

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN  
ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS:  
A CASE OF SELECTED PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE ASHANTI  
REGION.**

**BOAKYE FREDERICK**

**NSOR CELESTINA**

**TABI AWUAH SAMUEL**

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## **STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY**

We have read the university regulations relating to plagiarism and certify that this report is all our own work and do not contain any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted.

<b>NAMES</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>Boakye Frederick 10135421</b>	.....	.....
<b>Nsor Celestina 10135446</b>	.....	.....
<b>Tabi Awuah Samuel 10135427</b>	.....	.....

## **SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION**

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by Christian Service University College.

### **Certified by**

Justice Boffah Pokumensah (Rev.) ..... ..

### **Supervisor**

Mrs. Adwoa Amankwah ..... ..

**Head of Department, Communication Studies**

## **ABSTRACT**

Although some works have been done about the practice of public relations in organisations in Ghana, not much has been written about the nature of public relations practice in tertiary institutions in Ghana. This research therefore sought to assess the contribution of public relations practice in achieving organizational goals in selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region. The study used Christian Service University College, Ghana Baptist University College, Garden City University College and University College of Management Studies as selected cases. The study sought for the views of persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four selected private tertiary institutions.

The objectives of the study were to establish the relevance of public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions, to identify specific functions that can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions and to examine how public relations can be strengthened in private tertiary institutions. The Excellence theory in public relations was used in the study.

The study found that three out of the four selected private tertiary institutions do not have public relations department. The study also found that all the four tertiary institutions agree that public relations is very important in dealing with the external and internal publics of the various universities in achieving the organizational goals.

The study recommends that the three out of the four selected institutions which do not have public relations departments, should establish outfits which will be responsible for carrying out public relations activities; it is also recommended that the public relations department should be headed by a public relations officer with at least two assistants. According to the

excellence theory in public relations, these people should have an academic qualification in communication studies. The public relations officer should be a qualified person with at least a minimum of a first degree with specialization in public relations.

This is necessary to improve public relations practice in the three out of the four selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region.

## **DEDICATION**

We dedicate this work to the Almighty God for His love and guidance throughout our four years study.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the past decade, a lot of work and research has been done in international practice of public relations especially in the United States of America, United Kingdom and Europe. However, some other regions, such as Africa and Latin America, have not been adequately studied by researchers (Wu, Taylor & Chen, 2001). In the light of this, the knowledge of the practice of public relations needs to be broadened in Africa, especially its practice in the private tertiary institutions. This study sought to discover the contribution of public relations in achieving the organizational goals of private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region.

This chapter discusses the background to the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, objectives of the study, the research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study and the operationalization of key terms.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The formal practice of what is now referred to as “public relations” dates back to the early 20th century. In the relatively brief period leading up to today, public relations has been defined in many different ways; the definitions often evolve around the changing roles in the field and profession and technological advances. Good public relations require communication skills, expertise in dealing with all media and the principles of

persuasion. As a public relations practitioner, you should know when and what to communicate; this involves analysis, judgment, decision making power, counseling and planning (Seitel, 2001). Because public relations in its modern form originated from the United States of America (Seitel, 2001), the developmental history is first discussed with reference to America. Thereafter an overview of international development follows which include most African countries.

In some tertiary institutions in the western world, they have well established public relations departments. In Harvard University for instance, their government relations team represents the University's interests in legislation and regulation affecting higher education and maintains relationships with everyone from key thinkers on the national political scene to regulators and lawmakers. Their public relations team nurtures the relationship between the University and its host communities by working closely with local leaders, schools and educators and civic organizations in Boston and Cambridge, as well as other communities where Harvard has a presence. Harvard University have a communications team which manages the University's outbound communications, serves as a resource to local, national and international media organizations, and manages the University's online presence. All the above teams work in the public relations department in Harvard University.

However, there are some tertiary institutions in Ghana which also have well established public relations departments. For instance, the University of Ghana has a public relations unit which is called the Public Affairs Directorate and is primarily responsible for

planning, organizing and managing programmes and activities which enhance the flow of communication between the University and its publics. Their internal publics include faculties, staff and students, whereas the external publics include corporate and individual friends, sister and affiliate-universities/institutions and the alumni. Their media and publicity team acts as the primary contact between the University and the media, provides strategic guidance on on-going basis and executes as far as possible, the day-to-day publicity efforts on behalf of the University. The public relations office also performs protocol duties such as making official travel arrangements, assisting staff to acquire/renew travelling documents, acquisition/renewal of alien's registration and work permits, on retirement (Certificates, Send-off receptions), and on death (family liaison, facilitating university obligations).

The event organisation and management team of the public affairs is largely responsible for the organisation of University events and functions such as matriculation ceremonies, congregation ceremonies, inter-faculty lectures, inaugural lectures, special/occasional public lecture and media events. The public affairs directorate is the store-house for university publications. The publications range from official gazettes, which record appointments made, terminations and other administrative changes, to proceedings of statutory events on the university calendar (Matriculation, Congregation), mandatory and non-mandatory publications. Also, the Alumni Affairs Unit is a unit under the Directorate of Public Affairs. Its primary role is to facilitate the relationship between the University and its alumni, specifically the Alumni Association.

In view of this, the study focused on the contribution of public relations in achieving the organizational goals of private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Public Relations is developing in Ghana; there is a national professional body, the Institute of Public Relations, which was established in 1972 as the Public Relations Association of Ghana (PRAG). This association, as part of its achievements has been able to sensitize most organizations on the importance of having a public relations outfit.

The problem that exists in some private tertiary institutions was that, they do not have units or teams that carry specific functions at the public relations department. In some instances, the office of the registrar performs the public relations activities. This creates a serious problem because the registrar becomes ineffective. This is perceived to be improper, considering the peculiar nature of public relations practice.

It is the duty of the public relations practitioners to make their institutions known to the public by informing the public about the objectives of the institution, the programmes offered in the institution, its location and the success story of the institution. For example, if a prospective applicant wants to make enquiries about Christian Service University College at Odeneho Kwadaso and happens to meet a person who resides in Odeneho Kwadaso and the person directs the prospective applicant to Christian Village at Santasi, then, this means that the public relations practitioner of Christian Service University College is not performing his publicity work effectively by not making sure that the

institution is well known by the public. This will be a disadvantage to Christian Service University College because many applicants will be directed to Christian Village and Christian Service University College will lose all these applicants because the school is not known. The duty of a public relations practitioner is to create effective publicity, maintain and promote relationships with both internal and external publics, for example, a good relationship between an institution and its alumni is a very important thing. The public relations practitioner also provides advice on relevant projects to undertake as part of social responsibility and performs intelligence function by finding out the public perceptions about the institution.

