

Public Relations Activities of Public Institutions Which Shape the Public Sphere in Turkey

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Özet

Halkla ilişkilerin, şirket ve kuruluşların kamusal alanla nasıl ilişki kurduklarıyla ilgili olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu nedenle, halkla ilişkilerin kamusal alanla nasıl ilişki kurduğunu inceleyen halkla ilişkiler literatüründe çok az çalışmanın olması şaşırtıcıdır. Türkiye'deki halkla ilişkilerin tarihi gelişimi incelendiğinde bu alandaki ilk uygulamaların kamu kurumlarında olduğu görülmektedir. Bazı devlet kuruluşlarının 1960'lı yıllarda "halkla ilişkiler"i kurmak için bazı öncü çalışmalar yaptığı görülmektedir. Türkiye'de kamu kurumlarından daha uzun bir süre sonra özel sektör geliştirdiği için ilk uygulayıcıların kamu kurumları olduğu görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte, kamu kuruluşlarının bu girişimciliğini daha sonra özel sektör üstlenmiş ve devlet kendi kurumlarında etkili bir halkla ilişkiler mekanizması oluşturmamıştır.

Türkiye'de son yıllarda önemli özelleştirme faaliyetlerinin olmasına rağmen, devlet hala bazı alanlarda baskındır. Günümüz Türkiyesinde "kamusal alan" ifadesi "devlet kurumlarının faaliyet gösterdiği alanı" ima etmektedir. Bu bakış açısından bu alan ile gerçek halkın var olduğu alan arasında bir ayrım bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki kamu kuruluşlarının kamusal alanı şekillendirici halkla ilişkiler çalışmalarının olup olmadığını örnek olarak seçtiğimiz 18 kamu kuruluşunun halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerini inceleyerek ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Konuya açıklık kazandırmak için öncelikle Türk kamu kurumlarındaki halkla ilişkiler anlayışı ve uygulamasını, daha sonra kamu ve kamusal alan anlayışını; son

olarak da kamu kuruluşlarının kamusal alan üzerindeki halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerini değerlendirmektedir.

anahtar kelimeler: *halkla ilişkiler, halkla ilişkiler uygulayıcısı, kamusal alan, kamu kurumu, Türkiye*

Résumé

On sait que les relations publiques concernent la manière dont les sociétés et les organismes établissent des relations avec l'espace public.

Pour cette raison, dans la littérature des relations publiques, il est étonnant qu'il y ait très peu d'études qui examinent la manière dont les relations publiques établissent des relations avec l'espace public. Lorsqu'on examine l'évolution de l'histoire des relations publiques en Turquie on constate que les premières applications dans ce domaine ont lieu dans les organismes publics. On voit que certains organismes de l'Etat effectuèrent des travaux pionniers dans les années 1960 pour créer « les relations publiques. » On voit que ce sont les organismes publics qui s'appliquèrent la première fois comme le secteur privé se développa longtemps après le secteur public. Cependant, le secteur privé se chargea plus tard de cette initiative des organismes de l'Etat et l'Etat n'a pas pu créer un mécanisme efficace de relations publiques dans ses propres organismes.

Dans la Turquie actuelle l'expression de « l'espace public » fait allusion à « l'espace sur lequel les organismes de l'Etat exercent leurs activités. » Dans cette perspective il y a une séparation entre ce domaine et le domaine sur lequel existe le vrai peuple. En examinant les 18 organismes publics choisis, ce travail essaye de voir si les organismes publics déploient des efforts en relations publiques en vue de former un espace public en Turquie, en 2007. Pour éclaircir la matière il évalue en priorité le concept et l'application de relations publiques dans les organismes publics turcs, puis le concept de public et de l'espace public et analyse dernièrement les activités de relations publiques des organismes publics dans l'espace public.

mots-clés : *relations publiques, exécuter de relations publiques, espace public, organisme public, Turquie*

Abstract

It is known that public relations is concerned with the regard of companies and organizations to the public sphere. Therefore, it is surprising how little there is to be found in the public relations literature, the analysis of public relations' relation with the public sphere.

When the historical development of public relations in Turkey is analyzed, it can clearly be seen that public institutions were the primary practitioners in this field. It is also observed that some state institutions carried out several pioneering activities in the 1960's in order to establish "public relations". Since the private sector is developed so many years after the public bodies, it is the public bodies that were the initiators. However, this initiative of the public institutions was soon taken over by the private sector and the state could not establish an efficient public relations mechanism in its own institutions.

Although significant privatization activities have taken place in recent years in Turkey, the state is still preponderant in many areas. In today's Turkey, "public sphere" refers to "the sphere where state-owned public institutions operate". From this point of view, there is a distinction between this sphere and the one in which the real public exists. This study aims to reveal whether public institutions in Turkey have public relations activities intended to shape the public sphere or not, by investigating 18 public institutions. To make the issue clear, this study first deals with the understanding and practicing of public relations in Turkish public institutions. Then the following part of the study tries to define public and public sphere understanding. Finally, the field study assesses the degree of the public institutions' public relations activities in the public sphere.

keywords: *public relations, public relations practitioner, public sphere, public institution, Turkey*

Public Relations Understanding and Practices of Public Institutions in Turkey

The reasons behind the emergence of public relations can be listed as: establishing systematic relations between public and private institutions, and seeing this relationship as a depending result of democratic understanding and the most important is within the context of developing democratic understanding, the public efforts forcing the other institutions of social system to see and accept them as a power (Kazancı, 1997:1). In the society, it is generally expected not only public institutions should carry out specific duties but private organizations should, too. The administration must explain every action and procedure to the public clearly because in most countries the ruled person becomes into a citizen from an individual. So people want to benefit from the rights and freedom of being a citizen.

