MOROCCAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR’S USE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATION IN THEIR INTERACTION WITH THE STUDENTS:
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

By
Sad ACHAARI
Researcher in Moulay Ismail University – Meknes
Saadachaari5@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine Moroccan university professor’s use of Public Relations Communication when interacting with the students. This study employs the quantitative research method alongside with Grunig and Hunt model of communication (1984) and Grunig’s Excellence Theory of Communication Management (1992). The data was collected through a questionnaire handed out to 135 university professors in 12 Moroccan universities. The results of this study confirm that the Moroccan university professors use elements of public relations communication in their daily interaction with students thanks to their experience and educational knowledge. The results also show that Moroccan university professors are in the know of the different positive effects of effective communication on the students’ performance, thanks to their academic experience and ongoing professional development. The study ends up with a conclusion and some recommendations.

Key words: Education, Communication, Public relations (PR), higher education, university professors.

Résumé:

L’objectif de cette étude est d’examiner l’utilisation de communication des relations publiques par les professeurs universitaires marocains quand ils communiquent avec leurs étudiants. Cette présente étude utilise la méthode de la recherche quantitative en parallèle
avec les modèles de communication proposée par Grunig and Hunt (1984), ainsi que la théorie d’excellence de management de la communication présentée par Grunig en 1992. Les données ont été collectées à travers un questionnaire distribué à 135 enseignants chercheurs exerçant dans 12 universités marocaines. Les résultats de cette étude confirment que les professeurs universitaires Marocains utilisent des éléments de communication des relations publics dans leur interaction quotidienne avec leurs étudiants grâce à leurs expériences professionnelles et leurs connaissances du monde de l’éducation. Les résultats montrent aussi que les professeurs universitaires marocains connaissent bien les bienfaits d’une communication efficace sur la performance des étudiants au regard de leur expérience académique et leur développement professionnel continu.

Mots clés :

Relations publics- études supérieures- éducation- communication- professeur universitaires.
1. Introduction

Nowadays, efficient communication has become an essential tool for the increase of productivity and improvement in various fields especially education. Accordingly, public relations communication has been lately used throughout the world as a powerful instrument for improving and scaffolding higher education because it has given another dimension to communication which is appropriate for this globalized world and the different needs of the current society. The latter is characterised by the dominance of such new concepts as globalisation, the rule of the law, human rights, good governance and others.

Accordingly, higher education is considered by researchers, politicians, governments as well as lay people as an essential element for human progress, economic and social development. It is also considered as an impetus for international competitiveness which is based more on knowledge. Therefore, university professors, who are considered as the cornerstone of any improvement of higher education, are called upon to use public relations communication, since it gives the concept of communication a sophisticated dimension, and is regarded as an efficient tool to improve the quality of both teaching and management in different higher education institutions.

2. A conceptual framework

2.1. Definitions of public relations.

Although scholars and researchers in the field of public relations have tried to come up with a single, broadly accepted definition of public relations, a completely satisfactory and universally agreed upon definition is yet to be found. This is mainly due to the fact that: “The field of PR is a complex and hybrid subject; it draws on definitions and practices from different fields such as management, media, communication and psychology.” (Theaker, 2001:3).

Nevertheless, most professional communicators agree that the emergence of public relations is primarily due to the need for a clear, simple and effective communication, which is necessary for today’s sophisticated publics. Indeed, today’s ‘publics’ is educated, broadly informed about rights and duties thanks to sophisticated means of communication, such as social media and therefore reacts with a critical thinking way towards different social, political and economic issues. Moreover, this ‘publics’ wants to be involved in decision making and no longer accepts a top down communication approach.
It is also worth pointing out here that the rapid changes occurring in the fields of communication, sociology, politics and economy have had a great impact on the emergence of PR as a modern occupation and discipline. At the same time, its implementation in different range of industries has made it difficult for both academics as well as practitioners to agree on a universal definition. Hence, we can talk about several definitions rather than one. Correspondingly, these definitions may be divided into two main categories: Academics’ definitions and those of practitioners.

