

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY PREPAREDNESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS
FOR THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY**

By

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ABSTRACT

Public Relations Practitioners (PRPs) today operate in a globalised and multicultural environment and have the responsibility to engage with diverse audiences, regularly. As such, cultural diversity knowledge has become an immensely crucial component to succeed in the PR-industry. However, what is not clear is the extent to which universities equip PR students with cultural diversity knowledge - to satisfy industry expectations and thrive in the workplace.

This study aimed to establish the magnitude of equipment, of Public Relations students in cultural diversity knowledge, to meet the 'industry's' expectations. This research helped determine the significant role played by cultural diversity knowledge as part of the learning process for PR students. In an era of globalisation, PRPs should typically understand various cultures and the implications on industry practice.

The methodology used to conduct the research is qualitative. The method presented the opportunity to look at the structure of the PR programme at CPUT to assess the level of cultural diversity. This was achieved through interaction with students and lecturers, as well as a review of the curriculum and an overview of the measures put in place. The research methods utilised for collecting data are interviews, with the help of focus group discussions, and an in-depth analysis of the research documents. The research helps to measure whether students require practical training on cultural diversity before entering the PR field.

The data analysis and findings of the study suggest that PR students at CPUT have significant knowledge regarding PR systems on a theoretical basis. However, the data revealed that while students do receive knowledge on cultural diversity, they lack the practical know-how on how to apply this information provided to them, in the professional environment. The research revealed various traits, challenges, benefits, attributes, and importance of cultural diversity in organisations. Tertiary institutions can use the results obtained in this study to adapt the PR curriculum for students to be more equipped in the area of cultural diversity preparedness.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my late grand-mother **Delphine Ndoumiguibiga**. She played a critical role in shaping the man I have become. I will always love her. This project is also dedicated to my son, whom I want to teach the value of hardwork, perseverance and determination in accomplishing your objectives in spite of the challenges encountered in the process.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.2 Globalisation.....	1
1.3 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM	7
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	9
1.6 DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH	9
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	9
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	10
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
2. INTRODUCTION	12
2.1 Globalisation and the changing concept of Public Relations.....	13
2.2 The Role of Public Relations.....	14
2.2.1 Public Relations tools and methods in the workplace	17
2.2.2 Public Relations perspectives and models.....	18
2.2.3 The assimilating minority’s model	19
2.2.4 The diversity management model	19
2.2.5 The leveraging differences model.....	19
2.3 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY	20
2.3.1 Cultural diversity in the workplace	22
2.4 Factors influencing cultural diversity in the workplace.....	25

2.4.1	Education & knowledge	25
2.4.2	Cognitive preference	26
2.4.3	Cultural-diversity and Public Relations.....	26
2.5	Influence of cultural diversity in Public Relations	28
2.6	Evaluating and measuring cultural diversity.....	29
2.7	Theory of “Cognitive diversity hypothesis” related to cultural diversity	30
2.7.1	Justification Suppression Model related to cultural diversity	30
2.8	THE INDICATORS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE	31
2.9	CHAPTER SUMMARY	34
RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY		35
3.0	INTRODUCTION	35
3.1	RESEARCH DESIGN	35
Methods of Enquiry		37
3.2.1	Target population.....	37
3.2.3	Sampling Methods.....	37
3.2.4	Sampling Techniques	39
3.2.5	Students: Focus Group Discussions.....	41
3.2.7	The programme manager responsible for curriculum	42
3.3	PR Industry Practitioners –selected across key PR areas:.....	42
3.4	DATA COLLECTION	44
3.4.1	Interviews	44
3.4.2	Focus groups	46
3.4.3	Document Analysis	47
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS	48

3.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	49
3.6.1	Informed Consent.....	50
3.6.2	Privacy	50
3.6.3	Anonymity and Confidentiality	51
3.6.4	Harm to respondents	51
3.6.5	Validity and Reliability	52
3.6.6	Credibility	52
3.8	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	53
3.9	CHAPTER SUMMARY	53
<i>FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....</i>		55
4.0	INTRODUCTION	55
4.1	THEMES.....	55
4.1.1	Cultural diversity knowledge of PR students.....	55
4.1.2	Creativity	59
4.1.3	Teamwork.....	64
4.1.4	Cultural self-awareness.....	66
4.1.5	Flexibility	69
4.1.6	Critical thinking.....	73
4.1.7	Language development.....	75
4.2	ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS.....	76
4.2.1	PR Curriculum and Teamwork	77
4.2.2	PR Curriculum and Cultural self-awareness.....	78
4.4	PR Curriculum and language development	84
4.5	PR Curriculum, creativity and critical thinking	85
4.6	CHAPTER SUMMARY	89
<i>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</i>		91
5.0	INTRODUCTION	91

5.1	SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	91
5.2	Linking Objectives.....	93
5.3	AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY	97
5.4	SUMMARY	98
5.6	GAP ANALYSIS	98
	Recommendations	102
	<i>References.....</i>	<i>104</i>

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Diversity	The term refers to the differences present among various groups in a population, and those that remain unaltered and cannot be voluntarily changed. In general, these diversities include categories of race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical disabilities and sexual orientation. Diversities also have differences that can be changed, including those of the religious preferences or inclination, income levels, marital status as well as geographical locations (Sha and Ford, 2007:386).
Cultural diversity:	The cultural variety and cultural differences that are present across the globe (in a broader sense), society or in different institutions (Dictionaryonline.com)
Stakeholder:	Individuals that are directly or indirectly linked with the process, outcomes and performances of an organisation. Thus, the stakeholders usually have shares in these organisational processes, thereby bearing the risks of gaining or losing, as per the performance of the concerned organisations with which they are associated (Harrison, n.d).
Stakeholder relations:	These operations aim to manage the relations and activities as well as decisions with various external and internal stakeholders, to ensure collective benefits for all. Thus, it is a crucial role of those managing stakeholder relationships, to ensure that these relations benefit the stakeholders, which in turn can increase their motivation and cooperation.

<p>Public Relations:</p>	<p>This refers to the management of relations between organisations and different associated people. Robust communication and strategies ensure smooth relationships and dynamics between the organisation and their various stakeholders (Rawjee, Veerasamy & Gqamane, and 2012:7745).</p>
<p>PRISA (Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa):</p>	<p>Operating from the year 1957, PRISA represents communication management and PR professionals in Southern Africa. PRISA drives transformation and unites professionals (PRISA, 2017).</p>
<p>CPUT (Cape Peninsula University of Technology)</p>	<p>The only and largest higher education institution, in the Western Cape region of South Africa, offering degrees in technology. The university is a result of merges from various sovereign colleges and the Cape Technikon (CPUT, 2019).</p>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

‘Globalisation is a term used in many ways, but the underlying idea is the progressive integration of economies and societies (The Social Dimension of Globalization, 2020). Globalisation describes the developing interdependence of global cultures, economies, and populations. The cross-border trading system brings about all these critical interdependencies in different products and services, technologies, people and information, and the flow of investment. Globalisation is a historical concept that is mainly driven by transportation, technology as well as international cooperation.

1.2 GLOBALISATION

Globalisation has created new challenges and opportunities for the PR profession (Rosanna, Bob & Heather, 2016). The term, globalisation, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is that of a consistently occurring phenomenon connecting regions, people, as well as countries to one another, in an integrated and comprehensive manner not observed in the past (UNESCO, 2019).

Therefore, the concept of globalisation plays out in social perspectives where policies and institutions including trade, capital market liberalisation, corporate behaviour, the social environment, global labour standards and others, are involved (Asongu et al. 2020: 67).

There has been a critical dimension of globalisation, which differs from one society to another, depending on specific socio-cultural and socio-political milieus. The

concerned size refers to the effect of globalisation on people and their lifestyles, families, as well as communities. Globalisation brings several new opportunities for social development but at the same time, has disrupted social activities such as communication, community participation, and income levels (Hassi, A. and Storti, G.,2012).

The migration of people from one place, due to different reasons, including political unrests and safety concerns, has created new dynamics on how human beings relate to one other. The movement of people across the globe has brought about a mixture of different cultures, different ways of thinking, habits, and religion, thus producing a homogenous society. The effects are positive in terms of PR despite being condemned by several nationalists and cultural romanticists. Several communities, especially indigenous people, view their culture as the richest and oldest heritage.

Fine (2010), suggests that globalisation has resulted in lives intertwined with people from all parts of the world via the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the music we listen to, the information we get and the ideas we hold". In this aspect, the notion of Public Relations, as defined by the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA, 2019), is how the strategic and perception relations (*connecting and building with individuals*), and communication (*the representative of information dissemination*), are managed.

Globalization 101 (2017) also defines globalisation as acceleration and intensification of economic interactions among people, organisations, technologies, and governments of various countries. The author suggests that dramatic changes due to globalisation have urged policymakers to respond to the relational and social demands, in several communities.

UNESCO (Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue, 2009) highlights that organisations are now focusing on representing the socio-cultural sphere, which includes the environment, rural and urban life, food system,

religions, human rights, ethical heritages, family culture and quality-of-life issue. Culture is a concept that is positively related to communities and 'societies' development in various regions. Culture is a term that shapes 'people's identity and influences their behaviour. Culture is their way of being and to be more precise, is based on shared languages, values, thinking or beliefs, behaviours, norms, policies and other material objects (Zhuwao et al. 2019: 5).

UNESCO argues that the development of an increasing number of societies, having multicultural traits and populations, has led to increased challenges for Africa's educational systems - including the need for developing increasingly inclusive, flexible as well as a time-appropriate form of education (UNESCO, 2019).

The world consists of different races, and each race generally encompasses a multitude of several ethnic groups. Ethnic groups may have different ideologies, a frame of mind, their behaviour may be formal or informal, but the most crucial factor of cultural diversity is unification, despite cultural differences. Cultural diversity requires a high amount of respect from individuals, from different races, cultures, and religions. Culturally diverse groups often use the concept of multiculturalism, which defines a system of behaviours and beliefs that recognises the presence of all various people in a society or organisation (Johnston, 2015: 376). Multiculturalism acknowledges and provides value to socio-cultural differences and encourages individuals to give communal contributions to the development of society and organisations in the future.

Cultural diversity or differences evolve when people migrate from one place to another. Migration creates a situation where diverse cultures interact, live and work in the same environment. This context calls for individual acceptance, of the realities imposed by cultural diversity – enforcing the acknowledgement of different cultures, beliefs and ideas (Reachout.com, 2019).

The roles of professionals in the domain of PR are becoming increasingly significant - delivering insightful messages. PR professionals promote a more profound understanding among organisations and the participants in the organisational process. It helps in the development of corporate reputation and helps the organisation to acquire market share in diverse areas and stakeholder segments (Ravazzani 2006:4).

Public Relations Practitioners (PRPs) globally are facing more significant cultural diversity challenges: functioning in time zones with diverse forms of political as well as socio-economic frameworks, and within varying mass media restraints. Currently, Public Relations Practitioners (PRPs) seek relations with international populations that differ in state income, religion, literacy, poverty, environment, technology, language, and governance, seeing that 60 % of the global inhabitants are Asian, around 14 % are African. At the same time, 11 are European, while only 5 % live in North America (Global Demographics, 2019).

PRPs now work across multicultural disciplines daily, due to globalisation; continuously engaging with various stakeholders, on behalf of the organisation and clients' (Majidi, 2017:589). The management of communication occurs between different types of stakeholders of a concerned organisation (the stakeholder being both external as well as internal). Ki and Ye (2017:245) on the other hand define diversity based on unalterable differences (the differences can generally arise in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientations as well as physical or emotional disabilities or special abilities).

Alterable differences can also describe diversity. These are differences to be changed, including income, linguistic traits, social class, religious inclination, marital status, geographical location, as well as presence or absence of any kind of military experience.

Relationships are the organisation's key to success, and managers will use PR as a crucial relationship-building and - maintaining tool (Brunner, 2005:2). Several

organisations value cultural diversity, as they believe that a culturally diverse workforce facilitates the development of different forms of problem-solving, thereby enhancing the potential and capacity for solving any kind of contingency situations in the organisation (Beiswenger 2005).

Culturally diverse companies enjoy considerable goodwill and have correspondingly favourable relations with people (Cox & Blake, 1991:48).

Furthermore, a culturally diverse organisation is also bound to have a culturally diverse PR workforce, which beyond financial gains, brings creativity, learning, and flexibility (Thomas & Ely, 1996: 79-80).

PRPs needs to work in an environment that ensures communication is transparent, open and interactive. Practitioners need to be capable as well as competent enough in the domain of relationship building, with different groups of people. (Naskova, 2012). They also need to take into consideration the diversities in personal attributes of other people, with whom they are interacting. Additionally, these practitioners also need to have robust communication and interactive skills for striking up conversations with different groups of people.

However, PR professionals in Africa are mainly not equipped to enter the international field of operations, as they do not have considerable access to diversity education, which is immensely crucial (PRISA, 2019). Schachner et al. (2016:1196), affirm that there exists a considerable gap in the aspects of diversity education, for the preparation of students in the PR domains, despite this knowledge being available. Cultural diversity in public relations education has also been a major concern. Other authors have observed that Cultural diversity in public relations education has also been a major concern. In a study on 'Students' Perceptions of Diversity Issues in Public Relations Practice' Knight (2019) revealed that despite its popularity compared to other mass communication areas the PR discipline has not been equally attractive to racial/ethnic minorities both among faculty and students. Sriramesh (2003) added that Public relations (PR)

education has not kept pace with the rapid globalisation that has occurred since 1992. In conducting research about the link between diversity and inclusion and leadership in relation to PR education, Bardhan and Gower (2020) stated that student of today are the future of the PR industry and its leadership and the curriculum they encounter, and the faculty who educate them shape them for this role. They found that while there has been some improvement, there is still a long way to go in cultural diversity education in PR. They shared that diversity and inclusion should be included in the PR curriculum.

It is the responsibility of these people to develop their competencies in the establishment of intergroup relations (Swanson, 2005). The primary competencies required in such cases include enough insights about global diversities, differences and the presence of attributes and skills to ensure successful communication with different types of groups or individuals (Tilford Research Group, 2004).

PR professionals represent people from different backgrounds and cultures. Clients can be local or global and could be looking for professionals who can manage all conditions and processes appropriately. As far as PR is concerned, diversity represents several other categories of people which include some aspects like age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical qualities or attributes, languages, religions, demography, etcetera.

Diversity is also a commitment to the legal and ethical norms of equity, differences, and representativeness (Benecke and Oksiutycz, 2015: 820). It acts against some inappropriate actions like unequal employment and racial harassment. For PR professionals, diversity is how they deal with the divisiveness that may come with cultural and racial differences, in a particular community.

The primary responsibility of PR professionals is to maintain cultural awareness within both communities and organisations. Diversity should be a part of every business model and becomes significant when an organisation hires people from different cultural and racial backgrounds. Public Relations is a sector or industry in

which diverse communication and forward-thinking of PR professionals are critical (Molleda et al. 2017: 1088). Anyone who does not give priority to cultural diversity may lose clients or customers, and their valuable relationships. It is, therefore, necessary to teach employees how to maintain PR by considering diversity awareness.

Cultural awareness is an internal concept that falls under the subject of Public Relations. Cox and Blake (1991:48) argue that companies that are regarded as culturally diverse enjoy good reputations and have correspondingly favourable public relations. Cultural diversity awareness in PR is essential because it helps maintain relevant brand names and images in the market, through client satisfaction (Weick1979). On the other hand, cultural diversity awareness also helps employees work in diverse workforces (Qiu and Muturi, 2016: 236-249) . It is on this basis that the study examines the status and extent of cultural diversity preparedness, of public-relations students for South Africa's PR industry.

1.3 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Globalisation and the consistent shrinking of the world into the proverbial global village has meant that job functions are changing to suit changing social dynamics occasioned by immigration and urbanisation. For Public Relations Practitioners, the publics are no longer homogenous. One of the fallouts of globalisation and immigration is the growth and development of multicultural and very heterogenous communities. This has meant that PRPs need to to be equipped with the requisite skills and education to serve multicultural organisations and communities.

South Africa is one of the most culturally diverse nations on earth. Besides the county's rich multicultural and multiracial composition, it is also home to one of Africa's largest migrant populations. Given the immense emotional response race and feelings of otherness evokes as evident from xenophobia, it is pertinent to equip PR practitioners with the requisite skills and education that reflects South Africa's heterogeinity. There is limited research on the extent to which the PR

students in South Africa are being equipped with cultural diversity knowledge to enable them to thrive in the workplace. Ogbu (1992:5) believes that cultural diversity has become a key term in education — mostly minority education. Concerning PR, it is not clear whether there is a focus on cultural diversity in universities or colleges offering PR education. It is also not clear whether students fully understand this aspect of their learning before entering the PR industry.

