

An Evaluation of Public Relations Practice of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States in Relationship Management

¹Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan, Ph.D. and ²Chamberlain Chinsom Egbulefu, Ph.D.

Abstract

This paper entitled: “An Evaluation of Public Relations Practice of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States in Relationship Management” has examined whether public relations is effectively applied in managing relationships between the selected institutions and their publics or not. The design adopted by the study was survey. The Social System Theory was adopted. Data were collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered on the institutions’ students, staff and host community members as key publics. To complement data obtained through the questionnaire, the study further collected data by conducting oral interview with eighteen key staff of the selected institutions. Data collected were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings revealed that although the studied tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States recognise public relations, they do not apply it effectively in managing relationships with their publics. Due to the inability of the institutions to effectively apply public relations, they do not cultivate and sustain a very healthy and strong relationship with their publics. The study, therefore, concluded that public relations is not well understood by the managements of the selected tertiary institutions. The study recommended among others, that awareness programmes should be organised for managements of tertiary institutions by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, that managements of tertiary institutions should create independent departments for public relations and employ only trained and certified public relations personnel in them to carry out public relations activities.

Key Words: Public Relations, Tertiary Institutions, Publics, Benue and Nasarawa

Introduction

Organizations exist to attain certain goals for the benefit of man and his environment. This implies that the goals which higher institutions in Nigeria exist to attain are meant to enable her develop. In line with this submission, Osunbiyi (2004, p.193) posits that the development of any nation, to a larger extent, is a product of the kind of educational system it has. According to Osunbiyi, any society that wants to attain development must pay adequate attention to its education, most especially, “tertiary education which is capable of producing appropriate

¹ Gbaden Jacob Chiakaan, Ph.D. is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Taraba State University, Jalingo

² Chamberlain Chinsom Egbulefu, Ph.D. is a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria

manpower need that can propel growth and development in all spheres of human endeavors for any society.”

Of course, higher institutions of learning can attain their goals only when they have good or cordial relationship with their publics. The publics of an organization, according to Newson and Currel in Matera and Artigue (2001, p.111) are those people who have links to an organization’s programmes or events. In a similar note, Sambe (2005, p.24) defines the publics of an organization as various people who are either affected by the activities of an organization or whose activities can affect an organization. Every organization has its publics. The publics of an organization are divided into two. These are internal and external publics. The ability of an organization, including higher institutions of learning to achieve its goals is dependent on what relationship exists between it and its publics.

Unfortunately, the task of cultivating and maintaining cordial relationship between organizations and their publics is not an easy one (Chile (2003, p.40). It is not even a function that can be performed effectively by everybody. This is because it involves communication and systematic planning of programmes. Organizations, therefore, employ the services of public relations to achieve this. Attesting to this view, the British Institute of Public Relations (1987) in Gregory (2010, p.2) posits that “public relations practice is the deliberate, planned and sustained efforts to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.” Incidentally, due to the goals they are established to achieve, tertiary institutions appear to have publics that are more complex to deal with.

Folarin (1998, p.37) describes their publics as “social non- conformists” and further posits that a higher institution of learning such as university, polytechnic or college of education may be put into the category of organizations usually classified as “complex organizations” because, particularly, the universities, they harbour a large concentration of social non-conformists who do not want their rights to be tempered with. According to Ajala (2001, p.231), apart from students, lecturers, administrative staff, and their unions at local and national levels, they have alumni, potential students, potential employers of graduates, government, research councils, educational funding bodies, examination boards such as Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO) as their publics. Other publics, according to Ajala (2001), are potential donors, philanthropists, industries, commerce and the professional media personnel, National Universities Commission, and Ministries of Education. Public relations, in this regard, has the duty of managing the students, authorities and society as a whole.

Essentially, the function of public relations is to manage communication effectively. Ajala (2001, p. 231), in line with this position advocates that “two-way symmetric public relations model be maintained between publics, in and outside the campuses if institutions’ goals are to be realized.” Basically, public relations applies communication as a major instrument of building

relations between institutions of higher learning and their publics. It is in recognition of this function that George (2005, p.25) says public relations is “the management of communications between an organization and its publics to create understanding, prevent crises and increase the reservoir of goodwill for the organization.

