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Public Relations: Promotion of Stakeholder Relations in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: In order to promote stakeholder involvement, the study on public relations was carried out at the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria.

Methodology: The study used descriptive survey research design. All of the academic staff, non-academic staff, and management team at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology in Ikere, Ekiti State, Nigeria, comprised the study population. The researcher used multistage sampling method, including random sampling, quantitative sampling and proportional sampling, to select (N=900) respondents from academic staff members and administration personnel. In order to collect data for the study, two sets of instruments have been developed and used. They are a set of self-produced questionnaires called: Public Relations Services Questionnaire (PRSQ) and University Effectiveness Questionnaire (UEQ), Inferential statistical analysis, like Pearson Product Moment Correlation, has been used to analyse the gathered data.

Findings: The study found that a number of critical factors impacted the efficacy of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, including reputation management, press releases, media relations, social media, speech writing, crisis management, research, and content development and management. The public relations department of university was the finest indicator of the institution's efficacy.

Conclusion: The study concluded that communication has played an important role in building understanding and goodwill among high authorities because of its substantial impact and usefulness for the audience. Moreover, it has been established that public relations play an important and important role in the public, and that the emergence of media organizations has enhanced the social value and cohesion of the institution.

Keywords: Public Relations, Promotion, Stakeholder Relations, Bouesti, Nigeria.

Introduction

Public relations (PR) is a planned and systematic management role inside an educational institution that aims to improve the programs and services of the educational system, especially tertiary institutions of learning (Ofuani, Sulaimon, & Adebisi, 2018; Okwelle & Agwi, 2018). The scholar claims that public relations (PR) in (tertiary) academic institutions relies on a thorough two-way communication process that involves both internal and external publics, such as the general public, parents, communities, and the government, in order to stimulate an enhanced understanding of the tasks, goals, accomplishments, and needs of the institution. As a result, in organizational communications, the PR oversees other communications. Yahaya & Abubakar (2017); Okwelle, 2010). Thus, when a reference is made to the performance of Public Relations Departments in meeting university's objectives for producing quality graduates, effectiveness should be seen as an important factor.

Indicators of public relation services, such as active participation by stakeholders, quality of research, adequate staff complementarity, employee motivation and effective communication within and outside the University shall be provided in order to achieve university objectives. As expected, the universities in the Southwest of Nigeria are not performing as well as they should and are far from achieving their objectives with regard to the identified indicators. The fact that some universities do not provide specific public relations services to achieve the effectiveness of their institutions may also be a factor. In order to bridge the information gap between management and students and staff, an independent Public Relations Department is expected to be established in all organisations, including higher education institutions that are part of the university network. Ensuring comfort when handling social concerns on campus, coordinating other company initiatives like government and media relations, community relations and social responsibility programs, etc., has been a top emphasis.

The public relations section of the institution is deemed essential. The primary responsibility for creating and executing a strategic public relations plan is to the University's Public Relations Department. Through the production of written, edited, and distributed educational and reference materials that benefit all parties involved, the department hopes to maintain positive relationships with the general public. Maintaining an accurate and current database of all milestone events is crucial for identifying trends, gauging public acceptance of the institution's activities, identifying public concerns, and monitoring public opinion and expectations through official press releases, newsletters, special publications, premier towers, brochures, newspaper articles on higher education news, newspaper reviews, broadcast materials, press releases, speeches, and other communication material. In addition, copies of corporate ads are made upon request from pertinent departments, faculties, and units. Event-specific matters, including condolences and obituaries, are coordinated, as are all corporate and formal events, like graduations and matriculations. Commencement talks, lectures at the university, notable visitors, lecture series on exchanges, employee celebrations, tours, and receptions for dignitaries, in addition to the farewell party. The Public Relations Officer shall liaise with the relevant dignitaries on visits to the University or in connection with external visit by university functionaries, press conferences organising media interviews, radio and television talks as well as updating news pages of the website of the University.

However, some universities in Southwest Nigeria appear to be unable to meet most of these important responsibilities. Accordingly, the abovementioned Public Relations Services which have been considered in this study should be taken into account to ensure that all training programmes are effective. The capacity of the Public Relations Department to fulfil its tasks is a major factor affecting the effectiveness of these institutions. It is therefore expected that a university with good public relations departments and staff to ensure effective management of both communication and research within the University System will enhance administrative work, improve employee performance, increase academic productivity as well as improving students' educational results which are essential for its overall success. To that end, this study identified a relationship between some selected PR agencies and the efficiency of universities in Southwest Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Stakeholders

