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A NORMATIVE REFLECTION ON THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OR CORPORATE COMMUNICATION IN KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: There has been debate and disagreement among scholars, students and practitioners regarding the correct name to describe the discipline and practice of public relations and corporate communications. Some scholars and practitioners may dismiss such limited focus on nomenclature as trivial, but it underscores different theoretical and practical perspectives brought into the field. While there have been views from an American and European perspective providing a normative perspective, a global consensus on how to describe the discipline has not been arrived at. This study attempted to establish the Kenyan practitioners and scholars' views on this debate, as well as a reflection of the Kenyan practice from a normative perspective.

Methodology: Purposive sampling was used to identify practitioners and scholars to be used in this study. Qualitative date was collected through in-depth interviews with twenty-four informants from the academia and practice. The data was analysed through a normative interpretive framework derived from the review of literature.

Findings: Findings demonstrate that although there is no difference between corporate communication and public relations, majority of practitioners in Kenya are defined by the public relations perspective. Ironically, majority of the practitioners prefer using the title corporate communication to public relations. The results also show that in Kenya, there is a disconnect between the practitioners and academia's conception of public relations and corporate communication.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The position of the paper is that the African scholarly conception of public relations is unique and does not fit within the Western normative framework. On the contrary, Kenyan practitioners fall within the normative framework as they are yet to conceive public relations in a broader societal aspect as espoused by numerous African scholars.

Key words: *Public Relations, Corporate Communication, Communication Management, Normative Debate*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The main thrust of this paper is to describe the discipline of communication management in Kenya, in the context of the normative debate between public relations and corporate communication perspectives. This paper is premised with the question whether to define the practice in Kenya as public relations or corporate communication, and if this normative debate is relevant for the practice Kenya. In this discussion the term 'communication management' is used as a reference to both public relations and corporate communication. This paper will also use the term "labels" to refer to public relations and corporate communication.

This paper will attempt to give a review on how various scholars have approached the distinction on corporate communication and public relations. The objective will be to establish the extent to which they disambiguate the two disciplines, and whether this leads to consensus or further debate. This approach will be in line with Ruler and Vercic (2009) who feel that the multiplicity and sometimes confusing terminologies are part of the development of a young field, and urge for the debate to focus on central concepts, characteristics and parameters of the field.

This paper borrows heavily from the approach by Hubner (2007) who has documented the debates between the two disciplines from an American and European scholarship. American scholarship is advanced by both public relations and corporate communication approaches (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002; Wilcox and Cameron, 2009 and Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth, 2012 and Argenti, 2009). On the other hand, European scholarship is espoused from a dominantly corporate communication perspective (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007; and Cornelissen, 2004; 2017). However, it should be noted that we have scholars such as Anne Gregory (2010) advancing the public relations approach from the European dimension.

The above overview sets the context under which this paper reflects on the debate on public relations and corporate communication with a view to establishing whether the debates are useful in disambiguating and providing a consensus towards the relationship between the two terminologies. This paper will avoid reflecting on definitions as much as possible and instead focus on concepts and other aspects of argument.

1.2 The global context of corporate communication-public relations debate in Kenya

The Kenyan context within which the public relations- corporate communication debate may be understood has global origins. As stated earlier, the debate and confusion on use of the terms 'public relations' and 'corporate communication' is a result of different scholarly orientations in this field. One group comprises of scholars based in departments of business and management, while the other is from scholars based in departments of communication. Majority of European scholars are based in schools of business and management and advance the corporate communication perspective. These same scholars are described as professors of corporate communication in their academic fields. For instance, Van Riel is a professor of corporate communication at the department of business and society at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Joep Cornelissen is a professor of corporate communication and management in the same institution. Lastly, Paul A. Argenti is a professor of corporate communication, department of management, Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth in the

United States of America. These three scholars are closely associated with the growing influence of corporate communication (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007; Cornelissen, 2004, 2007; Argenti, 2009).