Public relations activities in some private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region are combined with administrative functions which undermine effective public relations practice. In view of this, this study found out how public relations can be strengthened in order to contribute to achieving goals of the private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region.

#### **1.4 THE PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of the study was to establish the contribution of public relations to achieving organizational goals of private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region.

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To establish the relevance of public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions.
2. To identify specific functions that can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions.
3. To examine how public relations can be strengthened in private tertiary institutions.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How relevant is the public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions?
2. What specific functions can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions?
3. How can public relations be strengthened in private tertiary institutions?

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Researching into the contribution of public relations in achieving organizational goals of private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region was added up to the existing stock of knowledge by:

1. stressing on the need for private tertiary institutions to adopt the practice of public relations.



2. helping public relations practitioners in private tertiary institutions to know the specific functions that they have to perform to achieve organizational goals.
3. helping the management of private tertiary institutions to know the relevance of public relations practice as a management function.
4. serving as a reference point for future studies.

## **1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study sought out the views of public relations practitioners in some selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region on the importance of public relations and its contribution to achieving organizational goals. There are nine private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region namely **Christian Service University College, Ghana Baptist University College, Garden City University College, Christ Apostolic University College, University College of Management Studies, Data Link University College, Spiritan University College, Ghana Telecom University College and Sikkim Manipal University**, but this study focused on four of them.

## **1.9 OPERATIONALIZATION OF KEY TERMS**

### **MANAGEMENT**

Koontz and Weihrich (1994) define management as “the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims” (p. 479). In this study, management is defined as the

attainment of organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organizing, leading and controlling organizational resources.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL**

Martin (2001) defines organizational goal as “the process that is based upon the same perceptual, political and self- interest factor that exist in every other area of managerial work” (p. 527). In this study, organizational goal is defined as the collective task that exists between management of an organisation in different roles in achieving the vision of the institution.

### **PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTION**

Tertiary education in Ghana is defined in the Report of the President’s Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (2002:xxxvi) as “the education offered after secondary level at a university, polytechnic, specialized institutions, open university and any other institutions to provide training that leads to the award of diploma and degree qualifications. Tertiary institutions provide the platform for training people in all spheres of human endeavour such as the humanities, sciences and technology, which are the driving forces of development” (p.xxxvi). This definition has been adopted for this study because of its in-depth explanation of tertiary institution by the Ministry of Education, Ghana.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

According to the Mexican Statement (1978), Public Relation is defined as “the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences; counseling the organization’s leaders; and implementing planned programmes of actions which serve both the organization’s and public’s interest”. This definition has been adopted for this study because of its in-depth explanation of public relations activity.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER**

In this study, Public relations practitioner is defined as a person who is involved in decision making in an organisation in order to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding and cooperation between an organisation and its publics, and also helping as an early warning system to anticipate trends.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents an overview of public relations practice and assesses how relevant its elements are to the achievement of organizational goals. It also discusses findings of studies relevant to the practice of public relations in organisations and the gap in literature that needs to be filled. The chapter also explains the theoretical framework for this study.

#### **2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the United States alone, Public Relations is a multibillion-dollar business practiced by 158,000 professionals and the employment of public relations specialists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2012 (Seitel, 2007) .

Therefore, the need for effective public relations in an increasingly competitive business environment should spur demand for public relations specialists in organisations of all types and sizes. Public relations practice as a field has grown immeasurably and today, it is clearly a grown industry (Seitel, 2007). Having seen how the practice of public relations look like currently, it is prudent to trace the profession down memory lane.

Public relations has been with us for thousands of years. Public relations became a profession in 1903 as Ivy Lee, who is recognized as one of the founding fathers of

modern public relations, defined public relations, saying: Public relations is the actual relationship of the company to the people and that relationship involves more than talk. The company must act by performing good deeds.

Today, although a generally accepted definition of public relations still escapes practitioners, there is a clearer understanding of the field. According to Seitel (2007), one of the most ambitious searches for a universal definition was commissioned in 1975 by the Foundation of Public Relations Research and Education. Sixty-five public relations leaders' participated in the study, which analyzed 472 different definitions and offered the following 88-word sentence:

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

According to the Mexican Statement (1978), Public relation is defined as the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences; counseling the organization's leaders; and implementing planned programmes of actions which serve both the organization's and public's interest. In the definitions of public relations given above, it is seen that public relations assists an organisation and its publics to adapt to each other mutually. The key word used in both definitions is that public relations is a management function. Public relations must report to and be part of top management if it

is to work to the benefit of an organization. Public relations must also serve as a sincere tool to management and its advices to management must be unfiltered.

For public relations to function like what has been stated above, in most situations, is easier said than done because many public relations departments in several organizations are combined with either marketing, advertising or even legal departments. This is not different from many private tertiary institutions. In the case of these institutions which are cases for this study, public relations report to or is performed at the office of the registrar.

According to Seitel (2007), the functions of public relations comprises writing, media relations, planning, counseling, researching, publicity, marketing communications, community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, government affairs, investor relations, public affairs and issue management and website development. This is a list of what public relations practitioners do and also provide all-round general communication counsel to management and publics.

Janice Sherline, a professor of public relations, gave a description of public relations as “the management of communications between an organisation and all entities that have a direct or indirect relationship with the organisation, i.e., its publics” (Seitel, 2007, p.6)

Every organisation has its own publics it deals with and it is one important responsibility of the organisation to build good lasting relationships with its publics.

## **2.3 THE PUBLICS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Public relations as the name suggests is simply relations with publics. Public relations practitioners communicate regularly with many different publics not necessarily the general public. Each public of an organization has its own needs and wants and this require different types of communication to address each of them. Often, the lines that divide these publics are thin, and the potential overlap is significant. Therefore, priorities, according to organizational needs, must always be reconciled (Seitel, 2007).

According to Seitel (2007), twenty of the most important publics of a typical multinational corporation or organisation are managers/supervisors, media, stockholders, investment community competitors, suppliers, special interest groups, community neighbours, .international community, banks/insurers, trade associations, dealers/distributors, customers, federal state/local legislators, regulatory authorities, academic community, labour unions, board of directors, clerical employees and employees family.

Public relations practitioners always act as a link between their organisation and the various publics. Publics can be classified into internal and external.

### **2.3.1 INTERNAL PUBLICS**

It comprises the immediate people in the organisation. Internal publics are also referred to as insiders of an organisation and are directly connected to the organisation. For

example, the management team, supervisors, employees, stakeholders, board of directors, clerks and investors.