The concepts of stakeholders and publics often appear to be used in the same way. In contrast, stakeholders are broadly groups of persons linked to the organisation such as workers, investors and customers (Grunig et al, 2002). Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that stakeholders may be any group or individual with any of the four types of links to an organisation, enabling, functional, diffuse or normative. Stakeholders belonging to the diffuse linkage are thus frequently identified when an organisation acts in such a way as to affect them. These publics are people of the community, green groups, journalists, voters and others who organize to cope with situations (Rawlings & Bowen, 2005). Bourne (2005) says that stakeholders are individuals or groups that have an interest, part of a project's rights or ownership and who can provide information on how to make this work better. More importantly, the stakeholders are those who do not participate in a company's existence and can no longer survive. Capital supplier shareholders, employees, other resource providers, customers, community residents and the natural environment are among this group of stakeholders. (Clarkson, 1995).

Types of Public Relations

Jefkins (1977) are freelance writers/consultants, public relation departments of advertising agents, public relation subsidiaries of advertising agents, independents public relation consultants and public relations counselors. It should be noted that unique forms of public relations organizations also exist in government public relations practice. Consequently, it is compulsory for the management of higher education institutions to be genuinely interested in sharing information with their staff.

The Internal Public Relations Department

External public relations organisations' services are to be relied upon by the functional Public Relations Department, or used as part of top management. Some institutions finds it more convenient to operate a skeletal public relations departments (usually a one man show) while others go for a highly functional public relations department staffed with professionals and experienced hands. However, in the absence of an internal public relations department, some institutions make a mistake of relying solely on external public relations services. This is not the case because such services cannot be offered to any company by a PR consultant or another external service provider, as Public Relations is an ongoing activity and does not involve ad hoc activities.

External Public Relations Department

An autonomous community, traditional rural and city unions, extractors or opinion leaders are also part of the external public. The communities, banks, schools children, teachers, traders, the lead government, electorates etc. Given their special characteristics, the abovementioned public is undoubtedly of great importance to us. In a critical examination of all these citizens, it will be shown that the process of integration of rural dwellers will begin to give rise to confidence in their abilities and contributions to society, even in the field of agriculture.

Functions of Public Relations

The following definition of public relations was adopted by the Public Relations Society of America in 1982, and helps to define its purposes: "Public relations help an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other." The PRSA's official press release further explains the function of public relations, saying: Public relations plays an important role in helping our complex multicultural society to make better decisions, contributing to the understanding of groups and institutions that will allow it to work better. This will contribute to a harmonious functioning of both domestic and national policies.

PR is a field that involves many different types of social institutions, including foundations, businesses, trade unions, government agencies, volunteer organizations, hospitals, schools, colleges, and churches. To

accomplish their goals, these organizations need to establish productive connections with a variety of public and stakeholder groups, such as workers, members, consumers, communities, shareholders, and any other interested parties.

In order to achieve its objectives, the management of these institutions must take into account citizens' attitudes and values. The external environment shapes the target itself. By providing guidance to management and as a mediator, public relations practitioners assist in the transformation of private objectives into realistic, publicly acceptable policy and actions. As a result, the field of public relations has evolved to include meaningful relationships between organisations and their main audiences through actions and communication. This view describes the role and responsibilities of public relations practitioners, which is defined as a management function. The definition of PRSA is, however, imperfect: The most significant weakness in this definition is the requirement of public relations to bring about a harmonious situation between personal and government policies. The relationship between the organisation and all its citizens cannot, in fact, always be perfect. Furthermore, that definition imposes on us the duty to act in the best interests of an organisation and its citizens, which could be logical impossibility if those interests were opposed. Cases such as classification, boycotts and opposition research and lobbying continue to require PR management and communication; despite the bad nature of these relationships. In the success of any organisation that brings people into its activity, whether they are shareholders, employees or clients, the unique management role of public relations plays a key role. This wording will help you understand that publicity is a secondary function of the general PR function and should not be confusing with its broader functions, although many people believe it to be an exclusive purpose.

The Sub-Functions of Public Relations

Think of PR as an important umbrella profession, with a number of different functions attached to it. These sub functions are often independent units within the organisation, often reporting to public relations and sometimes communicating with other organisational bodies such as legal, marketing or human resources. To understand how to manage a complex and efficient PR function, it is necessary to learn the sub functions and lexicon of terminology related to this function. Some of its sub functions are the following:

Issues Management: The handling of matters is the most crucial role in public relations. The management level function is in charge of recognizing difficulties, trends, industry developments, and other possible issues that may have an impact on the organization. Issues management is forward-thinking problem solving. A strong understanding of research, environmental monitoring, the organization's industry and business model, and management strategy are all necessary for issues management.

