of strategic plans by various sections of the university in tandem with the main university strategy. This practice was a characteristic of UG and GIMPA. As indicated earlier, the UG PR mentioned that the colleges in her university also had their own strategic plans which “translate from what the corporate vision and mission is”. The GIMPA SMR also intimated that arrangements had been made for schools to “get their own strategic plan within the framework of what has been provided by the central administration”. This practice could either boost or hamper integration depending on the extent of co-ordination or monitoring.

Asked about the awareness of their institutional mission and vision, the FGD participants could not confidently indicate their level of knowledge, though members in each group (especially those from CU and UG) could recite phrases from their mission and vision. The participants could not recall any vision or mission campaigns in their institutions, although they heard about the mission and vision at meetings or read them at their institutional websites. The faculty at UG said the mission and vision were not so visible on their institutional website and so one had to navigate to reach them. Interestingly, some of the UG faculty had seen a few vision and mission plaques in some lecture halls, whereas the participants from CU did not make mention of any vision or mission plaques at all. These two observations were contrary to claims made by the PR representatives in the two institutions. Additionally, the participants from UG and CU indicated that their mission and vision were clear and straightforward. However, the academic staff at CU intimated that there was no appraisal of the University's strategic plan so the stakeholders "do not get a full gauge about how far the University was going". The senior staff at GIMPA, however, said "on the website, we still have two visions and two missions". Therefore, it was not clear to them which their institution was working with.

The UG participants expressed some perspectives on the communication of their institutional mission and vision which are worth mentioning. According to the senior staff, what pertained on the ground was contrary to the mission projected by the University. That is, the University's intension to create an enabling environment for national and global development through cutting-edge research and high-quality teaching and learning, was misleading because usually, some of the incentives or logistics required for high quality teaching and learning were either malfunctioning or unavailable. They cited examples of malfunctioning public address systems or inadequate seats in some lecture halls. Even if requests were made for replacement or

installation, it would take a long time to respond, implying that teaching and learning would not occur in an enabling environment as indicated in the University's mission. Additionally, this situation would not promote the world-class status the university intended to achieve. One of them explained:

We can't say we are a world-class university when students stand two and more hours to learn. Some don't get seats because chairs are broken. When equipment break down, it takes a long time before those things are reinstalled.

In agreement with the claims by the senior staff, the faculty group at UG indicated that "there is a statement somewhere saying one thing but, on the ground, they are doing different things. So, a lot of people are not concerned about the University mission/vision". They maintained that intermittent internet access, partial allocation of research funds and the bureaucracy one had to go through to receive or be denied research funding were just examples of some of the bottlenecks in ensuring an enabling environment for intensive research. One participant described his experience:

Talking about enabling environment, when you want to source funds to do research, look at the bureaucracy that they take you through. I submitted an abstract to attend a conference and it was passed. When I went to see the accounts section, they said because it was approved by the Office for Research, Innovation and Development (ORID), I needed an appointment to see the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for ORID. I went to book the appointment but was never called, so why do you talk about creating an enabling environment?

The participants perceived that situation such as this might not motivate faculty to engage in research and as a consequence of this, UG would have difficulty in attaining its vision of becoming “a world-class research-intensive university over the next decade”.

Table 5.9 illustrates the survey respondents’ perspectives on the awareness of their institutional mission and vision. Interestingly, almost the same percentage of respondents who said they were aware of their institutional mission affirmed their awareness of the vision. Of the three universities, only CU had more students indicating their awareness of their mission (79%) and vision (80.2%). GIMPA recorded an equal percentage of students (47.1%) indicating that they were either aware or unaware of their institutional mission. With regard to their vision, almost half of the respondents (49.4%) were unaware, whereas 44.7% affirmed their awareness. The University of Ghana was the only institution which recorded the largest percentage of students indicating their unawareness of both their institutional mission (67.8%) and vision (60.1%).

The data in Table 5.9 illuminates the submissions made by the PR representatives at CU and UG regarding the circulation of mission and vision plaques. Follow-up questions revealed that the students at CU became aware of the mission and vision due to the plaques distributed across lecture halls and offices in the institution, as indicated by the SMR and PR representative.

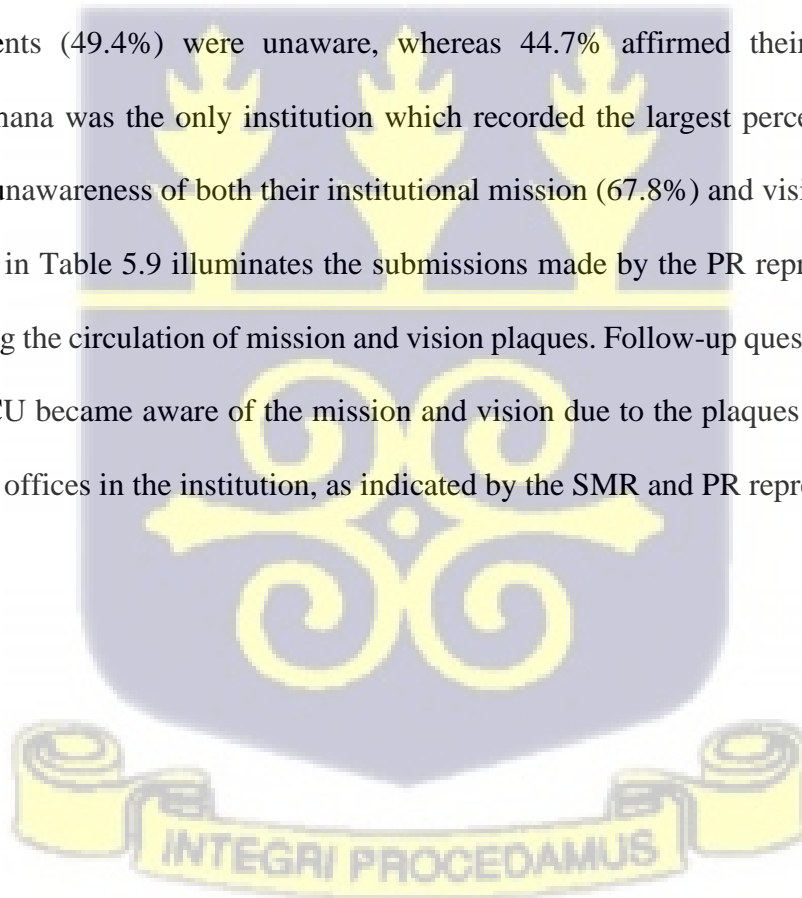


Table 5. 9: Awareness about University’s Mission & Vision

Name of Institution	Are you aware of the University's mission?			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Central University	64 79.0%	14 17.3%	3 3.7%	81 100.0%
GIMPA	40 47.1%	40 47.1%	5 5.9%	85 100.0%
University of Ghana	65 31.3%	141 67.8%	2 1.0%	208 100.0%
Total	169 45.2%	195 52.1%	10 2.7%	374 100.0%

Name of Institution	Are you aware of the University's vision?			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Central University	65 80.2%	13 16.0%	3 3.7%	81 100.0%
GIMPA	38 44.7%	42 49.4%	5 5.9%	85 100.0%
University of Ghana	77 37.0%	125 60.1%	6 2.9%	208 100.0%
Total	180 48.1%	180 48.1%	14 3.7%	374 100.0%

In comparison, the UG and GIMPA students indicated that they read about their mission or vision on their websites. Unlike the CU respondents, they did not have mission plaques in all lecture halls and offices, which explains why the majority of the UG respondents were unaware of the institutional mission and vision. Both the FGD and survey data did not record much on mission or vision campaigns. The negative consequence of this might reflect in the achievement of institutional mission and vision.

5.5.4 Achievement of Strategic Goals

The study further sought to find out the extent to which strategic goals had been achieved based on the communication of institutional strategy. At CU, it was gathered that the University’s core intent to raise transformational leaders was fully in force. Also, the administrative cadre was

working hard to achieve the University's objective of becoming a Christian university. Again, the institution's objective to move the majority of its academic programmes to its Miotso Campus had been realised. Additionally, the objective of getting all faculty to pursue terminal degrees (PhD) was fully in progress. The University had a monitoring and evaluation team responsible for checking the performance of the institution regarding the achievement of its goals.

The situations at GIMPA and UG were quite different. The SMR at GIMPA confessed that no evaluation had been conducted scientifically to assess the performance of the strategic plan: "there is no periodical review to see how we are doing. There is nothing scientific but unscientifically, we can say things are moving on well". The SMR at UG equally lamented about the inability to track the achievement of strategic goals but her claim was based on different reasons:

It is obvious that it is not just having the plan, but you have to know it; you have to walk it and implement it and it is the implementation that you need people (employees) to buy into. ... But it looks like people are not catching it because the most effective way of implementing the plan is to make it your personal record. So, if you don't see your role, you will just be watching the University. People are still learning to link their action plans to the strategic plan, and I have seen that each college has tried to carve out what it would do using the strategic plan. But how do we ensure that the messenger is in, the teachers are in... There's no reward, neither is there any punishment, and so people can just get away with it and then when they are coming for promotion, they bring you their four-year work on their action plans. It's a bit useless ... some people have no idea what we are doing.

Though the SMR indicated that the University's Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO) was in charge of tracking and evaluating the achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs), IRPO's report was usually based on achievements at the college level. The SMR, therefore, seemed disappointed by the slow pace at which employees were linking their daily routine to the achievement of the institution's strategic goals. The PR representative shared some of the sentiments expressed by the SMR. In her opinion, employees' attitudes and outputs did not measure up to what had been communicated about the strategic plan. This made it difficult to evaluate the achievement of the University's strategic goals.

The study further investigated how the communication of strategic plan, mission and vision had motivated FGD participants and survey respondents to contribute to the realisation of their institutional strategic goals. Though the FGD participants perceived that the communication of their institutional strategic plan, together with the mission and vision, was poorly done, they all indicated their contributions to the achievement of institutional goals, except for the senior staff at GIMPA who reiterated that they were not motivated by their institution to make any contributions towards the achievement of the institutional strategic goals. Asked about the kind of motivation they expected, they mentioned "cash".

On their contributions towards the achievement of institutional goals, both the academic and senior staff at CU said they engaged in activities that would boost student numbers, as this was perceived as the ultimate goal the University intended to achieve. Their perspective did not directly reflect the University's vision, which is "to raise transformational leaders for our world" though. On the one hand, the academic staff claimed that there was a marketing committee composed of faculty who mounted stands at vantage places to announce that "on-the-spot admission was going on. All this was part of faculty members' commitment to ensuring the

achievement of a strategic goal”. The group, however, complained about the lack of a monitoring and evaluation report which could help them to map out their future strategies. On the other hand, the senior staff had an underlying reason why they would “go all out to increase student numbers”. According to them, increase in enrolment meant an opportunity of “getting a jump in salary or certain allowances”.

At UG, the participants in the two different groups mentioned how they contributed towards the achievement of the University’s strategic goals. Some members among the senior staff said they tried to be punctual at work and avoided absenteeism in order to work diligently to help the University to achieve its goals. Others actually stated the specific activities they performed. For example, one member said that as a technician, his contribution towards creating “an enabling environment” for “high quality teaching and learning” was to ensure that the microphones in the lecture halls worked perfectly for lectures. Another participant said his work in the University Library enabled him to contribute to the University’s vision of attaining the world-class research-intensive status in that he directed students and faculty who visited the Library to the sections where they could find relevant research materials.

Similar to the senior staff, the UG academic staff enumerated some of the activities they performed. Some claimed that they created an enabling environment for teaching and research by engaging in quality teaching, maintaining good lecturer-student relationships and supervising student research. Others said they published their research findings in high-impact journals and made presentations at both local and international conferences which contributed to the attainment of the University’s vision. However, similar to the female group at CU, they had an underlying agenda for engaging in intensive research. The group members expressed a general consensus about one participant’s submission:

At our own level, we are trying to do some publications in reputable journals and that adds to the university's ranking as far as research productivity is concerned. So even though, I have not received any funding, at least, I have done a couple of publications on my own which contributes to the university's vision.... The paradox of it is that even if you are not being rewarded, you are supposed to publish in order to get promoted. When it comes to that, you have no options. Whether you like it or not, you have to do it if you really want to survive in the system.

The above statement illuminates the earlier assertion by the SMR at UG regarding employees linking their action plans to promotion.

Table 5.10 summarily describes the survey respondents' understanding of the messages communicated about their university's strategic plan and their contributions towards the achievement of strategic goals. The most interesting aspect of the data is that for all the institutions, the percentages of respondents who agreed that they understood the messages communicated were close to those who said the communication helped them to contribute to the achievement of strategic goals. For instance, GIMPA recorded 63.5% of students who claimed they understood the messages communicated about their strategic plan and 62.4% of those who said the communication helped them to contribute to the achievement of their strategic goals, whereas at UG 27% and 29.9% indicated their understanding and contribution respectively. Similarly, those who said they did not understand the messages communicated indicated that the communication did not help them to contribute to the achievement of strategic goals. For example, UG recorded 69.7% of students who misunderstood the messages communicated about the strategic plan and 67.8% of those who thought the communication did not help them to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals.

Table 5. 10: Student Understanding of Messages about Strategic Plan and Contribution to the Achievement of Strategic Goals

	Name of Institution			Total
	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana	
The messages I receive about the university's strategic plan are well understood				
Strongly Agree	5	9	7	21
	6.2%	10.6%	3.4%	5.6%
Agree	28	45	49	122
	34.6%	52.9%	23.6%	32.6%
Disagree	33	20	108	161
	40.7%	23.5%	51.9%	43.0%
Strongly Disagree	10	7	37	54
	12.3%	8.2%	17.8%	14.4%
No Response	5	4	7	16
	6.2%	4.7%	3.4%	4.3%
Total	81 100.0%	85 100.0%	208 100.0%	374 100.0%
The messages I receive about the university's strategic plan help me to contribute to the achievement of strategic goals				
Strongly Agree	9	9	13	27
	11.1%	10.6%	6.3%	7.2%
Agree	22	44	49	133
	27.2%	51.8%	23.6%	35.6%
Disagree	40	23	102	147
	49.4%	27.1%	49.0%	39.3%
Strongly Disagree	5	6	39	54
	6.2%	7.1%	18.8%	14.4%
No Response	5	3	5	13
	6.2%	3.5%	2.4%	3.5%
Total	81 100.0%	85 100.0%	208 100.0%	374 100.0%

The data from CU shows that more than half (53%) of the respondents misunderstood the messages, whereas a close percentage (55.6%) said the communication did not help them to contribute to the achievement of strategic goals.

Together, these results provide important insights into the claims made by the PR representatives and FGD participants. For example, the findings from CU did not reflect the claims made by the PR representative that by saturating their lecture halls and offices with the institutional mission and vision the intended communication would be achieved. The CU survey respondents

proved that mission and vision plaques were not enough to provide understanding of institutional strategic plan. The data from UG respondents also confirmed the FGD participants' claims that the communication of their institutional strategic plan had not been well done as more than three out of five respondents said they did not understand what was communicated.

5.6 The Implementation of IC

The study investigated the placement of PR practitioners at the management table and how this influenced the roles they played in implementing the concept. In addition, management's support for IC, based on their understanding of the concept was explored. The following sections present the data gathered on these aspects of the study.

5.6.1 Placement and Roles of the Communication Expert

The data revealed that all the three institutions had heads for their PR units. Of the three, only the Director of Public Affairs at UG had a master's degree in Communication Studies and professional training in Public Relations. The Head of the Corporate Affairs Directorate at GIMPA had a master's degree in Business Administration, whereas the Head of Corporate Affairs and PR Directorate at CU had a master's degree in Organisation Development. On the question of whether the Heads/Directors of PR were part of senior management (or the dominant coalition) in their respective institutions, the representative at GIMPA claimed she was part of senior management. She explained that: "I don't even report to the Registrar; I report directly to the Rector. ... I also sit as a non-voting member on the academic board and on the executive management as a voting member".

However, her statement did not conform to the SMR's claim that the Corporate Affairs Director reported directly to the Registrar "who was the focal person as much as communication

was concerned. ... So, Corporate Affairs works with the external people on behalf of the registrar". The Registrar, according to the SMR, was a member of senior management whereas the corporate affairs director was not.

Similarly, the responses from the PR representatives from UG and CU were at variance with the GIMPA representative's submission. Both representatives indicated that the PR Director was not part of the senior management in their respective institutions. The CU representative said in the structure of their institution, senior management was composed of only the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Deans. The PR Director was a senior member but not part of the dominant coalition, though he was involved in some of the decisions taken by senior management because "sometimes top management seeks my opinions on decisions they want to take since this has implications on our image and brand". Additionally, he served on certain committees and sub-committees. His statements were confirmed by the SMR at CU who said that the PR Director was not at the level of director; he was "an in-charge", and as a consequence of the level of seniority, he was not part of senior management meetings but he got adequate briefing to be able to do his job well. He added that "for a PR person to be part of top management, the person has to get to the registrar position" because by the structure of the University, "the PR Director is not a member of top management".