The internal publics of a private tertiary institution involve the following;

- The University Council
- Board of Trustees
- Management team
- Lecturers
- Students
- Alumni
- Other employees- skilled and unskilled

### **2.3.2 EXTERNAL PUBLICS**

It refers to the people outside the organisation. External publics are those which are not directly connected with the organisation. Examples include community, media, competitors, suppliers, financial institutions, government, regulatory authorities and consumers.

The external publics of a private tertiary institution include the following;

- National Accreditation Board
- Local regulators
- The government
- The media
- Affiliated university or universities



- Competitors
- Suppliers
- Financial institutions- banks, insurers etc.

It is important to note that all the above listed publics are key constituent groups on whom a private tertiary institution depends. The success story of an organization, both profit and non-profit, cannot be told without measuring the effectiveness of its public relations practice. Thus, an organisation can be said to be successful if it has achieved the set goals. This study sought to find how effective public relations practice can lead to the achievement of organizational goals, therefore, a fair knowledge and an understanding of the term “organizational goal” is very vital for this study.

## **2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS OF AN INSTITUTION**

A group of people work together with a common goal or objective in an organisation. The word organisation simply refers to an ordered manner of functioning. Johns and Saks (2008) explain organisations as social inventions for accomplishing goals through group efforts. This definition covers wide variety of groups such as businesses, schools, hospitals, fraternal groups, religious bodies, government agencies and so on. The authors further explained the three key aspects of the definition namely social invention, accomplishing goals and group efforts. On social invention, the authors explained the word “social” as a derivative of society which basically means gathering of people. It is the people that primarily make up an organisation.

All organisations have reasons for their existence. These reasons are the goals towards which all organizational efforts are directed. While the primary goal of any commercial organisation is to make money for its owners, this goal is inter-related with many other goals. Accordingly, any organizational goal must integrate in itself the personal goals of all individuals associated with the organisation. People, both as members of the society at large and as a part of an organisation interact with each other and are inter-dependent which result in group effort. Individuals in themselves have physical and intellectual limitations and these limitations can only be overcome by group efforts.

Shapiro (2006) explained that the origin of the word “goal” comes from the Old English word “obstacles” or “a hindrance.” In order to achieve a goal, you must work hard to overcome barriers and roadblocks. According to McShane and Glinow (1997), “goals are immediate or ultimate objectives that employees are trying to accomplish from their work effort” (p. 82). Goals in general are a statement of what an organization or subunit of an organization (e.g. a function or department) wishes to do. Goals state the end toward which effort is directed. They are usually a reflection of an organizational (or subunit) problem or of a desire to capture an opportunity to improve or advance the organization. They should be specific, measurable and time bounded. Therefore, organizational goals are objectives that an organisation works so hard to achieve.

Thompson and McEwen (1958) stated that in the analysis of complex organisations, the definition for organizational goals is commonly standard for appraising organizational performance. In many such analyses, the goals of the organisation are often viewed as

constant. Thus a wide variety of data, such as official documents, work activity records, organizational outputs or statements by organizational spokesmen may provide the basis for the definition of goals. It is possible, however to view the setting of goals (i.e. major organizational purposes) not as static element but as a necessary and recurring problem facing any organisation whether it is governmental, military, business, educational, medical, religious or other type.

Most organisations in Ghana, including tertiary institutions, have objectives for which they have devised several ways of achieving them. Every unit or department of an organisation work so hard to contribute its part to the achievement of the desired goal. Effective public relations practice in an organisation helps to increase the goodwill of the organisation and also leads to the attainment of the organizational goal and this is where this study is interested in.

## **2.5 RELATED STUDIES ON PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

In recent years, many private tertiary institutions have been established in Ghana. Most of these institutions have seen the need to set up public relations units to communicate better with their publics such as lecturers, students, alumni and affiliate universities. As to how well these institutions practice public relations is what this study sought to reveal.

This section provides an account of review of some research works that have been done in the field of public relations practice in Ghana and outside Ghana that will be significant to this study.

In a study on “Public Relations Functions in a Higher Education Setting: An Examination of Communication Management in Two Eastern U. S. Universities” by Luo & Yi (2005) revealed the need for tertiary institutions to have a fully fledged public relations department. In Luo and Yi’s study, nine participants working at two Eastern institutions (distinguished as state university and university college in this research) in the U. S. were recruited and interviewed. The first two participants were identified through university phonebooks and the rest were recruited through snowball sampling. In total, seven female and two male participants were interviewed.

At the state university, the communication function was divided into marketing communications, alumni relations, fundraising, and university foundation. The executive director of marketing communications supervises four units: marketing, university communications, Internet communications, and publication. Five participants at the state university were recruited, including four from the marketing communications unit and one from the alumni relations. The remaining four participants were from the university college. Among the four participants, two were from the communication office, one was from the alumni relations office, and one was from the fundraising office. The communication function at this institution comprised five offices: public relations, marketing communication, alumni relations, and fundraising.

Nine face to-face in-depth interviews, lasting approximately sixty minutes, were conducted at each participant’s office. Prior to each interview, the purpose of the study was explained, participants were asked to sign a consent form, and permission was asked

before audio-taping. The interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions meant to examine how communication programs were managed. These questions focused on empowerment of the public relations function, communicator roles, organization of communication functions, and public relations models.

The study discovered that in both institutions, the senior communication executives actively participated in the decision-making process. The vice president for communications at the local college noted that he reported directly to the president and was a member of his cabinet. He cited his professional knowledge as the reason why he was included in cabinet level decision making. In the area of public relations practitioners assuming managerial role, the study found out that the senior executives in both institutions assumed the managerial role by participating in decision making at the organizational level and program planning at the departmental level, also media relations was a prominent part of public relations activities at both institutions and the public relations office is the office charged with telling the university story to external audiences through the media. The study further found that the public relations units at the state university and university college were decentralized. In both cases, different sections handled different public relations functions. What this study suggests according to the authors is the need for tertiary institutions to help extend the Excellence theory in public relations (Grunig, 2002) by applying the theory to public relations in a higher education setting.

This research is significant to this study because it clearly shows a perfect practice of public relations in tertiary institutions in the U.S. However, the findings will serve as a guide to this study in discovering how Ghanaian private tertiary institutions also practice public relations.

In another study by Kwame Baah-Boakye and Ming-Yi Wu in 2007 on the topic “A profile of public relations practice in Ghana: Practitioners roles, most important skills for practitioners, relationship to marketing and gender equality”, highlighted that “Steyn (2005) did a database search of African Theses and Dissertations (a Project of the Association of African Universities). Only one masters thesis (Gyan, 1991) in public relations was found. Gyan (1991) discussed public relations practice in Ghana and argued that public relations has received little attention in Ghana. Public relations practitioners also played insignificant roles in their organizations. Gyan's 1991 thesis provided some preliminary information about public relations practice in Ghana. However, her study was conducted 16 years ago. Ghana has gone through dramatic political, societal, and economical changes after Gyan's (1991) study was conducted.”