On the contrary, scholars supporting the public relations perspective are not necessarily placed in departments or schools of business and management; and are mostly American. For instance, James Grunig is a professor Emeritus in the department of communication, University of Maryland. Wilcox Cameron is professor Emeritus of Public Relations, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, San Jose State University. On the other hand, Anne Gregory is a professor of corporate communication at the School of Business and Law, University of Huddersfield**.** Though professor Gregory is described as a professor of corporate communication, she is widely associated with projects and programmes in public relations and not the corporate communications "label" that defines her current position.

Therefore, discussion of the findings from a Kenyan perspective should be informed by a possibility that the practitioners, educational institutions and the market in Kenya could be influenced by the orientation provided by scholars from these two dominant approaches to communication management. This influence could be through exposure to books, other scholarly materials or institutions attended among other forms of interaction. The literature is reviewed along an interpretive framework which attempts to compare the corporate communication and public relations perspective, with a view to demonstrate whether these two disciplines are one and the same.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the two research objectives:

1) To find out how public relations and corporate communication conceptualized and practiced in the Kenyan industry.
2) To carry out a normative analysis of the practice of public relations and or corporate communication in Kenya

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 A Historical Reflection

A reading of the historical development of the field is provided from both a corporate communication and public relations perspective. The two approaches seem to have consensus in the period before 1990, where the discipline was singularly defined as public relations; but differ on their rendition on the years after.

Scholars such as Cornelissen (2004) and Argenti (2009) argue that public relations got replaced by corporate communication, while acknowledging the phases it had go through from press agentry, public information, one-way asymmetry to a two-way symmetry period. An additional perspective is provided by Argenti (2009), a corporate communication advocate, who states that the business context that has necessitated the replacement of public relations with corporate communications, which was more management driven. To him, the initial focus of public relations was "spinning" and had a journalistic approach that could not meet the changing

business environment and diverse stakeholders. We must be weary that the foregoing historical description has been crafted from a corporate communication perspective.

On the other hand, scholars from the public relations orientation indicate that the post 1990s public relations approach infused a management approach. Scholars such as Grunig (2002) and Wilcox and Cameron (2009), argue that the period beyond 1990 focuses on research, planning, execution and evaluation of public relations programmes (management), and relationship building. activities. It is during this period that public relations scholars including Grunig stop using the term "public relations" alone, and instead combine it with "communication management perhaps to underscore the centrality of management in the discipline. It is clear that though Grunig and others look at public relations from the management perspective, they do not subscribe to the label "corporate communication".

This particular research establishes that practitioners in Kenya do not necessarily view these two labels from the historical perspective. Not that it matters much, as the view of this paper is that corporate communication and public relations are one and the same and are not different phases of a field under development.

2.2 A Management School Reflection

The management school of thought emerged from the 1990s among some scholars who felt that a combination of both management and communication theories led to growth, development and relevance of the field. This perspective could easily be viewed from the historical perspective. This is a perspective shared by scholars from both corporate communication and public relations orientations.

From a corporate communication perspective, Cornelissen (2004) appreciates that this is a multidisciplinary field with benefits, saying, "Rather than accepting one traditional or arguing over one approach to the other, the different theoretic perspectives enrich our overall knowledge of Corporate Communication (pg. 18)." He argues that the strategic management strand and theoretical grounding would have greater benefit to the practitioners and their professional development than mere focus on the purity of the discipline of communication, devoid of pollination from other fields; an argument that this paper agrees with. Interestingly, corporate communication proponents have an erroneous view that public relations are not "managerial enough" (Argenti, 2009; Van Riel and Fombrun 2007; Cornelissen, 2004, 2017).

On the other hand, the public relations scholars retain the "label" public relations despite advancing public relations as a management field. The management perspective is best summarised by Grunig from this earlier theory of the publics to the excellence theory of public relations, his latest (Hubner, 2007). Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) and Grunig (2006), argues that public relations is a strategic management function that goes beyond publicity, media relations and messaging. Grunig (2006) goes further and concludes that all public relations theories crystallize at the excellence theory which attempts to institutionalize public relations as a management function. An actual reading of the excellence theory will reveal that public relations proponent through the excellence studies that begun in 1983 had long reflected on the discipline as a management function long before the corporate communication proponents had emerged. In an extreme proposal, a position that this paper does not support;

Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) view public relations as much broader discipline, with corporate communication as a sub discipline. The scholars decry the creation of new titles to describe the discipline such as public affairs, issues management, corporate communication, or external relations.