2.1.1. Academics definitions

Among the first pioneers in the field of public relations is Edward Bernays (1891-1995); he is also called the ‘father of public relations’. Bernays (1952) thinks that PR has three essential elements which are as old as society: “Informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people” (p. 3). According to him, the emergence of PR is the outcome of the growing complexity of society, the advances of technology, education and communication. Following that same line of reasoning, Harlow (1976), who is also regarded as an expert in the field of PR, made a great effort to collect and synthesize about 470 definitions of public relations; he then developed his own definition which is regarded by many scholars as plausible and pertinent. Harlow (1976) states in this connection that:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics” (Harlow, 1976 cited in Ralf Tench. Liz Yeomans, 2009:4&5).

Actually, there are numerous definitions of PR since every scholar approaches the filed from a different angle. However, nearly all books dealing with public relations mention Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) definition since it is concise and revealing. In this context, Grunig and Hunt state that “Public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics.” (1984: 6). Indeed, this definition is the one employed in this study since it goes alongside with the aim of this paper. Moreover, it focuses on two essential issues: The management of communication and the relationship between organizations and their publics.

2.1.2. Practitioner’s definitions

Practitioners definitions of PR are more related to the daily practice of the profession. They tend to include concepts of influence and persuasion. This may be explained by the fact
that practitioners tend to favour more tangible definitions and try to avoid complex and detailed descriptions of the discipline. In that endeavour, the First World Assembly of Public Relations stated that PR is:

The art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders, implementing planned programs of actions which will serve both the organization and the public interest.(Newsom et.al 2000,cited in Ralf and Liz, 2009:7)

In fact, practitioners’ definitions are also as diverse and different as those of academics; each provides only a limited understanding of what the profession involves. Despite the existence of several definitions, we may perceive that there are notions that unify them all including ‘communication management’, ‘beneficial relationships’ and ‘understanding’. The definitions also raised the word ‘publics’. This means that public relations does not deal with the term ‘publics’ as people often think, but rather as many groups of people, all those who have direct or indirect relationships with the organisation.

3. Review of the literature

It should be worth noting that this study is mainly built on existing knowledge, including a number of empirical studies that were carried out in different contexts and dealt with the issues of this study from different perspectives.

Habachi et al, 2013 carried out a study that adopted a documental literature review approach. The latter makes use of collecting data from existing documents. The study investigated how can the use of an effective communication in an educational institution between various constituents: Teacher- director or manager, Teacher- teacher and teacher- student, lead to success and improvement of different academics and managerial issues of the institution.

The study affirms that: “For an active, qualified, and productive education, effective communication skills are needed among school managers and teachers, both in the school environment and outside of it.”( Habaci et.al.2013:690).In communication process in education, the source is the teacher, and the receiver is the student. The message is the content of the curricula, the voice and thoughts of the professor. The channel is the teaching processes or materials used. The responses of the students represent the feedback.

(Habaci et.al. 2013) prove convincingly that: “Communication is the process of sharing ideas, knowledge, attitudes, emotions, news and skills and through this process,
behaviours can be changed” (Habachi et al. 2013: 695). Moreover, the objectives of communication in an educational institution are to maintain school culture and prepare tasks. Thus, for these objectives to be achieved, the publics of the educational institution must be in the know of all tasks executed. The researchers added that one of the essential conditions for attaining success in education is maintaining an efficacious environment for communication in the educational institution. In other words, “if the publics of the institution listen to each other attentively, communication will be impressive and solution-oriented” (Habaci et al. 2013: 695). Furthermore, the educational institution’s publics: The school director, vice director, professors, students and other employees should all be in a harmony with each other. Therefore, “in order for school success to develop, communication must be seen as a seminal and essential notion” (Ibid: 696).