In Baah-Boakye and Wu’s study, it was revealed that majority of Ghanaian organizations have now seen the importance of public relations and have given it the necessary support. The study showed that 84.4% of the participants who were public relations practitioners answered “yes” to a question asked in relation to whether the participants have decision making power in their various organisations.

On specific functions and most important skill for public relations practitioners in Ghana, the study showed that, eight (12.5%) participants chose writing. Forty-nine (76.6%) participants chose interpersonal communication. Seven (10.9%) participants chose speaking different languages. It was obvious that interpersonal communication skill was the most important skill for public relations practitioners in Ghana then. The significance of this study, according to Baah-Boakye and Wu, was that it discussed various contemporary research issues, including the roles that Ghanaian public relations practitioners perform, the most important skills for public relations practitioners, among few others.

This work is relevant to this study because it provides an overview of how organisations practiced public relations in Ghana in 2007. Following a recommendation that was made in Baah-Boakye and Wu's study that their research only focused on organisations in Accra and that, it will be helpful if another research can be done to extend to other parts of the country. This study will broaden the scope of the study of public relations practice in Ghana by focusing on private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

## **2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Excellence theory in public relations (Grunig, 1992; Dozier, 1992; Grunig, 2002) identified a set of characteristics of an excellent public relations function. Different researchers (Grunig & Jaatinen, 1998; Grunig & Grunig, 1998; Rhee, 2002; Luo & Yi, 2005), out of their research of various organisations have provided consistent support for the Excellence theory in public relations principles. A need exists for different context

study to be conducted to test the excellence theory in public relations and extend its application.

This study follows Luo & Yi (2005) call that “A need exists to study private institutions and understand their experience with managing communication. A comparative study of public relations practice between private and public universities would provide a comprehensive picture of how higher education institutions manage their communication” by assessing the contribution of public relations practice in achieving organizational goals of private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

The Excellence in public relations theory explained the value of public relations to organizations and society based on the social responsibility of managerial decisions and the quality of relationships with stakeholder publics. For an organization to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management.

Grunig (1992) suggested that the most effective public relations practice requires excellence in practice. The author described it as Excellent Public Relations. According to him, there are four levels analysis of excellent public relations and they are:

The theory states that at the programme level, public relations department should know why, when and how individual communication programmes are implemented. That is,



there is a conscious effort to have in place, a public relations plan that is strategically geared towards the attainment of organizational goals.

The theory again explains at the departmental level, how the public relations department operates and fits in with other departments and the organisation as a whole. At this level, there is a single or integrated public relations department separate from marketing. The department's head assumes a managerial role and reports directly to top management. The head and those who work under him have academic qualification in public relations or the field of communication are professionals. Two-way symmetric model of communication is also promoted. A two-way symmetric model of communication is one in which employees are provided mechanisms for dialogue with each other and with supervisors and top managers.

Two-way symmetric communication as a result contributes to organizational effectiveness. This model helps to improve morale of employees are more likely to enhance rather than to constrain the organisation. Two-way symmetric communication is necessary for the organisation to coordinate the behaviour of its relatively autonomous subsystems. Such coordination is necessary for the organisation to be effective. Two-way symmetric model of communication also helps to increase employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

The organizational level also talks about the understanding of and respect given to communication processes and audience feedback by the organisation and its staff. The

public relations head has a strong voice within the organisation and attempts are made to promote participative rather than authoritative organizational culture. Effective internal communication is promoted. In such a case, the public relations practitioner becomes the main channel facilitating communication between management and employees.

At the economic level, the theory states that communication programmes that are managed strategically help organisations to manage relationships with strategic publics that have the power to constrain the ability of the organisation to achieve its goals. When organisations manage these interdependencies poorly, the strategic public's protests, boycotts, go to court or ask for government regulation to constrain the autonomy of the organisation. All of these activities cost the organisation money. If strategic communication is successful, it should help to save the organisation money even though it often may not help it to make money. In essence, programmes should meet communications objectives, reduce costs and ensure job satisfaction among employees.

## **2.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has traced the public relations profession down memory lane and has also provided a comprehensive account on the elements of public relations. Various research works that have been done which is significant to this study have also been reviewed as well as the theory which served as a guiding principle to place this study in a proper perspective.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research method and design which was used for this study. It also provides an outline of the population, sampling process, data collection instruments, data analysis plan and data presentation plan. Issues of ethical concerns were also addressed.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

Tull and Hawkins (1984) explain that a research method offers a guideline or specification of procedures for collecting and analyzing the data necessary to help identify a problem or to help solve the problem at hand. According to Opoku-Amankwa (2009), research investigations that are primarily seeking non-numerical forms of data are called qualitative method of research. Researchers who use a naturalistic approach to investigate people's feelings and beliefs, opinions, or ways of life, find qualitative data in variety of sources and are interested in appreciating the 'meanings' attached to them. In this study, the qualitative research method was used because it is regarded as more appropriate because the basic aim of this study was to describe and explain the contribution of public relations in achieving organizational goals, from the perspective of the study population.

### **3.3 STUDY DESIGN**

The research design helps the researcher to answer the research questions effectively and also serve as a guide to choose the appropriate data required for the study. This study used the descriptive approach to find out views on how public relations contribute to achieving organizational goals.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) explain that descriptive research design is a process of collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. The researcher set out deliberately to describe profile of persons, events, situations or occurrences. It is undertaken to describe the characteristics of a variable in a situation. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) define descriptive research design as an attempt to describe or document current conditions or attitudes, that is, to explain what exists at the moment. This study used the descriptive research design to explain how public relations is practiced in private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region.

### **3.4 STUDY POPULATION**

Population is the total number of subjects, people, concepts or phenomena the researcher is interested in studying or researching about. The population of this study consist of all the private tertiary institutions in Ashanti Region, namely (1) Christian Service University College, (2) Ghana Baptist University College, (3) Garden City University College, (4) Christ Apostolic University College, (5) University College of Management

Studies, (6) Data Link University College, (7) Spiritan University College, (8) Ghana Telecom University College and (9) Sikkim Manipal University.

### **3.5 ACCESSIBLE POPULATION**

Out of the nine private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region, this study focused on only four of them, namely, (1) Christian Service University College, (2) Ghana Baptist University College, (3) Garden City University College and (4) University College of Management Studies. The reason for the selection of these four private tertiary institutions was based on the fact that there is a designated office which undertakes public relations activities in these four institutions. In the Christian Service University College the name given to the public relations practitioner is Partnership Development Officer. Also, in the University College of Management Studies the person in charge of public relations activities is the Registrar and in Garden City University College and Ghana Baptist University College, the office of the Assistant Registrar performs public relations duties.