Similar to the PR representative at CU, the one at UG said their dominant coalition did not include the head of the PR unit. She thoroughly explained that:

The way the University structure is, it is the Registrar who is a member of senior management but I'm not a member. For me, it is not a good thing for you to be on the same committee or platform with your supervisor. ... I prefer to receive the

instructions as a dutiful public servant so that if the Registrar, my boss, has something which concerns my unit, I expect my boss to tell me to do it.

Her statement was reaffirmed by the SMR at UG who indicated that the Registrar was part of senior management and so she had the mandate to communicate management decisions. However, the Director of Public Affairs was sometimes assigned to communicate the Registrar's circular on the University's webpage.

On the question of autonomy, the GIMPA representative said she enjoyed "55% autonomy," which she explained to mean that her directorate was one of the only two directorates that reported directly to the Rector of the institute. She also took instructions directly from the Rector and sometimes, from the Registrar. "So, I have a lot of power. ... As to whether I use it is what I don't know, but I don't witness too many meddlesome situations, you know", she added. Her claim was, however, rebutted by the SMR who maintained that the Registrar, being the main communicator, wielded autonomy because the message he crafted was not vetted by any officer provided he was communicating in the interest of the Institute. However, the administrative staff representing the Registrar in other sections of the Institute, including the Director of Corporate Affairs, sometimes referred their messages to the Registrar for vetting.

Unlike the GIMPA representative, the CU PR representative gave indication that he was not autonomous in his communication efforts. Though the directorate developed many communication materials, information circulated to the internal and external publics had to be approved by the Registrar or the Vice-chancellor. This was confirmed by the SMR who said:

The PR reports to me and they have no gaps in briefing. They do the message design and graphics all by themselves, but they will bring it up for discussions and then we will work it out. When it comes to media scheduling, they are basically in charge

of it. We let them decide, based on their understanding of the landscape, how media may be scheduled. Whether they are going print or electronic, they are completely autonomous in that regard. But we ensure that the moment we have information which must be put out, we work together in this kind of thing.

The CU SMR reiterated that the PR Director was mandated to develop some communication materials and handle media relations in order to avoid reducing him to “the roles of a messenger such as taking protocols and passports as was characteristic of certain organisations”. He also added that though the PR Director helped with the design of messages for the Vice-chancellor (VC), he could not own such messages because “no matter how close the PR is to the VC, the VC is the key spokesperson”.

Similar to the PR representative at CU, the PR representative at UG said the Director of Public Affairs did not wield autonomy. She explained:

If you are part of the University, you can't be autonomous. Whatever message I craft or even if I want to communicate to both internal and external publics, I need to first bounce it off my superiors so I cannot be autonomous in communicating. Autonomy will come when for example, you have received information from your superior saying this is coming from outside of the University, it is ok for you to communicate or you see something which is normal but not sensitive information. But communicating about the University, you cannot achieve that autonomy.

She further indicated that for collegial purposes, one had to share information with senior management before communicating such information to the University's publics so that such communication would not come as a surprise to them. Additionally, senior management might

want to add information from meeting decisions which the PR unit might not be privy to. “Therefore, when you are communicating on behalf of an institution, it has to be co-ordinated. You can’t just do it alone because once it goes out, you can’t erase it”, she said.

The SMR at UG endorsed this claim, adding that “we don’t have any such autonomous administration. I mean we expect that they (Public Affairs) will give the advice for us and we approve and then run with it”. In addition, the Public Affairs Director had authorisation to prepare letters for the Registrar’s signature, react to publications in the media, design general notices and communicate information from her office and from management. “So, there’s one that she develops the content and there is one that she’s the medium for communication”, she indicated. The above discussion suggests that all the PR directors were not completely autonomous.

It was also gathered that the heads of the PR units had budgetary constraints in handling their communication duties. This was evident especially in the submissions by the interviewees at UG and CU. The PR representative at UG reported about the lack of budget for the mission and vision plaques she planned for. Additionally, a university that aspired to achieve a world-class research-intensive agenda would be more concerned with cutting-edge research than allocating budgets to publicity materials such as plaques, banners and signage. The SMR at UG also gave indication that her office operated within their budget allocation, and it was expected that every other office would do the same. These interviewees’ perceptions were buttressed by the CU PR representative who said, “the nice ideas usually get stuck when you don’t have the funds to push them”. The SMR at his institution confirmed his claim saying:

There always will be budgetary constraints because they (PR) can’t get everything they want. If you leave them, they will blow the budget on advertising, but we really don’t have that kind of money.

It seemed, therefore, that both the PR representatives and SMRs were aware that communication efforts in the institutions were affected by budgetary constraints.

5.6.2 Availability of Communication Strategy

It was found that apart from CU, none of the other institutions had a communication strategy that served as the blueprint for the IC process. When asked whether there was a communication strategy to guide the IC process, the PR representative at CU had this to say:

There is a document which is on marketing and communication for the University; it has a leaning on the main strategic document which is guiding us for the next ten years. ... It was developed by a team led by the head of the Marketing Department.

The document, according to him, “mentions social media as one of the institution’s key channels of communication as well as co-ordination and consistency in communication”. The document was not circulated widely to the entire university, though the Corporate Affairs and PR Directorate used it as a guide. On this issue, the SMR’s statement was at variance with the submission by the PR representative. The SMR gave the indication that the communication strategy would be developed by the PR unit in consultation with senior management, implying that no such document existed.

The GIMPA PR representative said a team composed of a lecturer, representatives of the Corporate Affairs office, an external consultant and students were developing a communication strategy which would guide their IC efforts. Asked about the details of the document, she said the strategy would have a mission statement and a vision as well as objectives. However, the SMR at GIMPA did not seem to be aware of the development of any communication strategy for the IC

process. Asked if there was a communication strategy that guided the integrated communication process in their institution, he enquired about the essence of developing a communication strategy.

At UG, the PR representative was straight to the point when she was asked about the availability of a communication strategy. She said:

In fact, we don't have a document that we can hold on to. No. Even if we have a strategy, it is a spoken one or an unwritten one, but we don't have a document that I can show you.

Similar to the SMR at GIMPA, the SMR at UG requested for the explanation of the term, communication strategy, when a question was posed to find out about the availability of such a document. Based on the explanation, she confirmed the statement made by the PR representative saying: "I don't think we developed one".

Based on the analysis above, it is clear that the data collected for this study did not have any concrete evidence of a communication strategy for the implementation of integrated communication in any of the three institutions.

5.6.3 The Use of Technology

The data revealed that the universities had adopted social media as one of their major means of communicating with their internal stakeholders, though further probes showed minimal use of these media. At CU, social media platforms (especially WhatsApp groups) had been created for all categories of staff, aside the use of the University's website and intranet for communication. GIMPA and UG also used the websites and intranet widely for communication in addition to departmental and unions' WhatsApp platforms, though unlike CU, their WhatsApp platforms were managed by the respective groups and not by the institutions.

In all the universities, the institutional homepage appeared to be a major source of information, though some of the research participants complained that one had to navigate thoroughly to reach the information required. Apart from GIMPA, the stakeholders from CU and UG claimed that their intranet was managed well by their public relations offices, especially with regard to communicating information.

5.6.4 Support from Senior Management

There was a consensus among the interviewees regarding senior management support for the implementation of integrated communication in the institutions. Both the SMRs and PR representatives gave reasons to confirm their belief that senior management was in support of IC activities. Of the three SMRs, the one at CU appeared to be the most certain about what IC entailed and the implications of management support for the agenda. He said:

You make sure that you don't limit the PR budget when it is justifiable because the benefits of IC are for all of us. And once you give them the resources, including financial support ... equipment, camera, staffing and the rest, you make sure they are able to deliver.

This SMR deemed it important for senior management to appreciate the critical role of PR staff in the IC process by equipping them well enough resources to make them more effective. He mentioned training programmes/short courses and exposure to other institutions as some of the opportunities that the PR staff could enjoy to give them a broader understanding of the field of IC. He acknowledged the Corporate Affairs Directorate as the unit that initiated and designed most of the University's communication materials in consultation with management. Additionally, he commended the unit for its mediation and for being proactive in external communication. The unit

also played a key role in expanding the means by which the university could be visible, including the introduction of social media platforms. All these, according to the SMR, facilitated the IC process. The PR representative at CU admitted that senior management was in support of IC to a large extent. He said:

We have enjoyed a lot of support from senior management. It's been easy doing a lot of things because you hardly send an idea that will be shut down. The challenge, though, has been the budget. ... I want a budget that is fluid enough for you to do all the things you wish to.

Unlike the SMR at CU who exhibited some understanding of the IC process, the one at GIMPA requested for the explanation of the term when the researcher sought to find out his level of understanding. Thinking that the Registrar was the focal person for communication at GIMPA, he had a slightly different opinion when the question of senior management support for integrated communication was posed:

Why do you think management would not lend this support when me ... the Registrar is also a member of management and only carry information within the context of the institution's mandate? ... You cannot go outside that and begin to talk about issues that have nothing to do with the institution's regulatory framework.

What this implies is that being the main communicator and part of senior management, the Registrar was also at the centre of the IC process. Therefore, he could influence senior management support for the process. He did not link the support from management to the PR unit, though the interview with the PR representative revealed that the PR unit enjoyed a lot of support from senior

management with regard to the IC process. She said: “senior management is very supportive; they are right behind me and ready to listen to whatever suggestions I make”.

Similar to the SMR at GIMPA, the SMR at UG requested for the explanation of integrated communication. When she was later asked whether senior management lent its full support to an IC agenda, she had this to say:

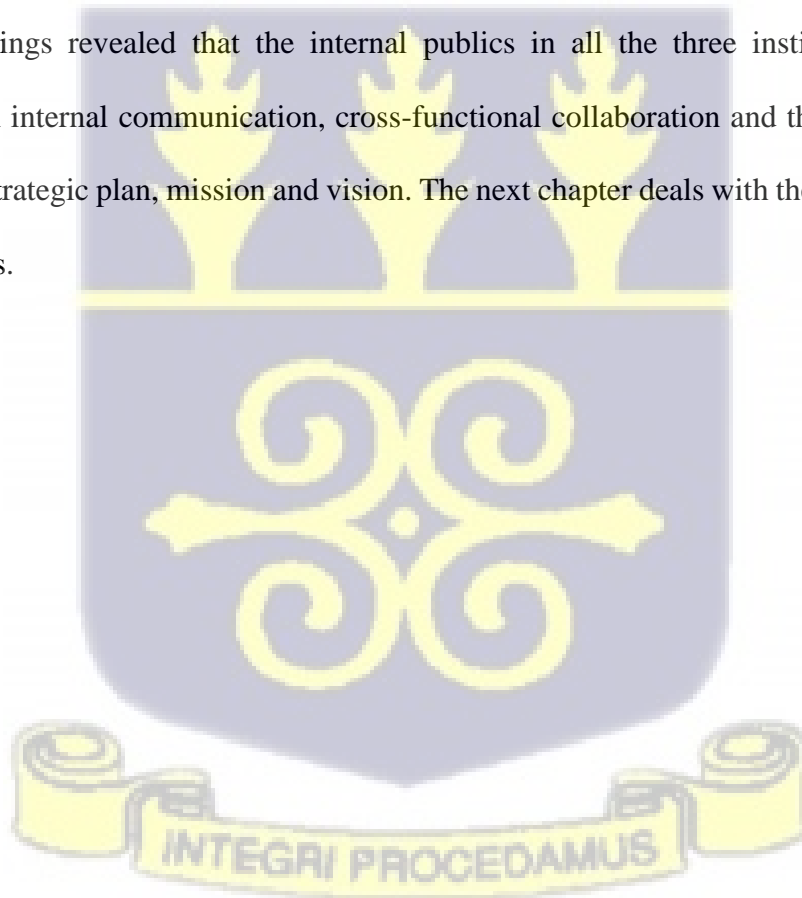
I should say I don't know why we should not. I don't see why if it should get us to where we want to go, why we should not support it. ... We will probably ask public affairs to take a shot at it, draw a plan and when they finish, we circulate it and then probably be able to reward if any department or unit which is able to use it well. It is not a bad thing so if it is planned, why shouldn't we use it?

Unlike the SMR at GIMPA, her countenance revealed someone who had not really experienced IC (as explained) but thought it was a laudable idea. The PR representative confirmed management support at UG indicating that senior management had been particularly co-operative to a large extent. She mentioned the availability of office space for all staff in the Public Affairs Directorate and collaboration with other units of the University such as the university library, the ICT and archival units which facilitated their IC efforts. She added that senior management also used the communication materials produced by the Public Affairs unit and sometimes repeated some statements developed by the unit when delivering speeches. This had contributed immensely to communicating the institution's corporate identity. All these, she said, also confirmed management support for the unit's communication efforts. She, however, wished there could be more professional staff and enough budget to make the unit's work smoother. It can be noted from the above analysis that both the SMRs and the PR representatives perceived IC as a worthy communication process to support.

5.7 Summary

This chapter dealt with the presentation of the research findings. The data collected from the three institutions, using different sources of evidence, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, survey and qualitative content analysis, were presented with particular attention to in-case analysis and across-case analysis. Additionally, the data were organised around the five broad themes that formed the basis of this study: the co-ordination of internal communication, stakeholder integration and relationship management, cross-functional collaboration, strategy communication and mission/vision campaign and the implementation of integrated communication.

The findings revealed that the internal publics in all the three institutions perceived fragmentation in internal communication, cross-functional collaboration and the communication of institutional strategic plan, mission and vision. The next chapter deals with the discussion of the research findings.



CHAPTER SIX

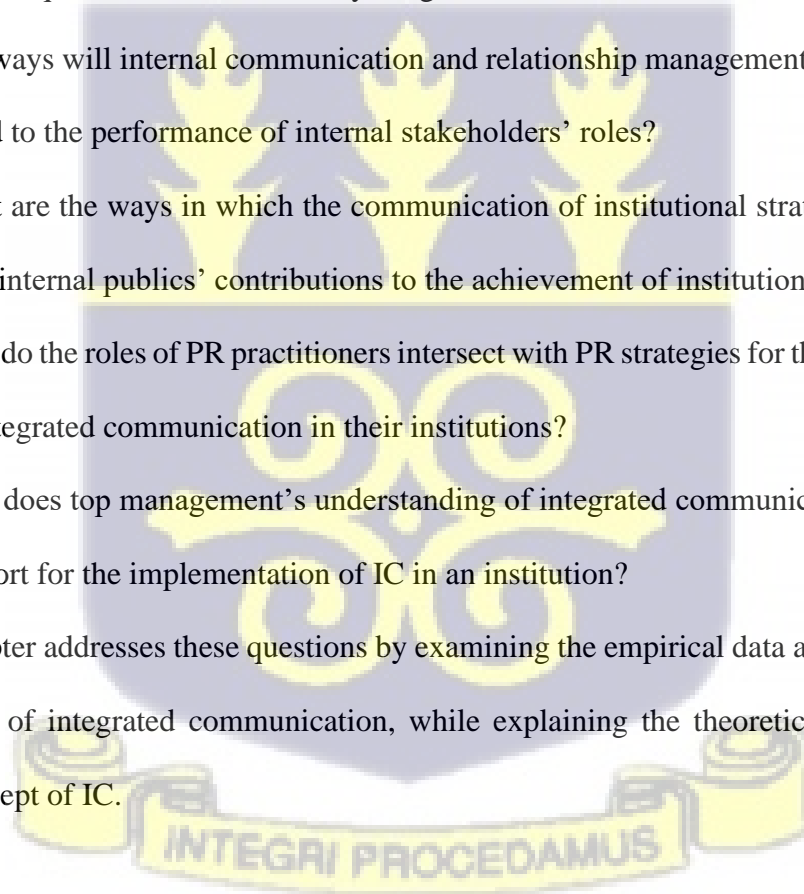
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 Introduction

The study set out to investigate internal stakeholders' perceptions about the practice of integrated communication in three universities in Ghana with the main objective of recommending the effective management of Integrated Communication in institutions. This chapter focuses on the discussion of the key findings. The discussion is woven around the emergent themes and the following research questions which the study sought to address:

1. In what ways will internal communication and relationship management in the institutions be linked to the performance of internal stakeholders' roles?
2. What are the ways in which the communication of institutional strategic plan connect with internal publics' contributions to the achievement of institutional strategic goals?
3. How do the roles of PR practitioners intersect with PR strategies for the implementation of integrated communication in their institutions?
4. How does top management's understanding of integrated communication link with its support for the implementation of IC in an institution?

The chapter addresses these questions by examining the empirical data against scholarship within the field of integrated communication, while explaining the theoretical paradigms that support the concept of IC.



6.1 Internal Communication and Relationship Management for Stakeholder Output

The objective of investigating the internal communication and relationship management in the universities was to determine the actors involved, the channels used, consistency in communication and the extent to which internal stakeholder relationship contributes to work output. This was premised on the fact that the holistic co-ordination of multiple communication activities and the different expertise demonstrated by internal publics are important in the IC process and help institutions to realise their desired goals as observed by Smith (2012b).