An emerging trend among scholars from a public relations orientation is looking beyond the business interests of an organization. Lattimore et al (2012) feel that there has been too much study and focus of public relations from a business and organization standpoint, rather than from a critical approach to public relations which critiques the misuse of power and other suppressive practices by organizations. Public relations scholars from Africa such as Opuka (2009) have also agitated for a more societal oriented form of public relations that is oriented towards solving problems in the society. Probably, this new approach of looking at public relations from a societal role than an institutional focus would differentiate it from corporate communication. How this would be conceived and practiced is not clear.

2.3 Reflection on Integration of Different Organisational Communication Practices

Scholars and practitioners have for long called for a unified approach towards communication management, so that all communication activities are planned for and executed under one function instead of being housed in marketing or human resources departments. This approach is largely supported by corporate communication proponents, and may easily be discussed under the management perspective.

Some scholars feel that corporate communication is the best terminology that describes all forms of communication activities done by an organization (see Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Cornelissen, 2004). For instance, Cornelissen (2004) is of the view that corporate communication is an integration of diverse backgrounds and advocates for the merger of marketing and public relations, through the corporate communication umbrella. This is a position shared by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) who suggest that management communication, organizational communication, and marketing communication merge into corporate communication. They further argue that "corporate" is derived from a Latin word "corpus" meaning body or whole, and ultimately a whole or unified communication from the organization.

The implementation of an integrated communication approach as perceived by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) is tricky in terms of balancing the marketing and corporate communication component. Cornelissen (2004) suggest a solution through a combined theoretical approach of using management (read marketing) and communication approach, but fails to convincingly demonstrate how the entire marketing function and communications would coexist, given their different theoretical and ethical orientations. Cornelissen's model gives various scenarios of coexistence of marketing and communication. First is an equal mix of marketing and communication, a dominant marketing approach and communication, a dominant communication approach and marketing, and a purely marketing or communication approach. This argument looks attractive from a practice perspective but it is not clear how the marketing theoretical orientation will reconcile with that of public relations.

Scholars with persuasion from a public relations perspective also see the integration in current practice of public relations. A reading on the thoughts of scholars such as Grunig in various

publications and Wilcox and Cameron (2009) demonstrates that there are various specializations similar to the different disciplines stated by the corporate communication proponents that are also housed under public relations. For instance, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) in their "excellence study" establish the communication function was integrated in manner that all activities were encapsulated within the public relations department by a senior executive with background in public relations. They observed that integrated marketing communication was integrated to an integrated public relations function, and not public relations integrated into a marketing function. This assertion appears to be different from that of Cornelissen (2004) who gave four possibilities of integration as mentioned earlier. Therefore, from a practical and scholarly point of view, both disciplines of public relations and corporate communications in their broadest sense encompass all communication efforts undertaken by an organization.

2.4 An Ethical Reflection

Scholars from the corporate communication orientation feel that the practice of public relations is looked done by the industry and practitioners, due to its perceived unethical practices. This is how Cornelissen (2004) captures these thoughts:

> "Clamour of arguments in favour of corporate communications view of an organization's communication practices increased rather than diminished with time. Deeply connected with structural changes in practice and the allied professions of marketing and public relations and the need for a makeover term for 'Public Relations' or public relations departments for their "negative spin" connotations (pg. 1)."

In a very subjective way, similar thoughts on public relations seem to be at play today where people mistakes lies, propaganda and any dishonest communication as public relations. While this line of argument is partly true, scholars from a public relations orientation argue that the practice is more managerial and ethical to address the changing environment that demands for more ethical and transparent communication (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002).

