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**The Role of Public Relations in Educational Development in Higher Education Institutions****Linda Afriani<sup>1\*</sup>, Agus Timan<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Hukum Awang Long, Samarinda, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesialindaaf23@gmail.com<sup>1\*</sup>, agus.timan.fip@um.ac.id<sup>2</sup>**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the strategic role of public relations (PR) in supporting the development of higher education institutions. By adopting McLean's (2006) organizational development model, this study analyzes how PR practices can be integrated into each stage of organizational development, from planning to evaluation. The research findings indicate that PR plays a crucial role in building a positive institutional image, facilitating effective communication with various stakeholders, and supporting the implementation of organizational strategies. Through a literature review, this study identifies that PR is actively involved in every stage of organizational development, such as building initial agreements, communicating development plans, conducting organizational culture analysis, designing communication strategies, and evaluating the impact of interventions. This study concludes that the integration of PR practices and the organizational development process is key to enhancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions. By optimizing the role of PR, institutions can achieve their strategic goals, build stronger relationships with stakeholders, and enhance their reputation in the eyes of the public.

**Keywords:** Public relations, organizational development, higher education, communication strategy, stakeholder

**INTRODUCTION**

In the realm of higher education, an institution's success hinges not only on academic achievements but also on its ability to effectively manage the organization. Organizational development is a process rooted in behavioral science that aims to enhance knowledge, skills, productivity, satisfaction, revenue, interpersonal relationships, and other desired outcomes within an organization, benefiting both individuals and the collective. The goal is to foster positive relationships between leaders and their subordinates. Consequently, it is crucial to implement organizational development concepts through collaborative strategies, interpersonal relationships, or teamwork focused on the organization's operations (Febriani, Syaifudin, and ..., 2023). Beyond social interactions, recognizing individual contributions is essential for organizational growth. McLean (2006) highlights key values in organizational development practices: (1) respect and inclusion, valuing everyone's perspectives and opinions equally; (2) collaboration, fostering mutually beneficial relationships within the organization; (3) authenticity, aligning behavior with values; (4) self-awareness, developing self-awareness and positive interpersonal attitudes; (5) empowerment, enabling individuals to build authority, strength, and courage to maintain morality and enhance productivity; and (6) democratization, implementing democratic principles within the organization.

Public relations plays a vital role in the development of higher education institutions. The role of public relations (PR) in higher education institutions is crucial in strengthening the institution's image, fostering public communication, and enhancing its competitiveness. In the modern era, PR is not only responsible for internal and external liaison but also acts as a driver of digital communication strategies.

The management and communication strategies employed by public relations professionals play a crucial role in fostering positive relationships between educational institutions and the wider community (Hasna, 2019) (Sandhiya et al., 2020). Effective public relations can help educational institutions, particularly at the higher education level, to communicate their policies, programs, and achievements, ultimately enhancing their public image and reputation. (Sandhiya et al., 2020) (Hasna, 2019) This paper explores the role of public relations in the development of higher education institutions, examining various functions and strategies used to engage stakeholders and achieve institutional goals.

In the context of higher education, the importance of public relations cannot be overstated. Public relations professionals in educational institutions are tasked with bridging the gap between organizational interests and the public, effectively communicating policies, regulations, and institutional achievements. (Naryoso & Lestari, 2016) (Novianto et al., 2020) (Hasna, 2019) By fostering strong relationships with stakeholders, public relations can contribute to the overall growth and development of the institution, cultivating a positive perception and enhancing the institution's ability to attract students, secure funding, and collaborate with industry partners.

As the higher education landscape continues to evolve, universities and colleges must adapt to the changing needs and expectations of their stakeholders. (Ibrahim & Nguru, 2018) This is especially true for public institutions, where public relations can function as an important bridge between the institution and its diverse audiences, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the broader community. (Putra, 2013) Public relations has been present in organizations for more than a decade, and its role is becoming increasingly important as organizations seek to not only provide goods or services, but also build a good reputation by building and (Halstead, 1984) (Trent & Trent, 1976) maintain strong relationships with its stakeholders. (Putra, 2013)

In higher education institutions, public relations can help institutions communicate their mission, values, and achievements effectively to their various publics. Kriyantono argues that communication is the main tool of public relations, playing a central role in the

interconnection process between organizations, public relations, and the public. (Sukmayani & Jamroji, 2021) The public relations department is responsible for monitoring institutional activities, understanding the needs and concerns of stakeholders, and facilitating effective communication between the institution and its audiences. This is especially important in the context of academic institutions, where the diverse needs and interests of faculty, staff, and students must be balanced and handled carefully.