### **3.6 SAMPLING PROCESS**

In this study, non probability sampling was used because the study sought to explore certain relevant and accessible artifacts for more in-depth analysis of a particular group which is the private tertiary institutions in Ashanti Region. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected. The purpose of the sampling is to secure a representative group which will enable the researcher to gain information

about a population. Rubin, Rubin and Piele (2005) explain that non probability sampling allows to explore certain relevant and accessible artifacts for more in-depth analysis. Non probability sampling does not allow to generalize to other groups or situations, but it is valuable for studying particular groups of people.

According to Opoku-Amankwa (2009), purposive sampling is an intentionally selecting respondents or elements for a study based on certain characteristics or qualities to meet the needs and requirements of a study. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the four private tertiary institutions because they have certain qualities, that is, there is a designated office which performs public relations activities in these four institutions. The four selected private tertiary institutions are Christian Service University College, Ghana Baptist University, University College of Management Studies and Garden City University College.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT**

In this study, data was collected through the use of in-depth interview which enabled the researchers to address the objectives of this study. Opoku-Amankwa (2009) defines interview as useful tool for finding out individual opinions, ideas, values and beliefs. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. For instance, selected respondents can be asked about their thoughts, opinions, perceptions, experiences and expectations about an issue or event which is of research interest.

Data for this study was collected through in-depth interview with persons who act as public relations practitioners of the four selected private tertiary institutions. The various persons who act as public relations practitioners in the selected private tertiary institutions were interviewed. These people were interviewed because they undertake public relations duties in their various institutions. An interview guide was prepared to enable the researchers ask specific questions that address the objectives of the study. Each interview in the four private tertiary institutions lasted for an hour.

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN**

In this study, qualitative data was collected through in-depth interview. Data collected was analyzed manually. The in-depth interview was recorded by notes taking and transcribed, data collected was grouped according to the questions asked; issues of similarities and dissimilarities of the questions and answers were compared and emerging themes searched for. The emerging themes were discussed in relation to the research objectives of this study.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Consents of the four private tertiary institutions and the people who perform public relations duties were sought through a written letter before collecting data for this study. Personal details of the respondents were not included in the interview to assure anonymity. They were also assured of confidentiality that this study was strictly for academic purpose. A copy of the findings of this study was given to each of the four selected private tertiary institutions. This will serve as evidence of the academic use of

the information they provided. It will also guide the various persons who act as public relations practitioners in the selected private tertiary institutions to intensify their public relations activities to increase the goodwill of their institutions.

### **3.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed the research method that was used for this study and how data was collected. It also outlined how data for this study was analyzed as well as how it was presented. Also, issues of ethical consideration were addressed.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. Data for this study was collected through interviews. The chapter discusses the demographics of the respondents for this study and provides responses from the respondents on specific questions that were asked during the interview.

#### **4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS**

Out of the nine private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region, the study focused on only four of them, namely, (1) Christian Service University College, (2) Ghana Baptist University College, (3) Garden City University College and (4) University College of Management Studies. In all, four people were interviewed, one person from each institution. All the four people interviewed were males.

##### **4.2.1 NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF RESPONDENTS**

In both Ghana Baptist University College and Garden City University College, the office of the Assistant Registrar performs public relations activities. In University College of Management Studies, there is no specific office responsible for public relations activities but the office of the Registrar at some times performs public relations activities. In Christian Service University College, there is a department responsible for public relations duties. The name given to the department is Partnership Development Office.

#### **4.2.2 TITLE OF POSITION OF RESPONDENTS**

In both Ghana Baptist University College and Garden City University College, the Assistant Registrar acts as public relations practitioner. In University College of Management Studies, the Registrar sometimes acts as the public relations practitioner. In Christian Service University College, the name given to the public relations practitioner is Partnership Development Officer. Two of the respondents confirmed that they have an academic qualification in communication studies. Both of them have a master's degree in communication studies.

#### **4.3 THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE**

To establish the relevance of public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions, three questions were asked in the interview namely, (1) Do you have public relations department in this institution?, (2) How long has this office been in this institution? and (3) Will you consider the public relations office as relevant to achieving organizational goals of this institution?.

When asked, "Do you have public relations department in this institution?"

Two of the respondents answered "no". They explained that there were no special departments for public relations in their various universities but the office of the registrar performs public relations activities; specifically the Assistant Registrar.

One other respondent answered “no” but stated that his university is a very young one and so not much structures have been put in place; He indicated that “the registrar at some time performs some public relations activities and in this institution very little attention is given to public relations practice”. Another respondent answered “yes” and indicated that his university has a public relations department and the name given to this department is Partnership Development Office. He stated that his university wants to strengthen strategic institutional partnership with its publics hence the creation of the department.

When asked, “How long has this office been in this institution?”

Three of the respondents did not answer this question because they do not have a public relations department. With the respondent who answered “yes” to the question “Do you have public relations department in this institution?” indicated that his university is quiet old but the department is very young. He reported that the department began its full operations on 1st February 2010.

When asked, “Will you consider the public relations office as relevant to achieving organizational goals of this institution?”

All the four respondents stated that public relations is very relevant to achieving organizational goals of their various institutions. All the respondents gave different reasons to this assertion; that public relations is very relevant to achieving organizational goals.

One of the respondents reported that public relations is very important for his institution because as a university,

We disseminate and communicate with our stakeholders and this can be effective through effective public relations. Our main goal is to get prospective students and public relations is a necessary tool in achieving this. As a university we must communicate our objectives and functions. We must also talk about our products, that is, the courses we offer and other packages that will make prospective students show interest and join us.

We also relate and communicate well with other stakeholders such as the accreditation board. We provide all the necessary information they need in order to ensure that we exist and operate as a university. Our affiliate university, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, also need information about us and we always ensure that we relate to them in good terms. The students who form part of our internal publics should also be informed of relevant information.

One respondent reported that he considers public relations as very relevant to achieving organizational goals.

Public relations office is very important in helping any institution to achieve its goals but it is rather unfortunate that we don't have one here. The goal of this institution is to build contact with stakeholders especially the National Accreditation Board, and to get the maximum attention from more stakeholders. In order to achieve this, public relations is very instrumental in the sense that through public relations, this institution can tell what they do, for instance the courses we offer here, our mission as well as the vision. Another point to achieve the goals is that public relations provides the avenue to organize properly to reach the outside world to explain to them our goals which will lead to ultimately achieving them. So I think public relations is very relevant in the achievement of goals.

Another respondent indicated that:

Public relations is relevant in achieving the goals of this university because the public relations practitioner communicates and market the institution. Our market, which consists of prospective candidates, always seek for information and public

relations is very relevant in giving the necessary information to these prospective candidates which will benefit the university at the end.