6.1.1 Co-ordination of Internal Communication and Internal Stakeholders' Output

Scholarship suggests that co-ordination is cardinal to attaining efficiency in communication and ultimately helps institutions to achieve their objectives (Akrani, 2011; Du Plessis and Thomson, 2013). Again, the literature categorises three different actors who can co-ordinate internal communication as an individual, a steering committee and adhoc meetings, each of which consists of communication manager(s) (van Riel, 1995). The findings presented in Chapter Five, however, reveal that the universities hardly employ the actors for co-ordination as mentioned in the literature. Rather, the co-ordination of communication in each university mainly rests with the Registrar (who is considered as the key actor). The PR director only assists with the process.

Additionally, administrative staff, Deans, Directors and Heads of Department assist with internal communication in the institutions. Of all these actors, only the PR director is a communication manager, though he/she is not the focal person for internal communication in the university system. This suggests that the university has its own protocols for dealing with internal communication, a system which regards the Registrar, rather than the PR director as the main communicator. The reason behind the university system designating the Registrar as the main actor

in the communication process could be attributed to the fact that, the Registrar is the Secretary to the University Council, the highest decision-making body and other important boards and committees including the Academic Board. Any administrative staff (in the registrar cadre) who serves on such boards can only be delegated, where necessary, to communicate on behalf of the Registrar.

It is also gathered from the data that there is fragmentation in internal communication at the institutions in that co-ordination appears to be distorted. Only the actors at the top management level (including the Registrar) seem to co-ordinate with the PR director (especially at CU and UG). At the Colleges/Schools/Faculties and Departments, however, co-ordination seems to dwindle as variously expressed in the submissions of the FGD participants. The complaints lodged by the FGD participants suggest that Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments and Administrators who are expected to relay information to staff do not perform this role as planned. There seems to be a distinct lack of strategies to ensure synergy in the communication process, contrary to recommendations by Moriarty (1994), Rouse (2006) and Mulder (2008). The implication is that each institution suffers conversation fragmentation (Grissom, 2019).

It was noted that the SMRs could not easily identify the main factor leading to the lag in internal communication. They mainly blamed it on the channels used and, therefore, resorted to the use of multiple channels of communication (as suggested by Welch, 2012) including memos, letters, intranet, meetings, with the intension of reaching the internal publics through different means. However, there was no evidence of audience research to identify the channels preferred by the different internal publics as articulated by Welch and Jackson (2007). Interactions with the research participants revealed their preferred channels which confirmed Welch's (2012) notion on 'usability.' The usability of internal communication media was seen in the FGD participants'

preferences for memos and emails or a combination of the two, which they claimed were reliable. The survey respondents also chose their institutional website as their most reliable source of information.

This study does not reveal much to support the different views that scholarship offers for the smooth co-ordination of internal communication. With the use of communication channels for instance, the research participants appear to face peculiar challenges with each of their preferred channels. Some of them complained about unreliable internet connectivity which delayed access to online messages or instructions and subsequently hampered the performance of their roles. Others who preferred communication through memos and letters criticised the untimely delivery of information or the delivery of letters to wrong offices which delayed their response or reaction to the roles expected of them. These two concerns came up especially from the FGD sessions at CU and UG. The PR representatives at the same institutions also complained about the sluggish protocols associated with seeking management approval for communication, whereas the survey respondents registered their dissatisfaction with the untimely release of information, confirmed submissions by the FGD participants and PR representatives. To the FGD participants at GIMPA, the unclear definition of roles at the management level delayed the communication of institutional decisions which led them to resort to rumours as a major source of information.

The above challenges, associated with the internal communication processes in the universities, defeat the call for effective co-ordination of institutional communication for the achievement of institutional objectives as proposed by Du Plessis and Thomson (2013), Smith (2012), Akrani (2012) and Duncan and Caywood (1996). From the theoretical point of view, these challenges do not help to reduce the barriers to integration as presented in Duncan and Caywood's (1996) model. The scenario presented shows that the communication actors appear to be at one

end of the spectrum trying to handle internal communication to the best of their ability, while the internal publics wallow at the other end of the spectrum to grab useful information. The end result is fragmentation in internal communication which has negative implications for work output because as some of the FGD participants indicated, they do their jobs based on information received. Therefore, when information is delayed or not delivered as expected, their schedule is jeopardised. For internal communication to be effective in the institutions, the PR manager must be charged to map out the effective procedures for co-ordinating communication.

On the issue of image management, the data provides enough evidence to show that the FGD participants at CU and UG, together with the survey respondents in all the institutions, are happy with their institutional image through the deployment of institutional logos, colour scheme and typography. For the research participants at CU and UG, their perceptions could be attributed to the SMRs and PR representatives' claims that those institutions are making stringent efforts to ensure consistency in their institutional visual symbols. This exercise, in both institutions, is guided by certain protocols which allow the institutions to develop identical visual symbols for all departments. It is clear that the little changes made in the deployment of their visual symbols make the research participants proud of their institutions as expressly indicated by the participants at CU.

Though the perceptions variously expressed by the research participants are not completely supported by the data generated from the content analysis on the deployment of the institutional visual symbols, they provide evidence of Massey's (2015) image maintenance stage which informs an institution to improve its image management effort based on feedback received from stakeholders. In effect, the internal stakeholders' perceptions are useful feedback that the institutions require to firm up their strategies to enhance their image (Massey, 2015; Massey. 2010;

Gilpin, 2010). Again, as Hussain and Ferdous (2014) would envisage, the universities' determination to implement a consistent and holistic programme on the deployment of their visual symbols would retain a positive image among their various stakeholders.

6.1.2 Integration of Internal Stakeholders and Relationship Management

The literature recommends two-way communication and stakeholder involvement in the integrated communication process (Briola, 2015; Morsing and Schultz, 2006, Freeman, 2004). Again, Hawrysz and May (2017) and Barker (2013) explain that engaging stakeholders in sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships ensures their commitment to working towards the attainment of institutional goals. For these reasons, Niemann-Struweg (2014) and Barker (2013) advocate for interactive engagement, knowledge creation and sharing. Against this backdrop, a key objective of this study was to assess interactive communication and stakeholder relationship management in the three institutions. Measuring the evidence in this study against the ideals projected by these scholars, it is apparent from the FGD panels that interactive communication is very minimal in the three universities. Though the SMRS and PR representatives were confident about the prevalence of interactive communication between management and other internal stakeholders in their institutions, the FGD participants and survey respondents generally expressed contrary views.

The picture that emerges from the findings is that, interactions between employees and management in the institutions lack the factors that bode well for sustainable relationships. The four broad issues that were identified by the FGD participants were inadequate two-way communication, the lack of cordial management-stakeholder relationship, unreliable feedback loops and bureaucracy, which the UG faculty referred to as “chains of command”. The views of the survey respondents regarding the lack of reliable feedback loops and unresponsiveness by

management confirm that the internal stakeholders involved in the study are not happy with the management-stakeholder relationship in the three institutions.

Engaging internal publics and interacting effectively with them supports the use of the involvement strategy (which advocates two-way communication) rather than the response strategy or the one-way delivery (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). As articulated by the FGD participants, stakeholder engagement makes the publics confident to justify, defend and protect management decisions to make operationalisation easier. Consistent with the literature (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Morsing and Schultz, 2006), some FGD participants collectively identified some of the factors that facilitate internal publics' support for management decisions. Stakeholder engagement, effective interactions and dialoguing, according to these participants, will enable management to elicit the internal publics' support and mold them into worthy ambassadors for their respective institutions. Though these views were predominantly expressed by the participants at CU, those at UG indicated similar sentiments when they expressed appreciation for a seminar organised for senior staff to solicit their views on the performance of their institutional strategic plan.

That management's failure to engage internal publics effectively does not encourage them to work wholeheartedly and help with the institutional implementation processes also came up clearly in the FGD sessions. This implies that consistent with the literature (Pitt, 2014; Andriof *et al.*, 2002), the participants understand the critical role of communication in encouraging internal publics to work for the implementation of management decisions. Unfortunately, the findings of this study do not seem to support Briola's (2015) recommendation that stakeholder integration is vital for the attainment of institutional goals.

In terms of theoretical perspectives, the kind of symbiotic relationship expected in integrated communication as projected by the systems theory (Laszlo and Krippner, 1997) is not

very prevalent in the findings of this study. Once the internal communication remains vertical, top-down or one-way, it is difficult to integrate the internal publics to the system and make them part of the whole integration picture. In other words, without adequate two-way communication, employees consider themselves detached from the system entity and feel discouraged to contribute their quota to the success of the system. Though the data partly supports the stakeholder-based integration stage (Duncan and Caywood, 1996) based on the identification of the institutional stakeholders by the SMRs and the assignment of internal stakeholders to HoDs and Deans for relationship management, there is no evidence of a fully integrated communication function led by Public Relations as prescribed by Duncan and Caywood's (1996) model.

As part of its objective to examine stakeholder integration, this study also investigated how cross-functional collaboration reflected in the relationship among internal publics especially the FGD participants. Cross-functional collaboration normatively allows employees with different expertise to work in teams in an enabling environment that facilitates creativity and knowledge sharing for the achievement of a common goal (Beck, 2019; Smith, 2012a). This implies that team spirit and open communication are the defining principles in this kind of communication terrain. The data from this study, however, appears to suggest that the universities do not have a good platform for collaboration. Though the FGD participants expressed divergent views about collaboration among the various departments, the general impression created at CU and UG is that collaboration is difficult to achieve. Departments are not receptive enough due to unhealthy competition among them and an ownership culture which is prevalent at UG. The groups that claimed collaboration was easy in their institutions referred to their colleagues or friends who readily provided them with the information required, implying that cross-functional collaboration is very scanty in the institutions.

At UG and CU, the data only shows effective collaboration among the Registrar's office, the PR unit and other constituent units of top management, whereas GIMPA is not clear about collaboration, due to the divergent accounts by the PR representatives and the SMR. The likely reason for the fragmented collaboration among employees is that there is no mechanism to whip up a team spirit among the various departments. Also, as noted by Wilsea (2018), the universities lack the degree of alignment required for different departments to articulate the institutional brand. Consequently, people tend to use their expertise in isolation. This defeats the purpose of knowledge sharing and the property of equifinality (explained in Chapter Two) which allows system units to thread different paths (or use their diverse expertise) with the aim of achieving an ultimate goal.

The data gathered on open communication is interpreted with much caution given the divergent views expressed by the research participants. The findings from the SMRs and the PR representatives in all the institutions give indication that there is open flow of communication in their respective universities. However, their ideas about open communication are limited to discussions at meetings where union representatives are present, especially at UG. Though CU claims that management keeps an open door to internal publics for discussions, it appears that the publics' inputs may not necessarily make any impact because management may not work with those inputs as indicated by the senior staff and PR representative. Whereas the senior staff in the same institution is outright in admitting to a closed system of information flow, the academic staff is not very certain. The latter eventually admits that management cannot always dialogue with internal publics, but they should ensure that the publics are well informed, which implies that information flow is not very open. The comparison made by UG faculty group sums up the whole argument and confirms the fact that there is fragmentation in communication at the university.

That is, information flows in piece meal at UG similar to blood circulation in a person with “a mild stroke”.

The combination of findings on the flow of communication does not support the conceptual premise that great institutions create an atmosphere of open communication and encourage communication across management ranks and departments (Gronstedt, 2000). Such an atmosphere also enables both vertical and horizontal communication which includes cross-functional communication, but this seems to be lacking in the institutions that were investigated.

There are several issues emerging from the findings on internal communication and stakeholder relationship. First, internal communication may appear to be well co-ordinated as submitted by the SMRs and PR representatives in the various institutions. Again, stakeholder relationship may seem cordial and interactive with appropriate feedback loops that enable two-way communication. However, the submissions by many of the research participants show that the internal publics and management live in two completely different worlds. Whereas management is of the view that stringent efforts have been made and the necessary protocols put in place for a well-coordinated internal communication and stakeholder integration, the internal stakeholders, are generally not happy with the turn of events. The internal publics’ complaints about the untimely release of information, poor network, unreliable feedback loops, poor inter-departmental collaboration, poor interactivity and management-employee relationship raise concerns about the poor management of IC in the institutions. Essentially, there is a disconnection between the effort management seems to be making and the internal publics’ expectations.

The above analysis implies that the internal publics are not adequately informed to perform their duties. Also, the findings of this study hardly demonstrate the open system of communication which is associated with two-way communication and a high level of interaction and

interdependence (Gregory, 2000). Rather, the institutions exhibit factors of the closed system which allows limited interactions as explained by Gregory (2000) and Cutlip *et al.* (2006). The study does not provide enough evidence to support the properties of systems theory such as holism, homeostasis and self-regulation which are necessary for the survival of integrated communication (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Barlie and Polese. 2010; Miller, 2009; Caldwell, 2012; Christopher, 2007; Senge, 1990; Covington, 1998). Consequently, it can be argued that Integrated Communication is not effective in the three institutions.

6.2 Strategy Communication for the Achievement of Institutional Goals

Literature points out that one way of measuring the success of Integrated Communication is to identify the realisation of institutional strategic goals as well as the mission and vision (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Massie and Anderson, 2003). Against this background, this study explored the communication of institutional strategic plans as an example of integrated communication practice by the institution. One of the objectives of this study, therefore, was to investigate how stakeholder engagement and the communication of institutional strategy influenced the internal publics' contributions to institutional goals.

6.2.1 Stakeholder Involvement in Strategy Development

According to scholarship, it is very important to seek the inputs of internal publics in developing institutional strategic plan because this participatory venture urges the publics to buy into the strategy, own it and yearn to be team players for achieving the desired goals (Dean, 2015). Even more important is the inclusion of the PR manager in the development process due to his/her role in communicating the strategy to institutional publics (Gallup, 2017; Moriarty, 1994). In line with

these suggestions, the study investigated the degree to which the communication of institutional strategic plan, mission and vision motivated the research participants to contribute to the realisation of institutional strategic goals. The data, however, do not show any significant results to confirm the points raised by the literature.

Beginning with the development of the institutional strategic plans, all the universities exhibited common features that show that the internal publics were not involved. In spite of the vital role PR plays in such processes, none of the three institutions showed evidence of PR inclusion in the steering committees set up for the development of their strategic plans. It, therefore, appears that the committees were set up without a clear understanding of the relevance of PR's role in the exercise. The UG steering committee was, however, attuned enough to realise the need for PR involvement. The contribution made by the Director of Public Affairs that, "... my colleague who was secretary and servicing the committee ... realised that the sort of discussion that was going on there, it would be good for me to come in attendance", is consistent with Gallup (2017) and Moriarty's (1994) position on the involvement of the communication or PR manager in such processes.

The data on internal stakeholder engagement reveal divergent views from the FGD participants. Generally, the views expressed by the FGD participants are inconsistent with Dean's (2015) suggestions on employee involvement in the process of developing an institutional strategic plan. The participants from GIMPA, just like the senior staff at CU, were certain that they were not involved in the process. Though the academic staff at CU and the senior staff group at UG felt they were represented, further investigations did not support their assertions. The former was found not to be involved in the process, whereas the latter which was represented did not receive any feedback from their representatives as expected. It, therefore, appears that the private and quasi-

public universities do not make provisions that allow internal publics (employees) to be represented on committees for drawing up policies such as a strategic plan. On the other hand, participants from the public university who have a window for union representation hardly enjoy any interactions on policy or strategy development with their union representatives. The implication here is that though the necessary system has been created to garner employee input, it is not used effectively, leading to undesirable results such as making employees feel their views are unimportant or stalling their rich ideas which could inform strategy development.

With regard to data from the survey, the respondents from GIMPA painted a different picture from what was presented by the FGD participants because more respondents showed satisfaction with the level of student involvement in the strategy development. The majority of respondents from CU and UG, however, seemed to agree with the FGD participants from their institutions as they showed dissatisfaction with their level of involvement. The broad picture created in all the institutions was that the internal publics were unhappy with the stakeholder consultations in drawing up policies such as strategic plan. It is pertinent, however, to note that involving internal stakeholders in the strategic planning process has a lot of implications. It informs them about where the institution is; where it wants to be in future, and what is required to get there. The consultations elicit the internal publics' consensus, support and opinions. Additionally, they own the eventual strategic plan, talk it and operate on the same playing field with senior management by aligning their daily actions with the achievement of the institutional goals. The lack of consultations will likely make the internal publics apathetic, and consequently jeopardise the realisation of the institutional vision.