With the help of public relations practices, the administration meets the society's need for information and enlightenment. Own to their reactions, the administration could adjust and modify its actions and procedures. On the other hand, pre-knowledge of public on certain issues facilitates the administration's job. Relations depending on good-will with managed groups on every level then establish the basis of social support to administration/management. To make the society do certain things democratically, comes from making them believe and persuade. When we look at the relationship between the administrator and the public in Turkey, since the Ottoman Government, managers (governors) were in relations with the public, but as time goes by, the function of this got weakened, and with the wrong practices of managers it even got worse.

Social Structure in Republican Era

Before referring to conceptualization of public, and public relations activities of Turkish public institutions, it is better to consider the social structure because this will give us some clues about the public relations practices in public institutions in Turkey and their public relations practices.

In the Ottoman Empire period, the administrator tried to learn the society's needs and wants by discussing practices called AYAK DIVANI, which was a long known reality in the empire administration. With the social and economic deterioration, the idea of "father government", "generous government" became a government picture which consisted of the public's complaints about the tax officers of that period. Reforms and Westernization movements managed for preventing the government from recession and collapsing introduced and developed an Ottoman bureaucracy which caused conflict and polarization between the governors (administrators) and the governed ones (Acar, 1994:3-4).

Between 1850 and 1950, machines and fertilizers were not common in agriculture. During these years, the Turkish industry was dominated by small family-run businesses and as a result, mostly, in the country self-sufficiency was prevalent with all its negative effects. Between 1920's and 1950's, 80% of the society was engaged in agricultural activities. Lack of modern inputs in agricultural production resulted in low production amounts and because of this, production could only feed the family. Lack of production surplus prevented people from the trade and relations with cities. Family business is an example of self-sufficiency. Because of this, there is no need to establish relations with the environment for a family-business. (Kazancı, 1997:158).

Strong central administration can only be seen in societal systems which are dominated by small family-businesses. Central administration holds all the authority, and establishes contact with rural areas only when the time for collecting tax comes or when the army recruits soldiers. In the single-party period (after the republic was established), the society's participation in political decisions could not be achieved as a result of the unavoidable society structure and because of the negative attitudes of the political government. This situation changed with the start of the multiple party period and gained importance.

After 1950's machines began to be used in agricultural production and with this development small businesses got bigger, and the production paced for market share. Turkish people and their institutions were forced to establish new relations with their environment and head towards demanding something from the administration. Introverted people transformed into a different people who demanded roads, equipment, fertilizers and loans from the state. In the period of Democrat Party, administrators continuously gave promises to the society. From then on, the society expected everything to be done by state. This expectation still prevails today.

With the 1961 Constitution citizens gained the right to organize that was guaranteed by the constitution. New horizons were opened to Turkish people. Military intervention which took place on 12 September 1980 took back all the fundamental rights from the society. The reason for neglecting public relations in Turkey should be sought in these societal and political developments.

Turkish Public Administration and Bureaucracy

State always needs to strengthen its domination and some tools to achieve this. Liberal understanding of 19th century left the approach which tries to solve societal problems only by economic freedom and by leaving the individual alone. This understanding was replaced with an understanding which sees individuals as citizens equipped with modern rights. Then the social state came into life. This change which is related to state took place out of the state that exerts a pressure on this to change its method. At the same time, these changes forced the state to see citizens as active and mobile societal beings.

Regarding to the votes of the whole society, making decisions without impairing or without clearly countering societal reconciliation is a societal must as well as a duty of the administration.

When we look at the Turkish public administration, its structure, operations and traditions make the environmental relations difficult. So the administration sees itself as if it does not have a duty to interact with the environment, and carry out public relations activities. So it could not also see and assess the consequences of delaying or impeding this duty. But to gain social support, the administration needs to make the society believe that they do positive and useful activities. Achieving this depends on the administration's good work, conveying and explaining these things to the public.

In developing and underdeveloped countries, the administration's dialogue with the public can not happen in the way that it is supposed to. Because, a lot of things are left to the administrators to decide. In these countries society is not power, it is an object of the administration. In this context, public relations practices have no meaning. Public relations could only prosper in an environment where both the administration and the society are aware of their responsibilities, borders and authority. There is not a tradition which calls the administration to account for its actions. As a natural result of this, initiatives are in the hands of public authority. Relations between the administration and the society in Turkey forms a vicious circle. We live in a process where the administration gives no information to the public, and the public does not have the consciousness to participate in the administration and control it. The reasons behind this lie in the Ottoman Empire's societal heritage and in the societal structure of the Republican administration.

Bureaucracy: Michels in his book (related to Oligarchy) indicates that in every society which reaches a certain degree of complexity, satisfying the administration can not be reached without bureaucracy. But the same process also diminishes the contact of the administrators, causes a small minority to own the power to decide and this could not get along with bureaucracy (Uysal, 1998:32). It is a common complaint that the public bureaucracy has forgotten that it is the servant of the public, but it made itself an aim and also it became insensitive to the public (Uysal, 1998:33).

To consult, meet and canalize the citizens to authorized units is undertaken by public relations departments. Public officials have low job satisfaction, have to do routine jobs and are employed without their profession taken into consideration combined with insufficient salary and poor working conditions. This situation generally causes negative communication between civil servants and citizens and conflicts arise between the two parties. In addition to these, multiple formalities bore citizens. For civil-servants, formalities are not a means, they are an end in themselves (Kazancı, 1997:82-91). MEHTAP project, which was launched in 1962 to reduce formalities, could not achieve this

objective (Okay and Okay, 2007:17-18). As a result of administrators using a different language than the public's, people escape from control and try to be different and look for respect in society. Moreover, not being understood by the society, the administration is protected from outside factors and dangers. This situation, on one hand, protects top managers against employees, on the other hand, it protects all employees against the society (Kazancı, 1997, 95). To get rid of this protective shell means a small and limited number of controllers who control, the administrators lose their privilege and it also means the whole society takes the control, which is against the deep-seated elitism (Kazancı, 1997, 100). To enlighten and to inform is a duty to be neglected in the rationale of administration. Some kind of bureaucratic information is known only by a small number of people. This situation points to reality: Administration does not like relations with environment much. As a result, public relations are among the issues that do not have priority in public administration.