This study further portrays the kinds of communication that should exist between various constituents of the institution. In this respect, the quality of communication between teachers and students influences a student’s success and behaviour. Thus, communication should be two-way. It should avoid any kind of top down communication flow. In other words, the concept of ‘teacher speaks and students listen’ should be literally avoided. In the same vein, the study depicts the importance of intercommunication. For example, communication between teachers and their colleagues as well as between the teachers and the administration should be a two-way communication. In this context, the administration should inform teachers about the components of the profession and the different updates, the teachers in turns should inform the administration about their professional problems and issues with their colleagues and students.

The study concludes by demonstrating adequately that in any educational institution, teachers carry a great responsibility for the wellbeing of society and that educational effectiveness should not be messed up with any communication problems.

Larissa A. Grunig, James E. Grunig and David M. Dozier carried out an important study in 1985. It is still regarded as one of the most influential research in public relations and communication. The ‘excellence study’ consisted of a quantitative as well as a qualitative survey research on 327 organisations in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The major research question was related to whether effective communication can contribute to the effectiveness and success of an organisation. It also tackled the issue of corporate social
responsibility as well as the efficient model for public relations practice. In 1991, the first results were made public; one of the major findings was that:

Public relations and communication management describe the overall planning execution and evaluation of an organization’s communication with both external and internal publics-groups that affect the ability of an organization to meet its goals (Grunig et.al, 2002:2)

Moreover, the study showed that the behaviour of an organisation towards its publics is the key factor of any good reputation. Accordingly, the study illuminated that “Public relations is a unique management function that helps an organisation interact with the social and political components of its environment” (Botan et.al 2006:47). Another important finding is that communicators can easily and effectively develop good relationships if they use two-way communication with publics rather than asymmetrical communication because the former way enhances participative culture. Further, the study confirmed that organisations that communicate symmetrically with activists can surely provide an impetus for excellent public relations since they will develop a competitive advantage over those organisations that do not work with activists.

Finally, the study showed that public relations is an important profession and discipline for society as a whole because it can make organisations more responsible, provide publics with a voice in management so that whenever there is a decision to be taken, they will take publics into consideration. Accordingly, public relations can enhance different relationships and resolve conflicts. For the study, “Public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organizational goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. “(Grunig et.al, 2002:97).

In this sense, Anna Marie Savio carried out a qualitative study in 1992 to investigate the necessity of PR in the context of a university and how PR operates in a higher education institution. Savio took the University of Natal, Durban in South Africa as a case study. The interviews carried out with university staff as well as with higher education authorities at the university confirmed that any modern university, whether it is public or private, needs PR as a tool to fulfil productivity and efficiency.

In this connection, Savio explained that PR communication in the University of Natal provided knowledge, understanding, goodwill and good reputation and as a result enabled the university to face challenges and emancipate problems before they arise. Savio (1992) pointed out that PR principles and practices that are accepted and applicable in the context of western
countries may not be wholly applicable to developing nations. Hence, there is a need for adapting PR principles to local cultures.

Actually, the above idea goes along with Sriramesh (2009), Sriramesh & Verčič (2012) when they state that cultural differences among societies affect the way public relations is practiced in different societies. Sriramesh (2009) and Sriramesh & Verčič (2012) further explain that knowledge of public relations practice would advance greatly if the impact of culture on public relations were better understood.

Savio (1992) further illuminates that even though the modern university in developing countries is relatively autonomous from governments, it is still subject to its authority and to a greater or lesser degree dependent on it for financial support. Thus, priorities in a university will be affected by the economic and political situation of the society in which it exists. In this study, Savio suggested that for a university to promote a good image and maintain good relationships with different publics, it needs to use PR principles and communication so as to increase productivity and even fund raising.

Accordingly, Savio pointed out the role of PR in changing the wrong idea that some businesses and governments still hold which is that higher education institutions do not enjoy a reputation for good management, and hence they are regarded as not productive institutions which means that societies can do without them.

Savio (Ibid) noticed that the Natal University succeeded in maintaining a two-way communication between the university and legislative, governmental bodies and other internal and external publics thanks to the public affairs department. The role of this department is similar to that of a public relations department. That is to say, it analyses and interprets economic, social and political issues that may affect the good functioning of the university. The purpose of this analysis and interpretation is to devise ways that can enhance internal and external communication.