6.2.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions about Strategy Communication

In relation to the communication of institutional strategic plan, the findings reveal that the SMR in each institution thought enough effort had been made to communicate the strategic plan together with the institutional mission and vision on various platforms. The internal publics, however, brought a different perspective to the discussion. Though the publics mentioned some of the channels used to communicate their institutional strategic plans, it appears the communication was not effective enough. As reported in Chapter Five, the FGD participants collectively complained about the scanty and centralised communication of their institutional strategic plans, *et cetera*. These seem to be the reason why the majority of survey respondents were unaware of their institutional strategic plans.

Several possible explanations can be deduced from the publics' complaints. First, the channels used to create awareness about the strategic plan, the mission and vision were not effective enough. Secondly, there seemed to be inadequate sensitisation seminars as many of the participants learnt about the strategic plan through their own efforts such as navigating their institutional website as well as reading mission and vision on plaques. Perhaps the only instances of face-to-face meetings to share the institutional strategy are the ones mentioned by the academic staff at CU (congregation and the launch) and the senior staff at UG (the stakeholders' seminar). In this regard, the participants' requests for more of such seminars or meetings indicate that the communication was not adequate enough to sink the strategy well.

The findings further indicate that the Deans, HoDs and other champions designated to assist with the communication appeared to do very little in educating the internal publics. It is even more surprising that the PR units that are expected to lead the communication of the strategic plans played very minimal roles because the study did not detect any vigorous campaigns organised by

the PR units. For instance, both the PR representatives at CU and UG mentioned the development of mission and vision plaques as a way of enhancing the communication of their institutional strategies. It appears, however, that the communication approaches used by the PR units were not integrated adequately well enough, leading to conversation fragmentation (Grissom, 2019).

The most interesting finding is that the PR representative at UG sees the communication of the institutional strategy, mission and vision not as the sole responsibility of the PR unit but as a duty of all units, especially senior management. This seemed to be the practice in the other institutions as well. While the involvement of senior management is important as explained in the literature (Dean 2015), PR role in this communication venture must also be considered as very key (Gallup, 2017) and not be relaxed. The impact of PR's role in strategy communication needs to be felt by the institutions. This is an opportunity for PR to engage in research to identify and segment institutional stakeholders and map out the channels that can effectively communicate the strategy to these stakeholders. It is also the occasion for developing campaigns to sensitise the stakeholders. Every message in the campaign must be relevant and of interest to the publics to urge them to associate with the institutional strategy. In this regard, John Martson's (1979) RACE (research, action planning, communication, evaluation) may guide PR to be at the centre of the communication process.

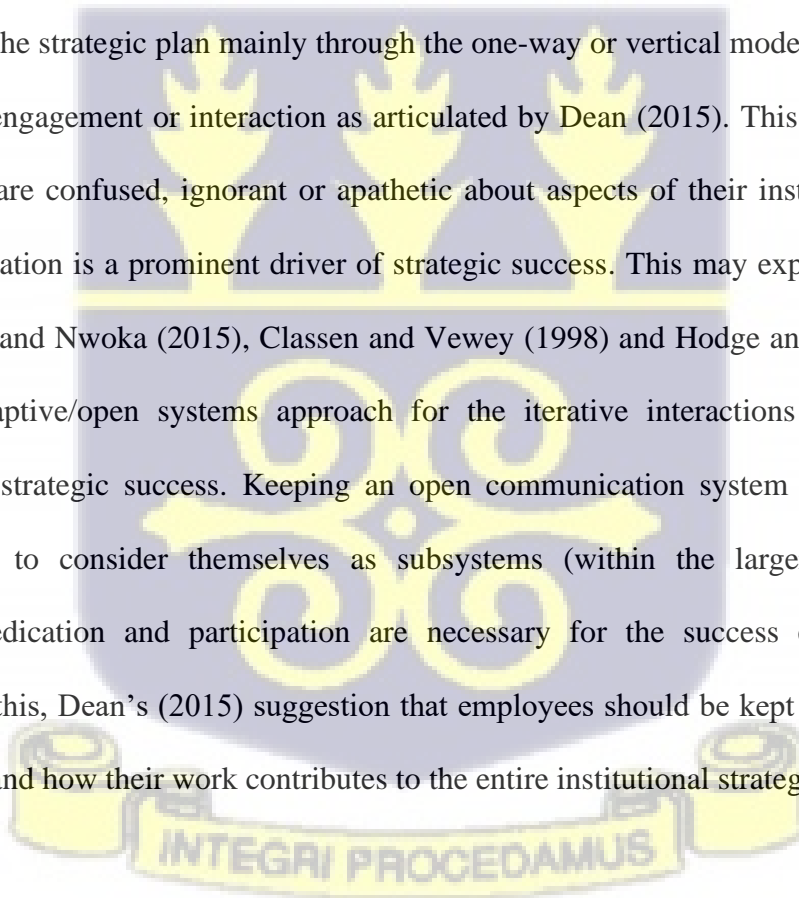
Among the FGD participants, the communication of the strategic plan was affected by various factors. For instance, the apathetic attitude exhibited by the male group at GIMPA was attributed to the lack of motivation. In addition, the data revealed that the GIMPA website displayed the contents of two different strategic plans which create confusion. As a result, the group members did not know which content to align their daily actions with. At CU, strategy communication appeared to centre on office holders such as Deans and HoDs who were supposed

to share the information with other internal publics in their respective units. Their failure to communicate the strategy as expected left the internal publics with limited avenues such as general fora and graduation ceremonies for accessing such useful information. The participants at UG experienced a worse scenario as some appeared to be ignorant about the authorship or the source of the University's Strategic Plan. The implication is that the internal publics may likely see a gap in the communication of the Strategic Plan leading to their ignorance about key aspects of their institutional strategy. Adequate knowledge of the institutional strategic plans, through effective communication, may empower the internal stakeholders to utilise their expertise for the benefit of the institution. On the other hand, ignorance may adversely affect their contributions towards the achievement of the institutional strategic goals.

The faculty group at UG shared the experience of their counterparts at CU in terms of the means by which they learn about their institutional strategic plan. Their complaint about having to navigate thoroughly to find the strategic plan on the UG website indicates that the document is not easily accessible online. This view is massively confirmed by the survey respondents in each institution. The institutional strategy, the roadmap for the achievement of institutional goals, is such an important document that stakeholders should not stress themselves to find. The institutional website is also a useful platform to host such an important document due to its accessibility to both internal and external publics. It appears the institutional websites are not user-friendly, with regard to navigating for the institutional strategy. However, locating the strategic plan on the institutional website should not be associated with drudgery and fatigue. As indicated by Brown (2021), "internet users are notorious for low attention span; if they do not find what they are searching for on the first page, they are likely to ditch that page for another". Also, White *et al.* (2010) suggest that employees prefer the push dissemination (which includes communication

by email or direct links) as against the pull dissemination by which one has to search for information. Consequently, positioning the strategic plan or its link on the institutional homepage should not be compromised. Otherwise, the institution is likely to lose stakeholders who may depend on the website to access the strategy and this may ultimately affect their contributions to the achievement of institutional goals.

The general impression created by all the FGD participants is that there is inadequate communication of institutional strategic plan and other policies to employees. The survey respondents demonstrated similar perceptions as shown in their massive dissatisfaction about awareness creation and accessibility of their institutional strategic plan. It is significant to note that communicating the strategic plan mainly through the one-way or vertical mode leaves little room for stakeholder engagement or interaction as articulated by Dean (2015). This may explain why the participants are confused, ignorant or apathetic about aspects of their institutional strategic plan. Communication is a prominent driver of strategic success. This may explain why scholars such as Chikere and Nwoka (2015), Classen and Vewey (1998) and Hodge and Anthony (1991) propose the adaptive/open systems approach for the iterative interactions required for the achievement of strategic success. Keeping an open communication system might inform the internal publics to consider themselves as subsystems (within the larger system) whose commitment, dedication and participation are necessary for the success envisioned. As a consequence of this, Dean's (2015) suggestion that employees should be kept up-to-date and be made to understand how their work contributes to the entire institutional strategy is cardinal.



6.2.3 Stakeholders' Contributions to the Achievement of Strategic Goals.

The findings from the SMRs and PR representatives revealed some uncertainties about the internal publics' contributions to the achievement of their respective institutional goals. Unlike CU where a number of goals are said to have been achieved, the SMRs at GIMPA and UG are not able to state categorically the contributions made by the internal publics towards the achievement of strategic goals because there had neither been any evaluation (as in GIMPA) nor a comprehensive report on the evaluation undertaken (in case of UG). The submission made by the SMR at UG that employees have to know their institutional strategic plan, walk it and align their roles to it perfectly corroborate the ideas raised by D'souza *et al.* (2011) and Walt (2006) that the institution is an integrated framework which may be affected by employees' decisions and actions. However, she (the SMR at UG) is unable to identify the main reasons for employees' inability or slow pace in linking their daily roles to the strategic plan. Some of the reasons she gives are based on speculations, though there is a clear indication of inadequate communication of the University's strategy as depicted by her own words "... it's a bit useless... some people have no idea what we are doing". Surprisingly, the PR representative who is supposed to diagnose the problem and suggest solutions woefully mentions that employees' attitude and outputs pose a challenge to evaluation.

It appears that the UG PR representative's statement illuminates the SMR's assertion that some staff do not seem to know what the University is doing. Therefore, they have very little or no contribution that calls for evaluation. It is also possible that the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) is relaxed about the evaluation of the performance of the Strategic Plan, because as indicated by the SMR, the evaluation task is vested in the Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO) and not in PAD. The implication is that the University seems not to consider the

evaluation of its strategic performance as a function of PAD, or perhaps Public Affairs is considered inadequately equipped to evaluate the contributions of subsystems towards the achievement of institutional goals. The case at UG was similar to the situations at CU and GIMPA where the Public Relations units were not involved in evaluating the performance of their institutional strategies. Consequently, the PR units' bid to demonstrate Martson's RACE in their respective institutions is likely to enhance their roles and influence their inclusion in the evaluation processes.

It is also important to note that though there is an expression of disappointment among some SMRs and PR representatives regarding internal stakeholders' contribution to the achievement of strategic goals, some of the FGD participants especially from CU and UG appear to give a glimmer of hope. The UG participants' enumerations of their contributions (to teaching and research) come as a surprise, given their earlier complaints about the disconnection between their institutional mission and vision statements and the reality on the ground. Those at CU also complained about the lack of appraisal of their contributions, though they appeared to be doing their best to help their university to achieve its strategic goals. It may seem that all these participants from CU and UG are willingly making their contributions in consonance with scholarly recommendations by Dean (2015) and Christensen, et.al. (2008) that employees become team players for the achievement of institutional goals if the strategy development is participatory in nature and the strategy is communicated effectively. This is, however, rebutted by the senior staff at CU and the faculty group at UG as they confess that their contributions are mainly geared towards salary raise and promotion respectively. This implies that employees who may appear to be working towards the achievement of institutional goals may be doing so to satisfy their own interests. A similar observation was made by Walt (2006) whose respondents mentioned that they

learnt their institutional values to satisfy a performance appraisal requirement and not because the values were effectively communicated.

What the above analysis suggests is expressly articulated by the FGD participants at CU: “people will just lend their minimum support so as not to have issues with anybody ...” (CU academic staff). In other words, people may not work wholeheartedly towards the achievement of their institutional goals. Also, in spite of the UG faculty group’s observation that no enabling environment is created for achieving the institutional vision of a world-class research-intensive university, they work hard to help realise the University’s strategic intent. However, their effort is to enable them to “survive in the system” which supports the idea that if strategy communication is not done to expectation, employees will not willingly contribute to the achievement of institutional goals. The apathetic attitude demonstrated by the GIMPA participants is even worse. Such employee actions (as exhibited by the CU, GIMPA and UG participants) may be termed as unethical behaviour (Duff, 2019), which might negatively affect the growth of the institution. For instance, if employees keep lending their minimum support to the cause of institutional goals, the overall institutional output might be minimal. Similarly, employees who make contributions to satisfy their own interests (such as salary raise and promotion) may relax when their needs are met, while those who are apathetic (like the GIMPA participants) may influence their colleagues with the negative attitude.

Theoretically, it may seem that the above-mentioned contributions by the CU and UG FGD participants support the equifinality and common finality perspectives of the systems theory, which refer to the diverse activities that systems actors perform to attain a common goal (Katz & Kalin, 1978; Miller, 2009; von Bertalanffy, 1962). On this note, despite the selfish intentions of these systems actors, their contributions might assist their respective institutions to move towards their

vision, irrespective of how minimal those contributions might be. On the other hand, system actors who appear apathetic (as with the GIMPA) are not fully integrated into the institution to enable them to locate their daily activities within the shared vision of the institution (Cadwell, 2012). In such a situation, systems property of ‘holism’, which is characterised by the integration of supra-system and its subsystems for a common goal, is not realised. It is important to note, however, that subsystems’ strife to achieve institutional goals, as demonstrated by the senior staff at CU and faculty group at UG, is driven more by internal stakeholder initiative than the institutional communication procedures. Conversely, where the participants appear apathetic like the GIMPA group, contributions towards the achievement of strategic goals are hardly recorded.

Operationalising support for the achievement of institutional strategic goals in terms of numerical distribution is also worth reporting. To a very large extent, the survey respondents at CU and UG confirm the perceptions of some of the FGD participants in these institutions in that the respondents’ lack of understanding, as reported in Chapter Five, negatively impact their contribution to the achievement of their institutional strategies. Surprisingly, the case at GIMPA was quite different because the respondents claimed they understood the communication of their institutional strategy, and this significantly influenced their contributions to the attainment of their strategic goals. While this finding seems to suggest that the GIMPA respondents were painting a positive picture of their institutional strategy communication, it reveals some internal inconsistencies. First, the number of respondents who claimed their understanding of the communication of their strategic plan facilitated their contributions to the strategic goals outnumbered those who said they were either unaware of the institutional strategic plan or rarely/never received information about it. This shows a clear disparity in their responses. Secondly, their responses on the understanding they gained from the communication of their

strategic plan does not sync with the GIMPA FGD participants' claim that their institutional website displayed information from two strategic plans, leaving them confused about which was operational. These inconsistencies imply that that the GIMPA respondents appear not to be a credible source with regard to seeking opinions about the communication of the GIMPA Strategic Plan.

6.3 PR Influence on the Implementation of IC

In keeping with the objective of this study, the roles that Public Relations plays in the implementation of IC in each university were explored. Scholarship strongly acknowledges Public Relations as a core management function that should operate at the micro, meso and macro levels of an institution to facilitate the IC process (Classen & Vewey, 1998; Lube, 1994; Hodge & Anthony, 1991). To be able to play its roles effectively, scholars further recommend that the head of Public Relations should have a seat at the top management table to influence management decisions by engaging in environmental scanning for the identification of potential problems and opportunities (Caywood, 2012; Angelopulo, 1994; Lubbe, 1994).

However, the results of this study have been unable to demonstrate much of the above recommendations. In the first place, the structure and line of reporting in the universities do not allow the PR Directors to be part of top management or exercise autonomy in performing their communication roles. As variously stated by the SMRs and PR representatives at UG and CU, the Directors of PR are not part of the dominant coalition in the two institutions. Neither do they wield autonomy, given all the protocols their communication materials go through for approval. The SMR at CU explained further: "... for a PR person to be part of top management, the person has to get to the registrar position", because per the structure of the University, "... the PR Director is not a member of top management". The PR representative at UG confirmed: "the way the

University structure is, it is the Registrar who is a member of senior management but I'm not a member... I prefer to receive the instructions as a dutiful public servant". These submissions seem to suggest that the institutional setting in the Ghanaian context (similar to the corporate landscape) does not support Caywood' (2012) recommendation that the PR manager must be part of the dominant coalition. Therefore, there appears to be a clear disparity between rhetoric and empirical reality. Kwansah-Aidoo and Owusu-Hemeng (2006) made a similar observation in the Ghanaian banking sector. Their study showed that members of the dominant coalition who considered PR role essential to their banks were not in favour of allowing PR professionals a seat at the top management table. It is pertinent to note, however, that this situation is not limited to Ghana and recent times. For instance, Grunig, Dozier, Ethling, Grunig, Repper and White (1992, as cited in Kwansah-Aidoo and Owusu-Hemeng, 2006) discovered that though many CEOs and corporate leaders considered PR role relevant to their respective organisations, in reality, they were not allowing the professionals to join the dominant coalition in the organisations. This might be due to institutional and social ignorance of the value of PR's efforts or the lack of a formally recognised managerial-level function for Public Relations within the institution (DeSanto, 2011).

It might also appear that being admitted to the top management table is subject to PR practitioners' educational background or professional training as suggested by Kwansah-Aidoo and Owusu-Hemeng (2006). Plowman (2004, as cited in Kwansah-Aidoo and Owusu-Hemeng, 2006) also notes that the role assigned to PR practitioners is strongly influenced by the professional competence and quality of members of the Public Relations team. However, this study shows that having educational and professional qualifications in Public Relations/Communication Studies does not determine a practitioner's inclusion in the dominant coalition. A case in point is the Public Affairs Director at UG who, unlike her counterparts at CU and GIMPA, has a master's degree in

Communication Studies and professional training in Public Relations, but is not part of the dominant coalition in her institution (just like those at CU and GIMPA).