2.5 Reflection on Debate between Relationships and communication

Ruler and Vercic (2009) revisit the debate on relationships and communication by suggesting that relationships are central in a public relations approach, but not in corporate communications. This distinction is problematic. Perhaps the starting point will be to unpack the meaning of "public" and "relations" on one hand, and "corporate" and "communications" on the other hand. The starting point is to assume that "public" implies the various publics which an organization relates (communicates) to. However, who relates with the public? How are these relations developed and maintained? An attempt to answer the two questions suggests that corporates relate with the public and these relations (read communications) are developed and maintained through communication. The position of this paper is that both public relations and corporate communication place relationships at the top of their priority. Both focus on a stronger bond (relationships) with their audiences, referred to as "publics" in public relations and "stakeholders" in corporate communication. Thus the question raised here is more of semantic in nature but not on fundamental differences between the two disciplines.

2.6 A Geographic and Regional Reflection

Scholars from different regions subscribe to different labels, practices and approaches to public relations and corporate communications. These regions could be divided into American, European, African, Asian and many other possible categories. Scholars such as Krishnamurthy and Dejan (2009) and Ruler and Vercic (2009) have edited handbooks capturing regional approaches and practices to the discipline of communication management.

The American and European perspectives have dominated the scholarly debates as mentioned earlier in the background. This debate has crystallized with American scholars taking a predominant public relations orientation, while the European scholars predominantly corporate communication (Hubner, 2007). Further still, Ruler and Vercic (2009) carried out a study on public relations and communication management in Europe in the "Delphi studies" involving twenty-six European countries and the findings indicated that the term "public relations" is not widely used in Europe; but is instead replaced with communication management, corporate communications and communication science among others.

Scholars from Africa also feel that there is need for clarity on how the discipline is defined. Perspectives from South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya will shed more light on this. For instance, Rosenburg (2009) provides a South African perspective to public relations by suggesting that the field is still characterized by its search for identity, legitimacy and professional recognition and challenges. The scholar challenges South Africa to seek more substantial and theoretical insights, while urging for further research to bring clarity to the practice of public relations which is associated with negative connotations. Closely related to the focus of this paper, the scholar acknowledges the diversity of titles used to refer to departments dealing with public relations, but concludes that the term "public relations" is still the most popular in South Africa despite cannibalism from other disciplines such as management consultants, advertising agencies and marketing firms. This takes us back to normative public-relations corporate communication debate, and demonstrates that this debate is not uniquely American and European, but also has an African as dimension.

African scholars call for a public relations approach that is beyond the managerial perspective but one that focuses on the impact on the social economic development of the society by steering organizations into solving problems that are unique to Africa. For instance, Skinner and Mersham (2009) acknowledge that practitioners should be informed by the wider socio, economic and political context and focus on solving challenges facing society. In their view, the different level of development in Africa makes African public relations scholars and practitioners uncomfortable with the accepted normative approaches, provided from both an American and European perspective. Similarly, Koper, Babaleye and Johansoozi (2009) give a historical dimension of the growth of the PR industry in Nigeria and acknowledge the oral communication nature of African communication, and its likely influence in the performance of public relations in Africa. They also acknowledge the unique contextual situations in which public relations skills and techniques are used in social change such as wars, conflict and government development agenda among others. Mbeke (2009) looks at the state of public relations in Kenya and with his historical rendition argues that public relations encompass all forms of persuasive and interactional communication at a broader societal level, more so the oral nature of communication in Africa.

It is clear that African scholars, apart from South African ones have not attempted to delve into the public relations-corporate communication debate, but see a unique conception of public relations that takes care of the interests of the minority and less powerful in society as articulated by Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2014), Rosenberg (2009), Skinner & Mersham (2009), Koper, Babaley & Johansoozi (2009) and Mbeke (2009). Similarly, The Pretoria School of thought, agitated from a combination of both European and American models of public relations, while adhering to wider society benefit through the "triple P" concept of people, planet and profits (Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, 2014).