Media Relations: The biggest visible part of the organisation's PR activity is likely to be its media relations function, where it involves a direct interaction with third parties. The media relations sub function is primarily a technical function, which means that it will be based on the ability to produce public relations materials and outputs. Tactics, such as news releases, podcasts, brochures, videos for broadcasting media, direct mail pieces, photographs, websites, press kits and social media platforms have often influenced the results.

Marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communications or integrated communication is also referred to. This sub function focuses on publicity and product promotion for specific consumer groups. In order to increase awareness and convince consumers to try or purchase a product, PR strategies and tactics are mainly based on the press and gentry model.

Government Relations and Public Affairs, Including Lobbying

The issues that a citizen or a community is interested in, which need to be communicated to it, are the public affairs of the organisation. Contacts with regulatory authorities and appointment and election officials shall be maintained through government relations.

Polling and Research

In the field of public relations, surveys and interviews are carried out to an extent where specialised agencies that perform such activities on a fulltime basis, in most cases under contractual arrangements or for retainers, exist. (Odudele and Ayegunle, 2024). Nevertheless, account should be taken of the fact that very large organisations frequently set up research units in one or more Public Relations departments.

Advertising

Although advertising is a different profession from public relations, it has always been employed as part of the PR campaign.

Concept of Stakeholder

Stakeholders may be involved within and outside the organization. Internal stakeholders are individuals who have an interest in the company through a direct relationship, such as employment, ownership or investments. External stakeholders are those who have no direct contact with the company, but whose influence on its activities and outcomes is significant. Suppliers, creditors and government bodies are all of the external stakeholders.

Stakeholder Theory

The theory of stakeholders gives rise to two views: morality and strategic thinking (Frooman, 1999). The moral view is that those who are affected by the organisation's activities have a right to be provided with information and, where appropriate, demands for specific levels of performance in order to achieve equilibrium between interests and benefits. (Freeman 1984, Mitchell et al. 1997, 1998). In 2013, Williams and Adams conducted an investigation into employee disclosures made by interested parties using a moral framework. Conversely, the strategic perspective emphasizes an organization's advantages concerning its capacity to accomplish its goals, as outlined below: The strategic approach is further defined by Freeman (1984) and Greenwood (2007) as it relates to managerialist and social control/construction. It is recognised in the managerialist view that stakeholders can provide benefits to an organization, for instance, legalisation and social licence for operation, risk management or learning, similar to Freemans (1984) Strategic Perspectives. (Sillanpaa, 1998). Critical theories lead to the construction of social control, which suggests a dominant organization over stakeholders in an immoral or unethical manner. (Livesey and Kearins, 2002). Consequently, depending on the organizational value derived from expected results as set out in Logsdon and Llewellyn (2000) and Rasche and Esser (2006), stakeholders may be addressed in a variety of ways. Therefore, there are different types of relationships among companies and the interested parties.

Communication and Stakeholder Relations in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology

Stakeholder relationships refer to professional relations among businesses, people or groups with an interest in their activity and decisions. Some examples of stakeholders are employees, investors and suppliers who wish a company to be successful. They can profit from such success. It is important that stakeholders are properly involved and communicated effectively in order to make the project as successful as possible. Maintaining good relations with the people most affected by projects will be facilitated through efficient communication. It is vital to communicate with each of them in the right way so that they remain on board (Odudele, 2023).

It is crucial to establish an open communication from the beginning of a project with relevant stakeholders, customers and suppliers so that it can be successfully implemented. The interests, issues and concerns of interested parties should be adequately taken into account and dealt with. As well, commitments made to them must be tracked, monitored and fulfilled.

Significance of the Study

Enhancing Stakeholder Relations: Understanding the significance of public relations in promoting stakeholder relations is crucial for institutions like Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology. Improved stakeholder relations can foster a positive reputation, increase trust, and attract support from various stakeholders including students, faculty, staff, alumni, government agencies, and the local community.

Building Reputation: Effective public relations strategies can help enhance the university's reputation locally, nationally, and internationally. This can lead to increased enrollment, improved faculty recruitment, stronger partnerships with industry, and greater funding opportunities.

Crisis Management: In times of crisis or controversy, strong public relations practices can mitigate negative impacts on the university's reputation. Understanding how to effectively communicate with stakeholders during such situations is critical for maintaining trust and credibility.

Community Engagement: Public relations efforts can facilitate meaningful engagement with the surrounding community, fostering partnerships, collaboration, and support for university initiatives. This can lead to mutually beneficial relationships and opportunities for community development.

Competitive Advantage: By implementing strategic public relations initiatives focused on stakeholder relations, Bamidele Olumilua University can gain a competitive advantage over other institutions. Positive relationships with stakeholders can differentiate the university and attract top talent, resources, and opportunities.