DeSanto (2011) identifies a list of functions that the PR practitioner ought to perform (including media relations, reputation management, relationship management, environmental scanning and boundary spanner) to be regarded as a manager. However, Grunig *et al.* (1992) maintain that the level at which these functions are performed is influenced by whether the practitioner is perceived as a manager or a technician. This implies that if the PR practitioner enacts the functions enumerated by DeSanto (2011) with excellence, he/she might pass for a manager. If not, PR may be relegated to fulfilling routine (technician) role in the institution. This argument is aptly captured by Hutton (1999): “Unless public relations finds a way to develop one recognisable identity, it will continue to be relegated to more technician ranks of practice charged with carrying out the decision taken by others” (Hutton, 1999. Cited in DeSanto, 2011:9).

The above may explain why the PR Directors are not part of the dominant coalition in their respective institutions. Increasingly, they appear to play the technician/functionary role which, according to Cutlip *et al.* (2006) and Gregory (2000), operates in a closed system. This system facilitates the use of the two-way asymmetrical model of communication which allows practitioners to develop high calibre information materials for the purpose of influencing institutional publics to behave in a desired manner. The PR situation in the institutions might also be influenced by the reporting lines which seem to explain why the PR practitioners do not have a full grasp of the IC processes in the institutions. Their institutional systems appear to pressurise them to be fully engrossed with the one-way asymmetrical model instead of the two-way symmetrical model which aligns with the open system and enables dialogue for attitudinal change by both the institution and its publics. Consequently, drafting some communication materials, circulating information

developed or approved by top management and attempting to secure consistency of communication appear to be the preferred tasks for the PR units at CU and UG as confirmed by the SMRs and FGD participants. Perhaps this explains why most of the FGD participants demonstrate uncertainties about the role PR plays in ensuring a cordial relationship between management and internal stakeholders. In the case of GIMPA, the FGD participants reported that PR's preferred role is to circulate funeral announcements via the institutional intranet.

In view of the above, the PR units are not seen at the centre of key IC antecedents such as cross-functional collaboration, relationship management and the communication of strategy, mission and vision (recommended by van Baalen and Mulder, 2016; Briola, 2015; Dean, 2015; Yang and Taylor, 2014; Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Shin, 2013;), as evidenced in all the FGD sessions. This situation can be explained in different ways. First, the University system appears to breed timidity which perhaps makes the PR units wait for instructions before embarking on the role of facilitating such IC protocols. Secondly, the PR units' failure to take such initiatives may be due to the lack of confidence emanating from their relegation to the technician role. The third reason may be budgetary constraints as gathered from the statements by the CU SMR and the UG PR representative. These might explain why PR roles seem to be skewed towards some minute aspects of the micro level of the institutions which involves the co-ordination of communication materials and image building. Consequently, it is not easy to situate the PR practitioners' roles within the meso and macro frameworks which focus on the integration of all communication activities, environmental scanning and communication management at the strategic level as proposed by Barker (2013), DeSanto (2011), Schutte (2009), Argenti, Howell and Beck (2005), Vos and Shoemaker (2001) and Classen and Vewey (1998).

The evidence of this study also points to the fact that the development or availability of a communication strategy is increasingly through the efforts of other units aside the PR units/directors. The PR representative at CU cited a similar document developed (by an academic unit). At UG, the SMR mentioned a document developed by a committee for branding purposes, whereas the SMR and PR representative at GIMPA gave divergent views about their communication strategy. The impression created is that the PR unit in each university does not have any document that guides its efforts in ensuring the IC process. The idea of communication strategy does not even appear to be familiar to them. This implies that all the many benefits that the communication strategy can offer for the implementation of IC as noted by Mele *et al.* (2010), Niemann-Struweg and Grobler (2007), Massie and Anderson (2003), Gagnon and Michael (2003) and Tushman and Nadler (1999) are not experienced by the universities selected for this study.

The findings of this study reveal what scholarship says about using technology to converge diverse media in order to reach diverse and fragmented publics (Kitchen and Burgman, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2010; Kitchen, 2005; Dewhurst and Davis, 2005, 2005). Consistent with these scholarly projections, the PR units use institutional websites, intranet and selected social media to communicate with the internal publics. The internal publics themselves affirm the convenience derived from sourcing information from the multiple media, in spite of some challenges faced. Though one would expect that the use of social media would facilitate two-way communication as indicated by Mulhern (2009), as noted from the FGD sessions, communication by social media such as WhatsApp only yields fruitful discussions on the platforms for the respective staff groups including academic and administrative staff. Suggestions and feedback channelled through the PR unit via institutional social media are hardly attended to as noted by the CU senior staff. The implication here is that the public relations practitioners are unable to exhibit the expertise, power,

relationship management and enhancement of institutional reputation associated with the use of technology and social media (Smith and Place, 2013; Lee and Park, 2013; Sweester, 2010). Again, the findings show little about the use of social media by the three universities, though these media appear to be popular among some FGD participants and the students/survey respondents. This gives indication that PR has to augment its use of social media to enhance the IC effort.

In a nutshell, the data gathered for this study does not produce much evidence on Public Relations contributions to the cause of IC in the various institutions. Caywood's (2012) call for Public Relations skills and vigorous communication strategies and tactics for the implementation of IC is not reflected in this research. Consequently, it may seem that Public Relations attends to the IC process with a *laissez-faire* attitude. However, it could also be that the stiff administrative systems prevent the practitioners from making meaningful contributions to the IC process. The consequence of it is that the institutional strategic intent would rarely be implemented effectively (Classen and Vewey, 1998; Dela Rey, 1994).

6.4 The Place of Social Media in the Implementation of IC

The findings of the study reveal inadequate use of social media in the communication processes of the three institutions. It is obvious that the commonly used internet channels are institutional websites, the intranet and WhatsApp platforms by some internal stakeholder groups, with WhatsApp being the only social media platform that is popular among the stakeholders investigated. While WhatsApp appears to be inadequately used, the internal stakeholders were also silent about other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Place et al. (2016) are clear about the fact that social media is becoming a key ingredient for direct engagement with publics as it makes stakeholder integration easier. The universities' minimum use of social

media, thus, deprives them of the interactive qualities associated with the media as a tool for fostering relationships and enhancing institutional reputation (Lee & Park, 2013; Sweester, 2010; Keller, 2009).

Additionally, the assertion by FGD participants at CU that WhatsApp platforms are created for certain staff groups in their institutions reveal the in-group/out-group effect presented by Place et al. (2016) whereby those in the know may be separate from those who are not. This practice may likely keep a chunk of the internal stakeholders out of the communication loop. Again, Place et al. (2016) express a concern where social media remains a technical consideration for those with expertise rather than a managerial consideration. It appears this is the case of the three institutions, as both Management and PR Officers do not seem to be actively engaging with social media. These issues call for all the three institutions take a serious look at their use of social media in their bid to successfully implement IC.

6.5 Management Support and Influence on the Implementation of IC

The endorsement of top management is considered very critical for the implementation of IC (Kitchen and Burgman, 2015; Argenti et al., 2005). One objective of this study was to explore top management's support for the implementation of IC. As noted in Chapter Three, top management is the architect that, according to Niemann-Struweg (2014), "serves to set the example for the integration of the mission in all communications..." (p.188) and additionally ensures the continuous communication of the institutional mission to all levels of the business. While scholarship gives impression about a well-informed management that can orchestrate the IC process, very little evidence is shown per the data gathered from this study. First, the data reveals that only the SMR at CU demonstrates knowledge about IC and some of the steps to follow in the

IC process, whereas the other SMRs (at GIMPA and UG) request for the explanation of the concept before contributing to the discussions held with them. The implication, then, is that except for the SMR at CU, the other SMRs, who happen to be designated as leaders of communication in their respective universities, can hardly orchestrate an IC agenda as expected due to the little knowledge they have. Consistent with the literature, the PR representative at UG suggests that top management has to lead the mission and vision communication. However, this does not appear to be the reality in the institutions.

Secondly, the data reveals that top management might have the will power to endorse the IC process, but this is highly dependent on a plan as summarised in this statement: “I don’t see why if it should get us to where we want to go, why we should not support it It is not a bad thing so if it is planned, why shouldn’t we use it?” The PR representatives in all the three institutions mention the reasons why they think management is in support of the IC process though these do not include the IC agenda that management expects from them. This indicates that IC is not part of the conversations between management and PR.

In spite of the initial ignorance displayed by some of the SMRs, all of them stated how the communication of their institutional strategy could be made easy. Those from CU and UG gave indications of designating some management personnel as champions for the communication of their institutional strategic plans. The SMR at UG, additionally organised a seminar on the institutional strategy for some internal stakeholder groups. Noting the problems associated with the old strategic plan, GIMPA took steps to develop a new one that will be reader-friendly, according to the SMR. While these management interventions appear to be consistent with the recommendations by van Baleen and Mulder (2016) and Niemann-Struweg (2014) who propose top management support for the implementation of IC, they also have associated setbacks. For

instance, the champions are hardly monitored to identify the problems that the internal stakeholders have with their role. The seminar at UG is short-lived and does not satisfy the consistency recommended for strategy communication (Dean, 2015). This probably explains why the senior staff at UG called for more seminars. GIMPA's attempt to change its verbose strategic plan resulted in two mission statements and two vision statements on its website, making its internal stakeholders confused about the one to follow.

In its support for the implementation of IC, another area of concern to top management is the availability of a communication strategy. The communication strategy should be jointly developed by top management and PR practitioners as theorised by Duncan and Caywood (1996). It should also have objectives that align with the institutional strategic objectives to guide the IC process (Duncan, 2011; Gagnon & Mochael, 2004; Massie & Anderson, 2003). The study reveals that both the SMR and PR representative at UG are certain about a document developed by a team to brand the University, which confirms that there is not necessarily any document to guide the IC process. The other institutions expressed divergent views on the issue. For instance, the SMR at CU expressed ignorance about the document which the PR representative said had been developed by their Marketing Department to serve as a communication guide. Similarly, the SMR at GIMPA did not seem to know about any document being developed by a team to guide their IC process as indicated by the PR representative. It, therefore, appears that neither the SMRs nor PR representatives are involved in developing the documents mentioned. Again, the ignorance expressed by the SMRs at GIMPA and UG about a communication strategy shows that their institutions are not familiar with the practice of guiding a communication process with such a document. The implication, then, is that top management in the three institutions have not played any major role to develop a strategy that guides the IC process as recommended by literature.

It is also evident from the findings that budgetary constraint is one of the huge challenges that may inhibit top management's support for the IC process. In other words, senior management of the universities (especially at CU and UG) pledges support for the IC process so far as there is enough budget. Though this perspective appears to be in consonance with Niemann-Struweg's (2014) observation, it is quite ironical because the allocation of sufficient budget for the IC agenda is a responsibility of management itself. Perhaps if the PR director is integrated into the dominant coalition, his/her inputs would facilitate the allocation of sufficient budget (Niemann-Struweg, 2014).

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, the findings presented in Chapter Five were discussed to respond to the research questions and objectives of the study. The discussion was guided by the conceptual and theoretical claims that define the IC concept. The following are the emerging themes that were identified from the discussion:

- The Registrar, who is the head of administration, is also the head of communication, the one mandated to lead and oversee all communication processes in each university, though each institution has a head of Public Relations.
- Contrary to theoretical and conceptual prescriptions, the Head of Public Relations neither wields autonomy nor sits at top management's table. Rather, the head reports to the Registrar, similar to other administrative officers. This seems to work against the effective practice of IC by the PR practitioners.

- The universities attempt a blend of old and new media in their integrated communication efforts. However, this is distorted by occasional untimely communication and the interruption of internet connectivity.
- In terms of communication flow, the universities are generally perceived to operate the closed system of communication due to minimal interaction and feedback loops.
- Consistency in communication is mainly perceived by the internal stakeholders as the alignment of visual symbols.
- Apart from collaboration between the PR units and the Registrar's office, collaboration in the other sections of the universities occurs predominantly among friends and not departmentally based because of fragmentation, as there is no central mechanism that ensures cross-functional collaboration.
- Some internal stakeholders lend support for the achievement of institutional strategic goals not because of the effective communication of institutional strategy, but because it is a requirement to achieving their individual goals.
- While top management and Public Relations units consider IC to be a laudable concept, its full potential is not exploited due to budgetary constraints, the lack of proper planning and a well-developed communication strategy to guide the process.

In a nutshell, integrated communication is not managed efficiently in all the three universities. There is fragmentation in all the factors that ensure effective IC such as internal communication, cross-functional collaboration and stakeholder relationship management. Though the top management and PR units in the institutions seem to be convinced that they are observing the elements of IC, they need to strengthen their efforts in order to deepen efficiency and,

consequently, have all internal publics buy in to their IC agenda. The next chapter deals with the conclusions drawn from the discussion and the recommendations for the effective practice of IC.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

The study set out to investigate the practice of integrated communication in three universities in Ghana, namely Central University, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration and University of Ghana. The main objective of the study was to examine the perceptions of the internal stakeholders of the institutions about the practice of Integrated Communication in their respective universities in order to make recommendations on how to improve the management of IC in universities in Ghana. The study was mainly guided by the systems theory which recommends a symbiotic relationship between a system and its subsystems in a manner that enables them to work together for the achievement of the same goal. In the same vein, Integrated Communication advocates the co-ordination of all communication activities to help the institution and its publics to work in sync for the achievement of institutional vision, making the systems theory appropriate for this study. The key issues from scholarship and discourse within the field of Integrated Communication which helped to frame the study were the scanty literature on the use of IC in higher educational institutions and the scope of internal publics' involvement, PR input and top management's backing for the Integrated Communication drive.

The study employed the multiple case study approach which accommodates different data collection methods. Under this mode of enquiry, a total of five (5) focus group discussions were conducted for selected academic and administrative staff and six in-depth interviews, for selected senior management representatives and PR representatives in the institutions. Additionally, a total of 400 students were surveyed in order to compare employee and student perspectives about the

practice of Integrated Communication. This chapter draws conclusions from the study based on the key research findings and the theoretical/conceptual reflections. The chapter also deals with the implications of the study to the practice of Integrated Communication in institutions and makes recommendations for effective practice.

7.1 Key Research Findings

The key research findings, as contained in the following section, are based on the perceptions the internal stakeholders expressed about the practice of IC in the three universities selected for this study.

7.1.1 Perspectives about Internal Communication and Stakeholder Relationship

The findings of this study demonstrate that the nature of an organisation largely influences the selection of key actors in internal communication. Being higher educational institutions (and universities for that matter), the universities have their Registrar as the head of communication because the Registrar is the head of administration and the secretary to University Council. This is a characteristic of all the three universities, regardless of whether they are private (CU), quasi-public (GIMPA) or public (UG). Apart from the Registrar, there are many other actors in the internal communication process including the Director of Public Relations who usually seeks approval from the Registrar (and occasionally from the Vice-Chancellor or Rector). The Vice-Chancellor/Rector, Deans and Heads of Departments also play some roles in internal communication. The different actors of communication, coupled with the different channels used, record various degrees of fragmentation in the universities' integrated communication efforts.

Of the three registrars, only the one at CU has a master's degree in communication studies. Similarly, only the PR Director at UG has a master's degree in communication studies among the PR representatives in the three universities. The findings, therefore, reveal that the universities have a porous human resource for communication, and this affects the co-ordination of internal communication. Co-ordination appears to end at the offices of the registrar and the vice-chancellor in liaison with the public relations unit. It does not seem to continue through to the other actors in communication which explains why many of the FGD participants and survey respondents complain about the untimely communication of issues.

The study further reveals the use of multiple channels by all the universities, coupled with a growing tendency to converge the various channels in order to reach out to their publics through both print and electronic means. Though the use of multiple channels seems to be appreciated by many of the internal publics, it is saddled with problems such as occasional network disruption and inaccessibility by some junior workers who can neither read nor use the internet.

Findings from the content analysis also show some inconsistencies in the communication of visual symbols in all the universities. This notwithstanding, the FGD participants and the majority of the survey respondents from CU and UG disclose the prestige associated with their institutional image, which they attribute to efforts made by those institutions to synchronise their visual symbols. GIMPA, however, reveals divergent opinions as the survey respondents seem to be happy with their image, whereas the FGD participants are not.

In addressing the question of how management relates to employees and students, the views expressed by the communication actors (SMRs and PR representatives) in all the institutions are inconsistent with the findings from the internal stakeholders who largely describe management-stakeholder relationships in their respective institutions as uncordial. The consistent

use of the top-down communication approach, the lack of reliable feedback loops and the unresponsive attitude of management are some of the reasons that account for the stakeholders' perceptions. The internal publics (especially the FGD participants) pledge their support for management subject to effective interactive relationships.