At this stage, relations between citizens, bureaucrats and persons with political identity come to agenda. Persons with political identity create an existence reason by showing or making the public sense the power of the administration to overcome bureaucratic obstacles. Persons with political identity mediate the relations between the administration and the citizens on behalf of the citizens. Politicians, and especially the Members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, mediate the relations between the citizens and the administration to solve different problems of the citizens. So they carry out the task expected of them (Kazancı, 1997:102). (A few years ago, some of the members of the parliament wanted an increase in their salaries. The reason was offering tea and meals to their voters who come to visit them at the parliament. So they indicated that their salary was not enough). This mediation, despite being institutionalized, is effective but its results are always personal. Administrators who tend to be silent and indifferent while dealing with ordinary citizens change their attitude suddenly when they encounter the mediation of parliamentarians, explaining the procedures to be followed and carrying out the necessary transactions rapidly. Administrator-citizen relations at the beginning do not exist but with the mediation of persons with political figures it can be established. Politicians gain prestige with the help of solving problems of voters. Voters use the power of voting to make the administration solve their problems with the mediation of political persons. In this situation, this trio (citizen - political person-administrator) protects and fulfills their interests (Kazancı, 1997:103). On the other hand, a transparent and less bureaucratic administration does not need for a relationship like this.

Despite the governments' efforts to downsize the personnel number coupling with the limitation in recruiting new employees, no decrease in the number of government officials can be observed. Rapid birth-rate and escalating unemployment forced governments to employ more people while new technological developments and emerging complex problems necessitated

establishing new units. To understand such a big formation, get to know that and know how to apply and consult is very difficult for citizens. Although in many European countries citizens have the right to ask for and obtain information from public institutions in very diverse issues, Turkish citizens did not have this right until recently. Law on Information Obtaining came into effect in 2004.

If the public opinion could be informed by very different sources, the same public opinion could reach the right conclusion. There must be public demanding information, when the administration does not inform by its own will. Secrecy in the administration is widespread in Turkey. Society complains about this secrecy very often. But with the emergence of new private TV channels after 1990's, the society began to express their problems.

Development of Public Relations in Turkish Public Institutions

Turkish public administration did not give adequate importance either to public relations or to corporate communication. Despite knowing the existence of public relations, public relations has always been ignored in public administration, because societal and managerial system does not show a need towards this practice. In fact, after the proclamation of the Republic, we can see the appointed government between 1937 and 1938 gave place to some proposals in the government program which aimed to improve public relations. This improvement proposal was especially on establishing relations between the police and the society.

After 1960's prospering private companies adopted public relations and changes that occurred after 1960's (such as organization of societal stratum) made private companies more sensitive to the society's needs. After the 1961 Constitution, new rights were given. Usage of these rights initiated the public administration and these institutions began to consider public relations as a function of administration. Then public relations departments began to be established and flourish.

In some papers regulating public administration, this point emphasized: "There is a necessity to find out public wants, inform the public, and acquire the participation of people in public services study." With the constitutional changes in 1970's, we can observe that participation in public administration regulation was set aside and the objective of enlightening the public came to stage (Uysal, 1998:38).

After the 1980 military intervention, public relations units, like many other sectors of the society, abandoned their primary functions for a while and began to deal with routine problems. There was no power left in front of the public administration which could criticize it. Sensitive part of the society was either silenced by the military junta or one that still existed modified their objectives. Volunteer and professional organizations, newspapers and unions which aim to

canalize the democratic reactions to affect the political power, were muted to level that the 12 September administration wanted and carried on their so-called duties (Kazancı, 1997:15). In such an environment, some public relations practices took the form of propaganda and flew downward only from the state to the public.

As a result of emerging liberalism in Özal government periods, society needed public relations practices. But the country's current public relations capacity then could not satisfy the need. For example, in many institutions, persons who were responsible for public relations were not educated in a related field and generally selected due to their good looks. This practice and selection method is still used today.

Formation of Public Relations Profession: There is no binding regulation regarding the professional formation of persons who carry out the public relations profession. Public relations practitioners in public sector are generally employed as an "exceptional civil servant". In the stage of entry to profession there is no rule. This results in negative consequences like discretionary, irregularity, ignorance in performing the profession. Lack of specific codification regarding the profession causes lack of inspection and lack of inspection causes no effectiveness. In the global arena, rules regarding the qualities of a public relations practitioner and how to conduct public relations (Athena, Tehran) could not achieve the desired results. Public relations practitioners, who try to increase the power of their organizations, can not succeed in increasing their power as well. This problem could be overcome not only by international meetings but also with the conscious efforts of the sector employees and claiming the ownership of the profession.

Public Relations Understanding and Practices of Public Institutions

Despite the 44 years since the time public relations was first practiced in Turkish public administration, we can say that for a long time public relations existed with unconscious efforts and was interrupted several times in public organizations. In some period, establishment of public relations units at some ministries and public institutions came true only with the personal efforts of some administrators, but the functions of the unit, continuity of the unit or abolishment of the unit depended on the top administrators' point of view.

Arrangements regarding the public relations started after 1980's in Turkey. The first arrangement was made with a governmental decree in 1983. This governmental decree defines one of the ministries' duties as, "planning the activities regarding press and public relations and conduct them according to the rules". Then, with another governmental decree which came into effect in 1984, ministry central organizations "press and public relations consultancy" were established to conduct the public relations services. This arrangement is important because they formed the foundation of public relations. (Uysal,

1998:132-133). There are matters to be emphasized in this regulation. First of all, there is not an indication that consultancies had to be established. No forcing rule exists. Press relations which were part of public relations in law were taken out of public relations and it gained a place which comes before public relations.

It would not be wrong if we say that because of the public relations consultant's direct relation with the minister, they participated in and merged with apolitical mission.

In Turkey, the administration as a principle, wants to learn what citizens think about their practices, but if these thoughts support them, the administrators want these ones to be expressed. They do not like the society's wishes, wants and complaints to be conveyed by the media.