Study Objectives

To Assess Current Stakeholder Relations: Evaluate the existing relationships between Bamidele Olumilua University and its stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, government agencies, and the local community.

To Identify Challenges and Opportunities: Identify the key challenges and opportunities in promoting stakeholder relations within the university context, considering cultural, social, economic, and political factors specific to Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria.

To Develop Effective Public Relations Strategies: Based on the findings, develop tailored public relations strategies aimed at enhancing stakeholder relations within Bamidele Olumilua University. These strategies should be practical, sustainable, and aligned with the university's mission and goals.

To Evaluate the Impact of Implemented Strategies: Implement the developed public relations strategies and evaluate their effectiveness in improving stakeholder relations. Measure outcomes such as changes in stakeholder perception, increased engagement levels, and overall reputation enhancement.

To Provide Recommendations for Future Improvement: Based on the findings and outcomes of the study, provide recommendations for further enhancing stakeholder relations within Bamidele Olumilua University. These recommendations should be informed by best practices in public relations and tailored to the university's unique context and objectives.

Research Questions

1. How do public relations strategies influence stakeholder perceptions and engagement at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology?

2. What specific tactics are employed by the university's PR department to promote positive stakeholder relations?

3. How do stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of communication channels utilized by the university for PR purposes?

4. What challenges exist in maintaining effective stakeholder relations, and how does the university address them through its PR efforts?

Methodology

Research Design and Population

A research methodology for the description of surveys has been adopted in this study. All academic staff members, non-academic staff members, and the management team of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science, and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, make up the study's population. A sample of 900 respondents was chosen from the universities by including academics and administration staff, using a multistage survey approach that included simple random selection, probability or proportionality samples. Two sets of instruments have been developed and applied to collect data for this study. The Public Relations Service Questionnaire, the Public Relations Service Questionnaire, the University Effectiveness Questionnaire, is a questionnaire that is designed by itself (UEQ).

Sample and Sampling Technique

Three sections A & B of the PRSQ have been divided up. Information on the demographic data of respondents has been received in section A, where 8 items are included, as well as in section B LTQ, with 41 items related to public relations services. Two sections of the UQ, A and B, have been split. In Section A of the questionnaire, nine items were used to gather information on respondents' demographics and in section B of the UQE they had 40 questions relating to university effectiveness at Bamidele Olumilua University College Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria. Experts have ensured that the instruments are valid in their face and content. A reliability coefficient of 0.79 and 0.81 for PRSQ and UEQ, respectively, has been obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson's product moment correlation, have been used for the analysis of the data collected. The nine hypotheses proposed have been evaluated in the range of significance of 0.05.

Interpretation and Presentation of Result

Question 1: What are the efficiency levels in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria?

To calculate the effectiveness of universities, a score of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria was used for this analysis. To illustrate responses to questions 1 through 40 in section B of the University Effectiveness Questionnaire, a frequency count and percentage have been applied. Southwest Nigerian universities have been ranked as poor, moderate, or excellent in terms of effectiveness using a percentile distribution formula. Respondents who answered the University Effectiveness Questionnaire with a score of 33.3 percent (53.28) or lower were classified as having a "low" level of effectiveness, while those who answered with a score of 66.6 percent (106.56) or higher were classified as having a "high" level of effectiveness. For the lower and higher groups of universities, the university efficiency scores have been set at moderate levels. This results in the lowest level of university efficiency starting at 40.0 to 52.28, which is followed by a moderate range from 52.29 to 106.55 and an intermediate range between 104.56 and 160.00. At the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria, Table 1 shows university effectiveness.

Table 1: *The degree of effectiveness of the Bamidele Olumilua University, Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria.*

University Effectiveness Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (40.00-52.28)	75	20.8
Moderate (53.29-106.55)	152	42.2
High (106.56-160.00)	133	36.9
Total	**360**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows the efficiency of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti, Nigeria. The findings show that, of the 360 academic staff members, 75, or 20.8 %, found the university's efficiency to be low. The proportion of those with a moderate degree of university effectiveness was 152, or 42.2 %, while the proportion of those with a high degree of university effectiveness was 133, or 36.9%. This indicates that the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria has a moderate degree of effectiveness.

Question 2: What is the predominant public relation services in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria?

In answering the above question, For items 1 to 40, the scores obtained by all respondents in Section B of "Public Relation Services Questionnaire (PRSQ)" and the total scores available for each of the dimensions of the university's public relations services have been calculated. To determine the degree of dominance (%) of each public relations service, the ratio of all respondents' scores to the total scores possible on each public relations service was multiplied by 100. Table 2 shows the result.