4. Research methodology

4.1. The survey questionnaire

The present study tackles the exploration of the interaction between Moroccan university professors and one of their essential publics, the students and find out whether it is compatible with elements of public relations communication. To generate quantitative data, a questionnaire was designed to investigate public relations communication practices in Moroccan universities among university professors in relation to the students.
In this study, many kinds of question and response modes in the questionnaire were used including: dichotomous questions (yes/no), multiple choice and Likert type, scale or rating scales (for example indicating how often an action is undertaken from ‘always’ to ‘never’). In general, the questionnaire employed in this study can be described as a structured one since the majority of questions are closed-ended. Lewin (2005) states that “highly structured closed questions are more suitable for large scale surveys as they are quick for respondents to answer and are easy to analyse using statistical techniques enabling comparisons to be made across groups”(p.219).

3.2. Procedures of analysis

The processing of quantitative data is regarded by many researchers as the second half of the battle since “having designed a questionnaire and administrated it to an appropriate sample is half the battle” (Dornyei, 2003:96). The obtained handwritten responses were carefully transformed into a code according to the variables then imported to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for statistical analysis. The rationale behind this operation is to “produce professional graphs, tables and pie charts which can be used in your final report” (Dawson, 2002:123).

Once the data was stored in SPSS software program, several descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyse data such as ‘frequency count’ which is considered as “a useful starting point in quantitative data analysis” (Ibid, 2002:126). As the analysis proceeded, many other statistical techniques were included namely Bivariate analysis (simultaneously analysing two variables) especially when there was a connection between one variable, and a number of other variables or multivariate analysis when there was an interest in exploring the connection among more than two variables.

5. The Results

This section embarks to present and discuss the findings that emerge from the analysis of the quantitative data. The findings are displayed following the objectives set at the outset of this study.
5.1. Demographic results of the questionnaire

Figure 1. Gender

This finding demonstrates that (71.1%) of the respondents are male while (28.9%) female. The results show that in the Moroccan university the representation of women is still small in comparison to that of male. Therefore, it may be noted here that although the university is a place where social values such as equity, equal opportunities and meritocracy are disseminated to society, great difference in terms of gender representation may still be noticed and this of course affects the communication practice.

Table 1. The respondents Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>31,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40,0</td>
<td>40,0</td>
<td>71,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**ISSN: 2458-6250**
This item is related to the respondents’ age. The SPSS output shows that, (40%) of the respondents’ age ranges between (41-50), (28.9%) age between (31-40), (28.9%) are (more than 51) and (2.2%) are less than 30. In this context, we can notice that the categories with the highest percentage are the second (31-40) and the third (41-50). Hence, these results are quite revealing about the human potential that the Moroccan university has. To illustrate more, it is generally thought that at this age, that is (30-50), the people show great energy and potential to innovate, create and promote their knowledge.

Table 2. The respondents’ institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moulay Ismail University – Meknes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20,7</td>
<td>20,7</td>
<td>20,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENA – Meknes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>35,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidi Mohammed Ben – Fes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>39,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed 5 – Rabat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13,3</td>
<td>13,3</td>
<td>52,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan 2 – Casablanca</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7,4</td>
<td>7,4</td>
<td>60,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENCG – Casablanca</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,2</td>
<td>5,2</td>
<td>65,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan 1 – Settat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>71,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadi Ayyad – Marrakech</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>80,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulay Slimane - Bni</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>82,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mellal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Zohr – Agadir</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>91,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL-Akhawayn University – Ifrane</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>94,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The finding show that 48 respondents work in Moulay Ismail university Meknes, 18 from Mohamed 5 university in Rabat, 17 from Hassan II university in Casablanca, 12 from Qadi Ayyad university in Marrakesh, 12 from Ibn Zohr university in Agadir, 8 from Hassan I university in Settat, 5 from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah university in Fes, 5 from Al Akhawayn university in Ifran, 3 from Moulay Sliman university in Beni Mellal, 3 from Abdelmalek Saadi university in Tetouan, 3 from Choaib Dukali El Jadida and 1 respondent from Poly technique of Taza. This demonstrates a large representation of Moroccan higher institutions.