Citizens who apply to institutions can only get help from the information offices for direction purposes. Because these offices do not have authorities to solve problems. In an (administrative) institution, top administrators' time is always wasted (for consulting purposes) even for small problems and the organizations' productivity is affected negatively by this practice. Administrators who believe their subordinates can not do their jobs as they should do not empower their subordinates and they see the bundles of authority they hold as a way to increase their hierarchical authority (Kazancı, 1997:191).

In ministries, public relations duty and offices are generally ignored as a unit. Public relations units are firstly useful for the minister and cut out newspaper headlines and articles, and then journalists. (Kazancı, 1997:192). Nobody complains about public relations departments because the job description is done very narrowly.

Most of the public institutions do not have a public relations policy. Setting up a public relations unit is perceived as establishing a new unit (Private and public institutions need to employ a public relations practitioner to be eligible to get an ISO 9002 quality certificate). These institutions do not perceive public relations as a managerial function and process. But in fact, the public administration must make public relations a part of public institutions' managerial philosophy and practice and public relations could support its functioning at the country level with the role it played in forming the government program (Uysal, 1998, 109). For this reason, public relations must not be seen as a burden which is imposed by external forces. It must be integrated with the managerial process and must be seen as a factor uniting the managerial philosophy and practice. This can only be achieved if public relations can be institutionalized in public institutions. Most of the civil servants know how the administration functions in Turkey but they are not well-informed about the technical and academic information regarding public relations (Uysal, 1998:iv). So, how administrators can affect public relations activities is an open-ended question.

Muhitin Acar conducted a study which included 109 different public institutions from Turkey. This study is titled "Public Relations in Turkish Public Administration". The results of this study revealed that public institutions do not evaluate public opinion, do not publish internal and external periodicals, and they consider publishing expenditures unnecessary. In addition to these findings, most of them do not have an archive and personnel is insufficient quantitatively and qualitatively. They also do not give importance to their relations with their environment (1994). The same study revealed that public relations units were located in different levels of organizations ranging from press and public relations office in province, to press, broadcasting and public relations office in municipalities, and coordinating offices in universities.

Acar's study showed that 109 of the 167 public institutions do not have a public relations practitioner, in 23 public relations units is just one public relations practitioner employed and only one unit employs eight public relations practitioners. Half of the practitioners working in these units do not have a university degree (1994:26-27).

Public relations units in public institutions mostly deal with press relations (press spokespersonship, clipping news papers and filing). Secondly, information centers, guiding, publishing periodicals, assessment of wants and complaints came. A very small proportion of these units conducts surveys and public opinion researches (Acar, 1994:47-65).

It can be observed that public institutions nearly did nothing concerning internal communication. After a brief on Turkish public administration, bureaucracy and public relations understanding, it will be useful how public and public sphere are perceived in Turkey.

Meaning of the Term "Public"

Just like English and French, public term has a dual meaning in Turkish. Public means "common, overt", it also covers "crowds" or "groups" according to some criteria. While involving the meaning of "overtly, commonly", it also involves a social group which come together according to some limits (Abadan, 1973:23-24; Noelle-Neumann, 1998:85).

The Dictionary of Turkish Language of the Institute (1998) defines the term "public" as "something which belongs to public". It also describes the public in two ways: Firstly, the public is the whole of people in a country; secondly, it means "all, whole". There is no definition of public sphere in the dictionary, so it is possible to say that public sphere is "something which belongs to all, whole". (Bacik, 2003:26). Every institution has many publics. In Turkish the term public is used to indicate "state" or "public administration". But in fact, the term in English means "not private and not personal, in other words, society" (Uysal, 1998:65).

The term public has a legal meaning. Habermas emphasizes the meaning of "open to everyone", which lies in the core of the term (For example, public interests, and public issues). This meaning is separated from private sphere. The state is stressed in legal concepts such as civil law and public authority. Here, a legal and political meaning is attributed to the concept of public. For example, in a sentence like "Journalists' responsibilities for the public", there is a public interest. Here, it is stressed that some problems and topics that interest everybody are dealt with. (Noelle-Neumann, 1998:85-86).

Public and Private Sphere Distinction

Public sphere is an issue hotly and intensely debated in Turkey. Issues or terms which have been debated for a long time in society have formed a symbolic universe. In Turkey, some terms are especially used by different persons in different ways. Naturally the evaluations made without looking at the history and parts of the patterns they belong to will be incomplete. But a text or a term can be read differently, different forms do not mean that it belongs to an area without rules . Because "est modus sistere rectum..." meaning "there is a measure for everything" (Eco, 1990:146).

As it is known, the distinction between private and public sphere dates back to ancient Greek polis. For the people living in Ancient Greek cities, public sphere stood as a universe of freedom in front of private sphere. Everything came out with the public light and could be seen. Private-sphere public-sphere distinction continued to exist in the Roman era. In Roman cities to be strong in the public sphere – civitas, sourced from the power/possession in private sphere. Other public spheres were council (meclis), theatres and arenas (Atabek and Dağtaş, 1998:159).

Distinction between public and private sphere exists with the developments of the 18th century capitalist economic developments, which brought about national and regional states and shaking the feudalist foundation. At the beginning of the 18th century, the term "public" means the state being objective. Civil servants are public persons and commit public duties. The buildings and institutions of the State are also public service units. From this century on, faith and worship are private issues. Public budget was separated from feudal lord's private property; bureaucracy, army and judgment partially was to become objective (Habermas, 2003).

To obtain some analytical simplicity it is useful to go back to the roots of the public sphere. The idea of replacing absolute monarchy with liberal democracy was that the only legitimate use of violence in society should be by government, and the character and scope of the government should be constantly controlled and criticized by the public. To make that possible, basic rights were: the rights of personal privacy and freedom of assembly, speech and press. The idea was to allow and empower private persons to meet in public to

discuss and criticize political matters. These basic rights were radically new. To realize bourgeois democracy, two public spheres were needed: The literary public sphere and the political public sphere (Jensen, 2001:134).