In South Africa, education on topics of cultural diversity is given a higher priority in Journalism and Mass Communication programmes, as an “imperative” educational and professional excellence. Meier and Hartell (2009:182) call for educators to be frank and dedicated to facilitating learner diversity in the context of South Africa. At this stage of the literature review, it is still challenging to establish whether PR professionals possess cultural diversity knowledge before joining the field.

The existing literature focuses on the significance of cultural diversity for the PR industry. The current research, however, does not explore the extent to which aspiring professionals are equipped in this area, at a tertiary education level. It is precisely why this study will, as a result, provide insights into how South African PR learning institutions have adapted to the challenges and opportunities that arise from globalisation, especially concerning cultural diversity.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of this study are:

- To what extent are Public Relations students equipped with cultural diversity knowledge, to thrive in the industry?
- How does the Public Relations curriculum equip students with cultural diversity knowledge to thrive or compete in industry?

- What is the PR industry's perception of PR students' levels of cultural diversity preparedness?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are:

- To establish whether Public Relations students are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge, to thrive in the industry.
- To understand whether and how the Public Relations programme prepares students with cultural diversity knowledge, to survive in the workplace.
- To establish the Public Relations industry's perception of PR students' levels of cultural diversity preparedness.

1.6 DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH

This study focused exclusively on cultural diversity preparedness in Public Relations Management (PRM) training institutions in South Africa. The study used the PRM department at CPUT as a case study, to establish whether it prepares PR students adequately for cultural diversity in South 'Africa's PR industry.

As such, the study results do not reflect the state of cultural diversity preparedness within all PR training institutions in South Africa. A sample of purposively selected PRM students and lecturers participated in the study.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the existing literature on cultural diversity preparedness in the domain of PR. The research will attempt to position cultural awareness as a

critical attribute for PR professionals. The dissertation will indeed support the premise that PRPs are called upon to represent people and organisations from all different backgrounds and cultures, at a local or global level. It is therefore critical that cultural diversity education forms part of the learning process at PR training institutions, to adequately prepare students for the industry.

The study will further highlight cultural self-awareness and emphasis on diverse ethnic group and social framework, as critical components in the field of PR. In cultural self-awareness, professionals must have the ability to understand an 'individual's ethnic self-identification (Kent, 2015: 487). On the other hand, the study will showcase that the ability to understand and acknowledge different cultures and racial groups, as well as flexibility and capacity to adapt to a changing world, among others, which holds the key to a successful PR career.

Finally, the study offers aspiring PR professionals' approaches and models for cultural diversity preparedness, in the era of globalisation, and establishes that PRPs are required to understand various cultures and their implications on the daily responsibilities of a professional.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This study consists of the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

This section provides an introduction and background to the research problem. It sets out the research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delineation of the research and the study's outline.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on cultural diversity and cultural diversity preparedness concerning the PR industry. This section provides an overview of the existing literature, on the significance of cultural diversity, for the field of PR, while exploring the gaps in the body of research available in how aspiring PR professionals prepare for the industry. The chapter is pertinent to the study, as it sets the stage and provides context for the research and the rationale for undertaking it. Finally, the chapter helps to put the objectives of the study into perspective, about how cultural diversity preparedness is viewed and interpreted by different authors.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

The chapter at hand discusses the research methodology and methods used in the study. The research methodology outlines clarify and justify the data collection methods used. The chapter defines the target population and sampling techniques. The research methods utilised for collecting data are Interviews, with the help of discussions carried out in focus groups, and analysis of the documents. The study employed the techniques for purposive sampling that facilitates the non-probability method of selection.

Chapter Five: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

The chapter presents analyses and discusses the study's findings. Outlining the critical findings of the study, by highlighting the extent to which Public Relations students at CPUT are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge. The results are presented, analysed, and discussed in thematic form using the literature and theoretical framework.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

The chapter concludes whether the used literature has managed to achieve the study aim and objectives, or not. It provides objective linking as per different study focuses. The chapter makes recommendations on culture diversity preparedness in PR practice in South Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature on cultural diversity in an increasingly globalised business environment. It explores the available scholarly works on preparing employees and students in the field of Public Relations on the realities of cultural diversity in the workplace and society at large. Also, the chapter examines literary

opinions in terms of measuring and analysing the extent of cultural diversity preparedness among PR professionals.

The next section of this chapter attempts to define cultural diversity and its manifestations in different organisations. The later sections of the chapter explore how cultural diversity and PR interconnect.

The researcher also assessed the benefits of ensuring cultural diversity preparedness within business organisations, especially regarding the influence of globalisation on workplace processes and composition.

2.1 Globalisation and the changing concept of Public Relations

Globalisation has created new challenges and opportunities for the PR profession (Sriramesh, 2009:1). Communication, according to these scholars, can be performed everywhere by the PR professional (Majidi,2017,p.589; Rosanna, Bob & Heather, 2016) . It makes one interrogate again, what tools or knowledge is required to achieve effective communication across cultures - this is still not explicit.

UNESCO (2019) defines globalisation as, the consistent phenomenon of increased integration of neighbourhoods, population and nations, as well as their socio-economic and political frameworks in an unprecedented manner. It has resulted in the creation of a global marketplace and increased awareness and flow of information, businesses and population from one part of the globe to another.

Globalisation requires the use of intercultural communication, which primarily involves the communications between people belonging from diverse cultural origins. It consists of the mitigation of cultural barriers to ensure the establishment of effective and multilateral communication (Assumpta & Sandin, 2009:46). Ultimately intercultural communication today means getting a competitive edge. Greater understanding of intercultural communication differences, manners,

etiquette, protocol and communication styles certainly leads to a much higher probability of achieving business goals (Rumsey n.d.). Zotzmann (2008) pointed that intercultural contact and communication have allegedly increased in the context of globalisation.

Vaagan (2017:2) added that when cultures meet or intersect, complexities often increase. The author stressed that In intercultural communication studies, various aspects of culture and cultural interaction are scrutinized from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

In the era of globalisation, the concept of PR has transformed in a manner that has led professionals in this field to guarantee better brand identification and visibility for organisations by considering multicultural dimensions. As stated by Haynes *et al.* (2017: 26-31), maintaining good PR has become essential for the organisation than never before, due to the scrutiny and the exposure to global dynamics. Recently, and due to the rapid change of business attributes provoked by s globalisation, organisations mainly depend on PR, and it has become a critical marketing tool.

In addition to its marketing dimension, Naumovska and Blazeska (2016: 175-186), also regard the concept of PR in the context of s globalisation, as a media tool to improve the engagement level with target audiences and key stakeholders. The role of PR practitioners therefore needs to be expanded on further to understand the correlation with cultural dynamics.

2.2 The Role of Public Relations

The broad domain of the aspects of PR includes the proper development of communication and positive interaction with multiple groups of internal and external stakeholders of an organisation (Ferguson, 2018:178). Moreover, PRPs operate either as advisers (for individual clients) or as technicians for higher managerial

levels in organisations, with the responsibility of development and dissemination of messages and information efficiently through various channels of media.

As argued by Wilcox and Cameron (2009:5), these experts play crucial roles in the development as well as maintenance of bilateral communicational channels, thereby facilitating mutual understanding, cooperation and high acceptance between organisations and the participants in different operational activities. PRPs act as mediators between organisations and their publics. In turn, their efforts help organisations to develop and maintain a favourable public image by disseminating information and perspectives that position the organisation in a positive light.

PR also helps organisations to manage problems or issues, by creating an informed as well as well-responsive management framework. Additionally, it gives a human face to the institution and creates human interest stories that appeal to the public _ advocating, serving public interests to the managers. Practitioners are also called upon to help anticipate changes or trends for firms to adapt to contexts (Theaker, 2016:23). However, the role of PR in many organisations is still not exact, given the changing environment in which organisations operate (Davis, 2004:202).

As opined by Austin and Pinkleton (2015: 35), PR experts act as bridges between the organisation (or their management) and other people associated with the operations (employees, investors, customers). The discipline of PR focuses on protecting the organisational goodwill, for the creation of better support and insights (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009:5; Theaker, 2004:6).

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000:51) assert the significance of studying and comprehending diverse forms of organisational relationships by PR professionals. This statement indicates that PR professionals need to understand administrative processes and relationships to formulate a clear notion of the corporate mission and vision. It can help them to develop a straightforward narrative about the organisation to the general public. This further confirms that PR professionals have

the responsibility to ascertain how the organisation relates to its stakeholders. They also examine the make-up of these stakeholders and how public perceptions affect the good standing of the organisation. Rawlings (2006:14) asserted that developing positive relationships with stakeholders is a necessity for organizations. He affirmed “the traditional management tendency is “to respond to the squeaky wheel stakeholder.If the organisation has not properly prioritised its stakeholders and their relationships, the squeaky wheel stakeholder may get more attention than is deserved.” Luoma-aho (2015) is adamant on the critical importance of stakeholder management in PR. The author suggests that Stakeholder engagement has risen on the public relations agenda recently mostly due to the introduction of social media and new hybrid forms of marketing, advertising, and public relations, and that “it is the future task of public relations practitioners to support the faith-holders, engage the hateholders and reveal the fakeholders.”

Ledingham (2003: 182) states that organisations tend to develop a competitive advantage in the presence of strong inter-relationships. Rensburg and Cant (2009: 52), resonate this view by positioning strong strategic organisational relationships as valuable intangible assets in the domain of competitive advantages.

The importance of leveraging relationships is central to the work of PR professionals, as this reaps benefits for firms. As suggested by Heath (2006:99), the presence of robust relationships is an attribute for high-performing companies, especially in the highly dynamic commercial environment, in the present period.

The PR team in companies need to act by the strategic mandate, to develop long-term as well as symbiotic relationships, between different organisational participants. These participants are both internal and external as well as diverse. The PR professional ensures harmony and understanding of the organisational goals. For this, they have to use certain tools, methods and techniques. The discussion below focuses on what these tools, methods and techniques are.

2.2.1 Public Relations tools and methods in the workplace

Public Relations emphasises the conveyance of the right message to the right group or audience that is essential to maintaining a positive environment in the workplace. According to Alas and Mousa (2016: 285-314), most organisations rely on their PR activities to improve their brand image. Wipulanusat *et al.* (2018: 31-37) said that community engagement is one of the most critical aspects of the PR work.

Community engagement with diverse audiences leads PRPs to consider specific channels to convey their message. Media has turned out to be a useful tool for PRPs to engage with the public, as it connects a broad group of audience to the organisation. According to Oakman *et al.* (2018: 56-61), selection of proper media helps organisations convey a strong brand message to their targeted audience, which is essential for audience engagement.

PR is concerned with promoting the brand value of a business, and it creates mutual trust between the company and its key stakeholders. As opined by Wipulanusat *et al.* (2018: 31-37), trust is essential to boost up the sales figure in a competitive market, that is only possible through strong values. In supporting the statement Alas and Mousa (2016: 285-314), commented that good PR also improve the credibility of organisations.

However, for the improvement of credibility, focussing on the influencer connection, networking strategies, and leadership pieces are also necessary (Caillier, 2017: 638-653). PR organisations help to circulate a positive message towards the targeted audiences, that leads to a more positive response from the audience, which improves the brand value and brand recognition of the organisation.

Public Relations greatly enhance business reach by enabling the business to establish new relations, which opens wider opportunities for the company to grow and expand their operations (Davis, 2020). Furthermore, PR delivers good accessibility to the key stakeholders to rate the products and services of the

organisation, thereby helping to identify the shortcoming and improve the quality of deliverables. Quality products and services are essential to capture a market. Public Relations always come from the reliability of the products or services because it ensures better engagement with the targeted audience (Gill, 2014: 101).

Therefore, organisations need to conduct proper in-depth market research; to identify the demands and preferences of customers, and the need to offer products or services with optimal quality, as per the requirement. It can create a good mutual trust in a market, that can lead to an improvement in PR. Apart from that, organisations also need to emphasise on the after-sales services; to create good brand loyalty that is essential for customer retention, as well as improvement of PR (Lindenmann, 2006:3).

There seems to be consensus that beyond press releases and brand promotion, organisations also need to consider the creation of public opportunities to improve their PR. For example, organisations can perform charitable activities, organise industry-wide events, partnering with celebrities etc. to enhance their brand recognition and media coverage manually, that can help the organisation to improve their PR (Martinelli, n.d.). It is therefore essential to analyse the models upon which Public Relations relies.

2.2.2 Public Relations perspectives and models

Mundy (2016:16) states that there are three (3) positions on valuing cultural diversity preparedness in the PR industry. They are a) The discrimination and fairness perspective (colour blind); b) Perspectives of legitimacy and operational access (the process of shunting individuals on different career-paths); and c) Learning and integration. Ravazzani (2016:168) on the other hand, provides three models for diagnosing the effort of culture diversity preparedness of PR students: a) the assimilating minorities; b) approach for managing diversities and c) the leveraging differences model.

2.2.3 The assimilating minority's model

In the assimilating minority's model, organisations or students reflect and react to the nation's policies and laws. The PRPs implement cultural diversity policies to meet the compulsory guidelines or quotas as enshrined in South Africa's Equal Employment Opportunity - the age discrimination, and disability laws. An emphasis on the assimilating-minorities model is mainly with internal workers and the duty of the policy connected to the HR Departments (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2017:255).

2.2.4 The diversity management model

The diversity management model recommends going past political correctness and the observation of laws to concentrating on the performance improvements and commercial case, next to social and legal mandates (Ravazzani, 2016:167). Managing cultural diversity is economically beneficial to the company and PRPs due to increased work satisfaction and worker productivity, as well as encouraging innovation, developing creative aspects and enhancement of the satisfaction levels of clientele. Instances of cultural diversity management programmes include a) policies of work-life balance, plans of part-time work, telecommuting as well as flexible hours; b) The philanthropic happenings that reflect diverse worker groups as well as communication between and across cultures (Chron.com, 2011).

2.2.5 The leveraging differences model

The leveraging differences model proposes respecting the organisation's differences and leveraging differences. The consideration of differences must be part of any ' company's promotion, compensation, recruiting training, and performance appraisal (Ravazzani, 2016:168). Some of the organisational

practices for achieving leveraging differences include; a) training on cultural sensitiveness; b) competencies recruitment; c) creating a community of ways centered on cultural and professional interests; d) practices entrenched in the fundamental business and e) inter-cultural interactions or communication between individuals of diverse cultures to attain shared understanding.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Fear (2003:203), avers that cultural diversity is noticeable at every company level. Cultural differences appear in every country and part of the world, and this has the potential to affect the economy or political stability of a given nation. However, cultural diversity is also present in everyday situations; it is unavoidable. It seems all these differences need to be incorporated and managed to take advantage of that configuration (Fear, 2003:203).

Demographic changes during the last 20 years have triggered an increased racial and ethnic diversity in the global labour force. Global demographics (2019), indicates that about 60 % of the global inhabitants are Asian; around 14 % are African; while 11% are European; and only 5 % are North-American (Global Demographics, 2019).

The estimated population of South Africa stands at 58,78 million, according to the 2019 mid-year population estimates (MYPE). The population mix shows various cultural traits, languages, as well as religious inclinations and practices. The black African population is in the majority (47,4 million) and constitutes approximately 81% of the total South African population. The white population is estimated at 4,7 million, the coloured population at 5,2 million and the Indian/Asian population at 1,5 million. Just over fifty-one per cent (30 million) of the population is female (Statssa.gov.za, 2019:8).

In an attempt to contextualise cultural diversity, Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver and Eckstein (2016:1191) state that cultural definitions emphasise the demographic traits (both primary and secondary). Schachner et al. (2016) also focus on the origin of the differences in the demographics, and their culmination from individual to group attributes.

In addition to cultural definitions of diversity, there are some organisational approaches to defining the concept. Hunt *et al.* (2018), aver that many global organisations like McKinsey define cultural diversity, as the process of ensuring the inclusion of a larger percentage of women and ethnic minorities. These definitions also emphasise on the demographic traits, but also have a more streamlined approach towards ensuring a high degree of diversity.

Additionally, the definitions try to analyse the cultural differences and their role in power-distances, especially in the domains of - functions and expectations in the workplace; perceptions; and styles of individuals. These insights into cultural diversity are broad and do not provide clear indications as to how this diversity plays out into the workplace, with a specific focus on the PR industry and its aspiring professionals.

To ensure further clarity on the notion of cultural diversity, the University of Michigan (2013) sought to delineate the concept of culture. They concluded that culture is how people relate to their physical and social environment, and how they express these relationships and stereotypes, as well judgments about an individual based on that “person’s membership of particular classifications”. While this definition provides more details on the key term, it does not place cultural diversity in the context of the workplace, vis-à-vis what impact, if any, it can have on a company’s performance and how PR fits into this picture.