Then also as a university, we deal greatly with protocol and public relations is very necessary to manage it very well. The public relations office is also useful for gathering information that affects the university and when necessary the appropriate reaction is given. So public relations is very important if this university is to make a head way.

The fourth respondent explained that:

Public relations is very important in achieving organizational goals because there is the need to have effective communication between the internal and external publics, the stakeholders as well as the media. Public relations also ensures effective messaging to achieve objectives. Proper public relations practice ensures when and how messages should be given out and the messages themselves are framed in order to communicate and achieve certain objectives. Again, public relations is relevant because it ensures consistency in messaging. Public relations make sure that information that is communicated is in line with the thought of the institution which it represents and no chance is provided for other conflicting information.

#### **4.4 SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

To identify specific functions that can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions, four questions were asked, (1) What are the specific functions performed by the public relations practitioner in this institution?, (2) What other functions do you think it is appropriate for the public relations practitioner to perform?, (3) Who does the public relations practitioner report to? and (4) Is the public relations practitioner involved in decision making?

When asked, “What are the specific functions performed by the public relations practitioner in this institution?” The responses were as follows:

Three of the respondents of this study gave similar specific functions performed by the public relations practitioners in their various universities. They perform the following functions;

1. They serve as a mouth piece for their institutions. The offices provide information about the universities to the public and respond to every question that may arise as well as act on behalf of the universities in information seeking and gathering.
2. The public relations practitioners are responsible for organizing programmes for their universities. Examples of these programmes are workshops and seminars, matriculation, congregation, handling protocol and serving as a point of contact for information.
3. They also have oversight responsibility of publicizing their universities. They make sure that there is an advertisement on admissions in their institutions and also announcements on both matriculation and congregation in both the print and the electronic media.
4. Media relations is another huge responsibility that they perform for their universities. They work closely with the media both print and electronic to ensure maximum publicity for their universities. When their universities organize programmes, they arrange for media coverage. They also react to when necessary, media messages about their universities.

5. They also handle alumni relationship. They serve as a liaison between the universities and their alumni; they disseminate information to the alumni and organize meetings in order to solidify the relationship between the universities and their alumni.
6. They manage the notice boards in their various universities. They are in charge of everything that will be pasted on the notice boards in their institutions.
7. They are also responsible for managing their universities websites. They gather, edit and communicate every information that needs to be on their websites. They also perform protocol function. This involves hosting and sending visitors around the university.

One respondent enumerated some specific functions that he performs which is different from the one's stated above. He stated that his office does more than traditional public relations practice; "We go an extra mile to perform other functions out of the spectrum of public relations". The functions are;

1. Partnership development is a specific function of his office. The office builds strategic partnership with institutions such as universities, churches and funding organisations. The office handles relationship with the institution's affiliated university; University of Ghana, there is also a partnership with international universities such as the Eastern University in the United States of America. Because of the Christian values of the university, "we also build partnership with churches in order to properly train our theology students". The office also develops partnership with funding agencies. "Our office has been able to raise

funds from Standard Chartered Bank to commence the building of a multi-national lecture hall in this university”.

2. His office manages the staff intranet system in the university.
3. He is also in charge of raising funds for the university, writing press releases and also plans trips for the university’s president or any other management member.
4. The office is responsible for putting together public relations tools of the university. For example publications, newsletters, folders, brochures and flyers.

When asked, “What other functions do you think it is appropriate for the public relations practitioner to perform”? Two respondents answered;

One said that a very key function that is fit for the public relations practitioner in his institution is that, he must act as a liaison between his institution and the outside world. He should really know or has an idea of what happens in both the institution and the outside world. This will properly place him in a position to communicate effectively.

Another respondent also explained that

Crisis management is another function that I think will be very useful to this university. If issues are not properly managed, it will turn into crisis which will affect the institution very much. Therefore every issue should be addressed well. Another function that I think will be appropriate is press or media briefing. That is informing the outside world what happens in this university.



Also, with the question of who does the public relations practitioner report to? Two of the respondents who are Assistant Registrars said they report to the Registrar of their various universities.

One respondent who is the Registrar made it clear that he reports directly to the Vice Rector of his institution and also during management meetings, he briefs management members on the activities of his office.

Another respondent also stated that officially, he reports to the president of his university and also has a reporting relationship with the Registrar as well since he is the head of administration.

When asked, “Is the public relations practitioner involved in decision making”?

Three of the respondents stated that they are involved in decision making in their institutions because they are part of the management and also at meetings, they relay every information that has been gathered by their offices to the other management members. They also convey information from management meetings that is meant for other departments. They provide expert advice on how their institutions can be marketed very well.

Another respondent also noted that he is involved in decision making but not part of the management decision making body of his university. He takes decisions that affect his office and also takes decisions that affect public relations practice in his university with

approval from the president of the university. He also advises the university president on public relations related issues.

#### **4.5 HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS CAN BE STRENGTHENED IN PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

To examine how public relations can be strengthened in achieving organizational goals in private tertiary institutions, three questions were asked. These are (1) what are some of the challenges the public relations practitioner faces?, (2) how can these challenges be addressed? and (3) how can public relations be strengthened in this institution?

When asked, “What are some of the challenges the public relations practitioner faces?”

Three of the respondents asserted that their major challenges that they face here have to do with insufficient funds to meet their budget. Most of the time, their offices are unable to do everything they have planned for due to insufficient funds.

One of the respondents confirmed that sometimes something happens in the institution and he might not know. “As someone who performs public relations duties, you should have an idea of what goes on in every corner of the institution but at times you might not be in the know of certain information which to me, I see it as a challenge”. He also stated that, there is no mainstream public relations training for the staff that works at his office. Since his office is not into proper public relations practice, “there are some areas that we need to be enlightened on but the university doesn’t have any of such training programmes in place”.

Another respondent indicated that since there is no distinct office for public relations in his institution, he honestly cannot pin point any major challenge that he faces in the practice of public relations. “Always, the major work done here are all seen as registry work so there are no public relations challenges”.

Also, two respondents stated that another huge problem that they face is lack of necessary logistics and staff to carry out all the activities that they have planned for.

When asked, “How can these challenges be addressed?”

Three of the respondent stated that their challenges can be dealt with if only their offices are given adequate and right money to effectively take care of all activities captured in their budgets.

One of the respondents indicated that his office should be properly recognized in his institution. He indicated that the office must be seen as an integral part of the institution and be given the appropriate recognition. Also, proper refresher courses and training must be organized to train the person who act as the public relations practitioner.

Another respondent reported that these challenges can be addressed when giving sufficient office equipment and additional workers to his office.

On the question, “How can public relations be strengthened in this institution?”