One study that has made close attempts towards placing the Africa practice within or relative to the normative framework is one by Kiambi (2010) who explores the public relations models and cultural influences in Kenya. He outlines the various models of public relations such as press agentry, public information, two way assymetrical, two way symmetrical, personal influence and the cultural interpreter model. His study is quantitative in nature, which limits his ability to probe the beliefs, experiences and practices within his informants. Moreover, majority of his respondents were mainly drawn from the agencies, and may not have provided the broad and diverse views that reflected the state of the practice in the country. However, in his findings he established that the personal influencer model was the most favoured model by public relations practitioners in Kenya, followed by the cultural interpreter model, Grunig's two way symmetrical, press agentry, two way asymmetrical and public information model in that order. He attributes the high preference to the personal influence model due to the high premium placed on relationships with key stakeholders. On the popularity of the cultural interpreter model, he avers that the increasing internationalization and growth in international trade has made a huge contributing factor. He however does not make any remote reference to corporate communications, perhaps given his American orientation to this study in that he was pursuing his master's degree from an American university.

The Table below summarises an interpretive framework that emanated from the view of literature regarding the concepts of public relations and corporate communication.

Table 1: Interpretive framework on public relations – corporate communication debate

Element	Public Relations approach	Corporate Communication approach	Reflection
Historical development	Public relations has matured to a management function	Public relations has matured into corporate communication	It is incorrect to suggest that public relations reached a plateau and got replaced by corporate communication.
Management perspective	Recognizes public relations as a management function and lately suffixes "communication management'	Corporate communication considers itself a strategic management function compared to public relations	Both approaches are strategic and managerial .
Integration of different organizational communication practices	Acknowledges various specializations under public relations	Acknowledges various specializations under corporate communication but also embraces marketing	It is difficult to reconcile the contradicting marketing and communication approach advocated by corporate communication proponents.
Corporate communication sanitises the reputation of public relations	Associated with spinning, manipulation and distortion of information as part of its history.	Corporate communication seen as more credible	No fundamental difference as one is named to appeal to the market (corporate communications).
Relationships versus communication	Appreciate the need for mutually beneficial relationships with publics.	Entails managing relationships with stakeholders.	Relationships and communication are mutually constitutive.
Regional perspectives	Predominantly American orientation. Also popular in Africa.	Predominantly European orientation.	Need to reconcile the American and European perspectives. Africa takes a critical public relations scholarly approach

As indicated in the table above, there are no points of departure between corporate communication and public relations. The concepts, approaches and tools are similar save for the choice of "labels".

In summary, the literature review reveals that corporate communication is predominant in the United Kingdom and Europe, while Public Relations in the United States. The take of this paper is that the current conceptualization and practice of corporate communications and public relations are broadly similar. Indeed, Garcia (2016) sums it best when he suggests that corporate

communication is trying to kidnap public relations, since there is nothing new that corporate communication offers in terms of concepts, theory and practice. On the other hand, there is an emerging trend from African scholars who see public relations from a broader impact on society, rather than limiting the practice at organizational level.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling design and sample size

The study targeted scholars and practitioners. The scholars were drawn from universities with schools of communication while practitioners from within the industry and agencies. The sample is summarised below:

Table 2: Sample Size

Description of population	Number of respondents
Public Universities deans/ heads of department	1
Private universities deans/ heads of department	2
Scholars	1
Public relations practitioners (agencies, consultants, private and public sector)	20
Total	**24**

The informants came from diverse backgrounds such as academia, public relations agencies, public institutions and the private sector. Therefore, their insights to a large extent represent the broad experience of practitioners and the industry in Kenya. The informants for this study were picked through purposive sampling and a sample size of twenty was selected.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data was collected through a semi structured interview schedule and responses captured in a voice recorder. The data was collected through semi structured interviews and went through a thematic analysis. Secondary data was collected from the review of literature, leading to the use of public relations-corporate communication interpretive framework derived from the review of literature.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings in this study are presented under various thematic areas in line with research objectives. The data was analysed and organised into various thematic categories such as the context of the practice and industry, conception and perception on public relations, conception and perception on corporate communication, perceived differences between public relations and corporate communication and perception on preferred titles. The findings are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Summary of findings on the public relations practice in Kenya