There are considerable literary debates regarding the benefits of the presence of a culturally diverse employee-base, brings in organisations. The proponents in favour of maintaining culturally diverse workforces help in contributing to talent pools and

the development of robust perspectives and insights. It enables the organisation to establish a culture of efficiency and problem-solving (Cox et al., 1991).

As noted by Glinkowska *et al.* (2016), multicultural teams can experience a lot of conflicts due to the presence of different beliefs and value systems. These issues can lead to sufficient loss of productivity for an organisation. A critical analysis of both these viewpoints suggests that PRPs have to understand strategies to leverage the benefits of multiculturalism and drawbacks of cultural conflicts. It will help them to develop narratives that can effectively communicate the positive aspects of an organisation when it comes to managing cultural diversity. An awareness of these benefits and challenges will also aid them in ascertaining the communication needs, of the culturally diverse audience. It will help them to meet their requirements; through sensitive and effective forms of communication.

2.3.1 Cultural diversity in the workplace

Laurent (1983:17) points out that there are crucial implications of cultural diversities on management in the sense that every manager has his/her style or theory. Still, cultural diversity plays a key influence in their decision-making process. Pless and Maak (2004) suggest that cultural diversity must be part of management processes. These authors recognise that there are challenges in building an inclusive diversity culture within an organisation.

However, Pless and Maak believe that dynamics imposed by globalisation compel people to regard cultural diversity beyond compliance with laws, as set by the government. They affirm it is essential for the success of the organisation. Scholars have attempted to convey the importance of cultural diversity to the success of an organisation. For example, Beiswenger *et al.* (2005) state that several organisations value cultural diversity, as they believe that the presence of the same, helps in the development of talent pool and robust problem-solving capabilities in the organisation - due to a variety of opinions and perspectives.

Patrick and Kumar (2012:2), echo this position by indicating that the presence of a robust and efficient diversity management framework in operational activities, can be highly effective and beneficial for organisations. It can ensure that employees feel satisfied and included. Consequently, happy and highly engaged employees can demonstrate higher levels of dedication towards the attainment of organisational goals.

Researchers have established a direct link between cultural diversity and the company's turnover. Ravazzani (2016:168) affirms that it is through employee participation that diversity expertise enhances the business' financial performance. Cox and Blake (1991:49) explained that a culturally diverse workforce has the potential to increase the sale of goods and services. With growing diversity in the markets as well as staff, production and sales of organisations are better facilitated in the presence the of efficient and diverse employees with different ways of working, beliefs, capacities, and problem-solving abilities. Managing cultural diversity effectively increases competitiveness, allows creativity, and improves its reputation.

Belanger (2015:16) argues that organisations can benefit from cultural differences by ensuring respect and acknowledgement of all the diversities of workers without biases. Belanger (2015:16) however cautions that if the organisation's management fails in the development of unbiased supports for these diversities, then diversity, despite its many positives, can potentially hamper the growth of a productive workforce.

If this is well-managed, Belanger (2015:16) reckons that creativity and problem-solving efficiency are among the benefits of cultural diversity in any company. For Barselaar (2017:23), cultural diversity is essential in the modern business environment, and this is particularly true for companies that venture outside their home countries. As highlighted by Barselaar (2017:28), the primary role of higher management in collaboration with the HR personnel is to ensure the creation of an

acceptant work-environment with an equal level of comfort for all workers, irrespective of their differences and culturally diverse traits.

The presence of culturally different, as well as efficient leadership teams, can help in ensuring a better understanding of all the cultural traits of employees in the company. It has the potential to contribute to a higher engagement of all employees, fewer discriminations, and an increase in the overall profitability and sustainability of the concerned companies. Smith (2017:45) argues that in a workplace consisting of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, exposure to different ideas and viewpoints becomes a norm which increases the level of acceptability and mutual respects among people.

Smith further argues that cultural diversity in the workplace helps in flexible brainstorming among the employees, thereby opening up spaces for innovative ideas and solutions, which is usually not present in a traditional working environment. With a workforce that understands the concept of cultural diversity and its benefits, one creates the chance for expansion of the business in different unexplored markets (Smith, 2017:45).

Cultural diversity in workplaces positively reflects the company reputation in the market, which is essential for the establishment of good PR. As opined by Clifford (2019: 51-57), organisations which recruit individuals from different backgrounds convey a strong brand message of equality and fair treatment.

According to Lambert (2016:68), a collection of diverse skills and experiences help the organisation to offer varied products in all their targeted areas, which can improve the company's reputation. Hence, cultural diversity supports the organisation to establish the right business image, by offering a transparent working environment and delivering products as per the expectation of customers, which can provide a business advantage.

The views highlight the concept and relevance of cultural diversity for business organisations, operating in a globalised business environment. It also explains the

beneficial aspects of ensuring cultural diversity. Furthermore, the academic works reviewed here have indicated that appropriate management of cultural diversity can help an organisation in ensuring success. PRPs can play an instrumental role in communicating the narrative of inclusion and diversity; to garner support from an increasingly diverse global audience. It has been pointed out by Mundy *et al.* (2018), that students need to consider various diversity-related issues while formulating decisions about PR. The section below examines the factors that influence cultural diversity in the workplace.

2.4 Factors influencing cultural diversity in the workplace

The literature reviewed at this juncture reveals, that cultural diversity in a workplace refers to different individuals respecting each other's cultural differences. It improves the workplace environment and supports the learning and adaptation process. However, other factors that can influence cultural diversity drastically in the workplace, include the following:

2.4.1 Education and knowledge

Different knowledge and education levels can also be significant factors that can influence cultural diversity in the same disciplines. According to Urbancová *et al.* (2016: 314-331), different knowledge and education levels can originate from different perspectives that can create conflicts in the same disciplines and can influence cultural diversity. It speaks to how individuals relate to and understand cultural diversity in the work environment. It, therefore, also previews the importance of preparedness before entering the workplace, especially from a PR perspective.

2.4.2 Cognitive preference

Cognitive preference is a significant factor that can influence cultural diversity in the workplace because individuals come from different backgrounds and hold different values. As highlighted by Lambert (2016:68), different religious beliefs, social norms, etc., result in various cognitive preferences that can affect how cultural diversity is leveraged.

2.4.3 Cultural-diversity and Public Relations

PRPs, in the present period, face more significant challenges of encountering diversities, as they need to operate in different time zones and various forms of economic and socio-political domains. They can also face constraints in terms of usage of other media for communications (Wakefield, 2008:141). Wakefield underlines that these PR experts seek global populations, and they try to incorporate the differences among the communities in terms of literacy, socio-economic conditions, governance traits, linguistic attributes, as well as religious practices.

In line with these considerations, Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver and Eckstein (2016:1193) indicate that the PR professionals' managerial candidates, as well as the leaders in the PR units, need to develop some core competencies in the aspects of employee recruitment and retention, as well as grooming. They also need to make the organisations aware of the insights and resources required for efficient relationship development with various related people.

PR managers value diverse talent and believe in the ability to identify and attract people who are either mixed or understand the benefits of cultural diversity for an organisation. Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver and Eckstein (2016:1191), also point at that the ability of a PR manager to steer a company towards cultural diversity-friendly approaches that will pay dividends on many company levels.

Cox and Blake (1991:48) also argue that culturally diverse organisations enjoy good reputations and have correspondingly favourable PR. Thus, a culturally diverse organisation is also bound to have a culturally diverse PR workforce, which beyond financial gains, brings creativity, learning, and flexibility (Thomas and Ely, 1996: 79-80). Therefore, it is safe to state that the public responds more positively to an organisation embracing cultural diversity.

A critical analysis of these perspectives shows that the idea of cultural diversity has several complexities. Academic literature posits varied views about the advantages and challenges of cultural diversity. At the same time, it is clear from these discussions that a clear grasp of this concept is crucial for professionals preparing to work in a globalised world. It is especially relevant for PR professionals, as they are the ones who have to handle the two-way communication needs of culturally diverse public and the increasingly inclusive organisations. It explains why they require proper education about this concept, in preparation for their professional roles

Weick (1979), added that for developing effective and symbiotic relationships with the components of the business environment, the organisation needs to incorporate the diversities present in the external environment, within its operational framework. However, Grunig and Toth (2006:42) argue that PR professionals are, on the contrary, incapable of comprehending all these diversities for the provision of support; to ensure the presence of a diverse workforce, in the concerned organisations.

According to Grunig and Toth (2006:42), there exist 60% to 70% of women operating in the domains of PR. However, there still exists a visible majority of white females in these domains, and many people do not dispute this phenomenon, which in turn indicates towards a shortage of diverse people in the same realm of PR, which is supposed to promote the importance of diversities.

There appears to be an understanding and consensus that the PR profession correlates with cultural diversity. The literature explored thus far, reveals the influence of diversity in the manner in which PRPs operate. It poses the question, as to how practitioners should maximise the potential presented by cultural diversity in performing their duty. Sha (2008) and Toth (2009) explain that PR people need to incorporate cultural diversity in the phases of research, development of strategies, implementations, and evaluations of their work.

Practitioners can only warn but not generalise about any public or audience. Generalising is challenging the practitioner to achieve their objectives, without comprehending the notion of diversity or cultural diversity. It prompts an investigation into why these types of qualifications are required, and whether this knowledge is available.

Schachner et al. (2016:1196), affirm that there exists a considerable gap in the aspects of diversity education despite knowledge being available. It is the responsibility of these people to develop their competencies in the establishment of intergroup relations (Swanson, 2005). The primary competencies required in such cases include enough insights about global diversities, differences and the presence of attributes and skills to ensure successful communication with different types of groups or individuals (Tilford Research Group, 2004).

Beardsley (2004:34), claims that organisations that do not communicate enough are often either disregarded or misunderstood by their publics. Moreover, communication programmes should align with the business objectives, and the public should be made aware of products and services offered. Azzopardi and McNeill (2016:299), support this premise by underscoring that effective communication must be a primary requirement for organisations to attain their goals.

2.5 Influence of cultural diversity in Public Relations

Cultural diversity helps to maintain a transparent working environment that supports the establishment of the mutual understanding of diverse people - essential for the establishment of PR.

According to Qiu and Muturi (2016: 236), organisations recruit culturally diverse people to convey a strong brand message of equality, thereby eliciting a positive impact on public perceptions of the organisation. However, as noted by Muturi and Zhu (2019: 75), due to the integration of different skills in the workplace, the organisation opted for diverse people that can assist in improving the delivery of products or services efficiently by maintaining customer preference. Cultural diversity also ensures proper acknowledgement of differences, which highlights the critical potential of the individuals that improve motivation levels.

Hence, cultural diversity makes the implementation of effective PR a lot easier (for an organisation), which can result in the achievement of desired success through maintaining a healthy and professional relationship with the key stakeholders.

2.6 Evaluating and measuring cultural diversity

Evaluation and measurement of cultural diversity are very much essential to analyse the cultural transparency of the workplace. It also delivers a clear and specific idea about the ethical considerations of the organisations, by highlighting equality and fair treatment in the workplace.

According to Qiu and Muturi (2016: 236), cultural diversity can be evaluated or measured through analysing the workplace practices, attitudes of the individuals, employer-employee relationship, etc. It delivers a brief idea about the internal environment of the organisation. Danso (2018: 410), suggested that through detailed observation of attributes of the employees like their ethnicity and dressing style etc., it is possible to gather ideas about the cultural diversity in a particular workplace. Understanding the dynamics of each difference is very much essential

to properly evaluate the cultural diversity of the workplace, which requires very clear conceptions about various cultures (mainly regional-based culture).

2.7 Theory of “Cognitive diversity hypothesis” related to cultural diversity

Cognitive diversity hypothesis emphasises the various perspectives that originate from the cultural differences of workplace groups. According to Mitchell et al. (2019: 471), cognitive diversity refers to the difference between the key characteristics such as perception, expertise and experience.

Bragge et al. (2017: 779-815), aver that cognitive diversity hypothesis also emphasises on the physical diversities like age, sex or race that helps the workgroups to eliminate misunderstandings, thereby smoothening out the interaction process at the workplace. Apart from that, “Cognitive diversity hypothesis” helps to choose the best idea from a wide range in a diverse workgroup, which is essential to eliminate conflicts as well as to improve problem-solving approaches.

2.7.1 Justification Suppression Model related to cultural diversity

The justification suppression model states that most people possess harmful social norms and egalitarian values that suppress their expressions on negative beliefs, which works as a critical barrier to cultural diversity.

Obenauer (2017: 1064) opines that the justification suppression model helps to eliminate prejudices related to diversity, which is beneficial to the promotion of cultural diversity in a group. Hence, to improve the PR through cultural diversity, this model might be helpful in organisations. This model also ensures active engagement of individuals of different cultural backgrounds, that will also support the PR through problem consulting.

2.8 THE INDICATORS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE

This section establishes a framework that determines the indicators of cultural diversity knowledge that will form the basis of this study. The 2009 report by UNESCO titled, *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, places creativity as a critical element of cultural diversity knowledge.

In cross-border communications, the primary requirement for ensuring the presence of diversities of culture is strengthening the roots of the culture, for which creative and adaptive responses to the dynamic environment is needed. This report suggests that a person who has cultural diversity knowledge is creative.

Building on this position Azman and Erdil (2013:27) implied that people who have cultural diversity knowledge tend to work in synergies, value different viewpoints - as they understand that this increases the chance for positive opportunities. The more you interact with other employees, for instance, the more knowledge you gain, allowing for innovation and personal growth, they affirm.

Business Notes (2019), has focused on cultural diversity competence and what it entails; stating that the notion of cultural-competence indicates towards the practical usage of social, as well as interpersonal skills, and insights. An individual that appreciates the differences in cultures, and uses it to his or her advantage or that of the group can be viewed as having cultural diversity education. Bennett (2014:45), believes that the ability to bring experiences and ideas that can be adapted to fit what each customer needs, as opposed to just trying the 'one-size-fits-all' approach, is a sign of cultural diversity knowledge.

Pointing to the element of creativity, Bennett stresses that the goal for companies is to tap into the knowledge and ideas generated by a diverse workplace, which provides the organisation with more ideas, that ultimately lead to better decisions.

There are many ways to prepare PR students or employees for cultural diversity in the workplace to promote cultural diversity. As suggested by Danso (2018: 410), the acknowledgement of differences is one of the best ways to promote cultural diversity successfully.

However, according to Lozano and Escrich (2017: 679-696), offering training related to implicit bias is most useful for the students or employees to prepare for cultural diversity. Mentoring individuals is also a great approach to establish a helpful link with other groups, thereby contributing to a diverse workforce.

Mentoring also helps to overcome interaction barriers. According to Danso (2018: 410), encouraging personal evaluation can also be as an effective way to minimise interaction constraints. This approach can help prepare students and employees for the challenges of a culturally diverse workplace. Therefore, continuous learning can motivate employees to prepare for cultural diversity, as well as in promoting a culturally diverse workplace.

Based on the above literature and as part of providing focus to this study, the indicators were summed up in the below table. These were tailored and edited to suit the purpose of this study.

Indicators of Cultural Diversity Knowledge
Creativity: Coming up with original, innovative ideas to specific issues.
Teamwork: Capability of collaborative working with diverse individuals, to achieve shared values and goals.

Cultural self-awareness: Ethnic identification ability among the individuals
Flexibility: Adaptive capacity for always coping with global changes
Respect: Respecting others' differences.
Empathy: Development of compassion, concerning different perspectives and cultures
Critical thinking: Capabilities of using deductive and inductive forms of reasoning
Language development: Ability to write or read in different languages

Source: Author Construct, 2018

These indicators are crucial for the effective management of cultural diversity. Being flexible is an essential aspect of accepting others' views. Respect and empathy can help PRPs to treat diverse populations with dignity. Cultural awareness is crucial for gaining a greater perspective, while language development can help to reach out to linguistically diverse groups. Critical - and creative thinking can help in generating unique approaches for managing cultural diversity.

Similarly, teamwork can help PRPs collaborate with diverse teams and get their inputs on decisions. Pinto (2018) avers that intercultural skills like those mentioned above should be part of the curriculum. Pinto also recommends training for instructors on how to integrate multicultural perspectives in classroom teaching. According to Killick (2020), using elective courses for extra credits and introducing interactive learning activities with peers can also increase intercultural sensitivity, including in PR education.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter reviewed the literary sources on various issues related to cultural diversity, cultural diversity preparedness, and the benefits and barriers associated with it. The literature review helped to identify the main concerns of PR practitioners in a globalised world. The analysis contained in this framework helps understand the significance of cultural diversity for the PR profession. Some of the key learnings from the literature review include a) Cultural diversity is visible everywhere in the world and has an influence on the performance of an organisation; b) Cultural diversity affects the manner PR practitioners operate. Moreover, c) Stakeholders are essential for the success and survival of an organisation - it is the role of the PR practitioner, to manage these relationships. Other findings are: d) Communication is an essential tool of the PR practice; e) Specific measures can be used to assess the level of cultural diversity in organisations, to understand its influence on PR practice; and f) The reviewed literature also sheds light on the fact that diversity is becoming a vital issue for many educators working with minorities, but not necessarily in other fields.