One of the respondents stated that:

I believe that public relations is very crucial and in the establishment of every institution, the first person to appoint is the public relations practitioner because, he will help reach out to other people and inform the world about the institution and also build contacts and networks for the institution. It is rather unfortunate that we don't have a public relations office in this university. Perhaps, it is because we are a young university and I believe that as time goes on we will create one and put proper measures in place to make it effective.

Also, one respondent established that the public relations practitioner should be empowered in terms of having the authority to speak on behalf of management without any counter comment. The public relations practitioner should speak the minds of the management and when that is done, management members should humbly accept that as the final position of the university.

Again, information should not be hidden from the public relations practitioner. The public relations practitioner should always have access to information. Nothing should be hidden from him because he communicates on behalf of the university to other stakeholders and if he gives the wrong information, it is the whole university that suffers.

Another respondent reported that his office should be provided with the necessary logistics. This will make his office very vibrant and active. He stated that his office should be given the needed recognition and should always be involved in the activities of the institution.

One respondent stated that, “I believe that public relations can be strengthened in this institution when the staff strength of the public relations office is increased”.

#### **4.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed the demographics of the respondents of the study and the findings of the interview, which was the main instrument used for the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the study was to assess the contribution of public relations to achieving organizational goals in some selected private tertiary institutions in Ashanti Region. To achieve this purpose, three objectives were captured, namely (1) to establish the relevance of public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions, (2) to identify specific functions that can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions and the (3) to examine how public relations can be strengthened in achieving organizational goals in private tertiary institutions. This chapter presents the findings relating to the specific objectives as well as the conclusions. Recommendations to improve public relations practice in tertiary institutions and suggestions for further research have also been discussed in this chapter.

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

##### **5.2.1 THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE**

The first objective of the study was to establish the relevance of public relations practice to achieving the goals of private tertiary institutions. Two of the respondents answered “no” to the question “Do you have public relations department in this institution?” They explained that there were no special departments for public relations in their various universities but the office of the registrar performs public relations activities; specifically the Assistant Registrar.

One respondent answered “no” but stated that his university is very young one and so not much structures have been put in place: He indicated that “the registrar at some time performs some public relations activities and in this institution very little attention is given to public relations practice”.

Another respondent answered “yes” and indicated that his university has a public relations department and the name given to this department is Partnership Development Office. He stated that his university wants to strengthen strategic institutional partnership with its publics hence the creation of the department.

The absence of public relations department in three out of the four selected tertiary institutions in the study do not conform to what Grunig and Grunig (1992) stated in their excellence theory in public relations, that there should be a single or integrated public relations department separate from other departments and the head and those who work under him should have academic qualification in public relations or the field of communication. In addition, all the respondents indicated that public relations office is relevant to achieving organizational goals in their various institutions.

One of the respondents indicated that public relations is very important for information dissemination and communication with the university’s stakeholders, communication of objectives, functions and courses offered in the university.

Another respondent also indicated that public relations is relevant in achieving the goals of the university because the public relations practitioner communicates and market the institution. He explained that the public relations office is also useful for protocol, giving information to prospective candidates and gathering information that affects and concerns the university and when necessary the appropriate reaction is given.

One respondent reported that public relations is very important in achieving organizational goals because there is the need to have effective communication between the internal and external publics, the stakeholders as well as the media. He stated that public relations also ensures effective messaging to achieve objectives. Proper public relations practice ensures when and how messages should be given out and the messages themselves are framed in order to communicate and achieve certain objectives. Again, public relations is relevant because it ensures consistency in messaging.

The study revealed as per the responses given, that all the four tertiary institutions agreed to the fact that public relations is very important in dealing with the external and internal publics of the various universities in achieving the organizational goals. This falls in line with Seitel's (2007) assertion that public relations is essential in handling the relationship between an organisation and its publics to achieve a set objective.



### **5.2.2 SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

The second objective of the study was to identify specific functions that can be performed by public relations practitioners to achieve the goals of private tertiary institutions. The study found the following, as the specific functions performed by the persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four selected tertiary institutions;

1. They serve as a mouth piece for their institutions. The offices provide information about the universities to the public and respond to every question that may arise as well as act on behalf of the universities in information seeking and gathering.
2. The public relations practitioners are responsible for organizing programmes for their universities. Examples of these programmes are workshops and seminars, matriculation, congregation, handling protocol and serving as a point of contact for information.
3. They also have oversight responsibility of publicizing their universities. They make sure that there is an advertisement on admissions in their institutions and also announcements on both matriculation and congregation in both the print and the electronic media.
4. Media relations is another huge responsibility that they perform for their universities. They work closely with the media both print and electronic to ensure maximum publicity for their universities. When their universities organize programmes, they arrange for media coverage. They also react to when necessary, media messages about their universities.

5. They also handle alumni relationship. They serve as a liaison between the universities and their alumni; they disseminate information to the alumni and organize meetings in order to solidify the relationship between the universities and their alumni.
6. They manage the notice boards in their various universities. They are in charge of everything that will be pasted on the notice boards in their institutions. They are also responsible for managing their universities websites. They gather, edit and communicate every information that needs to be on their websites.
7. They also perform protocol function. This involves hosting and sending visitors around the university.

The study also revealed other functions performed by a practitioner which was different from the above stated ones. The functions are;

1. Partnership development is a specific function of his office. The office builds strategic partnership with institutions such as universities, churches and funding organisations.
2. His office also manages the staff intranet system in the university.
3. The office is responsible for putting together public relations tools of the university such as publications, newsletters, folders, brochures and flyers.
4. His office manages the staff intranet system in the university, in charge of raising funds for the university, writing press releases and also plans trips for the university's president or any other management member.

According to Seitel (2007), the functions of public relations comprises writing, media relations, planning, counseling, researching, publicity, marketing communications, community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, government (regulatory) affairs, investor (stakeholder) relations, public affairs and issue management and website development.

The study showed that all the specific functions performed by the persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four tertiary institutions were captured with the exception community relations and issue management.

On who the public relations practitioner report to, the study found that two respondents who are Assistant registrars report to the Registrar of their institutions, another one who is the Registrar also indicated that he reports to the Vice Rector of his institution and the fourth respondent stated that he reports to the President of his institution and also has a reporting relationship with the Registrar since he is the head of administration.

These responses do not fully reflect what Grunig and Grunig (1992) said in their excellence theory in public relations, that, the public relations department's head should assume a managerial role and reports directly to top management.

The study also found that three respondents were involved in decision making in their institutions because they are part of the management.

Another respondent also noted that he is involved in decision making but not part of the management decision making body of the university. He takes decisions that affect his office and also takes decisions that affect public relations practice in his university with approval from the president of the university. He also advises the university president on public relations related issues.