The most influential theorist of the public sphere is Jürgen Habermas. The term "public sphere" simply refers to that sphere where private people came together as a public in the coffee houses and salons of late 17th and early 18th century in London. Then in France and Germany, there fuelled by the expanding number of political journals and newspapers, these first citizens would debate public affairs, form opinions and exercise their political rights to influence the government. While in practice, access to this system was denied to the vast majority, it was in theory available to all with the required qualifications. In this sense for Habermas, it was an institution (both in reality and in the abstract) bound up with capitalist social relations and class distinctions. The public sphere both reflected and contributed to the continuation of dominance by one class over another. It served the interests of the bourgeoisie, while claiming to represent the public as a whole (McNair, 1996:48).

Capitalist industry increased its technological sophistication in the 18th and 19th centuries and societies became more disciplined and organized. The expansion of education was essential. With education came literacy and the growth of mass circulation print media, followed then by popular agitation for, and eventual access to, citizenship rights for a growing proportion of the people. By the early 20th century governments found themselves confronted, for the first time, with mass publics, forming their collective opinions in an expanded public sphere comprising first print media, then radio and eventually television (McNair, 1996:49).

For Habermas and others who have been influenced by his account of the development of the public sphere, what might appear to be a progressive movement towards "true" democracy has been impeded by the changing nature of the public sphere itself. As media expanded in the 19th and 20th centuries they evolved, Habermas argues, from institutions for the rational public discussion of political affairs into privately controlled, privately motivated organs. The press became profit-making businesses, editors became the tools of proprietors, newspapers became 'the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere' (McNair, 1996:49).

As the public sphere was being privatized, and media outlets increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and conglomerates, it was expanding rapidly and moving from the servicing of public opinion to the management of it.

For Habermas, the nature of the evolving mass media, and the activities within it, the public relations industry working on behalf of political actors, transformed the public sphere from its original status as a forum for rational

debate into an arena dominated by the values of entertainment and consumption. Parties began to organize themselves like businesses, marketing and 'selling' their ideas and programs in the name of the public interest. The style of political performance, shaped and honed by public relations, began to have more importance than the substance of policy. Henceforth, "important political decisions would be made for manipulative purposes, and introduced with consummate propagandistic skill as publicity vehicles into a public sphere manufactured for show" (McNair, 1996:49).

From this perspective the early, bourgeois ideal of the public sphere has been corrupted by the commercialization and trivialization of mass culture and the increasing sophistication of the opinion management industry. The contemporary public sphere is comprised of ideologically biased, self-interested media on the one hand, and orchestrated by public relations professionals on the other (McNair, 1996:50).

According to Habermas, public sphere is a theatre where political participation is revived and even is an area where the government is criticized (Sarıbay, 2000:4). It is possible to summarize the public sphere that Habermas underlines in a few points. The first one is that public sphere is a product of the industrialized society. As Habermas says it is a different name of the public bourgeois. The second one is that this public sphere is not a constructed one. It is an area which was born and developed by itself. The third one is that this public sphere is an area where clearness takes place. Factors that traditional public covers, subjects of debate, values, symbols, actors gain clearness at this arena (Çaha, 2003:79).

Although the public sphere was originally thought of as being an assembly of citizens at a certain location or the population in general, it is not so today; yet it is dependent on freedom of assembly, association and speech. The public sphere is not the media; yet it is dependent on freedom of press and prevention of media monopolization. The public sphere is not a set of common values, norms or opinions; neither is it the statistical result of opinion polls; yet it can influence institutionalized opinion. The public sphere is not the sum or aggregation of individual, private preferences, values and beliefs, although it depends on protection of 'privacy', the integrity of private life spheres. The public sphere is not obliged or normally able to come to an agreement or a decision; yet it can influence decisions made by individuals, institutionalized associations and government (Jensen, 2001:135).

Conceptualization of public sphere just as the opposite of private sphere is not enough. Public sphere includes a very large arena.

The distinction between public and private sphere can be misleading while applying the freedom. In daily meaning, many subjects and areas about personal privacy and private life are inside the public sphere theoretically. That

is why leaving public sphere to the state can damage the private life (Bacık, 2003:27). For instance, many people think that family is out of the public sphere. However, according to Habermas, "saloon does not belong to home, it belongs to assembly". Defining the public sphere categorically as a sovereignty of the state is wrong. Public sphere is a concept which concerns everybody/society/ the whole.

According to Sennett (2002) "public sphere" is a social living arena which has a different position from family and friend environment consisting of many beliefs, acquaintances and strangers. Even though "public" and "private" have different qualities, they together form the thing called "the universe of public relations" (Yelken, 2003:46).

Places like streets, bazaars, houses of God which are considered private are inside the public sphere. Converting the public sphere to a kind of public arena is a common mistake here. However, the units that are governed by the state form the public arena. Today in our country, many people take the public sphere as the public arena. Also, the public institutions that give public service are considered as the units which are active in the public sphere.

L'Etang indicates that public sphere is affected by public relations professionals. According to L'Etang, public relations increase the visibility and impact of large organizations, thus reducing available space for citizens. Far from liberating or facilitating public debate and dialogue or the expression of "public opinion", public relations is profoundly instrumental, both intellectually and in terms of praxis. Public relations facilitates the relationship between business and the media at the expense of others and thus contributes to the erosion of the public sphere (1996:98).

Şerif Mardin, declares also that public sphere in the Ottoman society appeared as a product of Tanzimat regulations (1995:30). With the modernization attempts starting in the middle of the 19th century a boundary was drawn between the government and society. The government which was the subject at the beginning later became the actor of modernization. Ottoman modernization can be mostly defined as the modernization of the government. Yet the modernization in the Republican period is actually the act of modernizing the society. The effort of modernizing the society developed an attitude in time seeing itself absolutely accurate whereas seeing society having the potential of making mistakes often. Today the attitude of the ruling elite with its main factors is that: People have a private sphere in which they will be able to show their differences. Moreover, there is a public sphere which the government masters and in which they will not be able to present their differences. According to this attitude neither the public sphere nor private sphere limits and place are certain. There has not been a system that describes and defines the limits of these spheres legally. As it is not defined according to law it is not a big deal to describe these limits (Çaha, 2003:85-86).