In this context, the organizational development process according to McLean (2006) becomes a relevant theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding the role of Public Relations. This model consists of stages such as entry, start-up, assessment and feedback, action planning, implementation, evaluation, adoption, and separation, all of which encompass aspects of strategic and operational organizational management.

The significance of Public Relations management in higher education institutions is evident in its capacity to cultivate a positive institutional image among the public, bridge relationships between the academic community, external partners, and government, and support the continuous implementation of organizational strategies. Employing McLean's framework, this research aims to explore how the strategic role of Public Relations can foster the development of higher education organizations and provide practical insights to enhance institutional competitiveness.

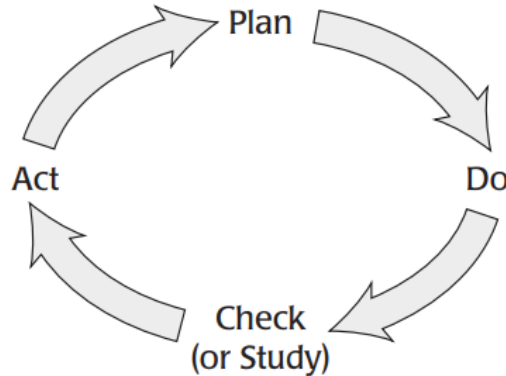
## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a literature review approach to investigate the role of Public Relations in higher education institution development. By exploring information and processing research materials through examining records of events that have been studied in scientific works in the form of writing, images, or monumental works of an individual (Sugiyono, 2016), this study aimed to uncover the significant role of Public Relations. Various data sources were utilized to gather relevant information. According to Imam Bawawi, the hallmark of the literature review method is that the data sources studied consist of books, journals, magazines, documents, newspapers, research reports, and internet-based information (Bawawi, 2016). These diverse sources were related to the role of Public Relations in higher education development and the concept of organizational development. Keywords used in the search included "organizational development in education," "the role of Public Relations," "communication strategy," and "higher education institution development." The collected literature was classified based on its relevance to the stages of McLean's (2006) process: entry, start-up, assessment and feedback, action planning, implementation, evaluation, adoption, and separation. The literature was also categorized based on the global, national, and local contexts in higher education. Each literature was analyzed to identify theories relevant to the role of Public Relations, determine empirical findings on the impact of Public Relations on higher education. Findings from the relevant literature were synthesized to formulate conclusions regarding the role of Public Relations in supporting each stage of organizational development according to McLean. This process was conducted to provide a comprehensive overview.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore the role of Public Relations in higher education organizational development based on McLean's (2006) process stages. Within the process of educational organizational development, McLean's theory can be used to understand the strategic role of Public Relations in higher education institutions, as explained by McLean (2006). Educational organizational development is essentially a repetitive cycle. This cycle consists of planning, doing, checking, and acting. This cycle, abbreviated as PDCA, was proposed by Shewhart in the 1920s as a model to explain the need for continuous

organizational improvement and the process that must be followed to achieve continuous improvement.

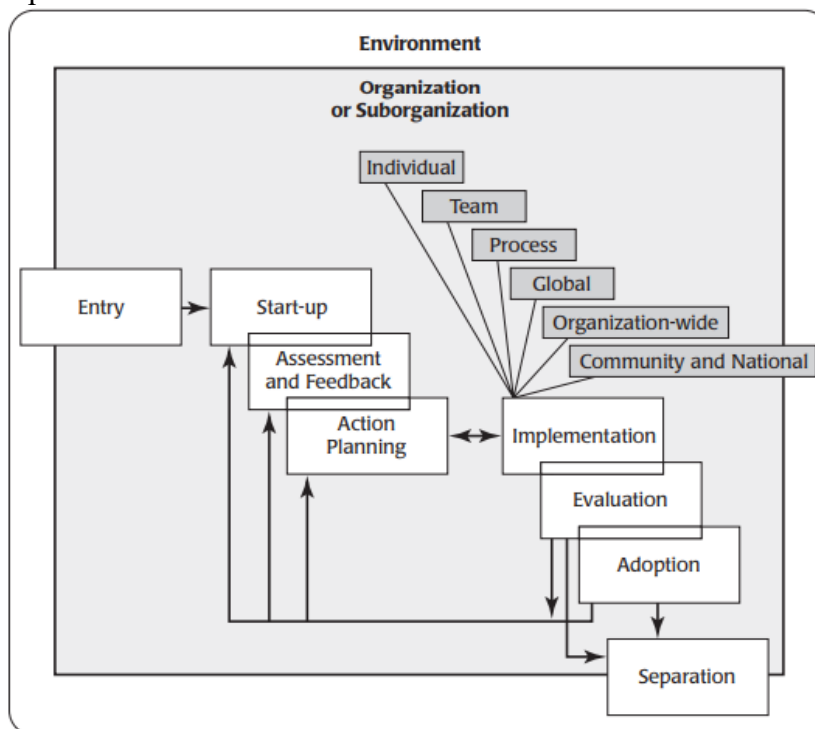


**Figure 1.** Model siklus PDCA

*Source: Organization Development: Principles, Processes, Performance (McLean, 2006)*