7.1.2 Perspectives on Cross-functional Collaboration

A key finding from the study is the minimal engagement in cross-functional collaboration. It was noted that cross-functional collaboration occurs between the registrar's office and the other offices that assist with communication (including the public relations office). Also, cross-functional collaboration occurs between the public relations office and other departments at a very minimal rate. Again, evidence from the data shows that collaboration among the departments is very limited due to unhealthy competition and an "ownership culture". Largely, collaboration among the internal publics is fragmented as it only occurs on friendly basis and not on departmental basis, according to the FGD participants. Based on these perceptions, the participants have divergent views about the open flow of communications in their respective institutions, though the general consensus is that the institutions do not keep an open system of communication.

The survey respondents in all institutions, however, reveal a point of departure by showing massive satisfaction with the open flow of information in their respective institutions. The general import, then, is that collaboration among the registrar's office and the other departments reflects in their communication with students who are at the receiving end. On the other hand, the employees scrutinise departmental collaboration and consider it to be inadequate because they need that to work more effectively.

7.1.3 Perspectives on Strategy Development and Communication

It was discovered that the engagement of PR representatives and internal publics in the development of the universities' strategic plans was either ignored or inadequate in all the institutions, except for the GIMPA survey respondents. The universities seem to employ multiple channels in communicating their strategic plans. Additionally, various strategies were adopted to deal with the challenges associated with the communication in each institution. In spite of all these efforts, the institutions suffer conversation fragmentation because the internal publics do not seem to be fully aware of their institutional strategic plan. The implication is that the use of meetings, seminars, websites and other channels appears not to be consistent or visible enough to register the strategies well in the minds of the publics.

It is also evident that the institution that developed mission and vision plaques (CU) made some impact with regard to creating awareness among its publics, compared to the ones that did a few (UG) or no plaques at all (GIMPA). However, this did not reflect in the internal publics' contributions to the achievement of their institutional strategic goals. It is obvious that the publics who contribute to the achievement of the goals do so to satisfy their own interests and not because of gratifications from the communication of their institutional strategies, mission and vision. This implies that effective stakeholder engagement and consistent interactions over an institutional strategy cannot be overlooked if an institution expects its publics to contribute wholeheartedly to the achievement of its strategic goals (Gallup, 2017; Dean, 2015).

7.1.4 Perspectives on the Implementation of IC

Evidence from the study further reveals that of the different conditions required for the implementation of IC, very little exists in the universities. Regarding the use of a communication

strategy, it is realised that CU and UG are guided by different documents which assist them in branding their institutions. These documents, however, do not completely cover/inform the other processes of IC as spelt out in the literature. A worse scenario is created by some of the SMRs and the PR representatives who demonstrate ignorance about the potentials of a communication strategy in the IC process.

With the use of technology, the findings show that GIMPA and UG use their institutional websites and intranet for official communication, whereas CU combines these with a social media platform (WhatsApp). These channels do not show adequate use of technology. They also reveal that the universities do not fully explore the potentials of social media in deepening integrated communication effort as recommended by Place et al. (2016), Smith and Place (2013) and Lee et al. (2010). Given the role of social media in ensuring interactive communication, the universities are seen to be losing a major ingredient that can enhance their IC efforts.

It is also clear from the findings that the structure and culture of the universities do not permit the PR Director to be part of top management and to exercise autonomy. As a consequence of this, PR's role as a boundary spanner, change agent and facilitator of relationship management, cross-functional collaboration, et cetera is undermined. Additionally, there is enough reason to show that the PR role is hampered by budgetary constraints.

With regard to top management support for the implementation of IC, the findings reveal that the management in each university is in favour of IC and would lend maximum support as long as there is sufficient budget and a well-developed plan to guide the process. Broadly speaking, the following main conclusions can be drawn from the study:

- The key factors of IC are not completely observed by all the universities investigated. As a result, the universities, together with their internal publics do not enjoy the full benefits of IC.
- The universities' communication systems are saddled by conversation fragmentation resulting from the inefficient co-ordination of internal communication.
- The minimal use of social media by the universities poses a huge challenge to the full application of IC in their communication processes.
- The lack of a well-developed plan and the required documentation (communication strategy) hampers effective IC in the institutions.
- The culture of the universities placing the Registrar at the helm of the communication processes which prevents the directors/heads of PR from taking full charge of IC and being part of top management. PR autonomy, thus, appears to be a mirage.
- PR's role is generally centred on downward communication with little or no room for engagement in the mechanisms that make IC work effectively including two-way communication and relationship management.

It can be gathered from the above that generally, integrated communication is not practised efficiently by the three institutions.

7.2 Implications for Practice

Even though the findings of this study can only be generalised to the sample drawn, they, nevertheless, have some implications for the practice of IC in universities and other higher educational institutions in general. Several years of research on Integrated Communication has advanced the knowledge base on how the co-ordination of internal communication facilitates the

IC process (Kokemuller, 2019; Du Plessis & Thomson, 2013; Christensen *et al.*, 2008; Mulder, 2008; Thorson & Moore, 1996; Moriarty, 1994; van Riel, 1992, 1995, 2001). However, this study reveals that the universities suffer conversation fragmentation arising from their communication systems, which may have impaired the effective co-ordination of internal communication. That is, using the available literature as a base, the study identifies some challenges associated with the co-ordination of internal communication in the three universities such as untimely communication (emanating from long protocols for approval) and inconsistencies with electronic communication, which could be addressed to enhance the IC process. These findings, therefore, suggest directions for revamping expertise, resources and approval processes for the effective co-ordination of internal communication. Also, the FGD participants and survey respondents gave divergent views on their preferred channels of communication. To enhance the co-ordination of internal communication, the institutions ought to embark on audience research to identify the right channels for each segment of internal stakeholders so that communication will reach target audiences as intended.

Though the qualitative content analysis of this study reveals some inconsistencies in the universities' deployment of some visual symbols, the research participants' satisfaction with the level of consistency achieved by CU and UG in certain areas of their visual communication is a source of encouragement for universities to work hard to raise their image. This finding implies that enhancing institutional image partly lies in the institution's effort or ability to ensure consistency in its graphical symbols. Consequently, institutions ought to work hard enough to achieve 'one look, one voice' through effective co-ordination and integration of visual symbols and messages (as suggested by Hussain & Ferdous, 2014; Kantanen, 2012; Grunig *et al.*, 2002;

Duncan & Caywood, 1996) to lead their stakeholders to engage in conversations and activities that will maximise their success.

While scholarship recommends mutually beneficial relationships between institutions and their publics for the achievement of common goals (Hawrysz & Maj, 2017; Briola, 2015; Yang & Taylor, 2014; Pride & Ferrel, 2014; Morsing & Schultz, 2006), the findings from this study suggest that the universities studied may not be completely adhering to this recommendation. The data shows both FGD participants and survey respondents expressing dissatisfaction about management-stakeholder relationships. To illustrate from one of the key findings, some of the FGD participants confess that if management relates cordially with them, they will also lend support for the implementation of management decisions. This empirical evidence calls for increased and sustainable effort by institutions to promote management-stakeholder relationship across all institutional units for the attainment of mutually beneficial goals. Consistent with the systems perspective, building mutually beneficial relationship may sensitise the internal publics to have a sense of belonging as subsystems and team players whose contributions and sense of sharing are key to the survival of the whole system (institution).

The findings on the development and communication of institutional strategies have a number of implications that are worth noting. First of all, the institutions' failure to adequately involve the PR Directors and the internal publics is inconsistent with literature by Gallup (2017) and Dean (2015) who advocate for the full participation of the PR practitioner and other internal stakeholders in developing strategic plans to avoid poor communication and failure to buy-in to the strategies. Again, the lack of a communication strategy in each institution might be a contributory factor to the poor communication of institutional strategies. Ultimately, the inadequate involvement of internal publics and poor communication of strategies may have led to

the apathy and half-hearted employee outputs described by some of the research participants. These findings may be used as evidence for the importance that scholars attach to the involvement of internal stakeholders and PR practitioners in the development and communication of institutional strategic plans and the communication strategy. For instance, involving the PR Directors at the initial stage may keep them abreast of the information that needs to be communicated to the publics in addition to what is required to develop a strategy to guide the communication process. The findings, therefore, provide empirical direction on how universities should involve their internal stakeholders in strategy development and communication.

Evidence from the study further suggests that Public Relations role as prescribed by the literature is encroached upon by the Registrar who is designated as the head of communication in each institution. Consequently, the Director of PR has no seat at the top management table. As articulated by the SMR at CU, the PR Director can only be part of top management after rising to the position of registrar. Autonomy in communication is, therefore, not a likely possibility. This might explain why PR's output in the IC process is scanty in all the institutions. It is pertinent to note that the dimension of PR encroachment found in this study is not covered in the literature and, therefore, requires critical attention. There is also the need to empower the Director of PR to lead thorough communication campaigns, be the liaison officer between top management and stakeholders and the orchestrator of all IC processes in the institution. Additionally, revamping expertise and resources for the proper co-ordination of internal communication will avoid conversation fragmentation in the institutions.

Generally, the findings of this study point to the fact that the three universities and their internal publics may not be enjoying the full benefit of IC. This conclusion may be attributed largely to the universities' non-observance of the key factors of IC in a more complete manner as

indicated above. It is important to note that this study provides empirical data on IC practices in three universities, which may add to the body of knowledge that serves as reference for the practical application of IC. Though the insights gained from the study may not bring about instant transformations in the institutions' integrated communication activities, it is possible that these insights may gradually awaken institutions to enhance their IC practices.

7.3 Implications for Theory

The study points to some issues that impinge on theoretical and conceptual claims within the practice of integrated communication. First of all, due to the universities' non-observance of the key factors of IC, it is not easy to identify each institution's stage of integration, as depicted by Duncan and Caywood's (1996) integrated communication model. Secondly, systems theory and IC scholars have variously emphasised the need for unifying efforts by institutions and their constituent units as well as the effective co-ordination of the multiple communication activities for mutually beneficial outputs (Du Plessis & Thomson, 2013; Smith, 2012a; Duncan & Caywood, 1996). The implication is that the theoretical propositions ought to reflect in the internal communication efforts of the universities investigated. However, the findings of this study show that the universities' communication systems are not well co-ordinated, meaning that the unifying efforts proposed by the systems perspective are not enacted by the institutions and their internal publics. Consequently, the findings of this study are inconsistent with the fundamental systems dictum of using a holistic approach for all communication activities.

Moreover, the kind of symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship posited by the systems theory might not be fully claimed for IC practice in the universities under investigation. Though the top management, especially at CU and UG, thinks a lot is done to ensure effective

relationships with the employees, the staff themselves do not show any gratifications obtained from their relationship with management. Coupled with this, much cannot be said of cross-functional collaboration which ensures effective communication, teamwork and mutually beneficial relationship at the horizontal level. All these findings do not resonate with the kind of interdependence and interrelationships that exist between a system and its sub-systems. Consequently, systems theory's proposition of the symbiotic relationship required for the survival of a system and its subsystems is not confirmed by evidence from this study.

Additionally, it appears that none of the institutions can fully boast of the adaptive/open systems approach which enables a system to receive inputs from its environment and processes the information received to deliver output with feedback loops to its subsystems (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015; Classen & Vewey, 1998). Evidence from this study shows the FGD participants do not enjoy the full benefit of the open system of communication. On the other hand, many of the survey respondents appear to be satisfied with information flow in their respective universities, but express dissatisfaction about the availability of feedback loops and top management's responsiveness. These appear to suggest that the open systems perspective, together with its properties of homeostasis and self-regulation (which deal with rigorous exchanges between the system and its constituents), is not fully supported by the findings. To give meaning to any attempt at mainstreaming the integrated communication concept in the universities, this study makes a strong case for an ecosystem that opens up the space for effective interactions among the university systems and their subsystems. On the basis of this, the study strongly recommends much deeper entrenchment of the system theory for a full benefit to be derived from the integrated communication approach.

Although this study is predominantly exploratory in nature, it raises a number of opportunities for further research and theory development. The study, through its multiple sources of evidence, has generated findings that may be relevant for the expansion of the systems theory. Though the findings cannot be generalised to larger populations due to the sample sizes, they offer the opportunity to refine the concepts and constructs that emerged from the inductive analysis.

7.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study and consistent with the literature, there is the need to re-examine the role of the Registrar as Head of Communication in the universities. This role assigned to the Registrar may have the tendency of diminishing the expected output from the Director of PR captured in the literature as the manager and orchestrator of the IC process. Additionally, opening up the space for more enhanced communication input of the Director of PR would be more appropriate and may, perhaps, deepen the integrated approach to carrying out communication activities in the universities.

While the above recommendation is necessary, it is equally important for universities to review or redefine the position of the heads of PR by designating them as IC champions. Placing them in the limelight of the IC process promises the following benefits: the effective co-ordination of all communication activities, image integration, management of mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders and cross-functional collaboration (Niemann-Struweg, 2014; Duncan & Caywood, 1996). Similarly, it would ensure the streamlining of reporting lines and the effective evaluation of the IC process.

Again, it is noted that the universities' lack of a communication strategy terribly affects their implementation of IC. In this regard, it would seem more fruitful for the universities to

develop a well-planned communication strategy with a strategic focus that aligns with their institutional strategic goals. The communication strategy would provide strategic direction for the co-ordination of all communication efforts as well as the alignment of individual daily activities with the institutional goals. Beyond the above recommendations, the following are also key:

Institutions must consider one-way or vertical communication as a practice of the past and limit it as much as possible. Stringent efforts must be made to engage stakeholders in two-way or interactive communication and acknowledge their inputs because when stakeholders feel marginalised, they become apathetic. This would impinge on the achievement of institutional strategic goals.

Closely related to the above, universities must be cautious of conversation fragmentation that could arise from poor co-ordination and the use of multiple channels for internal communication. They must embark on periodic audience research to identify their publics' preferred channels for communicating policies and other pieces of information in order to be on the same page with them. In this case, media/channels that are not in the position to communicate information clearly to certain segments of the publics can be avoided.

Furthermore, cross-functional collaboration must be managed in a manner that dissuades fragmented relationships and silos in order to encourage interdependence and team spirit that feed into broader discussions across the entire institution.

It is equally cardinal to dedicate an office or officer (preferably with PR expertise) to design a well-planned, thoughtful and holistic approach to management-stakeholder relationship. This design should take into account, the periodic sensitisation of key people (such as Heads of Departments) who would liaise with the departments on behalf of management to refresh their strategies for ensuring cordial relationships in their units. The periodic training and discussion to

endow the HoDs with the necessary skills and strategies to nurture mutually beneficial relationships with publics. Adequate provision must also be made for effective feedback loops and total member involvement in the communication process. These efforts will encourage a sense of belonging and efforts for the achievement of institutional goals for the mutual benefit of all.

To facilitate the above, new technologies should be extensively explored and employed. Institutions should make effective use of social media together with other technologies. Institutional websites should be updated often and be made interactive enough to attract stakeholders' input at all times. Reliable database and social media platforms should be created and well managed.

Scholarship recommends sufficient budget as a key pre-condition for running the IC programme, but this is subject to the importance attached to it. It is clear from the findings that none of the universities had sufficient budget for IC. Institutions must attach a lot of importance to the IC programme and allocate enough budgets to it to avoid poor quality and haphazard communication programmes. Similarly, all other resources such as office space and qualified personnel must be made available.

Universities must not lose sight of the fact that the buy-in of top management is always crucial for the success of IC. The commitment of top management would ensure that all possible barriers that impinge on the IC programme are removed; the necessary resources are provided and the IC programme as a whole is fully supported by top management. It is pertinent to note that the contribution of PR to an effective IC agenda is essential for top management buy-in. The public relations unit should, therefore, develop strategies and programmes that will attract the endorsement and full participation by top management.

It is additionally important to design a periodic evaluation schedule for the IC process. This calls for public relations active engagement at the micro, meso and macro levels of the institutions. The conduct of situational analysis at all these levels would inform public relations about the resources and logistics required while preparing the grounds to get buy-in from all key actors and stakeholders.

7.4.1 Recommendation for Further Studies

Further research using the deductive approach to investigate the perceptions of different institutional stakeholders about IC is recommended to confirm/debunk the systems theory by drawing inferences from larger populations.

7.5 Contributions to Knowledge

The study used the case study approach which allows the use of multiple sources of evidence to investigate integrated communication, using the systems theory as the theoretical basis. Employing multiple sources of evidence such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and survey generated data to highlight the different factors of integrated communication.

Additionally, the perceptions of four different categories of internal stakeholders provides a wide range of empirical evidence to fill the gap in literature identified earlier in this research.