5.2. Professors/ students interaction

The first part of the questionnaire is based mainly on Grunig and Hunt (1984), Tench & Yeomans (2009) and Stacks’ (2011) communication model. The items discuss the interaction between the university professors and their students. This part of the questionnaire is important since it divulges the beginning of the discussion of the subject matter of this study, which is public relations communication.

Table 1. Informing the students about the courses objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>80,7</td>
<td>80,7</td>
<td>80,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16,3</td>
<td>16,3</td>
<td>97,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>,7</td>
<td>,7</td>
<td>97,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This finding reveals that (80.7%) of the respondents always talk to their students about the objectives of the course(s) they teach. (16.3%) of the respondents affirm that they sometimes do. (0.7%) of the respondents expose that they rarely do and (2.2%) of the respondents admit that they never talk to their students about the objectives of the course. The results obviously show that the majority of university professors always inform their students of the objectives of the course(s) they teach.

**Table 2. Student’s evaluation of the course(s) they are taught.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding divulges that (50.4%) of the respondents have never administered any evaluation form to the students about the course(s) taught. (49.6) of the respondents reveal that they do. It can be noticed that there is a slight difference between the respondents who answer with yes and those who answer with no.

**Using the internet to interact with students**

**Table 3. Evaluating students’ performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Getting feedback from students about the courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37,0</td>
<td>37,0</td>
<td>37,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>63,0</td>
<td>63,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Transmitting information to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>58,5</td>
<td>58,5</td>
<td>58,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41,5</td>
<td>41,5</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Correcting students’ assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36,3</td>
<td>36,3</td>
<td>36,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>63,7</td>
<td>63,7</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nowadays, no one can deny the importance of the internet as a vital part of today’s sophisticated communication. The use of the internet is part of Media relation which is also a constituent of public relations communication. The above tables clearly portrays the Moroccan university professors’ use of the internet when interacting with their students.

The findings display that (26.7%) of the informants use the internet to evaluate students’ performance, while (73.3%) affirm not to use it for this purpose. Moreover, (37%) of the respondents admit using the internet in order to get feedback from the students about
the courses they teach. Furthermore, (58.5%) of our subjects reveal that they use the internet to process information to their students. Finally, (36.3%) of the respondents confirm to use the internet to correct students’ assignments, while (41.5%) admit that they do not. The results of this item clearly show that most of the respondents use the internet for the transmission of information.

**Figure 2. Students’ participation in the syllabus**

The above figure illustrates the respondents’ opinion about the students’ participation devising the syllabus. The finding depict that (60.7%) of the informants believe that students could have a say in the syllabus, while, (39.3%) of the respondents think that it’s not possible. Hence, we can say that more than half of the respondents are in favour of the students’ participation in designing the programme to be taught.

**Figure 2. Correction of students’ exam copies**
Overall, the findings depicted in the above figure were expected taking into account the last reforms related to the continuous assessment. The results reveal that nearly all the respondents affirm that they correct their students ‘exam themselves. These results will be analysed and discussed thoroughly with respect to public relations’ communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly motivated</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36,3</td>
<td>36,3</td>
<td>36,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>57,8</td>
<td>57,8</td>
<td>94,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly motivated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmotivated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above item inquired the respondents about their students’ motivation. The results show that (36.3%) of the respondents think that their students are highly motivated, (57.8%)
of the respondents also reveal that their students are motivated. Finally, (5.9%) of the respondents affirm that their students are partly motivated to attend their courses. These results show that more than half of the respondents think their students are motivated.

6. Discussion of the results

The findings of this research demonstrate competently that Moroccan university professors use elements of public relations communication in their regular interaction with their students. Indeed, the findings related to the communication between university professors and their students are very compelling. In the same vein, many elements that constitute this communication are to a great extent compatible with public relations communication and resonate well with Grunig’s et al (2002) and Grunig’s (2011) views.