This is a crucial gap explored in this research study by focusing specifically on the field of PR.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology and methods adopted for the study. The study adopted the qualitative research methodology. The researcher adopted a phenomenological approach to describe the students' perceptions of the importance of cultural diversity knowledge to their careers. The researcher conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to gather data. Data were analysed using the thematic content analysis. The chapter also discusses the population of the study, the population size, selection criteria and technique, as well as the ethical considerations underpinning the research.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

As stated, this study adopted the qualitative methodology of research. According to Wyse (2011), qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. The goal of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem under investigation or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research.

Given that cultural diversity is hinged on perceptions, experiences and opinions, the research design is appropriate for the study. Quantitative research is research used to quantify a problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. It is not appropriate for this study.

The research design provides the opportunity to uncover the underlying issues behind the problem under investigation.

According to Creswell et al. (2007: 51), in qualitative research, the interaction between researcher and respondent is essential. The researcher attempted to understand their interpretations and what they perceive cultural diversity represents. Qualitative research is essential because it measures things that numbers might not be able to define. Qualitative methods sometimes identify trends before they show up in the quantitative data (Business, Satisfaction and DeVault, n.d).

Research design is the overall strategy that is chosen by the researcher, to integrate the various components coherently and logically, in a way that helps to ensure the effectiveness of the research (Sacred Heart University Library, 2011).

Research design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research design also includes research philosophy; discussing the specific ways that help to give a different idea of methods through which data can be garnered, as well as the methods for proper analysis. The research design also includes a research approach that discusses the different plans and procedures that a researcher often takes into consideration when aiming for a relevant result for the research topic, through the implementation of qualitative frameworks (Creswell and Creswell 2017:27).

Ontological and epistemological foundations underpin qualitative research. The science behind the study under investigation describes the ontological foundation. It is a system of beliefs that helps to reflect a proper interpretation of the different constitutes considered by the researcher. On the other hand, epistemology refers to the branch of philosophy that discusses the various sources of knowledge and the different possibilities concerning their limitations (Gialdino, 2009). The discussion now turns to the sample group for research.

The purpose of triangulating is to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Bowen, 2009). Corroborating findings across data sets can reduce the impact of potential bias by examining information collected through different methods. The researcher analysed data collected from the interview process thoroughly to come to a better understanding of the PR that is present.

3.2 Methods of Enquiry

3.2.1 Target population

According to Yin (2017), the target population helps to give a deeper understanding of the research topic and provide conclusive findings. Banerjee and Chaudhury 2010 (cited in Asiamah, Mensah and Fosu Oteng-Abayie, n.d.) define population as “an entire group about which some information is required to be ascertained” .

As part of this study, a total of 23 participants were engaged. PR managers and the PR lecturers were involved, along with third-year students who had completed their internships in the PR industry. These groups provided insights into cultural diversity preparedness of PR students.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with PR lecturers and managers. The researcher also gathered data from students through focus group discussions which took place at CPUT Cape Town Campus. PR lecturers and PR managers who have hired students from CPUT formed part of the target population.

3.2.3 Description of participants

Sample means the list of every sampling unit with a capacity of adequately representing the target population (Yin, 2017:69). The sample for this study was selected from third-year PR students at CPUT who had worked as interns. It is essential that this study focuses on PR students because they have a theoretical understanding of what is expected of them as future professionals. The choice of third-year PR students was made based on the fact that they are required to conduct a professional internship in the PR industry for one year.

This experience is crucial as it helps to gather their sentiment on their level of preparedness on cultural diversity, while in the industry. Third-year students are at a crossroad; between campus and the PR field. They are critical stakeholders in gauging the extent to which they have been provided with the necessary tools, to face the challenges and opportunities created by cultural diversity. Through focus group discussions, students were able to compare their different experiences of being in the PR industry as interns, from different angles and perspectives.

The study was also extended to lecturers and PR industry managers. This sample was selected out of the need to have an expert opinion, on the level of preparedness of students as they enter the industry. As industry stakeholders, PR managers welcome, work with and supervise PR students, as part of their training. PR managers are in a unique position; to judge the students' ability to grasp issues of cultural diversity in line with the work of PR.

Finally, PR lecturers are responsible for providing the academic and theoretical knowledge, necessary for students to possess as future PR practitioners. Their participation in this study provided the context in which the students learn before their entry in the workplace.

The main idea for selecting the population is that they will help in the proper investigation and provide a better understanding of the different research problems addressed in this research (Setia, 2016). They will give adequate information about the training that they have obtained and also the process of hiring.

3.2.4 Sampling Techniques

The study employed the purposive sampling technique to select participants for the research. Purposive sampling is also widely known as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling. According to Etikan et al. (2016), the primary purpose of the purposive sampling technique is to produce a logical assumption to be representative for a particular population. Sampling techniques is either non-probability or probability. Probability sampling entails every population member having an acknowledged non-zero likelihood of selection (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

For the non-probability sample, there is no random selection of members from the target population. No probability sampling techniques include judgmental/purposive, snowball, quota, and convenience sampling. Considering this technique helped in selecting participants who have the relevant knowledge, as well as characteristics as needed for the concerned study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; De Vos et al., 2002; Sarantakos; 1998; Struwig& Stead, 2001). The sample selected has been expected to provide necessary information regarding the importance of cultural diversity when entering the workplace.

The main objective of a purposive sample for this study was to produce a selection that can provide expert advice and experience-based opinions on the research questions. Additionally, the researcher deemed the population capable of delivering the substantive information, that gave the basis for concluding the study. Expert knowledge of the population helped the researcher to select participants in a non-random manner, thereby having a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population.

Furthermore, the purposive sampling also helped to identify and select a few PR managers/practitioners, to discuss to the importance of cultural diversity knowledge as part of competency requirements in hiring interns, and what opinions they have on the preparedness of students on cultural diversity when entering the workplace. The purposive sampling involved the application of knowledge and awareness of the researcher to select appropriate participants, that would contribute towards the success of the study. The PR managers would provide the researcher with detailed insights into the situation within the workplace.

The PR managers/practitioners approached for the interviews were former students at CPUT, with one of them being an Account Director whose role is to supervise interns. PR managers understand the pressures of the PR field and how these pressures affect the bottom-line. They are therefore obliged to hire and work with interns who possess the potential to help advance their agenda. It was crucial to understanding how they rate cultural diversity knowledge as part of the skills to possess when hiring or retaining PR interns. The selected managers also have insights into the PR programme at CPUT. They were well-positioned to provide feedback on what they believe is the level of preparedness of students on cultural diversity.

As industry stakeholders, PR managers welcome, work and supervise PR students as part of their training. They are in a unique position to judge the students' ability to grasp issues of cultural diversity in line with the work of PR. Managers provided insights into their experience in working with students (interns) of the level of cultural diversity knowledge before they accede to the PR field.

Finally, the decision to include lecturers in this research was for assessing the influences of diversities (especially cultural ones) on the lecturing process, and what measures they put in place to encourage and promote cultural diversity in the classroom. The selection of lecturers was also through purposive sampling because they had the characteristics and knowledge needed by the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; De Vos et al., 2002; Sarantakos; 1998; Struwig & Stead,

2001). The selected lecturers provided the researcher with the information that he needed regarding the importance of cultural diversity when entering the workplace.

The data collected from the 23 participants comprising of students, managers and lecturers were adequate to produce meaningful results. For this research, interviews and focus group activities were conducted with the below sample:

3.2.5 Students: Focus Group Discussions

The suitable size for a focus group is six to eight participants (excluding researchers). Still, focus groups can work successfully with as few as three and as many as 14 participants (Gill: 2008). For this study, fourteen third-year students took part in the focus group discussions. The students shared their experiences and real-time pieces of evidence of how cultural diversity education or lack thereof, impacted their performance as interns in the PR industry.

In selecting students, the researcher ensured that they came from different racial backgrounds. The goal was to decipher how they were able to relate to one another as classmates and how they were able to manage their individual and group diversity. It was also crucial to ensure that students came from as many geographical locations as possible so that they could understand how their own experiences played a part in their learning process as part of education on cultural diversity. As a result, the researcher ensured that students from different races — Black, White, Indian, Coloured took part in the study. All the students and the managers were selected for this particular research, as they can provide useful and relevant information related to PR. Students will have in-depth knowledge, and they use it in their daily activities, and therefore this will make the research more representative.

3.2.6 Lecturers

The researcher selected one lecturer per PR subject. PR is a major within the course, as well as the aspiring career for students in the programme. A major is a specific subject that students can specialize in while aspiring to a degree. As part of this study, the selected lecturer is, therefore, a critical stakeholder in responding to questions around the measures put in place to prepare students to succeed in the PR field.

3.2.7 The programme manager responsible for curriculum

This lecturer coordinates and leads efforts into adapting the curriculum to accommodate feedback and evolving new dynamics. This lecturer helped to understand how the Public Relations programme prepares students with cultural diversity knowledge to survive in the workplace.

3.3 PR Industry Practitioners –selected across key PR areas:

3.3.1 Account Director at a PR Agency and Supervisor for interns from CPUT

PR Week (2020), describes a PR Account Director as the senior contact person for clients within an agency or in-house organisation. They manage and oversee a PR team to ensure that campaigns are delivered and that they meet service level agreements. Commercially minded and creative, the PR Account Director is adept at building relationships with critical commentators, industry spokespeople and senior journalists. They direct and lead PR projects and provide counsel to their clients and board alike. The researcher engaged with a PR professional due to their function of not only interacting with clients to preserve sources of revenue, but they also supervise teams responsible for servicing the clients daily. PR Account Directors understand the client's expectations and convey these to the respective units of consultants and interns. It was, therefore, important to gather from this

professional, the importance of cultural diversity knowledge in addressing the clients' needs, while assessing the preparedness of student interns in this specific area.

3.3.2 Entry-level/ Junior Account Manager at a PR Agency

Junior Account Managers typically have not been in the industry for a significant amount of time. Therefore, there is a clear link they can make between the tools acquired at school and their application in the workplace, especially in line with cultural diversity preparedness. Given that Junior Account Managers work under the supervision of Account Directors, it was essential to understand how much of these directives to serve clients are influenced by the cultural diversity component. It is additionally vital to note that the agency environment enables the PR professional to work on many clients from different sectors, as well as geographical locations. It allows the Junior Account Manager to appreciate how the preparedness or lack thereof played a part in how he/she approach their duties.

3.3.3 PR Practitioner in Corporate environment

The corporate environment is different from the agency setting in the sense that a PR practitioner deals with one client (his/her organisation). However, the organisation still has to interact with internal and external stakeholders who come from different cultural backgrounds. The researcher selected a PRP operating in a corporate environment to provide balance, as well as provide insights into whether the requirements for cultural diversity preparedness in that environment are the same.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

As earlier stated, the researcher gathered data for the study through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.

3.4.1 Interviews

Neuman (2000:506) asserts that the procedures of in-depth interviews can be viewed as a combined effort for information generation, which is done by both the interviewer as well as the respondents. The in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher provided an opportunity to explore all aspects of the topic extensively. The interview was semi-structured, thereby allowing participants to explore various elements and express their positions freely and candidly. Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be studied and also allows the interviewer or interviewee to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill: 2008). The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, also allowed for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been considered pertinent by the research team (Gill: 2008). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to investigate a range of topics from the participant's perspective (Given, 2016:87).

The interview sessions allowed gathering genuine and real-time insights. Participants opened up more during the interviews. It provided the researcher with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to clarify any view participants may hold should the need arise.

This form of information collection framework often considerably facilitates field research. This form of data-collection method significantly helps those studies that are carried out in the domain of qualitative research (Du Plooy 1995:112). The reason for utilizing in-depth interviews was to ensure that the different perceptions of the respondents about cultural diversity and the students' level of preparedness (lecturers and PR managers) were uncovered. The interview also aided to

comprehend how each of these participants regards cultural diversity and how knowledge of it shapes PR careers.

The interview questions provided the scopes of diversion for both the interviewers as well as respondents, for generating more in-depth and detailed information regarding the research (Gill: 2008). In-depth interviews also allowed detailed observations of the characteristics of the selected participants, even so, that non-verbal details could also be uncovered (Du Plooy 1995: 114).

According to Du Plooy, this type of data collection is the most convenient and efficient way for research where in-depth insights, especially on complex and sensitive components, are required. For the concerned study, this helped in effectively collecting and assessing the perceptions as well as the beliefs of students on the extent to which they are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge, to thrive in the industry. Being considerably flexible, this provided a considerable opportunity to the study proponents, as well as the interviewer to emphasize their areas of interest and to collect much relevant information (Du Plooy 1995:114).

Given that the study's respondents consisted of individuals from different cultures, the researcher explored vital elements related to their individual beliefs, perceptions, and practices. Precise and accurate assimilation of people's sentiments were gathered through the interactions.

The use of the flexible approach could be seen to be generating superior outcomes compared to a structured interview. This has helped in discovering and collecting information, which is important for the study but would have been left out if the data have been collected in a structured framework. As in the latter, there remain no scopes for fruitful diversion or change of course of discussions (Gill: 2008).

3.4.2 Focus groups

According to Neuman (2000:510), discussions in focus groups facilitate qualitative information generation and assessment of the perceptions of groups in focus. The advantage of using focus groups for this study is that they provided valuable outputs and helped to gather information faster.

The objective was for the participants to express themselves freely on the issue of cultural diversity within the PR programme. This method sets the stage for contradictory responses which enabled the gathering of information on whether Public Relations students are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge to thrive in the industry. The discussion also sought to understand, from the perspective of the students, how the Public Relations programme prepares students with cultural diversity knowledge to survive in the workplace.

The researcher acted as the moderator of the focus group discussion and guided the interventions through leading questions to initiate the debate. The conversations were recorded and kept confidential for further evaluation by the researcher. In this role, the researcher was able to keep the discussion within the objectives of the study.

The focus group discussion involved third-year students. The central theme of discourse was the issue of cultural diversity education within the programme. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to allow students to share their views in the presence of other students from different cultures. It was an opportunity to observe how they interact with each other and test their understanding of other cultures. Ultimately, this method helped determine first-hand, the entrenchment of cultural diversity within the programme, and how it plays out in the relationships between students, and whether they think it is an essential part of their PR training. This method has a social orientation and thus helps in conducting research and collecting information, that is relevant to real-life social occurrences. The group nature of the focus group discussions also ensures freedom and comfort among

the group members, as they feel more secure than in the case of individual interviews (Baker 1992:225; Steward & Shandasani 1990:55; Reinard 2001:226).

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Creswell et al. (2007: 82) state that document analysis entails using documents as tools for gathering data. It involves focusing on all communication types that shed light on the investigated phenomenon. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher interprets documents to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Document analysis, 2016). It entails the compilation of coding content into similar themes during the study of focus groups (Document analysis, 2016). The thematic analysis helps to bring out any themes and patterns that are present in the data collected. In this case, the document investigated was the course guide of the PR programme at CPUT. The analysis sought to establish whether there were courses included that address cultural diversity education.

There are many reasons why researchers choose to use document analysis. For instance, document analysis is an efficient and effective way of gathering data because documents are manageable and practical resources. Documents are commonplace and come in a variety of forms, making them a very accessible and reliable source of data. Obtaining and analysing records is often far more cost-efficient and time-efficient than conducting your research or experiments (Bowen, 2009). Also, documents are stable, “non-reactive” data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher’s influence or research process (Bowen, 2009, p. 31). Creswell et al. (2007: 82), also classifies a document, such as a curriculum, as a primary source of data as it will be sourced directly from the head of the programme and it will be the original document.

The purpose of triangulating is to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Bowen, 2009). Corroborating findings across data sets can reduce the

impact of potential bias by examining information collected through different methods. The researcher analysed data collected from the interview process thoroughly to come to a better understanding of the PR that is present.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The study used qualitative thematic analysis to analyse the information collected through interviews. Thematic content analysis is a form of qualitative research analysis that emphasizes recording, pinpointing, and examining patterns in the data. Themes refer to patterns in the data sets, that are vital for describing the phenomenon and remain linked to the study question. The thematic analysis method comprised of different steps that are explained as follows (Sarandakos, 1998):

3.5.1 Transcription

In this step, the researcher organizes the information collected or recorded in a written form to aid a better understanding of the information collected.

3.5.2 Editing and Checking

The information collected is sorted and categorized under relevant units. Thorough analysis and reading of the information collected, development of relevant themes, and grouping of the data under specific themes facilitate this.