Parameter	Key highlights
Context of the practice and industry	Market does not understand public relations Media relations confused for public relations Practice and structure of industry has evolved Lack of policy and legal framework Public relations practiced at a tactical level Approach to teaching public relations has influence
Conception and perception on public relations	Relationships Ethical Management function
Conception and perception on corporate communication	Management function Business orientated organizations One way communication
Perceived differences between corporate communication and public relations	Scope Orientation towards management Nature of environment and industry Reference to individual or company
Perception on preferred titles for the profession	Corporate Communication Communications Public relations Communication Management Others

The discussions are made under three broad categories as this paper seeks to disambiguate public relations and corporate communication from a Kenyan perspective. The discussion is presented under three headings, that is; what shapes the conception of communication management in Kenya, public relations and corporate communications practice is same, though perceived as distinct disciplines and corporate communication is most preferred title in Kenya.

4.1 The Conception of Communication Management in Kenya

The conception of communication management in Kenya is influenced by practitioners, the media industry, trainers and the market (comprising employers and clients). The four shape the understanding and use of public relations and corporate communication "labels".

Firstly, practitioners in Kenya have failed to bring clarity, simplicity and cohesion into the practice, and instead have contributed to the perception that limits public relations to media relations. Majority of pioneer practitioners and scholars in Kenya have a training and background in journalism, and their influence on the practice cannot be ignored. This is in agreement with the argument raised by Mbeki (2009) on majority of trainers and practitioners in Kenya having a journalism background. Therefore, it was or is much easier and interesting for

them to engage in media relations, at the expense of other communication management functions. This has led to the perception and misconception that public relations is narrower in scope and mostly limited to media relations, compared to a "broader and more strategic" corporate communication. These findings are in line with Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) and Cornelissen (2017) who observe that the original conception of public relations focused more on media relations at the expense of other functions.

Similarly, the media industry is a central player in the communication management industry in Kenya due to its power to shape public opinions of audiences, and reputations of organisations. Media is a strong institution in Kenya, especially in facilitating national dialogue and conversations. Therefore, institutions spend considerable amount of time and their resources on engaging the media. Incidentally, the practice in Kenya has focused more on media relations with majority of public relations agencies spending most of their time in providing publicity to their clients. This has forced both practitioners and employers to wrongly conclude that media relations subsumes public relations. This same observation has been made by Kiambi (2010) though he does not acknowledge how this conception leads the perceived differences between public relations and corporate communication, a debate that this paper seeks to contribute to.

Moreover, the manner in which training institutions have conceived and taught public relations and corporate communication has influenced the practice and industry. Some learning institutions treat corporate communication as a more management and strategic oriented discipline compared to public relations. Such institutions teach corporate communication at postgraduate level to experienced practitioners, who are likely to be in management roles. The undergraduates are taught public relations, with the understanding that it is not managerial and strategic enough. Given that the education sector is supposed to influence practitioners in the industry, this approach entrenches the misconception that corporate communication is more strategic than public relations. This paper rejects this proposition advanced by some scholars in Kenya, who appear to agree with the corporate communication advocates such as Cornelissen (2017) Argent (2009), and Van Riel & Fombrun (2007).

Finally, the employers and clients have a bigger influence on the practice and perceptions created regarding public relations and corporate communication. The market itself, which includes employees and clients has tended to equate public relations to media relations as discussed earlier. This arises from the high demand for publicity among organizations. The other reason for this conception arises from majority practitioners focusing on media relations, at the expense of other communication management functions. Naturally, employers judge the industry based on the performance of the practitioners. So in this case, it appears employers and clients perceive corporate communication to offer more strategic and management value to organizations. For Kenya, it appears the choice of the labels "public relations" and "corporate communication" is shaped by the market.

4.2 Public Relations and Corporate Communications Practice

The Kenyan conception of public relations and corporate communication is not conclusive. To a large extent public relations and corporate communication are perceived different in scope, though considered interrelated. Kenya has largely associated communication management with

the "label" public relations. As indicated earlier the Kenyan conception of public relations is associated with media relations. Clients mostly demand for media relations when engaging public relations consultancies. This in turn has forced agencies to focus more on media relations to meet the client expectations.