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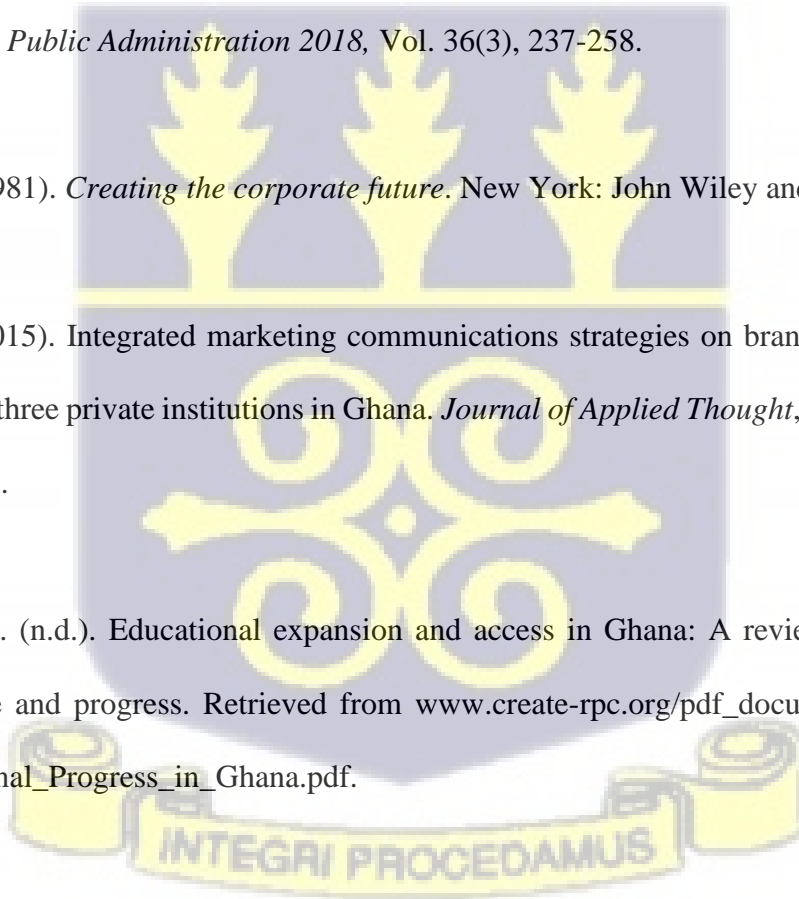
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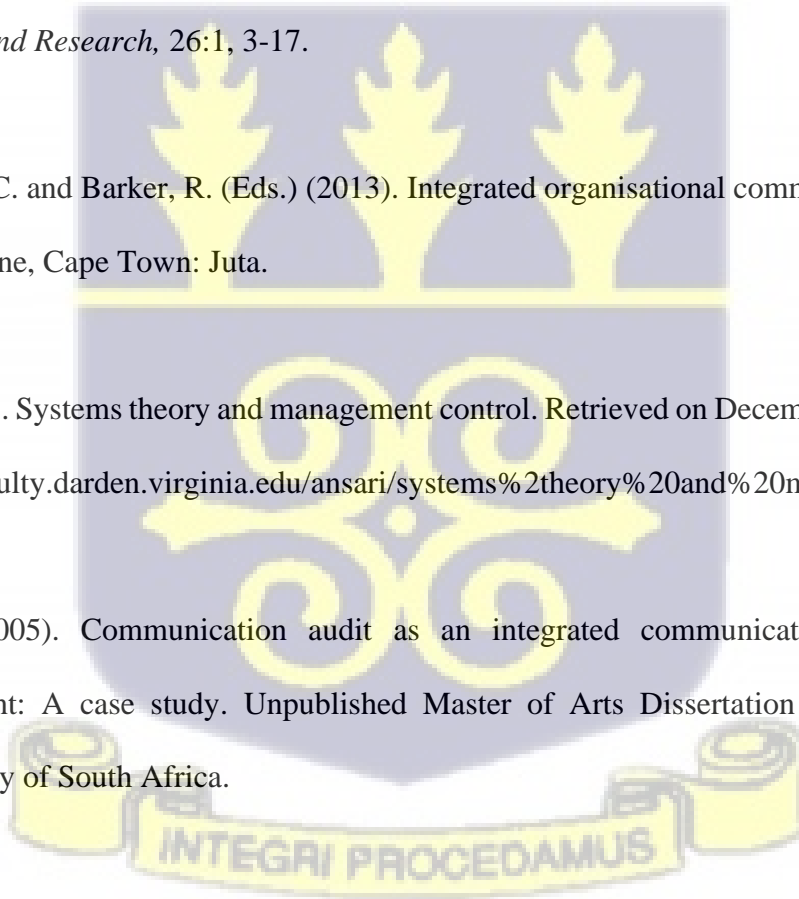
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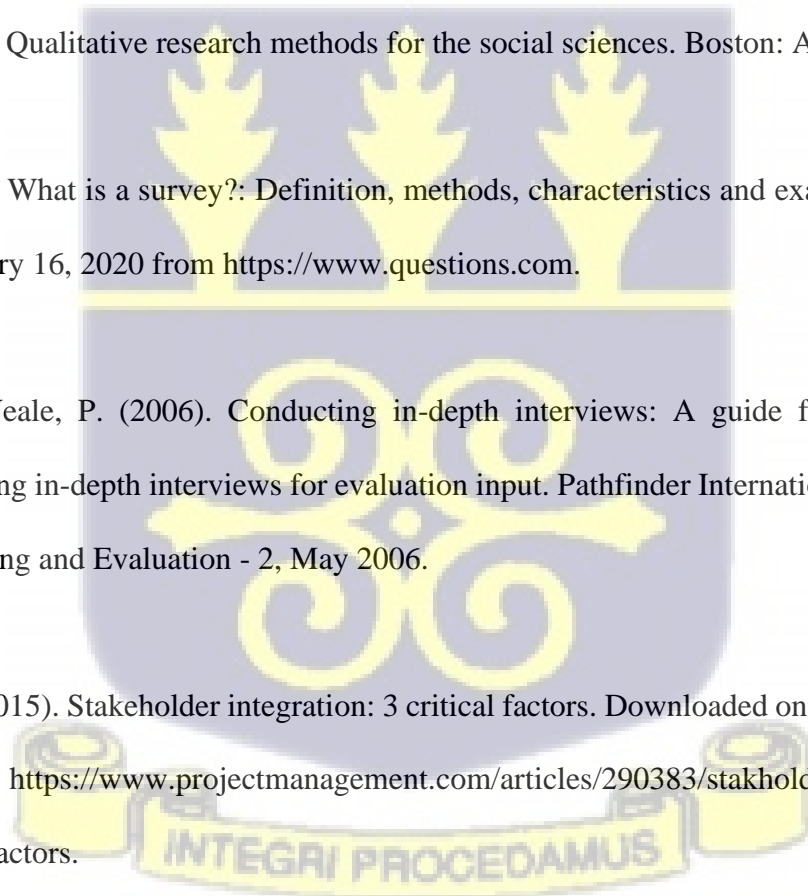
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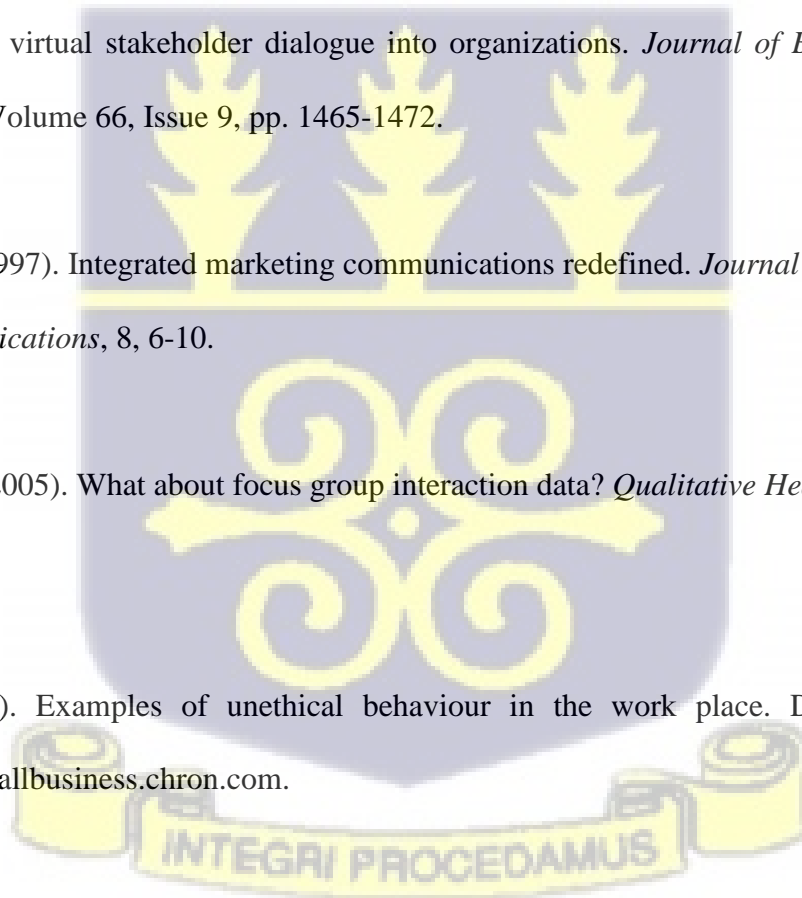
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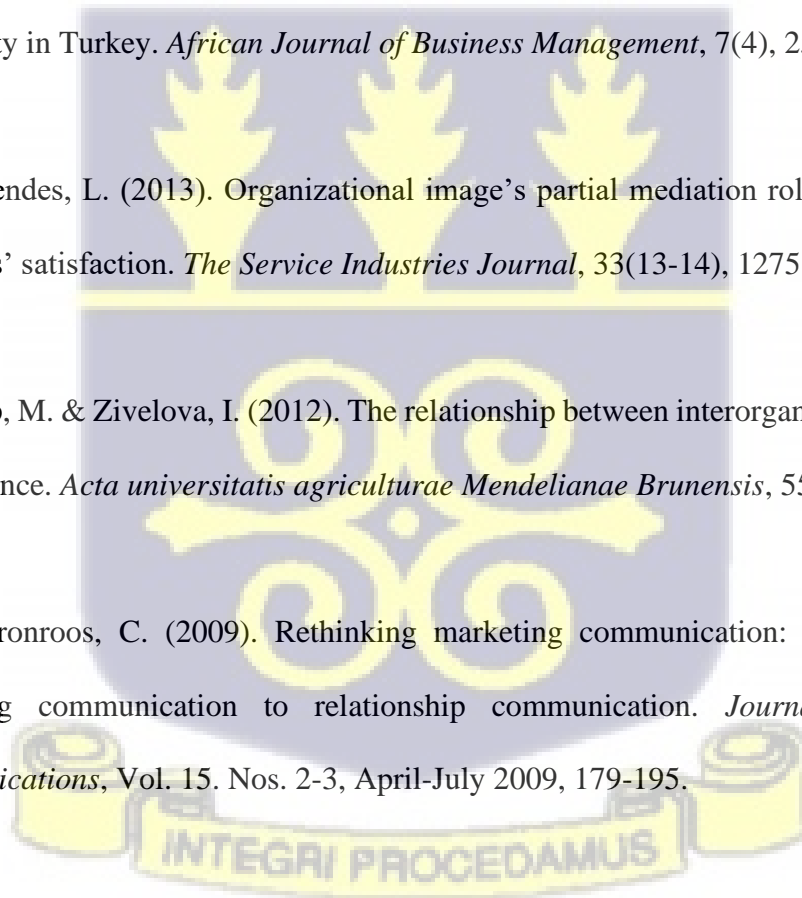
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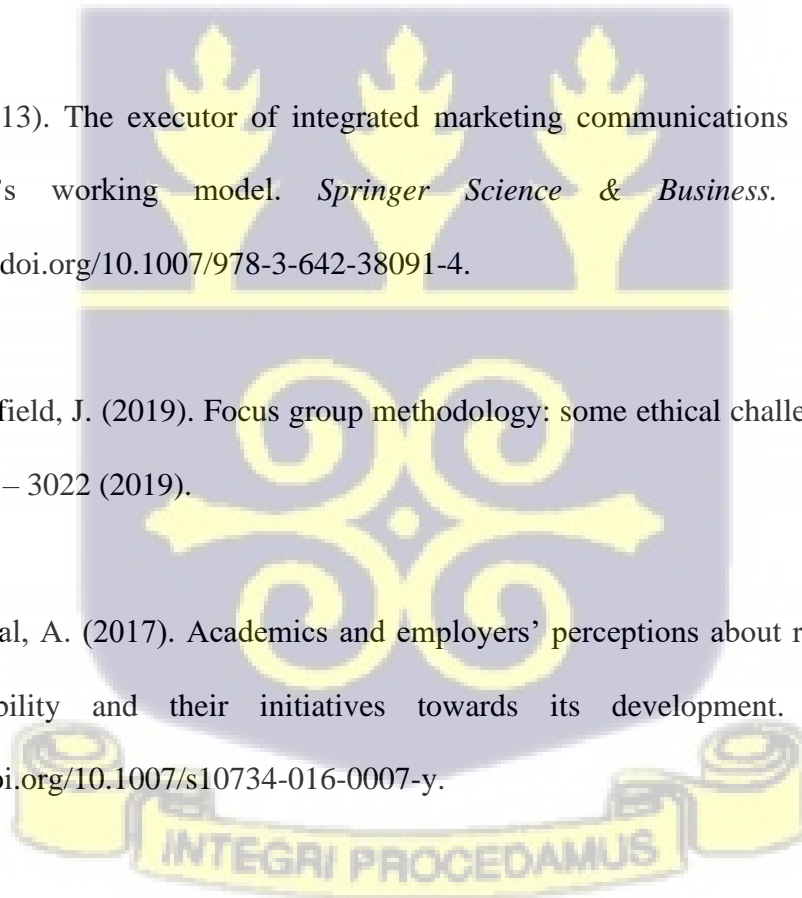
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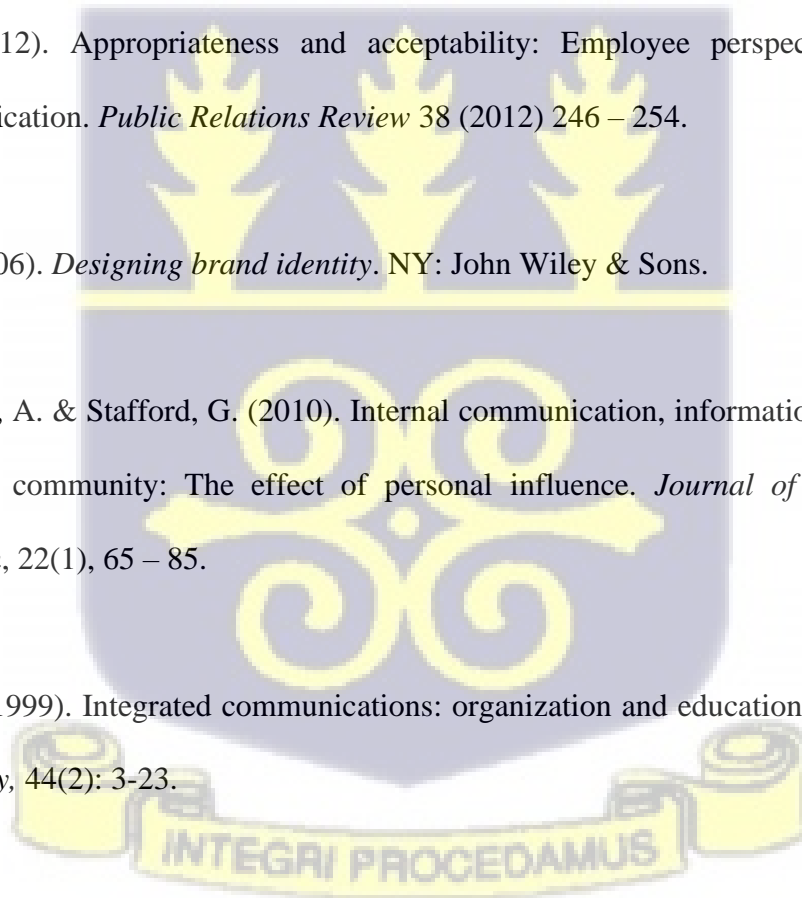
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**APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED EMPLOYEES OF THE
UNIVERSITIES**

INTRODUCTION

I am a student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. I am conducting a research on integrated communication in universities for my PhD thesis. This discussion is to help me gather data for the research. Please be assured that this is a personally-sponsored and purely academic work. Therefore, I have no intentions to use the information derived for any financial gains. Your candid opinions would be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

A. GENERAL IMPRESSION ABOUT COMMUNICATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

Q1. What are the channels used for communication in this University? Probe

Q2. Which of the channels would you say is your most reliable source of information about the University and why?

Q3. Tell me about your general impression about communication with employees in this University.

Q4. In your view, which department is fully in charge of communicating information from University Management? Probe

B. IMAGE MANAGEMENT/CO-ORDINATION AND STRATEGIC CONSISTENCY IN COMMUNICATION

Q5. What is your impression about the deployment of the University's symbols, inscriptions, colours? Probe

Q6. To what extent has the deployment of the University's symbols promoted the image of the University?