3.5.3 Analysis and Interpretation

In this step, the perceptions and information grouped under relevant themes are assessed to understand the underlying meanings of the data recorded. Post analysis and understanding, the meaning and perceptions are interpreted and used for deriving inferences.

3.5.4 Generalization

The information collected from different sources is compared and contrasted for developing general assertions and deviations from public perceptions. It is followed by a summarization of the information in relevant paragraphs, for helping the readers in gaining fruitful insights.

3.5.5 Validation

The information collected is tallied across different transcripts to assure the presence of validity and reliability in the data and the research. The researcher did this with the help of multiple readings by the partners to ensure the robustness of the information. This has been followed by the formation of the central themes and inferences as well as conclusions regarding the concerned study (Karlsson, 2016; Krippendorff, 1980; Sarantakos, 1998). A proper document analysis helps to analyse the data that is collected along with understanding the details of the focus group that is presented by selected participants. The conceptual framework that is presented provides a detailed understanding of the different things that are shown in the literature review.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are some of the guidelines followed by a researcher in the process of conducting a study. It helps to research without any biased conclusion and results. Ethics, as highlighted by May (2011), are the formulation of principles and standards to ensure the presence of morality in relevant activities and behaviours, which is immensely important in research. These issues are about the justification of actions and the company of appropriate procedures, especially while dealing with human responses (Leikas and Kulju, 2018). The PR department at CPUT was consulted, and for the study, their consent for interviewing students in the

concerned department was collected. Management was asked, by the companies who had employed the students, to interview the PR supervisors who were managing the students. It is important to note that ethics clearance was sought and obtained from CPUT. The researcher keenly observed the following ethical steps:

3.6.1 Informed Consent

According to Grinyer (2009), participants of any study are entitled to know about the research and the reasons behind their participation in the surveys. They also need to be aware of the nature of the interview to be conducted by the researcher. The participants' informed consent has to be given in the form of a written document to ensure their voluntary participation.

In this study, the researcher sought the informed consent of the participants through a written declaration highlighting the purpose of the study, expectations, and stating how the information would be utilised. Regarding interviews, a consent form was sent to participants via email before the interviews. The consent form was sent to the selected participants through email before the interview. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any point during the research. Informed consent was sought from the interview and focus group participants consisting of students, lecturers and PR managers.

3.6.2 Privacy

It is of immense importance in any research to safeguard the privacy of participants. It ensures that the integrity and individuality of the respondents are maintained (Lăzăroiu et al. 2018). The researcher kept the confidentiality of the participants by ensuring that data collected was only used for the study with the consent of the participants.

The names of the selected participants were secured, and all the data collected was used only for academic purpose, and not for any commercial purpose. The information collected and used in the research along with the relevant study materials will be kept for the coming seven years, which can help in the creation of a trail for audit. The recordings, as well as hard copies, will be destroyed after the concerned period.

3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

It is the moral responsibility of the study to ensure that the anonymity of the participants is maintained (Golder *et al.* 2017). This study guaranteed the participants anonymity and confidentiality by hiding the names of the respondents. Confidentiality was maintained in the concerned research by ensuring that none of the personal details of the participants was disclosed to anyone not related to the study.

Codes have been used to develop the summary and interpretation of the responses collected in the study (Millar and Brewer, 2003). These codes help to understand different elements without exposing the personal details of the selected participants. It helped to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process.

3.6.4 Harm to respondents

The researcher adhered to some practical norms and regulations so that the selected participants will be safe and free to express their thoughts and feelings. This research did not have the potential to cause harm to the participants. Besides, sometimes sensitive information was shared that required more attention from the researcher. The participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study in case of any discomfort. Participant opinions, as well as decisions, have been fully respected.

3.6.5 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. They indicate how well a method, technique or test measures something. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is about the accuracy of a measure ((Middleton, 2019).

Validity and reliability suggest that research is credible and trustworthy (Creswell et al., 2007). They stress that it is generally accepted, that the use of multiple methods of data collection is a way to ensure trustworthiness. In the case of this study, three approaches were used to gather information. These are namely: interviews, focus groups and document analysis.

These methods allowed the verification of data obtained through various stages. It also allowed the researcher to consider an appropriate method for each of the participants involved in the study. The interviews are more suitable for lecturers and PR managers while focus groups will be an ideal method to gauge the interaction among students and gather information from different experiences.

Finally, the document analysis provided an in-depth understanding of what the PR programme, course guide offers concerning cultural diversity education. These methods complement each other because all the participants have a crucial role to play in understanding the topic.

3.6.6 Credibility

The respondents were provided with the scope of free engagement and opinion provisions regarding their experiences, which in turn helped in the collection of adequate information in each domain. The researcher conducted a pilot study to ensure that the questions to be asked were relevant to the research objectives.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The data collected from the 23 students, lecturers and managers were adequate to carry out the study. The findings of the research are, therefore based solely on the interactions with the group of experts selected purposively. Given that qualitative research is a method of analysis based on respondents' perspectives, the researcher did not measure responses.

The process of conducting this research using qualitative methodology turned out to be time-consuming. As part of this process, personal experience and knowledge influenced observations and conclusions at times.

This research took several months and dealt with personal interactions in the process of collecting data, and this raised issues unrelated to the topic of the study. Given the open-ended nature of the questions, participants had more control over the content of the data collected. Therefore, it proved difficult to verify the results objectively against the scenarios stated by the respondents.

The findings are based more on opinion and judgment for the most part. Because all qualitative studies are unique, they are difficult to replicate (Rude, 2019). Finally, the research was labour-intensive as it required long processes such as categorization, recording, etc.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the qualitative nature of the research design was validated, and the demographic spread of the participants in terms of race and gender was presented using graphs. Non-probability, purposive sampling was utilized to select

participants. The sample comprised of students, lecturers, and managers. The data instruments employed were interviews, focus groups and document analysis. The data collected was analysed by using thematic analysis. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion on the ethical considerations and strengths and limitations of the study. In the following chapter results of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter focuses on the presentation of data from interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The chapter presents data collected from lecturers, students and industry representatives. This data informing the analysis involves the non-numerical and is analysed presentation of data thematically because it utilized a qualitative approach. The researcher analysed the transcribed data to summarise the key findings of the study.

4.1 THEMES

4.1.1 Cultural diversity knowledge of PR students

The study sought to understand the cultural diversity preparedness of PR students at CPUT. The data collected shows that the students of PR at CPUT have sufficient theoretical knowledge of cultural diversity. During the focus group discussions, one student mentioned:

“ we are taught in the communication science module how to work in a multi-cultural environment. PR students need to get exposure to cultural diversity, for us to know what to expect in that environment, and to know how to work with each other in that environment with different cultures.”

This finding contradicts the assessment made in previous studies that suggest that PR professionals in Africa are mostly not equipped to enter the international field of operations, as they do not have considerable access to diversity education that is immensely crucial (PRISA, 2019). Similarly, Toth (2009) had also argued that PR

professionals rarely receive diversity education in preparation for entering the PR field. Schachner et al. (2016:1196) further affirmed that there exists a considerable gap in the aspects of diversity education, for the preparation of students in the PR domains, despite this knowledge being available.

However, the data revealed that while students do receive knowledge on cultural diversity, they lack the practical know-how on how to play this information provided to them, in the professional environment. The data pointed out that students struggle to relate and are not confident in applying their theoretical knowledge in real-work situations when it comes to cultural diversity.

One respondent said the following:

“While we appreciate that theoretical knowledge is critical in our training process at *the* tertiary institution level, the fact that we cannot immediately apply this knowledge or see the correlation suggests that practical experience is complementary and key. Perhaps we need to be assessed on our cultural diversity knowledge so that we know how ready we are before the industry”.

From interactions with the students, the researcher noted that there are gaps in their cross-cultural knowledge. This gap exists mainly in terms of their practical capability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Students have been given the required knowledge for interacting with people of a different culture, but they lack the necessary expertise for practical application of the knowledge gained. “Many South African graduates are not able to apply the theory into practice,” claimed one respondent during the focus group discussion.

One respondent affirmed:

“The PR programme initiates various field trips, as part of the activities contained in the course. These activities aim to broaden the horizons of

students and provide them with perspectives on the real environment in which PR professionals are called upon to operate.”

The respondent, however, indicated that these trips did not necessarily prepare them on the influence of cultural diversity, as it was not the focus of learning during the trips.”

“While I appreciate these trips and the experience gained through them, I have to stress that cultural diversity was not a focus on the exercise. If it was, then I missed it.”

The researcher noted that due to limited practical application, students could not put knowledge into practice. Hence, the researcher noted that although students had theoretical knowledge about cultural diversity, they were nonetheless unskilled in practical applications of cultural diversity knowledge, thereby exposing their unpreparedness. One respondent conceded thus:

“I did not feel ready on this issue when I started my service training. There is huge variability in theory, which we were taught and the reality we face when we are going to the industry.”

The findings have shown that the students are not comfortable working with culturally diverse people and audiences in the real business environment. This is despite their explicit knowledge and understanding of theoretical knowledge, that explains the importance of understanding cultural diversity. Meier and Hartell (2009:182) had previously called for educators to be frank and dedicated to facilitating learner diversity in the context of South Africa. Sha (2008) and Toth (2009) also explicated that PR people need to incorporate cultural diversity in the phases of research, development of strategies, implementations, and evaluations of their work.

Moreover, the research revealed that most of the students at CPUT have theoretical knowledge of cultural diversity. However, they lack sufficient practical expertise on how to work with people from diverse cultures. They often struggle to view the bigger picture of how the theoretical knowledge they possess can be implemented efficiently and pragmatically, once in the industry. Students have yet to understand that cultural diversity knowledge, which is a critical skill in PR.

Students acknowledged:

“The make-up of classrooms allows for diversity where students from different cultural backgrounds are put together. We can navigate through the differences around them for the sake of completing a project. However, we fail to retain the importance of the aspect of PR as part of our learning and carry this out when we go to industry.”

These are the findings from the answers provided by the students during the focus group process. The responses recorded during the interviews have also revealed similar opinions.

The students emphasised the importance of theoretical knowledge on cultural diversity without clearly stating whether they feel prepared to enter the industry and apply this knowledge. They also pointed to the gap between what they learn and how it affects their career as PR professionals.

One respondent called for investment in the networking curriculum, where the industry and students interact more regularly. One of the interviewed students remarked thus:

“This will allow PR students to connect the dots during their learning process automatically. The PR personnel need to be able to break into networking. Since PR is the mantle of business, PR students need to be business-oriented.”

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural diversity preparedness of the PR students in the industry. Indicators of cultural diversity were identified as a basis to determine what cultural diversity means.

4.1.2 Creativity

4.1.2.1 Development of innovations and original ideation regarding issues

The data collected from the study shows that students are encouraged to be creative through the projects and assignments, which form part of the PR course. The data further shows that students understand what is required of them.

“Generally, group assignments are an opportunity for us to share ideas and experiences with classmates from different cultures. It is true that lecturers try to form groups based on the differences of skills and cultures.”

Interactions with lecturers revealed that PR students are subjected to exercises aimed at stimulating their creativity and innovating minds. The majority of students also confirmed that they are encouraged to be creative and are continuously reminded that it is an essential part of the PR profession. “Our individual and group assignments depend greatly on our capacity to be creative, as the marking on this aspect weighs enormously,” said one respondent.

This view is in line with Bennett’s (2014:45) position that the ability to bring experiences and ideas that can be adapted to fit what each customer's needs is a sign of cultural diversity knowledge. Pointing to the element of creativity, Bennett stresses that the goal for companies is to tap into the knowledge and ideas generated by a diverse workplace, which provides the organisation with more ideas, that ultimately lead to the better decisionmaking process.

However, while creativity is emphasized in the PR programme, there is no focus on how learning in a culturally diverse environment can contribute to this trait.

One student pointed:

“We fail to harness the culturally diverse environment in which we learn as part of the creative process. It is in part because students are allowed to choose groups in which they want to work on an assignment. Most students gather along the same racial lines most of the times. This does not allow for cross-cultural experience sharing in completing assignments. We are also not clearly instructed to work across cultures because it carries benefits in the process of coming up with creative solutions.”

On that note, it has been suggested that a culturally diverse organisation is bound to have a culturally diverse PR workforce, which beyond financial gains, brings creativity, learning, and flexibility provided by a culturally diverse PR workforce (Thomas and Ely, 1996: 79-80). This needs to be harnessed proactively. Sha (2008) and Toth (2009) explain that PR people need to incorporate cultural diversity in the phases of research, development of strategies, implementations, and evaluations of their work. From an education standpoint, the importance of cultural diversity in solving problems and bringing out creativity is not overstated, according to students. Groups for assignments are formed casually, and as a formality without clear intent to leverage the cultural diversity of students. The students are typically encouraged to show creativity by engaging in learning activities, that require them to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions.

The programme coordinator responsible for curriculum attested that students from the PR programme at CPUT are rated highly by the PR industry players. The demand for CPUT students as interns is very high, even though there has not been clear feedback on how interns utilise cultural diversity to their advantage and help attain the firm's goals.

The programme coordinator said:

“Our students are generally praised for the ability to perform and add value to the organisations where they are deployed as part of their in-service training. It is also true that we are yet to assess how they specifically fare on the issue of culturally diversity while in the industry.”

An analysis of the course guide helped to verify this statement made by the Programme Director. The document analysis showed that the curricular approach, for the PR programme at CPUT, places a high emphasis on creativity by creating the scope for unique group projects that allow students to brainstorm and come up with creative viewpoints.

An analysis of the PR course guide highlights that the “qualification has both a theoretical and practical component and will enable the learner to create carefully planned Public Relations activities which are strategically aligned with organisational objectives and relate to the needs of the business world.”

From an industry perspective, most students from the PR programme at CPUT are perceived to be capable and reliable. One interview participant from the industry explained:

“The high levels of creativity shown by these students made them valuable to companies. However, we feel that students lack specific skills required when they first take up positions as interns. Various critical elements are overlooked in the learning process, according to the PR industry.”

Another industry representative said:

“Students from CPUT are very motivated and disciplined. However, at times, we spend more time teaching them basics such as putting together a media rather than focusing on the core business of PR. These basics should be taught at the university level. It is also

important to have a conversation with tertiary institutions on how students can be better equipped on cultural diversity knowledge and how to leverage it.”

As a result, PR managers spend more time going over these basics with the students to sharpen their creative minds in line with the PR field, rather than focusing on critical elements of the work. The data also states that ascertaining the fact that being exposed to a diverse audience influences PR strategies, and contributes to one aspect that students still struggle to adjust. Students take for granted the ability to be innovative through the experience of a culturally diverse setting. Beiswenger *et al.* (2005) state that several organisations value cultural diversity as they believe more solutions are brought to the table for consideration, and there is improved potential for problem-solving.

The industry stakeholders interviewed believed, however, that while most PR students possess creative abilities, further training is required for most of them to meet the creative needs of a highly demanding industry such as PR. The findings in this regard show that the PR students at CPUT are capable of demonstrating significant levels of creativity during small-scale academic projects or internships. However, they require greater degrees or real-world exposure to ensure that these students can meet the creative demands of large-scale professional firms in the field of PR.

“Practice makes perfect and practical exercises need to be enhanced and increased for students before they enter the industry. This is to ensure that they are fully prepared. But practicals need to be adapted and aligned to the industry’s needs. Students from CPUT demonstrate a level of competence but emphasis needs to be put on how the PR industry is evolving. The demand of the a globalised world and challenges for PR professionals should be stressed.”

The data collected from the research further showed that students with a theoretical understanding of cultural diversity do not necessarily know how this knowledge applies in real life or industry situations. The students interviewed put more emphasis on the importance of theoretical understanding of cultural diversity, without clearly stating whether they feel prepared to enter the industry and apply this knowledge.

One student claimed:

“We seem to have sufficient knowledge but sometimes struggle to put it into practice.”

Overall, the PR programme at CPUT makes problem solving and creativity a priority. It, however, does not emphasize how this skill can be enhanced by learning in a culturally diverse environment. It is crucial to reconcile these contradictions with proper explanations. Muturi and Zhu (2019), have shown that PR students in the United States (US) are exposed to a lot of diversity while studying in this field. Still, this exposure does not necessarily have a significant influence on their perceptions of issues related to the creative appreciation of differences. This particular study has highlighted that this occurs due to the inadequate focus on diversity-related activities.

A similar situation is observed at CPUT. Even though the curriculum emphasises on the need for generating creative viewpoints, this process does not always occur in culturally diverse environments. Students tend to develop groups with people from the same background, and this limits their ability to expand creativity through intercultural interactions. It is a critical issue that adversely affects the broadening of these students' overall creative potential while studying this particular course.