Public relations in any organization, according to Oyeneye (2013, p.53), be it a higher institution or not is a management function. Oyeneye further posits that the assertion that public relations is a management function no longer generates argument. It is now appreciated more than ever before that the greatest impact of public relations can only be felt when public relations is placed in the right position within the management hierarchy in any organisation. The only issue which requires clarification is the role public relations is supposed to play in management. Another important issue is how public relations can consolidate its position in management. Sharing a similar position with this, Denny Griswold, Publisher of *Public Relations News* in 1977 in Keghku (2005, p.5) posits thus:

Public Relations is a management function, which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest and plans and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

Public relations, as a part and parcel of management, ensures that there is collaboration between organizations and their publics. Even though, according to Offonry (1985, p.35) and Oslo (2003, p.200) public relations performs many functions, those functions all revolve around communication. For instance, media relations, crises management, employee relations and community relations which are functions associated with public relations in an organization can never be well executed without the tool of communication being employed.

On the basis of what has been said so far, it can be perceived that effective management and application of public relations in an organization is very important. It is necessary for the smooth operation and success of an organization as it is capable of managing communication in order to create a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. Such atmosphere has the advantage of achieving teamwork for an organization. Oyeneye (2001, p.198) states that without teamwork, no organization can operate and achieve its goals successfully. Effective public relations can help manage reputation by communicating and building good relations with all organizations' stakeholders.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria must employ and manage public relations in an appropriate manner in order to earn a positive reputation, and it appears tertiary institutions in Nigeria are aware of the importance of public relations to them. This is attested by several works carried out by different scholars in this regard. Osunbiyi (2004) and Ajala (2001) point out that tertiary institutions recognize and apply public relations. Similarly, studies by Soho (2007), Olanipekun

(2011), Ugbah (2011) and Igben (2001) all show that public relations is practised by tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Negative stories about tertiary institutions in Nigeria in recent times have, however, raised the fundamental question of how they practise public relations. For instance, strikes by academic and non-academic staff, of tertiary institutions against government are numerous. From 1980 to 2013 the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and their non-academic counterpart, Non Academic Staff Union (NASU), had gone on strike for more than ten times (www.asuu.gov.ng, 2013). The same situation is applicable to the unions of other tertiary institutions.

Apart from strikes by workers of tertiary institutions, Osunbiyi (2004, p.195) identifies other issues, such as incessant crises, high school fees, cultism, lack of good learning facilities, admission irregularities, thorny relationship with host communities and poor media relations. All these negative practices identified with tertiary institutions, according to Ajala (2001) and Osunbiyi (2004) are giving them a bad reputation and image.

It is, no doubt, clear from the foregoing discourse that the relationships between tertiary institutions and their publics is not very cordial. Public relations, according to Ugbah (2011, p.11), is expected to serve as a significant and effective instrument of gathering and engineering goodwill, understanding, establishing mutual and sustainable relationship between an organization and its publics.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the fact that tertiary institutions practise public relations, they are still faced with many issues. Ajala (2001, p.230) and Osunbiyi (2004, p.195) list some of such issues as incessant crises, high fees, cultism, lack of good learning facilities, admission irregularities, thorny relationships with host communities and so on. These issues raise doubts and questions about the institutions' ability to understand and effectively apply public relations in order to achieve cordial relationship with their publics and also attract positive coverage from the media. These doubts also become necessary given the fact that public relations is one of the least understood areas of modern management as asserted by Nwosu (1995) in Keghku (2005, p.4) and George (2012, p.25). Ajala (2001, p.11) agrees with Nwosu (1995) and Keghku (2005) when she states that some people have misconceptions about public relations and its functions. She reveals further that such people misconstrue public relations for publicity, giving gifts, gaining media attention and telling lies. Black (1989) in Chile (2003, p.6) corrects the misunderstanding and misconceptions about the practice of public relations. Among others, Black states that public relations is fundamentally calculated to improve mutual understanding between an organisation and all with whom it comes into contact, both within and outside the organization.