At the planning stage, the organization has decided on what will be done and tested. Subsequently, in the do stage, if the results of the trial are successful, they can be explored further and the process can be improved. However, if it is unsuccessful, then in the do stage, it is necessary to review the mistakes made in the process, which is called check or study, so that it can be reviewed and tested again. Then, at the act stage, which is the action process, it emphasizes continuous improvement. Therefore, the development process cycle is not only one-way, but also back-and-forth and linear.

To fully understand the role of Public Relations in the development of higher education institutions, a more comprehensive cyclical model is needed to identify the stages in the educational organizational development process that can be integrated with PR strategies. This organizational development process model consists of the following stages: entry, start-up, assessment and feedback, action planning, implementation, evaluation, adoption, and separation.



**Figure 2.** Educational development process model

*Source: Organization Development (Principles, Process, Performance)*

In this more comprehensive organizational development process model to understand the strategic role of Public Relations in higher education institutions, McLean identifies stages in the educational organizational development process that can be integrated with PR strategies:

- a. **Entry:** This is the decision to collaborate with the aim of improving the organization's condition. The role of PR here is to build an initial agreement between the institution and its partners (such as companies, media, or government), with the aim of increasing the institution's competitiveness and excellence.
- b. **Start-up:** This is the phase of starting organizational development activities based on the agreed-upon agreements. PR plays a role in communicating these agreements to all stakeholders, including the academic community, to create full support for the development plan.
- c. **Assessment and feedback:** This phase involves conducting joint analysis or diagnosis with consultants to determine the organizational culture and strengths and weaknesses of the institution and informing the organization's members of the results. In addition, this phase looks at the interests and direction of the organization by looking at the commitment and resources available to the organization. In this phase, PR can manage student, alumni, and community satisfaction surveys, as well as facilitate communication between consultants and internal parties in diagnosing organizational culture.
- d. **Action planning:** This involves developing the previous plan by designing how the organization can move forward to achieve its goals and objectives. In this phase, PR plays an important role in designing communication strategies that support the achievement of goals, such as promotional campaigns, institutional branding, and digital strategies to reach a wider audience.
- e. **Implementation:** This involves implementing the previously made plans. In this phase of organizational development, it is called intervention. PR implements communication strategies, promotes the institution's flagship programs, and strengthens relationships with external partners.
- f. **Evaluation:** This is done by answering the question "how well did the intervention achieve the planned targets?". PR can collect data from media monitoring, surveys, and analysis of the impact of promotions on achieving institutional goals.
- g. **Adoption:** This is about seeing the results of the intervention. Successful interventions can lead to changes and improvements in the organization. However, if the intervention does not achieve its targets, this phase is skipped and repeated at the initial phase. In this phase, if the intervention is successful, the results are internalized as positive changes in the organization. PR ensures that these changes are known and accepted by the entire academic community through clear and open communication. If the intervention is unsuccessful, PR assists in re-planning to improve the strategy.
- h. **Separation:** This is the phase of separation between the consultant and the Institution that collaborates after the intervention process is carried out. This separation is carried out after seeing the achievement of the intervention. PR plays a role in documenting the success or lessons learned from the collaboration to be a reference for further organizational development.

Public relations plays a strategic role in all stages of educational organizational development, as explained by (McLean 2006). From entry to separation, PR serves as the primary link between the institution, the community, and partners. With effective communication management, PR can be a catalyst in building a positive image, expanding networks, and supporting the institution's continuous growth. Based on the stages (McLean, 2006), PR has a strategic role in supporting the development of higher education institutions. This role not only involves communication management but also includes data collection,

strategic planning, intervention implementation, and evaluation of results. To enhance the competitiveness of higher education institutions, the integration of PR roles with the organizational development process must be managed in a structured and sustainable manner.

## CONCLUSIONS

Public relations plays a strategic role in supporting the development of higher education institutions, particularly through effective communication management at all stages of organizational development based on the McLean model (2006). PR is responsible for building the institution's positive image, bridging communication between the academic community and external partners, and supporting the implementation of organizational strategies through digital and collaborative approaches. By following the PDCA cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act), PR can integrate communication strategies into planning, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance of the success of organizational development programs. This role helps higher education institutions to enhance their competitiveness, reputation, and ability to attract students and partners

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