4.1.3 Teamwork

4.1.3.1 The capability of working with different types of group members for achieving common targets and goals

From the focus group sessions and interviews, it was established efforts by lecturers enable students to work in teams for group assignments and related PR projects. One interviewed lecturer indicated that working groups were formed across racial lines. The lecturer of a major subject interviewed said:

“This study found that working together with people from different cultural backgrounds is beneficial to the students as that enables sharing of skills, ideas and perspectives through interaction and socialisation.”

This is usually possible when the lecturers themselves play a role in forming groups. In such circumstances, the lecturers try to create culturally diverse groups to ensure greater inclusivity and higher exposure to varied viewpoints. However, students are usually, in other cases, given the opportunity to choose their groups, and this usually leads to students gathering among people of their race. This is the main finding in this regard that has been derived from interviewing the lecturers of the PR course, at CPUT.

In the light of this, interviewed students fail to see the correlation between these group activities and the need to work across racial lines to be equipped for the PR industry. The interviews further revealed that some of the experiences of working with other students help the PR students to learn more about cultural differences. However, a student respondent noted:

“We have not noticed any difference in our cultural sensitivity as a result of working in diverse groups. We do not feel that teamwork in this regard ensures a high degree of preparedness concerning cultural diversity. “

Most of the participants indicated that the experience of teamwork did not necessarily enhance their awareness or consciousness of diversity in any way.

They expressed the view that they did not profoundly think about the implications of working in multicultural teams, in terms of their diversity preparedness. While a few students recognized “we have learned new perspectives, by working with other students who come from different backgrounds, but we still regard group work as a formality rather than a necessity to benefit our careers.”

According to Azman and Erdil (2013:27), people who have cultural diversity knowledge tend to value different viewpoints, as they understand that this increases their chances for positive opportunities. The scholars further suggested that the more you interact with other employees, the more knowledge you gain innovative ideas for personal growth. This is also in line with the arguments of Smith (2017), who found that people from different backgrounds and cultures are exposed to varying viewpoints and ideas.

The collected data shows that lecturers hold the same opinion. They feel that opportunities to work in multicultural teams have helped many of their students become more sensitive about diversity-related issues. They have expressed the view that this change is often reflected in their academic coursework, as well. However, the interview responses from the students did not corroborate this fact, which shows that multicultural teamwork has not enhanced the conscious synthesis of diversity knowledge. This makes their cultural diversity preparedness inadequate in terms of practical aspects.

The data collected shows there was also a consensus from all interviewees that the ability to communicate with people from different cultures, is critical in the PR industry. If the students are equipped with good communication skills, it would be easy for them to interact and understand different audiences. Students understood that regular group assignments offer the opportunity to learn more about others and the field.

However, the students expressed a degree of regret, that until the study was conducted, they did not take these group projects as a tool for learning about the

diverse audiences - in the field of PR. In this context, it is essential to highlight that even implicit learning through teamwork experience can be useful in equipping PR students, for a culturally diverse work setting.

However, conscious acknowledgement of this learning can make this even more useful, mainly because being mindful of cultural diversity can help them to pick up more nuanced aspects of cultural diversity. Consequently, this can enhance their overall levels of cultural diversity preparedness. As suggested by Danso (2018: 410-430), the acknowledgement of differences is one of the best ways to promote cultural diversity successfully.

However, according to Lozano and Escrich (2017: 679-696), offering training related to implicit bias is most useful for the students or employees, to prepare these groups with cultural diversity knowledge. Mentoring individuals is also a great approach to establish a helpful link with other groups, that can contribute towards the diverse workforce.

Mentoring also helps to overcome the interaction barriers that are quite essential to prepare students or employees for cultural diversity. As noted by Danso (2018: 410-430), encouraging personal evaluation can also be considered as an effective way to minimise the interaction constraints, which can be helpful to prepare students and employees for promoting cultural diversity at a workplace.

4.1.4 Cultural self-awareness

4.1.4.1 Understanding of ethnic identification of an individual

Discussions during the focus group study showed that PR students are generally aware and conscious of the differences between themselves and the individuals around them. According to Haiyan (2014), cultural self-awareness, and the ability to see how their culture has influenced them speaks to consciousness. The focus

group showed that most students are aware of their cultural background and its influence in terms of shaping their personality.

One student remarked thus:

“People from different backgrounds and with different values work in the same environment, and they view the world in different ways and unite to work in the same project.”

Another participant added thus:

“Us as PR students need to get exposure to cultural diversity for us to know what to expect in that environment. It will help us to know how to work with each other in that environment with different cultures.”

A third respondent indicated thus,

“As a PR practitioner, you are the intermediary between the company and the public. Thus, you need to interact with everyone to learn more about different cultures.”

During the focus group discussion, students unanimously averred that the issue of cultural diversity is freely discussed during classes without undue restrictions. Students understand the influence of culture in a general manner. The views raised by the students during the focus group highlighted these facts.

The study further revealed that the PR programme at CPUT makes provision for subjects like communication science that explore cultural diversity. The students averred that communication science gave them more understanding of what to expect from culturally diverse workplaces. The course guide indicates that students get taught communication science in the first, second and fourth years of study.

A student indicated:

“Social Psychology as another subject in the PR programme that enables students to comprehend social interactions, including their origins and their effects on other individuals. This subject has the potential to broaden students’ horizons and deepen their understanding of the different audiences they are called upon to deal with, in their profession.”

The document analysis of the course guide suggests that Social Psychology covers topics such as decision making, persuasion, group behaviour and personal attraction. The PR course information states that a qualifying learner will be able to assess, measure and critically evaluate an organisation's current situation regarding its relationships with key stakeholder groups. Also included in the course information is the fact that students who take the course build their capacity in essential business - and life skills, to assist them in working within diverse professional environments.

The Programme Coordinator said:

“In PR, there are social studies which examine students’ ability to work as groups from different cultures. The coordinator insisted that students are aware of the different cultures that surround them, and the course strives to lead them to acknowledge this.”

However, the research showed that there is a discrepancy between this awareness on cultural diversity instilled and transmitted to students, and their ability to put this into practice once they enter the industry. The knowledge conveyed in this regard refers to the materials taught in class and the implicit lessons provided through activities and projects. In this regard, Belanger (2015:16) argues that one way in which organisations can benefit from cultural diversity is by first acknowledging differences among workers and understanding these various characteristics.

According to a student:

“While the knowledge is conveyed to us, it is not made explicit that this is a critical skill for a PR student; we are ambivalent of its real-life application.”

Additionally, the research revealed that the PR course guide is currently under review to adapt it to the current PR environment. There was also recognition from both lecturers and the industry that the curriculum needs to evolve at the same pace as trends in the industry.

The cultural diversity preparedness of PR students is expected to equip them for effective professional practice in a rapidly globalized world. It is essential to highlight that adapting to the evolving patterns of industry practices can potentially enhance students’ cultural diversity preparedness.

On the specific issue of cultural diversity preparedness, the Programme Director responsible for curriculum acknowledges the need to upgrade the current curriculum, so that it caters to matters that are of practical interest to the students and industry. The PR Account Director interviewed, added:

“PR operates in a dynamic and changing environment. Both the industry and the PR programme must regularly engage and discuss how to adapt the curriculum to include overlooked aspects. How to practically instil the notion of cultural diversity in students, is still at a level that requires further consultations and collaboration.”

4.1.5 Flexibility

4.1.5.1 Adaptability for sustaining in a changing world

The issue of adaptation is relative and differs from one student to another. The majority of students agreed that it takes a reasonable amount of time to adapt to

the demands of the industry once they commence their internship periods. Most students also indicated they are expected to develop pragmatism in the work of PR when they start their internship positions. But it is while they are in the industry that they grasp and take full consciousness of the notion of cultural diversity and how it impacts the profession of PR.

On the other hand, an industry respondent decried the fact that students are not always capable of connecting the dots on the issue of cultural diversity and its importance for a PR professional. This issue can be reconciled on the basis that the perceptions of students and industry professionals are quite different from one another.

“This is because students rely on a more theory-based approach, while industry insiders analyse the situation from a more practical perspective. High levels of valuable exposure for the PR students can help to minimise these discrepancies in views,” said the industry representative.

Furthermore, the study found that the industry would like to be more involved in shaping the PR curriculum so that it considers the requirements of the job. The industry professionals have expressed the view, that students from CPUT are generally capable of carrying tasks assigned to them. Still, they lack training on some relevant, critical and practical components of the PR work, such as compiling a media list and analysis of a target audience.

“The industry and tertiary institutions have to work hand-in-hand so that each party fulfils their role. It is important to note that students come to the workplace without work experience, and it’s the industry’s responsibility to train them. Time could be saved if these students came to the workplace with more practical knowledge than just theory, especially on cultural diversity and it has an impact on the profession of PR,” said a PR Manager.

The literature review had established that practitioners face even greater diversity, operating “across time zones, within different political -, economic -, and social

systems, and with varying media constraints” (Wakefield, 2008:141). Wakefield underlines that practitioners seek relationships with multinational populations that differ in national income, literacy, religion, environment, poverty, technology, governance, and language. Therefore, the issue of adaptability is central to the work of a PR professional. This aspect helps to explain the PR students’ need to be highly flexible while studying and working in this particular field.

4.1.5.2 Respect and Empathy

The data collected through interviews show that industry stakeholders give a lot of importance to proper team development. Industry stakeholders were adamant that the key to strong team-development is the appreciation of differences in opinions as well as perceptions of members.

“CPUT PR students usually accept and appreciate the cultural diversity of their colleagues, as they enter the workplace. We have have never experienced cases of racism, xenophobia, or any other element of rejection for the other, from interns,” remarked an intern supervisor (Account Director)

The problem, however, remained - that students still struggle to figure out how these differences can be an asset for them as PR professionals. Lecturers also shared that students understand that differences in others have the potential to broaden horizons, provide growth, and help to gain new insights. A student confirmed:

“Cultural differences are palpable within the PR programme at CPUT, and we learn to work and accept each other. But there are many instances where classmates want to gather and work with others of the same culture, thus making it difficult to understand and learn about other cultures.”

Another student further averred:

“Even though cultural differences are respected, we fail to understand how to leverage these differences so that it is beneficial to our PR careers. “

The holistic understanding of these issues gained through the data collection process shows that the students are unaware of the practical implementation of diversity-related knowledge.

Having respect and empathy include an appreciation for others' differences. Also, it is crucial to respect the cultures and perspectives of different people. It can help to minimise conflicts between various people and ensure that multiple people can work with one another with ease. Respect and empathy also breed significant goodwill for specific professionals and the organisations that they represent.

The ability to be compassionate and connect with others is critical to our lives, both personally and professionally. Demonstrating empathy – a crucial part of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness – also improves human interactions in general and can lead to more effective communication and positive outcomes, in both work and home settings (The Importance of Empathy, n.d).

Barselaar (2017:29) supports the plans for the development of a leadership framework, incorporating cultural diversities. As per the assertions of the concerned author, it is beneficial for the companies to identify the future leaders among the existing employees with relevant potentials and to start developing their skills and capabilities from early periods.

The presence of culturally different and efficient leadership teams can help in ensuring a better understanding of all the cultural traits of employees in companies, thereby contributing to the higher engagement of all employees, fewer discriminations, and an increase in overall profitability and sustainability.

Smith (2017:45) argues that in a workplace consisting of people from diverse cultures, exposure to different ideas and many types of viewpoints becomes a

norm, which increases the level of acceptability and mutual respect among the people.

4.1.6 Critical thinking

4.1.6.1 Being able to use inductive and deductive reasoning

PR Managers interviewed considered it very important for students to develop critical thinking skills before starting their training in the industry. There was also an understanding that real-life exercises and the industry setting help to facilitate students' ability to think critically and connect the dots.

However, the industry is precise that the necessary knowledge needs to be taught at the tertiary institution level. The interviewed PR Managers were unanimous that many CPUT PR students enter the field with encouraging signs in the area of critical thinking.

“Nevertheless, their critical thinking skills need to be cultivated more in line with the requirements of the industry and the constantly changing environment,” claimed one industry player.

Another PR Manager said: “students require more real-life experiences, while at universities, on how to use diversities of races and environments to their advantage.”

The Junior Account Manager interviewed affirmed thus:

“I wish cultural diversity was a prominent feature in how students learn before they start their professional journey. Students are usually in their comfort zone when they first start in the field. It sometimes takes several months to start appreciating the differences

around them and how this help sharpen the way one thinks for the benefit of your organisation.”

Interviewed lecturers, on the other hand, indicated that cultivating students' abilities to assess the soundness of knowledge claims and arguments is one of the most important objectives of the PR programme, at CPUT. Priority is given to how this skill can be transmitted to students, primarily through group and individual assignments.

“Critical thinking is demanded, stimulated and rewarded in most instances,” according to the lecturer.

The lecturers also agreed that there is a need for more engagement and alignment, with the industry on what areas require focus in the process of preparing students to use inductive and deductive reasoning, to come up with solutions to problems posed as part of the PR assignments.

Although most students share the view that critical thinking skills are presented as very important in the learning process, they are unclear if they have what it takes to tackle the demands of the industry. During the group discussion, some students revealed that during their internships at various PR consultancies, they had been told on some occasions that some of the exercises performed in the tertiary institution may not amount to the reality on the ground.

“We need more assignments and simulations on cultural diversity knowledge. This will go a long way in ensuring that we make a clear correlation between the profession and the skill,” said one respondent.

“As PR students, we need to learn to adapt to different environments as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, we tend to make real sense of this when faced with challenges of cultural diversity, when critical thinking is required,” added another respondent.

Deductive reasoning refers to the process of moving from general premises, for generating particular conclusions. Armat *et al.* (2018) have explained that deductive reasoning involves progressing from general ideas to specific and logical conclusions. Belanger (2015:16) reckons that creativity and problem-solving efficiency are among the benefits of focusing on cultural diversity in any company.

For Barselaar (2017:23), cultural diversity is essential in the modern business environment, and this is particularly true for those companies that venture outside their home countries.

Cox and Blake (1991:49) explained that a culturally diverse workforce has the potential to enable the sale of goods and services. As per their beliefs, in the present period, with increasing diversity in the markets as well as workforce, production and sales of organisations are better facilitated in the presence of efficient and diverse employees with different ways of working, beliefs, capacities, and problem-solving abilities. Managing cultural diversity effectively increases competitiveness, allows creativity, and improves organisational reputation.

4.1.7 Language development

4.1.7.1 Being able to speak and write more than one language

The ability to speak a different language is regarded as an asset by PR recruiters, as revealed by separate interviews with industry representatives.

“A student who can speak different languages has a lot to bring to the firm. Our challenge is also to be able to relate to diverse target audiences; language becomes a barrier at times.”

Another industry representative acknowledged that “students generally speak more than one language. South African students are usually able to speak and write in English/Afrikaans/Xhosa, for instance. For us, the more, the better.”

A different respondent from the industry revealed, “we also have situations where students only speak one language. Multilingual candidates usually have an edge in the recruitment process.”

This is immensely valued, as it allows the PR professional to relate, communicate and engage with various audiences for the benefit of his/her clients. “National understanding of different languages and cultures are needed to be able to address the cultural diversity question.”

As far as the PR programme at CPUT is concerned, students wished, during the discussions, that provisions were made for them to learn new languages in addition to English and their various first languages. There was a call by students for a course based on languages to be introduced, thus giving them the option to add to their language proficiency. The students would like to learn to speak, read and write in specific languages such as Afrikaans and French, to ensure that they can reach out to a linguistically diverse audience.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This section provides an analysis of the research findings in relations to the cultural diversity indicators identified earlier in the process. The results further seek to establish whether aspects of the curriculum help to ensure that students are exposed to multicultural teams and group interactions; as well as, whether the curriculum caters for a better understanding of each other and development of a greater appreciation for teamwork while fostering creativity, respect and empathy, among others.

4.2.1 PR Curriculum and Teamwork

The results of the study revealed that the PR programme at CPUT makes provision for subjects that explore cultural diversity. Communication Science was mentioned as one of the subjects that discusses how cultural diversity influences the professional. This subject is credited with giving students a decent understanding of what to expect in terms of diverse cultures that play out in the function of PR and how the professionals in this field are required to adapt in the context of globalization.

Respondents also pointed to Social Psychology, as another subject in the PR programme that enables students to comprehend social interactions, including their origins and their effects on the individual. This subject was found to have the potential to broaden students' horizons and deepen their understanding of the different audiences, which they are called upon to deal with in their profession

The study findings also implied that the ability to communicate with people from different cultures is critical in the PR industry. If the students are equipped with good communication skills, it will be easy for them to interact and understand different audiences.