Table 2: *Predominant Public Relation Services in the University.*

Dimensions of Leadership Traits	N	Respondents Total Score	Total Score Obtainable	Level of Dominance (%)	Ranking
Reputation management.	540	7608	10800	70.4	3rd
Press releases.	540	7764	10800	71.9	1st
Media relations.	540	7704	10800	71.3	2nd
Social media.	540	7608	10800	70.4	3rd
Speech writing.	540	7392	12960	57.0	8th
Crisis management.	540	7332	10800	67.9	7th
Research	540	7476	10800	69.2	5th
Content Development and Management	540	7356	10800	68.1	6th

Table 2 presents the predominant public relation services in the university. The result shows that press releases (71.9%) is the most predominant public relation service in the university. This is closely followed by media relations (71.3%), social media and reputation management (70.4%), research (69.2%), content development and management (68.1%) and crisis management (67.9%), while speech writing (57%) is the least in the ranking order. As a result, the university's most important media relations service is press releases.

Testing of Hypothesis

The research hypothesis set out in this study has been tested by the Pearson product moment correlation.

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between public relations services and the effectiveness of universities is not significant in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

For the purpose of testing this hypothesis, scores relating to public services were calculated using items 1–40 in Section B of "Public Relation Services Questionnaire" (PRSQ)," while university effectiveness was obtained using items 1- 40 in Section B of "University Effectiveness (UEQ)". A statistical analysis of

Pearson's product moment correlation values at a 0.05 level of importance was subsequently carried out for these sets of scores. The result is shown in table 3.

Table 3: *Pearson product moment correlations.*

Variables	N	x̄	SD	r cal	P-value
Public Relation Services		111.56	2.06		
	6			0.844[*]	0.034
University effectiveness		95.31	1.45		

[*]p<0.05

The computed r-value (0.844), as indicated in Table 3, is noteworthy at the 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis is no longer valid. Thus, PR services and the effectiveness of higher education in Southwest Nigeria are related. Public relations services have a strong and positively statistically significant relationship with colleges' effectiveness.

Discussion

The study showed that in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, there was a significant relationship between the effectiveness of the public service and the effectiveness of the university. This means that, in the university's efficiency, leadership qualities will improve or have a favourable effect. The fact that the university system is not able to achieve a quality of its outputs unless it has good public relations with staff and students in order to effectively manage activities within and outside the University, may be responsible for this finding. The study of Yahaya & Abubakar (2017) points out that public relations can lead to positive results such as prizes, honesty, staff participation, cooperation, exchanges of information and open communication. The smooth functioning of the institution may be hindered and its effectiveness impaired if it does not do so.

The study has shown that a significant relationship exists between the combination of PR services and reputation management, press releases, media relations or social networking. speech writing, crisis management, research and content development and management and universities effectiveness. This implies that efficiency of the university system will be strengthened if public relations officers are careful and thorough in carrying out their tasks. Several scholars have supported this conclusion, arguing that there is an important relationship between each variable of public relations and the effectiveness of universities (Falola, Oludayo, Akinnusi, Osibanjo, & Salau, 2018; Grunig, 2000).

Outcome of the Findings

The findings of the study suggest that public relations services, e.g. reputation management, press releases, media communications and social networking have been found to be in line with those results. The key factors influencing the effectiveness of Bamidele Olumiluwa University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State have been speech writing, crisis management, research and content development and administration. The public relations service was the best determinant of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria's effectiveness.

Conclusion

Public relations has played an important role in building trust and goodwill between universities as well as thanks to its considerable impact and usefulness for the audience. Moreover, it has been found that public relations play an significant and essential role in the dissemination of information to the public as well as strengthening the social value and cohesion of the institution through the establishment of media organizations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn from the findings of this study:

1. A Communication Policy should be established which clearly lays down what the institution's management intends to do in terms of communication and public relations. The availability of such a communication policy in the institution will make it possible to communicate effectively through all its communications channels.

2. In addition, the provision of appropriate communication methods should be ensured with respect to staff and other workers by public relations professionals and experts working for educational institutions. Therefore, it is essential that the management of higher education institutions be genuinely willing to share information with their staff.

3. Relevant media should be used to disseminate information to both internal and external audiences due to the need for efficient communication in which messages must be factually and accurately communicated.

4. In order to ensure absolute communication, the public relations staff should be entrusted with all formal communications in the institutions (Adagala & Michael, 2017).

5. Since PR depends on precise and true information and data, which are frequently obtained through research, studying research methodology and theories in addition to the fundamentals of mass communication is essential for PR professionals.

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