Q7. What are your views about the co-ordination of communication activities in this University? Probe

Q8. How does information travel from Management to University stakeholders?

Q9. How will you rate consistency in communication (from Management-HoDs, Management-union groups)? Probe

C. COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Q10. How do you get information about this University's Strategic plan? Probe

Q11. How has the communication of the University's strategic plan helped you to contribute to the achievement of the University's strategic goals? Probe

Q12. In your view, to what extent has the University achieved its strategic goals? Probe

D. CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

Q13. Indicate the level of collaboration that exists among departments/employees regarding the sharing of information about the University's strategic goals.

Q14. How easy is it to derive information from other departments/colleagues to advance your work? Probe

Q15. What are your overall views about the free flow of information in the University? Probe

E. RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Q16. What are your impressions about the University Management's relationship with employees?

Probe

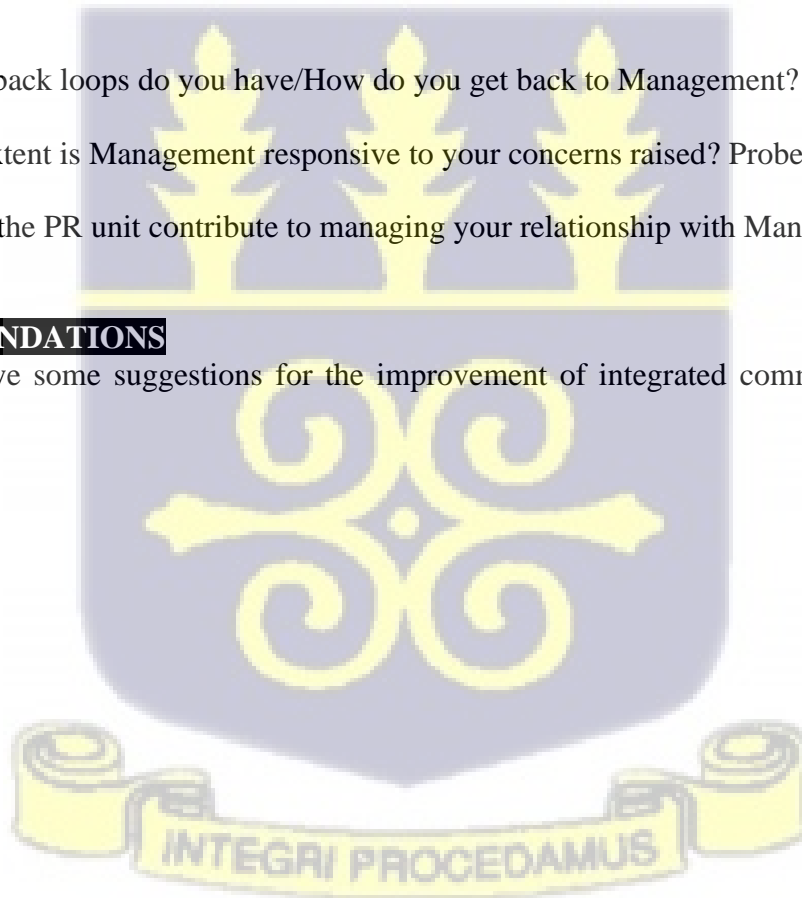
Q17. What feedback loops do you have/How do you get back to Management?

Q18. To what extent is Management responsive to your concerns raised? Probe

Q19. How does the PR unit contribute to managing your relationship with Management? Probe

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Q20. Kindly give some suggestions for the improvement of integrated communication in this University.



**APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SAMPLED STUDENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITIES**

Serial No.:

Thesis Title: An audit of integrated communication in universities: A study of three universities in Ghana

INTRODUCTION

I am a student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. I am conducting a research on the above topic for my PhD thesis. I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Please be assured that your answers will be confidential.

Thank you.

A. GENERAL IMPRESSION ABOUT COMMUNICATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

Q1. From which of the following channels do you receive information about the University?

(Please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Notice Boards [] | 2. University Website [] | 3. Emails/Intranet [] |
| 4. Student Handbook [] | 5. University Brochure [] | 6. Newsletters [] |
| 7. University Events [] | 8. Radio [] | 9. Newspapers [] |
| 10. Television [] | 11. Social Media [] | 12. Grapevine [] |
| 13. Other (Please specify)..... | | |

Q2. Which of the following would you say is **your most reliable** source of information about the University? (Please select only one answer.)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Notice Boards [] | 2. University Website [] | 3. Emails/Intranet [] |
| 4. Student Handbook [] | 5. University Brochure [] | 6. Newsletters [] |
| 7. University Events [] | 8. Radio [] | 9. Newspapers [] |
| 10. Television [] | 11. Social Media [] | 12. Grapevine [] |
| 13. Other (Please specify)..... | | |

Q3. How satisfied are you with information flow in your University?

1. Very satisfied [] 2. Satisfied [] 3. Dissatisfied [] 4. Very dissatisfied []

Q4. Which of the following **best describes** your impression about communication in the University? (Please select only one answer.)

1. I get fully informed [] 2. I get adequately informed [] 3. I get fairly informed []
4. I only get limited information [] 5. I hardly get informed []

Q5. In your view, is the public relations department fully in charge of information from University Management?

1. Yes [] 2. No [] 3. Not sure []

Q6. How often do you receive information from the public relations department in this university?

1. Frequently [] 2. Sometimes [] 3. Rarely [] 4. Never []

B. COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Q7. Are you aware of the university's strategic plan? 1. Yes [] 2. No []

Q8. Are you aware of the university's mission? 1. Yes [] 2. No []

Q9. Are you aware of the University's vision? 1. Yes [] 2. No []

Q10. Would you say information about the University's strategic plan is readily accessible?
1. Yes [] 2. No [] 3. Not sure []

Q11. How often do you receive information about the University's strategic plan?
1. Very often [] 2. Often [] 3. Rarely [] 4. Not at all []

Q12. Through which of the following channels do you often receive information about the University's strategic plan? (**Please tick all that apply.**)

- 1. Notice Boards []
- 2. University Website []
- 3. Emails/Intranet []
- 4. Student Handbook []
- 5. University Strategic Plan []
- 6. Newsletters []
- 7. University Events []
- 8. Radio []
- 9. Newspapers []
- 10. Television []
- 11. Social Media []
- 12. Grapevine []
- 13. Other (Please specify).....

Q13. Which of the following **channels** would you say is your **most reliable** source of information about the University's strategic plan? (**Please select only one answer.**)

- 1. Notice Boards []
- 2. University Website []
- 3. Emails/Intranet []
- 4. Student Handbook []
- 5. University Strategic Plan []
- 6. Newsletters []
- 7. University Events []
- 8. Radio []
- 9. Newspapers []
- 10. Television []
- 11. Social Media []
- 12. Grapevine []
- 13. Other (Please specify).....

Q14. Use the list below to describe your views about the way university management communicates the university's strategic plan to you.

	Communication of University's Strategic Plan	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree
a	The messages I receive about the university's strategic plan are well understood.				
b	The messages I receive about the university's strategic plan help me to contribute to the achievement of university goals.				
c	Messages received on the university's strategies make me a proud associate of the University.				

Q15. Overall, how satisfied are you with communication received about the university's future strategies?

1. Very satisfied [] 2. Satisfied [] 3. Not satisfied [] 4. Not satisfied at all []

Q16. Will you say communication about the university's future strategies informs your reaction towards the achievement of the university's long range goals?

1. Yes [] 2. No [] 3. Not sure []

C. CO-ORDINATION AND CONSISTENCY IN COMMUNICATION

Q17. Will you say communication received from the various departments is well co-ordinated?

1. Yes [] 2. No [] 3. Not sure []

Q18. The various departments depend on the public relations/public affairs department to communicate their events.

1. Strongly agree [] 2. Agree [] 3. Disagree [] 4. Strongly disagree []

Q19. The public relations department ensures consistency in all the messages received from university management about the university's future strategies.

1. Strongly agree [] 2. Agree [] 3. Disagree [] 4. Strongly disagree []

Q20. The messages received from the SRC about the university's policies are the same as those received from the university management.

1. Strongly agree [] 2. Agree [] 3. Disagree [] 4. Strongly disagree []

Q21. Use the list below to describe your views about consistency of communication.

	Consistency of communication	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree
a.	Messages about the university's activities are usually sent through one department.				
b.	Messages about the university's strategic plan are usually sent by the Public Relations Department.				
c.	I receive the messages through the same channel.				
d.	I receive the same messages through different channels.				

Q22. Do you have opportunity to send feedback on the messages received about the University's strategic plan?

1. Yes [] 2. No []

D. STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Q23. Please rank your impression about the University's relationship with students in the following table.

	The University's relationship with students	1 Very Satisfactory	2 Satisfactory	3 Unsatisfactory	4 Very Unsatisfactory
a.	University's relationship with students				
b.	Negotiation with students in drawing up policies.				
c.	Timely communication of University policies				
d.	Availability of reliable channels for students' feedback.				
e.	Responsiveness to students' feedback				

E. DEPLOYMENT OF UNIVERSITY'S SYMBOLS AND COLOURS

Q24. Please use the list below to indicate your views about the deployment of the University's symbols and colours.

	Deployment of University's symbols and colours	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree
a.	There is consistency in the use of the university's colours on vehicles.				
b.	There is consistency in the use of the university's logo on various departmental sign boards.				
c.	The alignment of university visual symbols promotes the image of the university.				

F. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

D1. Gender: 1. Male [] 2. Female []

D2. Age: 1. Less than 18 years [] 2. 18-25 years [] 3. 26-35 years []

4. 36-45 years [] 5. 46 and above []

D3. Name of Institution:

1. Central University [] 2. GIMPA [] 3. University of Ghana []

D4. Programme: 1. Social Sciences [] 2. Business []

D5. Residential Status: 1. Resident on Campus [] 2. Non-resident []



APPENDIX III: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED

MEMBERS AT THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITION IN THE UNIVERSITIES

INTRODUCTION

I am a student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. I am conducting a research on integrated communication in universities for my PhD thesis. This interview is to help me to gather data for the research. Please be assured that this is a personally-sponsored and purely academic work. Therefore, I have no intentions to use the information derived for any financial gains. Your candid opinions would be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

A. GENERAL IMPRESSION ABOUT COMMUNICATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

Q1. What are your views about the distribution of information in this University? Probe

Q2. What role does your office play to ensure information reaches the internal publics as expected? Probe

Q3. To what extent does feedback received from internal publics indicate that information from management is well communicated?

B. STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP

Q4. Who are the University's stakeholders?

Q5. Please tell me about how management's relationship with the publics is managed?

Q6. Which office is at the centre of communicating information from management to the University's publics? Probe

C. CO-ORDINATION, STRATEGIC CONSISTENCY AND IMAGE MANAGEMENT

Q7. Which department is mainly responsible for co-ordinating information circulated to the internal publics?

Q8. Does the department have a communication strategy that guides the communication of the University's strategic intent? Probe

Q9. Can you please tell me about the measures in place for the co-ordination and integration of messages circulated to the internal publics? Probe

Q10. What are your views about the management of the university's messages, symbols and colours?

D. COMMUNICATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN, MISSION AND VISION

Q11. What are your views about the strategies used to communicate information about the university's strategic plan, mission and vision? Probe

Q12. What shows that the communication efforts received the expected reactions from the internal publics? Probe

Q13. To what extent has the department helped the University to achieve its strategic goals or promote its image?

E. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

Q14. Please tell me about your views about integrated communication and the department in charge of its implementation? Probe

Q15. To what extent is the department in charge of integrated communication autonomous? Probe

Q16. How does your office help to ensure the implementation of integrated communication?

Q17. How far does senior management support the integrated communication efforts? Probe

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Q18. What recommendations would you give for the improvement of integrated communication in this university?



**APPENDIX IV: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAMPLED
WORKERS AT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS**

INTRODUCTION

I am a student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. I am conducting research on integrated communication in universities for my PhD thesis. This interview is to help me to gather data for the research. Please be assured that this is a personally-sponsored and purely academic work. Therefore, I have no intentions to use the information derived for any financial gains. Your candid opinions would be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ON COMMUNICATION AND IC

Q1. Who are the key actors in internal communication in this university? Probe

Q2. What roles does your office play to ensure that information reaches the University's publics as expected? Probe

Q3. Briefly, what does integrated communication mean to you? Probe

B. COMMUNICATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN, VISION AND MISSION

Q4. Does your university have a current/recently used strategic plan? Probe

Q5. Please tell me about the processes involved in developing the document.

Q6. What strategies are adopted to communicate the strategic plan, vision and mission? Probe

Q7. To what extent has the university achieved its strategic goals? Probe

C. INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP

Q8. Can you please mention your major stakeholders? Probe

Q9. How do you manage the relationship between management and internal publics? Probe

Q10. How do you ensure internal publics respond to management decisions? Probe.

Q11. To what extent would you say this university operates in an open environment where people can easily get access to information?

D. CO-ORDINATION/STRATEGIC CONSISTENCY AND IMAGE BUILDING

Q12. What strategies do you use to co-ordinate the messages circulated in the University? Probe

Q13. How do you ensure collaboration among internal publics to ensure synergy communication? Probe

Q14. How does your department manage the use of institutional symbols and colours? Probe

E. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

Q15. Does your department have a communication strategy that guides communication in this university? Probe

Q16. What other mechanisms do you have for the implementation of integrated communication in your university? Probe.

17. Please tell me about the position of the head of the PR in senior management discussions. Probe

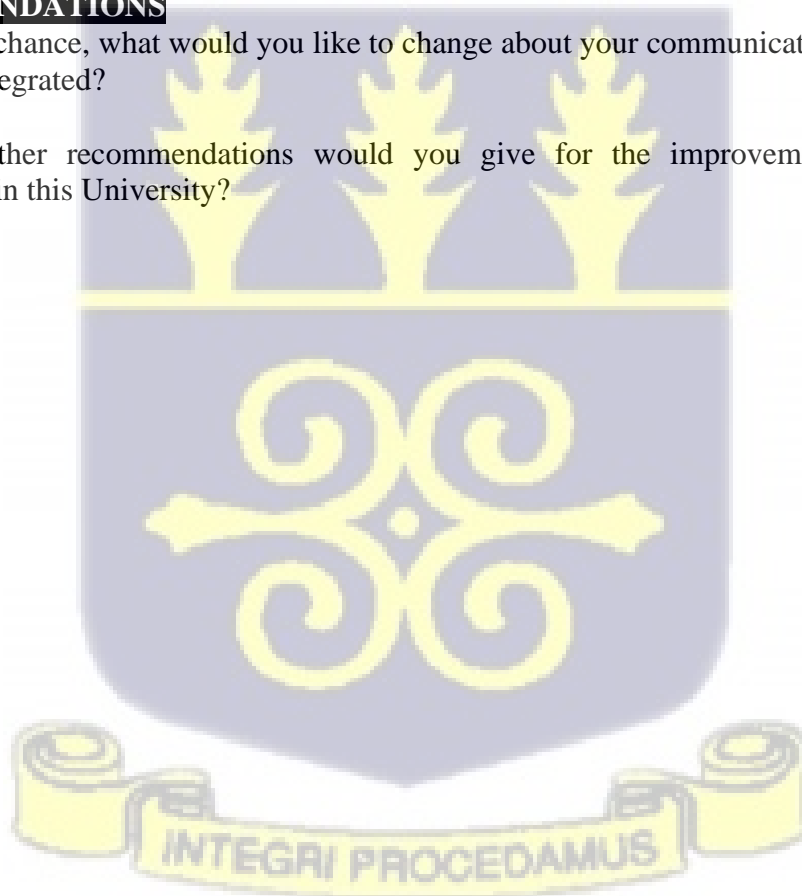
Q18. To what extent does management support the PR department in its efforts to ensure communication integration? Probe

Q19. Assessing your overall communication efforts, how far has the PR department been successful in its integrated communication efforts? Probe

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Q20. Given the chance, what would you like to change about your communication programme to make it more integrated?

Q21. What further recommendations would you give for the improvement of integrated communication in this University?



**APPENDIX V: CHECKLIST FOR GATHERING DATA ON THE USE OF
UNIVERSITY SYMBOLS**

	Category	Central University	GIMPA	University of Ghana
Use of Logo				
1.	Placement of institutional logo on signboards			
2.	Placement of institutional logo on stationery such as letterheads and business cards			
3.	Placement of logo on institutional vehicles			
Use of Colour Scheme				
4.	Consistent use of the right corporate colours for institutional logo			
5.	Consistent use of corporate colours on signboards			
6.	Consistent use of colour scheme on institutional vehicles			
7.	Consistent use of colour scheme on stationery (e.g. letterheads, business cards)			
Use of Typography				
8.	Consistent use of typography on stationery			
9.	Consistent use of typography on signboards			
10.	Consistent use of typography on vehicles			

(Use ✓ for 'Yes' and X for 'No')