The PR programme puts in place various activities that encourage students to work together across cultures, thereby helping to ensure that students learn about cultural diversity through proper interactions. These include group assignments and other projects that require collaboration and understanding of one another. These activities promote teamwork, and it joins Azman and Erdil (2013:27), who indicated in the review of the literature that people who have cultural diversity knowledge tend to work in synergies and value different viewpoints; as they understand that this increases the chance for positive opportunities.

However, the results show that students were mostly unable to put the cultural diversity knowledge gained to use in real-life situations when they got to the industries. Industry respondents decried the fact that students are not always

capable of connecting the dots once on the issue of cultural diversity, and its importance for a PR professional. The current activities and projects contained in the curriculum need to promote teamwork and do so implicitly.

4.2.2 PR Curriculum and Cultural self-awareness

The data collected from the research also revealed that the PR curriculum is currently under review to adapt it to the current PR environment. There was also recognition that the curriculum needs to evolve at the same pace as trends in the industry. Students believed that the knowledge conveyed to them does not make it explicit that cultural diversity is a critical skill. They also argued that they were not taught hands-on approaches to apply cultural diversity knowledge to the workplace. Most students indicated that they are expected to develop an understanding of real fieldworks and cultural aspects when they start their internship programmes, and it is only then that they take full consciousness, of the notion of cultural diversity.

On the specific issue of cultural diversity preparedness, the institution acknowledges the need to upgrade the current curriculum so that it caters to matters that are of practical interest to the students and industry. A different approach to how cultural diversity is taught to students before joining the industry should be considered. Cultural diversity is an important learning component, but there is no particular emphasis on this issue in the curriculum and students are trusted to understand and adopt this concept as they progress in the course.

4.3 The Role of Field Trips in Cultural Diversity Education

4.3.1 Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre

A field trip to the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre was arranged for the students of CPUT to help them gain significant knowledge of different cultures and

for enriching their cultural experience. This allowed the students to understand the ill effects of cultural discrimination and exclusion. The site was selected for determining the behaviour of different individuals in such a strained and violent environment, and to gain an idea of the responses of the people for such a phenomenon.

The visit to the Holocaust centre allowed for an understanding of the adverse impact of the holocaust on the local culture. The field trip was also an opportunity to provide students with an understanding of how culture is critical to relations among people as well as the impact on development.

It has also been understood that resistance and destruction of culture by an event such as the Holocaust hurts the culture that needs to be understood while interacting with people in that area. The field trip has led to theoretical knowledge of the cultural changes, which took place during the Holocaust.

4.3.2 Field Trip to the Parliament

The trip to South Africa's Parliament helped students to understand that diverse people within the same country are connected in some way or the other despite their differences. The student conducted the field trip to the Parliament to assess its impact on the political thoughts and viewpoint of the people. This is another area of study that has been undertaken for understanding the functioning of political bodies.

Moreover, to assess the functioning of the SA Parliament, as per the laws of the country is essential. The field trip has also been undertaken for assessment, of the legal framework of the country and how the parliamentary functions affect the legal status of the people. The field trip has been useful for determining the impact of the legal framework on the attitude, rights, and freedom of the people in the country, that influences their cultural viewpoint as well. Hence, the field trip has been important for determining the impact of political communication and its varied

element. This has been instrumental in understanding the effects of political frameworks and political communication, on the cultural viewpoint of the people.

It has also been noted that as part of the development of knowledge of diverse culture there, is a need for understanding how people from different cultures interact with each other and live as a community. Hence, a project for community engagement has been arranged as part of the Public Relations Management curriculum.

4.3.4 Community engagement project with NGO's

Community engagement project with NGO's has been found adequate to be part of the curriculum for the Public Relations understanding. It helps to understand how people from different cultures interact with their environment. The NGO project required students to take part in a field trip to an NGO and interact with volunteers and management involved in that project. Since the project is on community engagement, interacting and working with stakeholders of the organisation was imperative, to fully integrate and learn about new cultures.

The need for focusing on community engagement has been stressed so that people from varied political, legal, and cultural viewpoints, belonging to different regions of the society, can come together and offer their service for the project. Considering that it is a community project, there were avenues for interacting with people of different communities, that belong to diverse cultures. Hence, this was instrumental in determining the knowledge of different cultural values of people involved in the community project.

Moreover, the practical knowledge on the application of theoretical information related to a different culture and cultural diversity management has been attained; through this community engagement with the NGO, as part of the PR curriculum in university. Furthermore, the need for giving value to people of other cultures has

been enhanced, as well as the preparedness of the students to deal with people of different cultures, in a culturally diverse environment.

Principles such as fairness and cooperation have been determined as part of the participation in the community projects, that have been instrumental in understanding the knowledge and its application for preparedness in understanding cultural diversity.

As part of the PR curriculum, media relations need to be understood for determining the impact of media on Public Relations. It is with this perspective that the need for the students to take part in the festival felt necessary, as part of the PR programme. For developing knowledge in the role of media relations, students participated in the Cape Town International Jazz Festival. The students were able to interact with people from diverse cultures here.

The students have participated in the festival and have interacted with other people who have been part of the festival. This interaction has been instrumental in assessing the culture of people at the festival. How the festival brings people together, and the role played by the international media in facilitating the interactions is also part of the curriculum of diversity preparedness. The participation by the student has been important for developing the need for the application of knowledge, on international media and its role in the cultural milieu.

The role of media in cultural management has been attempted to be understood, through the participation in the festival, by the students. It has further been understood that people have an enhanced level of interaction with people from a different culture.

The experience allows students to test their theoretical knowledge of festivals and media relations, and associate it with cultural appropriation and cultural diversity assessment. Furthermore, the student has been able to determine the role of media, in bringing people together at festivals, across regions and borders. Participation has also been instrumental in determining the successful

management of cultural gaps among people, through media interventions that take place during such music festivals - through increased communication and intercultural communication.

For determining the impact of living conditions, on people's viewpoints and their culture, the students have studied the integrated project in the Western Province. This helps to appreciate cultural differences.

The study conducted by the students was aimed towards understanding the differences between the different people that reside in the Western Cape Province. The project is essential for determining the cultural viewpoints and differences between the original inhabitants and informal settlers, for gaining knowledge on the cultural diversity in the Western Province, which defines the interactions between the informal settlers and the original settlers.

It gives the students insight into the cultural diversity of communities in the Western Cape and being able to assess the impact of the living conditions and the occupations on the cultural environment, of the residents. This determines the degree of intercultural interaction and the cultural interaction with the people of other areas. Furthermore, the living conditions and the economic status of the people in the Western Cape Province had been noted in the study.

Furthermore, the students have understood that differences in the living conditions, the economic status, and the cultural environment, determine how people interact in their community, as well as with people of other districts and communities. Hence, it must be noted that participation in the projects, as part of the curriculum has been important for developing the various factors that affect the knowledge of cultural diversity. The engagement of the students in such projects, as part of the curriculum in Public Relations Management has been very beneficial for the students' knowledge of PR, cultural diversity, and cultural communication.

These different provisions, taken within the PR programmes, are in contrast with previous assertions on cultural diversity education, in PR. Ogbu (1992:5), believed

that cultural diversity had become a key term in education, especially minority education. The author, however, did not clearly state whether there is a focus on cultural diversity in PR schools. The literature also revealed, that in South Africa, education on topics of cultural diversity is given a higher priority in Journalism and Mass Communication programmes, as an “imperative” educational and professional excellence.

Meier and Hartell (2009:182) called for educators to be frank and dedicated to facilitating learner diversity in the context of South Africa. The literature did not specifically deal with the cultural diversity education in South African PR schools. It was, therefore, challenging to establish whether PRPs is equipped with cultural diversity knowledge before joining the field. Schachner, Noack, Van de Vijver and Eckstein (2016:1196), were adamant that there exists a considerable gap in the aspects of diversity education for the preparation of the students in the PR domains, despite the presence of sufficient resources needed.

The findings of this research showed that the PR programme at CPUT creates an environment that promotes cultural diversity and allows for students to be prepared on cultural diversity. However, it is not clear through the interactions with the students that they fully understand this aspect of their learning before entering the PR industry. What is missing from the current curriculum structure, and the approach to cultural diversity promotion is a detailed assessment of how the different activities and projects provided prepare students on cultural diversity.

Hence, there needs to be a focus on the multicultural approach, at all tertiary institution level regarding the planning of the curriculum, so that people can have a broader perspective. For the development of the globalized perspective, CPUT needs to consider dedicated cultural diversity subjects to expand on this area. Lozano and Escrich (2017: 679-696), agreed that offering training related to implicit bias is most useful for the students or employees, to prepare for cultural diversity. Mentoring individuals is also a great approach to establish a helpful link with other groups that can contribute to a diverse workforce.

4.4 PR Curriculum and language development

The study participants suggested the internationalization of the curriculum to focus on academics, along with the study of human psychology and international studies. Another aspect of the PR curriculum is the learning of new languages in the curriculum so that cultural understanding can be enhanced. By making the curriculum multilingual, students stand a better chance of being culturally prepared for the workplace.

This is because the students would have more exposure to different languages and shall be able to understand the history of the language and the culture of the people. By making such a multilingual approach to the studies in the undergraduate programme, the courses can be made more global, as opposed to teaching students in their native language and setting only.

For a global outlook, there is also a need for developing the viewpoint of the teachers in the classroom so that they could support the multilingual approach of the students in the university classrooms. Pre-service teachers need to assume the role of the reflective practitioners, for the application of the empirical, observational, and analytical skills for the teaching of the subjects in the curriculum. The global view is developed by making the curriculum more open and not being restricted to any specific local environment or country-based settings.

Furthermore, the cultural preparedness of undergraduate students is expected to get support from the development of the relation between academic success and cultural relevance, from theoretical and practical perspectives. Pre-service teachers that are part of the instructional classes align their linguistic understanding and their teaching style, as per the courses taught. The curriculum for fostering cultural diversity is shaped in a manner where role models reflect the idea of cultural diversity as part of the learning courses.

The educators' awareness of the complexities brought forth by globalization, can help in the teaching of multicultural education.

Add-on courses on linguistic diversity can be the key to cultural diversity. Integrated learning and group work can help students to meet people from other cultures and enhance their intercultural sensitivity. The curriculum of multicultural education also places focus on professional development and training through seminars, workshops, and student exchange programmes.

Such progressions are not just supportive of the development of the cultural diversity of the students in the university, but also useful for their professional development. Professionals working in the global environment are required to be open in their approach. Participation in fieldworks in different places can offer a more global approach and stance. The curriculum helps to prepare students for the globalised workplace, properly.

4.5 PR Curriculum, creativity and critical thinking

The study has showed that creativity is a critical element of cultural diversity knowledge (UNESCO, 2009). Belanger (2015:16), also reckoned that creativity and problem-solving efficiency are among the benefits of focusing on cultural diversity in any company. The researcher discovered that PR Managers interviewed considered it very important for students to develop critical thinking skills before starting their training in the industry.

There was also an understanding that real-life exercises and the industry setting help to facilitate students' ability to think critically and connect the dots. One PR Manager said that the industry is clear on the basic needs, to be taught at the tertiary institution level. Many CPUT PR students enter the field with encouraging signs in the area of critical thinking.

From an industry perspective, students from the PR programme at CPUT are viewed as capable and reliable, for the majority of them. The industry players interviewed, however, felt that students lack specific necessary skills required when they first take up positions as interns. Various critical elements are overlooked in the learning process, according to the PR industry. A second PR Manager underscored that PR Managers spend more time going over these basics rather than focusing on key elements of the work. It is clear that the diversity of audiences influences PR strategies - one aspect that students still struggle with.

Furthermore, the study found that the industry would like to be more involved in shaping the PR curriculum so that it considers the requirements of the job. It views students from CPUT as capable of carrying tasks assigned to them, but they lack training on some relevant, critical, and practical components of the PR work.

The functional components include tasks such as compiling a media list and analysis on a target audience. The industry believes time could be saved if these students came to the workplace with more practical knowledge than just theory, especially on cultural diversity.

Finally, the PR industry acknowledged that students from the PR programme at CPUT are prepared and are easier to work with, than students from other learning institutions. Students are highly rated by the PR industry players as lecturers confirmed that the demand for CPUT students as interns are very high.

The perspective of the employees in the industry has also revealed the importance of Public Relations programmes, in an educational institution considering the demand for specific skills. The demands of the industry, for students enrolled in Public Relations programmes, can also be related to the skills and capabilities desired in the industry. It is expected from the students, that apply as an intern to prove to their organisation that they have skills in public communication and can interact with people, irrespective of their shortcomings.

One of the significant challenges faced by organisations that recruit interns without sufficient knowledge in public communication is their inability to recognize the importance of diversity in the workplace. Graduates who have not received enough opportunities to learn about cultural diversity as part of the courses in the university cannot address people of other cultures and beliefs.

This shortcoming had been noted by the industries, who have hired interns in the field of Public Relations Management. The skills include communication skills and the skill of intercultural interactions. This also makes the induction programme for interns to be time-consuming, as the industries have to give training to the interns regarding the specific job requirements.

The Account Director said the proposal for the involvement of the industry in preparation of the Public Relations curriculum in universities is to make sure that the graduates are equipped with specific job skills. It has been noted that the learning courses in universities focus on theoretical knowledge, rather than the development of behavioural and soft skills.

Such skills include communication skills and behavioural skills and the ability to adjust in a culturally dynamic environment. This creates difficulty for students to complete Public Relations activities, uninterruptedly. This is because of the challenges faced in analysing the demands and views of a culturally diverse target audience in activities.

The Account Director added that establishing an industry-specific curriculum as part of the PR programme at CPUT would include opportunities for students to indulge in practical field works, for developing their knowledge of different cultures and the factors affecting them. It would help to address the challenges that students might face in addressing the needs of the target audience in the organisation in which they might work. Hence, the industry's perception of the preparedness of the graduates depends upon the need to indulge in practical experiences for developing their cultural knowledge.”

The industry-specific curriculum would also be based on making the students enrolled in the Public Relations programme culturally vigilant. Organisations involved in the arrangement of Public Relations activities such as cultural events and festivals require the interns to be aware of culturally different situations and differences between individuals, depending on the environment and individual beliefs. Awareness cannot be enforced onto interns with sole theoretical knowledge, without giving them scope for practical testing of their learning.

The knowledge preparedness of students, as per industry perspectives, shall be to tailor learning courses to address industry trends in the Public Relations programme, by making the desired skills part of their employability skills so that the students can also take the selected initiative.

The alignment of employability skills with the learning courses is one of the concerns of the industry regarding the university curriculum in Public Relations programmes. There are various countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, where universities formulate the curriculum for the PR programmes depending upon the industry trends in the country. The industry-specific demands such as technological capabilities; training in cultural diversity; flexibility; intercultural communication skills; and language courses are focused on. The intention is to make the graduates global candidates for employment, as opposed to being employable for one job position.

Industry-specific students are considered more desirable than well-trained students, for students that are highly qualified in their major subjects. It is the intention of understanding the industry perspective regarding the students in the PR programme at the CPUT. The preparedness of the graduates is also reflected in their ability to be aware of the changing dynamics in society, in terms of culture and shifting boundaries.

The preparedness of the students in terms of cultural diversity would mean their ability to recognize the existence of people of other beliefs so that they can identify different opinions and engage in incorporation in the workplace. Industries are focusing upon the need for recruiting people from different parts of the world who can contribute in the best manner to the workplace outcomes. This is specifically important to the companies involved in managing PR events and festivals.

The key intent is to have such interns that are prepared with the knowledge of cultural diversity and the existence of diverse opinions and values. This is because such recruits would also have a better understanding of what the majority, as well as the segregated sections of the society demand, and would also have tolerance for others' opinions in the workplace. Such recruits become an asset for the organisation, as they help the organisation to flourish in a dynamic environment without restricting organisational growth.

It is with this intention that the need for making the learning courses to be industry-specific has been part of the perspectives of the industries, regarding curriculum planning in universities. The view of the industry is to make the students and graduates in the PR programmes to study such skills and to be equipped with such understanding, that would help them to function in a culturally diverse environment.

Training programmes and fieldworks can be included in the curriculum so that practical testing of knowledge can be possible. Industry perspective is to make the curriculum to be more realistic and practical than just depending upon the learning to be theoretical. According to Flowers (2020), a social media writing approach can also enhance the intercultural sensitivities of PR students. It is an issue that has not been addressed by the participants of this study.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This study sought to establish the extent of the preparedness of PR students on cultural diversity in the industry. The research revealed various traits, challenges,

benefits, attributes, and importance of cultural diversity in organisations. Tertiary institutions can use the results obtained in this study to adapt the PR curriculum for students to be more equipped in the area of cultural diversity preparedness. The chapter shed light on the key findings found, concerning the leading indicators like creativity, teamwork, critical thinking, and others.