An example of these elements is the finding related to the professors’ explanation of the course(s)’ objectives to the students. The finding denote that, (80.7%) of the respondents always talk to their students about the objectives of the courses which obviously meets Grunig et.al (2009) in which they insist that in any organisation, the public should be informed about the objectives of any action and that there should be enough transparency so as to avoid any kind of misunderstanding.

Another example is related to students’ evaluation of the courses they are taught. The findings are interesting and valuable since they reveal that (49.6%) of the respondents ask their students to evaluate the course(s). Although the percentage is below the average, it shows the willingness of the Moroccan university professors to communicate well with their students and inculcate a participative approach between teachers and students. It is also an evidence of the openness of Moroccan university professors to the philosophies and ideas of the modern society.

Accordingly, this finding echoes Grunig et.al’s (2009) visions of ‘publics’, communication and compromise. Similarly, the finding related to students’ motivation is of great value since it indicates that (36.3%) of the students are highly motivated and (57.8%) of them are motivated. This finding is compatible with Kitchen’s (1997) public relations principles and practice as well as with Grunig et.al’s (2002) views about internal communication and public satisfaction.

On the other hand, the findings related to the communication between the Moroccan university and their students reveal some aspects that are not in accordance with public
relations communication. One of these aspects related to the professors’ correction of students ‘exam copies. In this context, the finding divulges that the majority of professors (97.8%) devise their own exams and correct their students ‘exam copies.

With regard to PR communication, namely Grunig et.al (2002) and Cutlip et.al (2006), this has a negative impact on internal communication, on the notion of equity as well as on trust building. In this connection, Grunig (1992) and Grunig et.al (2002) explain that the ‘publics’ lose trust in their organisation when they are treated poorly or when they feel a kind of injustice or unfairness. It may also be said that the above finding is an example of what Grunig and Hunt called one way asymmetrical communication.

This section has been concerned with a presentation of the discussion and interpretation of the findings elicited from this study investigating the use of public relations communication by Moroccan university professors when interacting with their students. The results crop up from this inquiry have been evaluated and interpreted in the light of the quantitative method implemented for this purpose.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study are very revealing since they convincingly display that many elements of public relations communications are actually practised and used by Moroccan university professors in their interaction with students.

It could be stated that the findings of this study are significant in several ways. First, they can be an impetus for university students as well as researchers in general to further investigate the role that can public relations communication play in the promotion of higher education.

Second, the findings of this study may be taken as a call for a reconsideration of the place of communication in the strategic planning of any reform in the Moroccan university. Finally, this study has the capacity to reveal that public relations communication is a prominent contemporary issue that deserves academic attention.

To conclude, Landrum et.al (2001) state that “The image portrayed by institutions of higher education plays a critical role in the attitudes of the institution’s publics towards that institution”(Cited in Jonathan Ivy, 2001:276). Indeed, bearing in mind the findings obtained
from this quantitative study, it is apparent that not only the professors and the students benefit from public relations communication but also the university as a whole. This explains the fact that in recent years, many universities all over the world have set up public relations services so as to better interact with their publics and scaffold a favourable image of their universities that can enable them to face the different challenges of the present century namely their ability to gain their publics’ trust. Actually, this resonates well with Duhé’s (2007) view arguing that “when people are visible members of an organization, their identification and support for the organization increase” (p.361).

The corollary of this is that the Moroccan university, which has always played a vital role in the dissemination of inspiring knowledge, new values and providing Morocco with the necessary skilled human capital, is required to adopt new strategic ways in the field of communication that can enable it to regain the trust and fidelity of its various publics since “effective communication in a school setting allows change and the proper shaping of the world, as well as providing a great advantage for the school in reaching its objectives” (Habaci et.al,2013:690).

Briefly stated, the findings of this study have obviously shown that the Moroccan university has a great human potential that can enable it to cope up with the new ideas of this century.

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http://revues.imist.ma/?journal=REGS  ISSN: 2458-6250