In Turkey, public sphere is directed by bureaucratic nationality. Even the prime minister complains about the bureaucracy as it is dominant in many areas. That is why, in a sphere in which the influence of bureaucracy is totally felt, public sphere can never be the sphere of public. Moreover, it is necessary to limit the state's power in public sphere and give more importance to civil organizations. Democracy is not possible without political public spheres whose citizens decide and behave autonomously (Meyer, 2004:21).

In the process of shaping of the public sphere, the influence of the mass media should not be forgotten. As social scientist Friedhelm Neidhardt indicates, public communication should be responsible for three functions. Firstly, public communication should be transparent and the information should be correct, reliable and extensive. Secondly, people should evaluate the information that is defended by others. Lastly, it should encourage the interaction among different knowledge and ideas (Meyer, 2004:27-28). However, we can clearly see that public institutions in Turkey generally inform the society and their publics only from one side and try to canalize them.

Today, the Internet, which is not hierarchical, presents an unlimited and symmetric style in its basic principle that anyone can reach, and is in a position providing the use of public sphere to most people. Even though interactive chats are made in chat rooms over the Internet in the presence of many people, it gives such an impression that a private exchange of ideas is taking place between two people. Yet, a person, having left the private sphere, enters the public sphere and participates in debates related with public affairs. The Internet connecting the world forms a global public sphere. Museums, newspapers, reading houses, operas, cafés, which Habermas underlines, have played an important role in the form of public sphere: In the same way, the Internet plays a similar but more effective role.

Research Scope and Methodology Aiming to Understand the Public Relations Activities of Public Institutions

This study aims to reveal whether public relations activities of public institutions have a role in shaping public sphere and if so, to what extent. The study was conducted by a survey among public institutions operating in Istanbul. Before forming the survey questions, a literature review was done by the author. Observation was also used in this study as supplement to the survey. But the survey formed most of the study. 30 close-ended and 2 open-ended questions were directed to respondents who are responsible for carrying out public relations duty in public institutions. The first part of the survey contains questions regarding the demographic and professional information of respondents. The second part of the survey tries to reveal public relations department facilities of these public institutions and their sufficiency to be judged. Lastly, the extent of the effectiveness of the key audience is analyzed.

We include municipalities, Mayor of Istanbul, Turkish Standards Organization, Istanbul Police Headquarters, Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council, Chairman of Provincial National Education, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, Turkish Airlines, Istanbul City Municipality, Istanbul Financial Office, Istanbul Stock Exchange, The Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey, as the sample. 30 surveys were sent to these public institutions headquarters or offices between May and July 2007. Some of the accepting institutions answered the survey by face to face interview or by fax. The return rate of the study is 60 %.

Some of the public institutions refused to answer the survey without any reason. It is very interesting that answers were given by their public relations department. Returning 18 surveys were analyzed with SPSS.

Findings

Half of the respondents were female. When we look at the educational background of the respondents, we can see that most of them (77, 8 %) are university graduates, followed by a Master's Degree (16.7 %).

Only one respondent who is responsible for public relations (out of 18) indicated that she graduated of Communication faculty in which public relations education is given. Others graduated of other faculties and schools. Nearly all of the respondents (94.4 %) graduated from different schools other than the communication faculties.

These persons took the professional knowledge about their field from universities (22 %), from seminars and courses (11.1 %), from professional experiences (48.1 %) and in-company training (18.5 %). From these data, we can say that public relations in public institutions is still practiced by trial and error, or in short, learning by doing method.

Public relations practitioners are represented under different names in public institutions but public relations activities are related with press any way. The reason of this is priority of media relations in public relations activities. Job descriptions do not include corporate communication, because in Turkey relations with publics are performed under the name of public relations.

Characteristics of the respondents: 61.2 % of the respondents have tenure of between 0-5 years, 5.6 % have tenure of between 5-10 years and just 5.6 % of them indicated tenure of over 10 years. When asked whether the respondents had a public relations job, 38.9 % of the respondents answered positively and half of them expressed they worked in an unrelated field.

72.2 % of the respondents expressed that they are following public relations and related developments and 22.2 % marked negative choices. Practitioners follow developments related to public relations generally from

professional practices (35.7 %), then from related publications (21.4 %), from in-company courses and seminars (10.7 %), press (7.1 %), international publications (3.6 %) and lastly from the publications of universities (3.6 %). 17.9 % of the respondents did not answer this question. It is obvious that developments in public relations field are followed mostly from practical applications and courses rather than literature. Public relations practitioners in public institutions lack the necessary education and political bodies and local administrations have tremendous effects in recruiting public relations personnel. So this resulted in employing unqualified people in public relations departments.

61.1 % of the public institutions expressed that they have written expressions regarding the principles and objectives in informing their publics. When we evaluate the public institutions' public relations practices generally this percent is a highly exaggerated one. Because the thing called "public relations work" in public institutions means just only the guiding of citizens to authorized units, in short only counseling.

16 of the responding institutions have public relations departments. Only two of them do not have a department labelled public relations, but some of the public relations duties are done by other departments. Public relations departments work in coordination with the units indicated below:

Who is responsible for public relations department	Frequency	Percent
No answer	2	11,1
Top manager	7	38,9
Assistant of top manager	3	16,7
Head of the office	2	11,1
Head Office	1	5,6
Clerical Office	1	5,6
Mayor	1	5,6
Other	1	5,6

As seen from the table, some of the public relations units are positioned under the upper management and report to the upper management while in some others, units are situated under the lower management working bound to units such as clerical office, and top management. The activities to be made in public relations departments are determined by the upper management at the rate of 44.4 % and by the upper management with the department administration at the rate of 55.6 %. Thus, in the planning and application of public relations activities the upper management plays an active role on the

subjects related to their own facility field. The central structure in public foundation can be thought its source.