Grunig and Grunig (1992) postulated that the public relations head should have a strong voice within the organisation and must be part of the decision making body of the organisation.

### **5.2.3 HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS CAN BE STRENGTHENED IN PRIVATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

The third objective of the study was to examine how public relations can be strengthened in achieving organizational goals in private tertiary institutions. The study discovered the following as the major challenges facing the persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four selected private tertiary institutions.

Three of the respondents reported that the major challenges they face have to do with insufficient funds to meet their budgets. Most of the time, their offices are unable to do everything they have planned for due to insufficient funds.

One of the respondents indicated that sometimes something happens in the institution and he might not know. “As someone who performs public relations duties, you should have

an idea of what goes on in every corner of the institution but at times you might not be in the know of certain information which to me, I see it as a challenge”. He also stated that, there is no mainstream public relations training for the staff that work at his office. Since his office is not into proper public relations practice, “there are some areas that we need to be enlightened on but the university doesn’t have any of such training programmes in place”.

Another respondent indicated that since there is no distinct office for public relations in his institution, he honestly cannot pin point any major challenge that he faces in the practice of public relations. “Always, the major work done here are all seen as registry work so there are no public relations challenges”.

Also, two respondents stated that another huge problem that they face is lack of necessary logistics and staffs to carry out all the activities that they have planned for.

In addressing these challenges, three respondents of the study indicated that their challenges can be dealt with if only their offices are given adequate and right money to effectively take care of all activities captured in their budgets.

One of the respondents indicated that his office should be properly recognized in his institution. The office must be seen as an integral part of the institution and be given the appropriate recognition. Also, proper refresher courses and training must be organized to train the person who act as the public relations practitioner.

Another respondent reported that these challenges can be addressed when giving sufficient office equipment and additional workers to his office.

The persons who act as public relations practitioners for the four selected institutions outlined various ways in which public relations can be strengthened in their institutions.

One respondent indicated that the public relations practitioner should be empowered in terms of having the authority to speak on behalf of management without any counter comment. The public relations practitioner should speak the minds of the management and when that is done, management members should humbly accept that as the final position of the university.

Again, information should not be hidden from the public relations practitioner. The public relations practitioner should always have access to information. Nothing should be hidden from him because he communicates on behalf of the university to other stakeholders and if he gives the wrong information, it is the whole university that suffers.

Another respondent reported that his office should be provided with the necessary logistics. This will make his office very vibrant and active. He stated that his office should be given the needed recognition and should always be involved in the activities of the institution.

One respondent stated that, “I believe that public relations can be strengthened in this institution when the staff strength of his office is increased”.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The study has shown that public relations is very relevant in achieving the organizational goals of the four selected private tertiary institutions. It was revealed that public relations contribute a lot to the institutions in the sense that public relations ensures effective communication between the internal and external publics of the institutions. Public relations also ensures effective messaging to achieve objectives and goals set by the institutions. Public relations practice makes sure when and how messages should be given out and the messages themselves are framed in order to communicate and achieve certain goals and objectives of the institutions.

The study discovered that out of the four selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region, only one institution has a public relations department. According to the excellence theory in public relations by Grunig and Grunig, for an organization to be effective, according to the theory, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management. It was suggested in the theory that the most effective public relations practice requires excellence in practice. Therefore, there should be a public relations department which operates and fits in with other departments and the organisation as a whole. Therefore, there should be a public relations department which is separate from the other departments in the institution.

Again, the study revealed that in three out of the four selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region, the Assistant Registrars and the Registrar perform public relations activities in their respective institutions. They combine public relations activities with

other administrative functions which undermine effective public relations practice. This is perceived to be improper, considering the peculiar nature of public relations practice in the sense that public relations involves a deliberate, systematic, planned and sustained programmes of action.

Public relations is also aimed at winning, securing, retaining and maintaining the mutual understanding and cooperation of an organisation and its publics. Also, public relations is a top management activity that involves planning, organizing, directing and controlling the resources of an organisation to achieve corporate objectives. Therefore, considering these functions of a public relations practitioner, the Assistant Registrar or the Registrar who also perform other administrative functions will have a divided attention and cannot perform public relations effectively. Consequently, there is the need for these institutions to have a public relations officer who will perform the functions stated above.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure effective public relations practice in the four selected private tertiary institutions of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations;

1. The three out of the four selected institutions which do not have public relations departments, should establish outfits which will be responsible for carrying out public relations activities. The public relations department will ensure effective communication between the internal and external publics of the institution and will enhance efficient messaging to achieve objectives and goals set by the institution.



2. It is also recommended that the public relations department should be headed by a public relations officer with at least two assistants. According to the excellence theory in public relations, these people should have an academic qualification in communication studies. The public relations officer should be a qualified person with at least a minimum of a first degree with specialization in public relations. This is to ensure excellence in the practice of public relations.
3. The study recommends that the public relations department should be given clearly defined roles to perform. The public relations activities should not be combined with any other administrative functions. This will ensure effectiveness in public relations practice.
4. The study recommends that the four selected institutions should create the enabling environment for high performance of public relations. The public relations department should be provided with the necessary office equipment and the needed logistics to ensure effective operation.
5. It is also recommended that the four selected institutions should empower public relations practitioners to be involved in decision making. Especially in crisis management. This is essential because the public relations practitioner provides expert advice on how to formulate and communicate the decisions to the relevant publics in order to achieve the desired results.

## **5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study only sought for the views of persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four selected private tertiary institutions on the contribution of public relations in achieving organizational goals. The study recommends that further studies be done to find out management views on the relevance of public relations in their institutions. This is because, sometimes, management underestimates the contributions of the public relations department to the development of the institutions.

## **5.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has discussed the three main objectives of the study as per the findings from the perspectives of the persons who act as public relations practitioners in the four selected private tertiary institutions in the Ashanti Region, namely (1) Christian Service University College, (2) Ghana Baptist University College, (3) Garden City University College and (4) University College of Management Studies. Conclusions were made based on the findings of this study and recommendations for ensuring effective public relations practice in the four institutions and for further research offered.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- Q1. Do you have public relations department in this institution?
- Q2. How long has this office been in this institution?
- Q3. Will you consider the public relations office as relevant to achieving organizational goals of this institution?
- Q4. What are the specific functions performed by the public relations practitioner in this institution?
- Q5. What other functions do you think it is appropriate for the public relations practitioner to perform?
- Q6. Who does the public relations practitioner report to?
- Q7. Is the public relations practitioner involved in decision making?
- Q8. What are some of the challenges the public relations practitioner faces?
- Q9. How can these challenges be addressed?
- Q10. How can public relations be strengthened in this institution?