The results presented indicated that organisations with a culturally diverse workforce benefit from different skills and ideas. The sharing of ideas in the organisation can lead to better performance, as employees will be able to relate to stakeholders regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Good handling of the stakeholders of the company or organisation is viewed as being more crucial for the general success of the organization.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study will present the findings that the researchers have collected through data collection. Also, the objectives of the research were reviewed in line with the data collected and analysed, to ascertain whether or not they were met. The methodology section suggests that the qualitative modes of data collection had been used for the study. Therefore, a handful of students at CPUT's Public Relations Department had been interviewed. The collected data would help in highlighting the extent of real-life knowledge present within the students of the university, regarding PR. The key findings section would compare the data collected through interviews and compare it with the objectives of the study. Thus, this section would ensure that the objectives of this study have been met. The recommendations section would guide students, in context to real-time PR activities. Further areas of research would be presented at the end of the study.

5.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The data collected through interview sessions revealed that the concept of cultural diversity is one of the leading concerns for agencies across the world. Due to international expansion of businesses, companies now deploy culturally diverse employees so that they gain a better understanding of foreign markets, thus enabling achieve competitive advantage within the market sphere. Anais et al. (2019), argue that internationalization of the business process management system has inspired companies to serve hitherto unknown market spheres. It also implies that companies would also have to service an ethnically diverse range of consumers. Cognitive ability varies across cultures; therefore, the reaction of communities to a specific issue would be different.

It implies that PR professionals would have to deal with all kinds of communities with their unique characteristics. This has been discussed extensively in the findings and analysis section of the study.

According to Azzopardi and McNeill (2016), effective PR comes from good experience. Therefore, candidates would have to possess practical knowledge of managing PR issues. Findings from this study suggest that PR students at CPUT have significant theoretical knowledge regarding PR systems. However, practical experience regarding PR systems would have to be maintained effectively for managing real-time issues regarding PR.

Data collected for this study also show that students are creative enough to generate ideas. Interactions with PR students suggest that they are often subjected to case studies so that they can practice creativity within PR systems. Based on reports by experts, it was noted that PR systems are dependent on team efforts. Students within CPUT are often provided with group assignments so that they learn effectively about PR systems. PR students in CPUT have are aware of the cultural differences between communities. They adapt themselves to compliance with situations and are flexible, further enabling them to solve multicultural PR issues as per demands.

The researcher also noted that students at CPUT have hands-on soft skills. Therefore, they must develop respect and empathy with consumers all across the globe. Critical thinking, inductive, as well as deductive reasoning, can be considered as essential aspects of PR. Students at CPUT are trained to maintain rationality in decision-making processes. PR students would also have to learn about different cultures and languages; this would enable them to interact with culturally diverse clients efficiently. However, a lack of practical knowledge, regarding diversified PR systems, can be the major drawback for the study.

5.2 Linking Objectives

5.2.1 To establish whether Public Relations students are equipped with cultural diversity knowledge to thrive in the industry

The study achieved this objective in the literature review, as well as findings and analysis section of the study. The research suggests that the students of CPUT are well equipped with knowledge systems, that would be required to manage PR systems. However, students lack practical knowledge of handling PR systems issues regarding diversified clients. This can be considered as one of the significant drawbacks that have to be managed by the faculty of PR at CPUT. Interactions with the students also revealed that students are not comfortable in working with a diversified range of clients. However, they wish to understand the differences within a culture and be industry ready in compliance with PR systems.

5.2.2 To understand whether and how Public Relations programmes equip students with cultural diversity knowledge to survive in the industry

Detailed research and analysis in this field showcased CPUT's emphasis on exploring aspects regarding cultural diversity in workplaces. Based on the findings of the study, it can also be stated that communication science has been identified as a subject that had enabled changes within organisations. Students have also emphasized soft skill development sessions during detailed integration. It allows them to be creative as well as innovative while dealing with PR issues. Moreover, it also allows students to be flexible and rationally make decisions.

5.2.3 To establish the Public Relations industry's perception of PR students' levels of cultural diversity preparedness.

These objectives have been met in the data analysis and findings sections of the study. During the group study sessions, students were conscious of cultural

differences. However, they lacked detailed knowledge regarding cultural differences. Hence, they refrain from working within a multicultural environment. However, the faculty suggests that industrial visits are being conducted regularly for enhancing the knowledge of students. Students have been keen to learn about cultural differences within industries.

Based on the findings of the study, PR students, not only need to be encouraged to embrace cultural diversity as a critical skill, but the curriculum also needs to be adapted so that they have the necessary tools. Also, it is imperative to ensure that they are placed in an environment where they can succeed. It is recommended that tertiary institutions and the industry should have a more intimate relationship, that enables constant feedback between the two parties during the internship process. This way, the sector can regularly give information to the institution on the areas that need to be addressed.

Furthermore, the industry and universities, such as CPUT should not just collaborate during the internships of students. Collaborations should take place regularly, especially during the conception and amendments of the curriculum. It will help tertiary institutions to come up with programmes or courses that are in line with industry expectations on critical skills such as cultural diversity knowledge.

It can provide students with broader opportunities to interact with diverse groups of people, thereby reducing communication barriers. It is essential for cultural diversity. Regular engagement with the organisations' internal activities and culture will help the students to learn and understand how people from different cultural backgrounds work synchronously to obtain a common goal. It can also influence them positively for teamwork, which can be helpful for them to maintain cultural diversity in the workplace in future, by valuing the differences of other cultures.

Continuous interaction between the university and the industry can improve the level of preparedness of the students. Learning about different will encourage students to learn more about other cultures, which can help develop their interest

in diverse groups of people. It also enables the students to interact with other people from different cultural backgrounds, which is necessary for promoting cultural diversity successfully in the workplace. Apart from that, cultural seminars can also improve the interest among students to know about different cultures; therefore, such initiatives can also be considered by the university authorities.

Finally, there has to be an emphasis on the learning process at a very early stage. The critical importance of cultural diversity for careers in PR had been noted. Students need to be evaluated on this specific skill so that they can relate easily and understand. This needs to form part of a particular module when group assignments and other projects are prepared for students.

The other steps to be undertaken by CPUT for enhancing the cultural preparedness of the students shall be changes in the campus environment. Campus life needs to be open to more adjustments and flexibility. Campus life needs to encourage discussions and interactions among people of diverse cultures. This can be supported by the participation of people from varied cultures, to come together in an informal setting to discuss their culture, viewpoints, family setting, and their socio-economic setting. This is required for ensuring that people get the flexibility and support from the campus life at the CPUT, for understanding the intercultural value and cultural diversity.

CPUT can also develop new courses as part of the academic learning, for promoting the cultural diversity preparedness of the students in the university, such as a course for Multi-Cultural Leadership Foundation. Such courses can be designed specifically for the students in the first year, for encouraging them to learn more about other cultures. Either, this course can be made voluntary or it could also be made compulsory in the academic curriculum of the undergraduate students.

Through using such courses, the self-confidence and self-esteem of students can be developed, through leadership programmes that meet the desired industry requirements of cultural preparedness, among university graduates.

Practical and interactive workshops can be arranged as part of the curriculum for the students in the second year. Such workshops can be designed for group works where intercultural groups can be formed to take part in workshops. Current skills and industry trends required by industries in the market can be taught to the students so that students are ready to face the workplace demands in the future.

Training programmes and skill development can also form part of the courses, as aligned with the demands of the industry. Such workshops can address the skill development of interview preparation of students; presentation skills, networking; stress management; and tips for managing workplace diversity.

The university can also arrange fellowship schemes, and teachers from other universities can be invited to teach at CPUT about language and courses that are specific to their universities. This fellowship programme can be instrumental in the preparation of the students to be exposed, as well as accept the cultures in other countries. This familiarity is essential for the students to enhance their cultural preparedness and limit their cross-cultural resistance.

Teamwork is one of the essential attributes in managing cultural diversity in the workplace, for which it is considered as a critical indicator of cultural diversity knowledge. Teamwork can be promoted by assigning a clear role to the individuals, which can make the objectives clear and straightforward and influence everyone to work collaboratively. It is also recommended to give some authority to the team to make decisions that can impact the mutual trust between the team members. It is also essential to create an efficient synchronisation between team members from different cultural backgrounds, which is necessary for cultural diversity.

Creativity is another key indicator of cultural diversity; therefore, PR students need to emphasise more on the different ideas of different cultural people, to promote creativity in the workplace. Furthermore, it can also create a positive motivation towards an individual's activity that might be crucial to maintain cultural diversity at the workplace.

Language is a significant barrier to cultural diversity because different languages restrict individuals to interact with others actively. Therefore, workplace authorities are recommended to generalise a particular language for the workplace that can bridge the gap of communication in the workplace, which is necessary for managing cultural diversity successfully. Clarification of purposes for each workplace activities is mandatory, to improve the flexibility of employees belonging from different cultures because it can put an impact on their engagement towards a standard action, which can be very helpful for cultural diversity in the workplace.

Cultural self-awareness is also a key indicator of cultural diversity knowledge. Therefore, it is recommended for universities to influence their students to express their ethnic interest and respect other's ethnic perception, which might be beneficial for them in future to adapt to a culturally diverse workplace, quickly. Appreciating the differences between different cultures is also necessary to manage cultural diversity. It is recommended for the universities to maintain a strict level of sensitivity in students, to maintain respect towards other cultures which can also help them to understand different cultural values.

5.3 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Future studies may include other students that are doing other programmes at CPUT, as this study only concentrated on Public Relations students. This study solely focused on the cultural diversity preparedness of Public Relations students. Other students who are studying other programmes can also be considered in the readiness of an industrial environment or work environment - in general.

More so, this study was confined to the students at CPUT only; other studies can be undertaken on various universities and colleges, or even the universities countrywide, to come up with results which can be generalized.

This study utilized a qualitative approach; however, further studies can be carried out using the quantitative research approach. This study offers an opportunity to relook on the education system, to ensure excellent education from tertiary institutions in South Africa, as well as to ensure that the Public Relations students are well prepared for the diversified cultures in industries.

5.4 SUMMARY

The previous chapter focused on the presentation and interpretation of the data found in this study. It looked at the presentation of results obtained from the interviews undertaken with the respondents on the cultural diversity preparedness of Public Relations students, for the industry. It is important to reiterate that this research seeks to examine the level of readiness of PR students on cultural diversity. Semi-structured interviews were administered to a sample of respondents, and the data collected were grouped into different themes and sub-themes, to enable better analysis of the results. This chapter looked at the findings of the study, conclusions, recommendations of the research, and suggestions for further investigation.

5.6 GAP ANALYSIS

The study examined the preparedness of PR students to incorporate cultural diversity in communication and interactions with different people and organisations. Primary data for the research was obtained from students of a particular

department, both in the forms of interviews and focus groups. It indicates the presence of specific gaps in the concerned study. The primary gap present in this aspect is that the research concentrates on a small sample of respondents from one institution venturing into the domain of PR. This, in turn, can give rise to the potential threats of leaving out vital information and perceptions of the students from other institutions, as well as personnel venturing in PR domains in different geographical regions.

The study reflected upon the different skill requirements from the students that are graduating from the university. The findings revealed that the PR industries' perspectives are aligned with the views of the students regarding the work environment and skills that are required to be recognized as capable and skilled employees. From the interviews with the students, the researcher found that students were aware of the presence of people from different backgrounds in their places of internships. They also recognize the need for giving value to the people of varied cultures and beliefs, for fostering cooperation and teamwork in the workplace. Hence, the interviews with students had revealed the importance of cultural diversity to be recognized by the students, in the university.

The researcher also noted that students in the workplace would have to be the intermediaries between their organisation and the target audience. Hence, there would be a need for cultural sensibility and cross-cultural awareness of the students, that are desired by the industries in which they are placed. The findings suggest that industries' perspective is aligned with the need for recruiting such interns that do not struggle with understanding the differential views of the target audience and that they have quick knowledge of people's deferential behaviour and viewpoints.

The findings suggest that without appropriate preparedness of the students regarding the cultural acceptance and cultural diversity, the organisations would have to spend more time to give the students the required training for developing their capacity. It becomes undesirable for the organisation, hence there is

increased pressure from the industry to universities to make the curriculum industry-specific so that the students can be trained in skills required by the industry.

Findings also reveal the factors that affect students ability to address the target audience in PR. In the area of PR, the students from CPUT generally struggle with understanding cultural diversity, thereby affecting their abilities interact with people from different cultures.

The researcher also found that there are huge differences between the theoretical knowledge taught to the students in the academic courses and its practical application in real-life situations. There seems to be a lack of scope for empirical knowledge to be acquired by the students, for developing cultural diversity. Hence, the researcher recommends consistent field studies to places such as music festivals, holocaust centres, and industry projects to enhance students' understanding of different cultural environments. Such fieldworks shall be instrumental in developing the practical knowledge of the students in real-life situations.

It is particularly essential for developing the level of adjustment of the students in the multicultural environment in PR. Based on the understanding of the findings, there would be recommendations suggested for CPUT, for making progressive changes in the Public Relations curriculum, for increasing the cultural preparedness of the students.

The findings also reflect upon the need for making the curriculum to have a practical approach by adjusting the teaching style of educators offering language studies and focusing more on-field works, for practical knowledge.

The study indicates the presence of robust cultural preparedness of the students; however, there are several limitations in these aspects and especially in the students' perceptions. The problems that can be seen to be highlighted by the concerned study, from the information collected (both through in-depth interviews

and focus groups), are that there are considerable scopes for development of perceptions and knowledge, regarding cultural diversities among the students - the resources are also present in these aspects. However, the institutions providing these skill-development programmes can be seen to be lacking mechanisms for proper channelizing of these resources, to ensure the development of preparedness of their students.

The students in PR domains in South Africa are increasingly becoming prepared for the realities of the real-life PR world. However, the study also highlights the need to improve both hard and soft infrastructure that can potentially aid the preparedness of students for the PR world.

Although the researcher fashioned his interview questions to address the study's objectives, it is essential to state that there are aspects other than the three themes of PR which can have considerable impacts on the preparedness of the students in PR.

Another gap is that the research relies considerably on the primary data collected from the students. However, there are various information and data (secondary) that can be seen to be present in the aspects of PR and cultural diversity the inclusion of which can help in making the insights of the research robust, comprehensive and contributing to the studies in these domains. The exclusion of these sources can lead to restricted or constrained outcomes from the concerned research, which in turn indicates further scopes of exploration regarding the issue of concern.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, PR students not only need to be encouraged to embrace cultural diversity as a critical skill, but the curriculum also needs to be adapted so that students are given tools and put in an environment where they can succeed in this area. Additionally, the researcher puts forward the following recommendations:

- i. Tertiary institutions and the industry should have a more intimate relationship that enables constant feedback between the two parties during the internship process. This way, the sector can regularly give information to the institution on the areas that need improvement.
- ii. The industry and universities, such as CPUT, should not just collaborate during the internship periods. This collaboration should take place regularly, especially during the conception and amendments of the curriculum. It will help the tertiary institutions to come up with programmes or courses that are in line with industry expectations on critical skills, such as cultural diversity knowledge.
- iii. Continuous interaction between the university and the industry can improve the level of preparedness of the students.
- iv. Finally, there has to be an emphasis on the learning process at a very early stage. The critical importance of cultural diversity for careers in PR has been noted. Students need to be evaluated on this specific skill so that they can relate easily with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Lecturers need to be intentional while constituting groups for assignments. They should ensure that they mix students in ways that allow for diversity.
- v. Campus life needs to be flexible in ways that encourage discussions and interactions among people of diverse cultures. This can be supported by the participation of people from varied cultures to come together in an informal

setting to discuss their culture, viewpoints, family setting, and the socio-economic setting. This is required to ensure that people get the support from the campus life at the CPUT for understanding the intercultural value and cultural diversity.

- vi. CPUT can also include new courses as part of the academic learning to promote the cultural diversity preparedness of the students in the university, such as a course for Multi-Cultural Leadership Foundation. Such courses can be designed specifically for the students in the first year, to encourage them to learn about other cultures.
- vii. Practical and interactive workshops can be arranged as part of the curriculum for the students in the second year. Such workshops can be designed for group works where intercultural groups can be formed to take part in workshops. Current skills and industry trends required by industries in the market can be taught to the students so that the students are ready to face the workplace demands in the future. Training Programmes and programmes for skill development can also form part of the courses, as aligned with the needs of the industry. Such workshops can address the skill development of interview preparation of students; presentation skills, networking; stress management; and tips for managing workplace diversity.
- viii. The university can also arrange fellowship schemes. Educators from other universities can be invited to teach languages and courses that are specific to their universities at CPUT. This fellowship programme can be instrumental in the exposure of students to other cultures. This is essential for the students to enhance their cultural preparedness and limit their cross-cultural resistance.

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