83.3 % of the responding public institutions have an information and counseling center for answering citizens. For this reason, it can be thought that conducting "information" duty can help public relations departments in continuing their facilities regarding public relations. Appointing information duty to public relations departments show that there is a confusion of cooperation and complexities in the division of labor. This shows that no public relations consciousness can be constituted.

Facilities of public relations units in public institutions are depicted in the table below:

Facilities of public relations departments in public institutions	Very unimportant %	Not important %	Neither important nor unimportant %	Important %	Very important %	No answer %
Sending rectifying information, explanations or supplement which took place in the media	11,1	5,6	11,1	11,1	27,8	33,3
Establishing relations with the media	27,8	5,6	16,7	5,6	33,3	11,1
Following the news and assessment about the institutions	16,7	16,7	5,6	11,1	33,3	16,7
Increasing the motivation of employees	5,6	0	11,1	16,7	33,3	33,3
Doing consultation work to the management/administration	5,6	5,6	11,1	16,7	27,8	33,3
Preparing speeches, and presentations etc., to the management	11,1	5,6	5,6	11,1	27,8	38,9
Doing research to learn the internal and external publics' expectations	11,1	22,2	11,1	5,6	11,1	38,9
Gaining public support for the actions to be done	5,6	22,2	11,1	11,1	16,7	33,3
Conveying changes which occurred in the institution and services	16,7	5,6	5,6	22,2	22,2	27,8
Creating the institution's positive image	33,3	5,6	11,1	27,8	5,6	16,7
Establishing and pursuing two-way communication based on completeness and righteousness	22,2	11,1	5,6	11,1	27,8	22,2
Analyzing and predicting the future trends	5,6	5,6	11,1	16,7	16,7	44,4
Doing technical PR studies like reports, bulletins and exhibitions	0	22,2	11,1	5,6	27,8	33,3
Hosting visitors	0	11,1	5,6	11,1	33,3	38,9
Assessing the wishes and wants coming from the organization	5,6	5,6	16,7	11,1	33,3	27,8

While public relations departments consider sending rectifying information, explanation and following the media important and very important, establishing media relations is seen as important for some institutions and unimportant for others, so important and unimportant responses are in balance. But it has to be expected that if the media has a high priority in public institutions, answer given to establishing relations must be concentrated on the choice of importance. In the same way, increasing motivation of employees is seen as a major facility but what the public relations departments do for motivating was not indicated. Giving consultation support to the management is important for the respondents. If we take into consideration the rates given to the rate of facilities determined by the high level management, which is 44.4 %, answers given to this question are not consistent. To conduct research for learning the expectation of the publics and gain the support of them were evaluated as unimportant, which also means no importance was given to the expectations and demands of citizens. But in fact, the reason of these institutions' existence is to serve citizens. They do not even worry about creating a positive image. Establishing two-way communication is seen important. If we take services to meet the expectation into account, the answer given to establishing two-way communication is also inconsistent. Welcoming visitors and assessing the demands from outside the organization are seen as important, which could give us some clue about the public relations facilities of the Turkish public institutions. While learning the expectation of the target audience is seen as important, it is very contradictory that assessing wants from external organization is seen as equally important.

Mediated communication (like telephone and e-mail) is used intensively with a rate of 79, 3 % and face to face communication rate is 21,7 %. The aim of the communication with the publics can be listed as below:

The aim of the communication with the publics	Frequency	Percent
For establishing two-way communication	7	29,2
For determining the satisfaction with services	6	25,0
For communicating the services given and innovations	8	33,3
For finding out about the reactions in advance and take necessary precautions	1	4,2
For informing and publicity	1	4,2
No answer	1	4,2
Total	24	100

Again when the duties of public relations departments are investigated, establishing two-way communication based on true and complete information is not very important. Data show that conducting research for finding out how the services of the institution is perceived by the publics is not considered adequately important. We think that the answers given to the questions – with

or without means, how and why we connect with the publics – are ideal. Because we know that the works to learn the publics' demands and the works to supply these demands are done rarely.

When asked to public institutions what citizens expect from them, priority was given to obtaining complete and right information (56 %), taking good services/products (36 %) and improvement of the institution's service and product understanding in line with their expectation (8 %). It can be seen that citizens do not expect too much from public institutions and improvement of public institutions' services and product understanding is the lowest. Because deep-seated and long-lived bureaucratic structure and system protect itself, and prevents citizens from influencing and penetrating into this area, which makes change impossible.

Public relations practitioners mentioned the difficulties in establishing communication with the publics. Working in a public institution is one of the difficulties (44.4 %). Reasons of this mentioned as:

Difficulties public institutions experienced in establishing communication with their publics	Percent
Because of the bureaucratic obstacles, facilities could not be finished in short periods	30,8
Administration does not believe in the necessity of public relations	7,7
Intervention of politicians with the facilities to be made	7,7
Not doing necessary activities because of budget cutbacks	23,1
Not having sufficient competent personnel	30,8

As it is seen, problems of public institutions arise mainly from bureaucracy, effect of politicians and lack of competent personnel.

When the public relations practitioners were asked which of the public relations activities they found adequate and which of them inadequate:

Public relations practitioners' evaluation of their own public relations activities	Adequate	Inadequate	No answer
Participation to decisions made by the administration	44,4	44,4	11,1
Planning public relations activities for short, medium and long range	50	38,9	11,1
Cooperating with internal publics	61,1	27,8	11,1
Giving consultation support to the high level management	55,6	27,8	16,7
Arranging media relations	72,7	11,1	16,7
Organizing some events	66,7	16,7	16,7
Conducting research on the institution's reputation and its actions	50	38,9	11,1
Speaking on behalf of the institution	66,7	16,7	16,7

Majority of the public relations activities are found to be sufficient with the rates over 50 %. But in fact, the upper management is the major determiner of these activities. Communication and public relations knowledge of the upper management must be judged and this is a further research topic. We think that the works or activities we discussed above, which have no place in the public relations department activities but are evaluated enough here, in fact are not done. If they were done, these matters would be added to the duties of the public relations departments above.