Findings in this study demonstrate the communication management profession in Kenya is is still at its infancy in the development process as focus is on press agentry as highlighted by Cornelissen (2004). Majority of the practitioners have adopted the public relations label, while a few use the corporate communication. The vast usage of the public relations label in Kenya is contradictory in that scholars have written extensively on the negative reputation of the discipline (Cornelissen, 2014; Argenti, 2009 and Rosenberg, 2009). Despite the label public relations being extensively used in Kenya, the corporate communication "label" is preferred by practitioners as will be explained in other parts of this paper.

Incidentally, scholars in Kenya have taken a position that this paper does not agree with. The view of this paper is that corporate communication and public relations are one and the same discipline described from different perspectives. The scholars argue that corporate communication is a strategic and management function, and should be taught at postgraduate level. They hold the view that public relations is operational and ought to be taught at undergraduate level to less experienced practitioners. The thinking from the academia indicates that undergraduate students in this discipline are not prepared well enough to operate at a strategic and management level. This is a contradiction which assumes that corporate communication is an advanced study of public relations. By advancing this argument, Kenyan scholars have aligned themselves with scholars from the corporate communication perspective who argue that corporate communication ought to be taught at schools of business (Cornelissen, 2014; Argenti, 2009; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). This is cognizant of Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) view that public relations is a much broader discipline, with corporate communication being a sub discipline. As argued consistently in this paper, these two disciplines are not distinct, and the training approach in Kenya is adding more confusion to the discipline and practice. In the absence of alternative concepts, approaches and tools for the practice of these two "labels" the views of the academia demonstrate the gap between the practice and academia globally.

An interpretive normative framework derived from a review of the literature from the two orientations demonstrate the state of the Kenyan practice against the normative debates. In this case, the practice in Kenya is aligned to the historical development phase of the discipline (Cornelissen, 2004) with strong focus on publicity and media relations as established by Kiambi (2010). It is evident that the Kenyan practice is yet to significantly contribute to the global normative debate, although Mbeke (2009) has underscored the wider societal role that public relations ought to play in solving problems facing African societies (African Public Relations Association, 2018 & Rosenberg ,2009). In this regard, from an African scholars' perspective, use of public relations to serve business goals are not an end in themselves unless they mitigate the challenges facing the continent. Despite such robust arguments from African scholars, practitioners in Kenya appear to lean towards the normative American and European orientations. This indicates a clear gap between scholars and practitioners in Kenya.

In a nutshell, the two "labels" are not different from a practice and scholarly perspective. The only problem is that those scholars who use the "label" public relations do not acknowledge the existence of corporate communications, or they treat is as a subset of public relations. On the other hand, those supporting the corporate communication "label" only acknowledge public relations as part of the history of the discipline and profession. In latter works, the scholars from a public relations perspective, have modified the description of the discipline by adding the suffix "communication management", to public relations (see Grunig, 2006, Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management Professionals, 2014). This paper supports the use of public relations and communication management, as it is a neutral term that appeases both public relations and corporate communication proponents, hopefully.

4.3 Corporate Communication is most preferred title in Kenya

Majority of practitioners in Kenya prefer the title corporate communication. This is followed by communications, communication management and public relations. The preference of corporate communication as a title is contradictory as findings demonstrate that majority of practitioners in Kenya use the label "public relations" in their job titles. The corporate communication "label" is preferred to public relations as it conceived and perceived as more strategic, managerial and with a broader scope. On the contrary, Public relations is largely associated with media relations and other forms of publicity as mentioned earlier. Again this is erroneous from both normative and practice perspective as the concepts, approaches and tools are the same. The other misconception is that corporate communication is largely practiced in a business environment, and deals with organizations that are profit oriented. The choice of these labels is made against criticism by Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) over the proliferation of new titles to describe the discipline. However, it is the view of this paper that titles could change as a response to a dynamic business environment and development of theory.