The reasons behind finding public relations activities inadequate can be listed as below from the viewpoint of the public relations practitioners:

Reasons behind finding PR activities inadequate	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
Not giving sufficient importance to PR in institution	11,1	22,2	0	22,2	22,2	22,2
In the organization structure inadequate place of PR	11,1	22,2	16,7	5,6	16,7	27,8
Not having sufficient budget to carry out activities	16,7	16,7	11,1	16,7	16,7	22,2
Lack of staff and organization	5,6	33,3	5,6	5,6	22,2	27,8
Intervention of administration with the PR activities	0	11,1	11,1	22,2	22,2	33,3
Uninterested public opinion and the media	0	22,2	11,1	22,2	16,7	27,8
Lack of support personnel	0	27,8	11,1	11,1	16,7	33,3

According to the results, public institutions give adequate importance to public relations, public relations' position in organization structure is adequate, the administration does not intervene with public relations activities done by public relations units, and public and the media show interest to public relations activities, only they think that there is a lack of support personnel and organization.

55.6 % of answers to the question whether the public relations departments in public institutions determine the demands of their publics or not were all positive, with the exception of one institution which did not answer the question (5.6 %). Yet, among the questions towards signifying public relations departments' tasks a search to understand the demands of the target group found that 33% of the answers were insignificant, 11% indecisive and 16.7% important. The rate of positive answer given to this question was 55.6%. Thus,

the answer given is contradictory to the one that is given above. Contradictory answers make us think that the people who answered the questions did not reflect their objective ideas; also some of them seem to be unaware of the answers that must be given.

Some public institutions indicate that they sometimes use consultancy agencies for some organizations. The news of public institutions' activities takes place in the media at the rate of 90% at most.

When we asked about the influence of the publics in shaping the public institutions' facilities and services, the answers are as shown in the table:

Influence of the publics on public institutions activities	Frequency	Percent
Strongly influential	6	33,3
Influential	9	50,0
Neither influential nor non influential	2	11,1
Totally non-influential	1	5,6

The view regarding the "the public influence on activities" contradicts the views regarding doing research to learn the publics' expectations and the effect of the activities on publics.

When the public relations practitioners assessed the public institutions' reputation in return for the public's reactions, 22,2 % found it to be very positive, 66,7 % found it to be positive and 5,6 % were indecisive and, 5,6 % found it to be negative. According to these results, public institutions and public relations departments operate excellently!

Another study done by the author tried to reveal the views of public on public institutions' public relations departments and activities. The research was conducted during May-July 2007 among randomly selected public institutions in Istanbul like Istanbul Municipality, Head Official of District of Beyoğlu, Bahçelievler and Bakırköy, Tax offices in Kocasinan and Çapa, Istanbul Hospital, ISKI and IGDAŞ. Public was asked to express to what extent they knew about the public relations departments of these institutions and their public relations activities. Among 305 participants, 117 said that they knew, 149 said they did not know and 39 said they partially knew.

Generally, people think that civil servants waste their time with chats from morning to noon. (Tortop, 1986:92). The reason of this is that public institutions do not take the public's views into consideration and do not inform them in activities planned to be done.

The answers given to the questions whether the works of public relations departments in the public institutions met the publics' needs and demands are

below: Of 188 people answering this question, 48 stated that they met, 69 stated they did not, and 71 stated that they partly met.

We want to mention some factors we encountered while conducting this research to give some opinion about public relations facilities of public institutions:

- For a long time, public relations units have existed in TRT and SSK, but personnel have been appointed recently;
- Activities done under the name public relations is nothing more than information giving in front of a desk in branches of finance ministry, because the person who is responsible for carrying out public relations duty is an ordinary civil servant and do their duties with an understanding that another friend could do their duty in their absence and thus, they perceive this duty as a shift.

Conclusion

Developments and changes in political, economical and sociological conditions first mandated public relations in public sector and then in private sector in Turkey. But the development of public relations in public institutions is insufficient compared to that in private institutions.

The level of public relations services in Turkish public administration is, if not always, almost zero. Efficiency of public administration is very low in this area (Kazancı, 1997:223). Generally, public institutions, public administrators cannot adopt the philosophy of public relations. Mostly they adopt a practice shaping the public opinion, and they sometimes even ignore the public opinion.

In every parliamentary election, the upper administration of the bureaucracy changes, to be filled with persons who are closer to the party in power. So these regular changes affect public relations practitioners who work with upper managers. This could explain the difficulty that the public relations units are in. Public relations departments' activities should be directed towards the institution, not to the person.

Public relations departments in public institutions must determine their duties and put them on paper. Otherwise, public relations activities are shaped according to the personal preferences of the institution's manager. There is a strong connection between public relations practice and democratization of society. Public relations needs a democratic and participative culture to flourish.

No institution in our sample does activities to shape their publics in the activities they do and will do. Also all of the institutions indicate that they do not have policy about what the publics think about their activities. Most of the organizations' public relations practice is one way and inadequate in Turkey. Public relations actions in these institutions are in the initiatives of public

relations departments' managers and employees. Generally, most of the public relations activities are limited solely to establishing good relations with the media. In our research, most of the public administration institutions' images are found to be positive, but in fact they are negative.

In Turkey when the term "public sphere" is used, it is understood as "the area in which public institutions that belong to state operate". When the actions of public institutions are investigated, it can clearly be seen that they do not engage in activities which shape the public sphere. Insufficiency and inadequacy of public relations facilities are clear. Because administrators do not have adequate knowledge about public relations, administrators do not believe in the necessity of public relations units, and political governments play important roles in acquiring managerial positions with very strict bureaucracy in these organizations and there is inadequate dialogue between institutions and the society.

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