The contradictory preference of corporate communication title over public relations shows that Kenyan practitioners are not aligned to public relations or corporate communication along the normative debates of scholars. Instead the Kenyan practitioners are of the view that corporate communication is a much cleaner label that appeals to the market, compared to public relations which has a notorious reputation (Argenti, 2009; Cornelissen, 2004). The practitioners in Kenya feel that corporate communication defines what the practitioners do in a day to day basis. On the contrary, as discussed earlier, Kenyan scholars hold the view that corporate communication is more management oriented, and the title should be used for the practitioners in management positions. This paper does not agree with the position taken by the scholars as both public relations and corporate communication "labels" presume a management approach. Scholars such as Grunig (2016), Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012), Argenti(2009), Cornellisen(2014), Van Riel (2009) and others have written extensively on the management aspects. In a more pointed manner, Garcia (2016) sums it best when he criticises the over-glorification of corporate communication, through arguing that corporate communication is trying to kidnap public relations, since there is nothing new that corporate communication offers.

This paper does not support the emergence of new titles, but seeks the clarity on the use of public relations and corporate communication. Because as the discipline evolves, and profession gains more traction in society; the market requires clarity on the titles that best describe the profession.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Kenyan practitioners' understanding of communication management takes a purely western normative approach, where the focus is on the organisations and businesses. This is both from the public relations and corporate communication perspective. On the contrary, there have been conversations among Kenyan scholars that communication management should seek to improve society, other than focus purely on the business interests of organisations. For instance, the Pretoria declaration in South Africa though not sustained, questions the normative practices in the discipline and industry, a point also raised by African Public Relations Association through the Gaberone declaration of 2018 (APRA, 2018). The two have called for the adoption of a critical public relations approach, where the focus is on the use of public relations to create a positive impact on the society, through social change.

So what is the way forward on the two labels from a normative perspective? The Public Relations Society of Kenya, the main and only professional body of communication management professionals in Kenya has not offered a definition on what public relations or corporate communications is in the Kenyan context. However, it subscribes to the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management and describes itself as a body of public relations and communication management industry in Kenya without making any reference to corporate communication. Perhaps, as a result of using the communication management tag for inclusivity, it presupposes no need to mention the corporate communication label. This is not an adequate reflection of the industry as seen from earlier arguments, majority of practitioners prefer the corporate communication "label". The position of this paper is that communication management professionals employed by organizations whether in a business set up, nonprofit making or government are basically dealing with the management of communication. None of the "labels" is superior or broader than the other, despite perceptions among scholars and the industry. The scope, concepts, approaches and tools are similar. The use of the "labels" is partly determined by the scholarly orientation, the operational environment of the organization, the geographic region and continent among others. The only reason why this paper may support the adoption of another term for public relations, is the negative connotation associated with the use of public relations. This is an allegation that public relations proponents have been unable to dispel despite reframing the discipline as guided by ethical principles.

The position of this paper is that neither the use of public relations or corporate communication alone should describe the practice in Kenya. Scholars and practitioners in Kenya do not agree on what constitutes public relations and corporate communication. However, practitioners prefer the corporate communication label, which contradicts the argument by African academicians regarding the unique nature of public relations in Africa. The submission of this paper is to go for a neutral term "communication management" to describe all forms of communication undertaken by organizations. This is an amendment to the all-inclusive "Public Relations and Communication Management" label. label taken by Grunig (2006) and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management should be adopted.

In summary, the literature review reveals that corporate communication is predominant in the United Kingdom and Europe, while Public Relations in the United States. The take of this paper is that the current conceptualization and practice of corporate communications and public

relations are broadly similar. Indeed, Garcia (2016) sums it best when he suggests that corporate communication is trying to kidnap public relations, since there is nothing new that corporate communication offers in terms of concepts, theory and practice. On the other hand, there is an emerging trend from African scholars who see public relations from a broader impact on society, rather than limiting the practice at organizational level. The challenge is for African scholars to influence practitioners into apply the unique African approach in their day to day work.

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