While it can be agreed that public relations is practised by tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the basic question that needs answer however, is whether the institutions really understand what it is

and apply it accordingly. Consequently, this study investigated whether the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States apply public relations in an effective manner in managing relationships with their publics.

Research Questions

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. How is public relations recognised and applied in an effective manner in managing relationships between selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa states and their publics?
2. What are public relations strategies applied by the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States in managing relationships with their publics?
3. What is your own assessment of the way and manner selected tertiary institution in Benue and Nasarawa States apply public relations strategies in managing relationships with their public?
4. How does effective or ineffective application of public relations strategies affect the ability of the selected tertiary institutions to manage relationships with their publics?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social system theory. The system theory has been traced to George Hegel who in the 19th century held that the world is a process and is controlled by a tension between opposites. A system, by classification, according to Littlejohn (1996, p.42) is a set of things that relate to one another and form a whole. Scot (1967) in Chile (2003, p.102) sees a system theory as one which studies “parts in aggregates and movement of individuals with the environment of the system, interactions among individuals in the system (and the) general growth and stability problems of a system.”

An organization has been viewed by Huse and Bowditch (1973) in Chile (2003, p.77) as a system that comprises a number of sub-systems, all of which are independent and interacted upon and dynamic-having inputs, outputs, operations, feedback and boundaries. As a social system, an organization is equally an open system which Littlejohn (1996, p.43) posits “is oriented toward life and growth.” An organization as an open system has sub-systems (parts) which all relate to the whole and their environment.

Tertiary institutions are made up of different departments or units as sub-systems which are independent but which relate to one another and also operate collectively. The ability of the sub-systems or sub-units to operate effectively is, however, dependent on the ability of those who are at the top to manage them well. The social system theory is, therefore, not only relevant to this study, but it is the theory upon which the study is anchored. This is because higher institutions of

learning, as held by the social system theory and supported by structural-functionalism, are made up of several departments or units. These units operate separately but for the overall wellbeing of the institutions as a whole. This means that the ability of the institutions to achieve their goals effectively is dependent on their ability to manage all the available departments excellently.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Wimmer and Dominick (2001, p.113) have observed that survey method is particularly more versatile and practical, especially for the administrator, in that it identifies present needs. Another is that the survey constitutes a primitive type of research in that the investigation of any problem must begin with a “survey” of its nature before it can move into the more structured and rigorous phase. The study used the instrument of questionnaire. It also used oral interview to complement the questionnaire.

The population of this study comprises all the staff, students and members of the host communities of the five selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States. The choice of these institutions, purposively decided upon, was informed by the fact that these institutions, like others in Nigeria, practise public relations. The institutions are Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia and College of Education Akwanga. Therefore, staff, students and members of the host communities who are some of the key stakeholders of these institutions constituted the study population of 1,231,549.

The population of staff and students was obtained from the Registry Departments of the five selected institutions covering the 2014/2015 academic session. For the population of the institutions’ host communities, data were obtained from the National Population Census in respect to the 2006 census as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette of 2009. The total population under study was 1,231,549. Here is a breakdown of the population, according to the individual institutions and their host communities:

Table 1: Distribution of the study population across the various institutions

S/N	Institution	Staff	Students	Host community	Total
1	Nasarawa State University, Keffi;	1000	15,000	92,664	108,664
2	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	2,365	14,801	297,398	314,564
3	Benue State University, Makurdi	2,125	39,172	297,398	338,695
4	Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia	658	5658	330,712	337,028
5	College of Education, Akwanga	848	18,320	113,430	132,598

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The sample size of the study was 400. This was arrived at using Taro and Yamane's (1960) statistical formula. With size, Nasarawa State University, Keffi was assigned a total of 35, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi 102, Benue State University, Makurdi 110, Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia 110, and College of Education, Akwanga 43.

After sampling the population of each of the institution, the researcher went ahead to purposively assign 30, 50 and 20 percentage ratios to the various units of the population comprising staff, students and selected key members of the institutions' host communities. Staff and students were assigned greater percentages because they constitute the main and internal publics of the institutions. As internal publics, they are more knowledgeable about the way the institutions apply public relations. Moreover, as internal publics, they are more directly affected by the activities of the institutions than the host community members of the institutions who constitute the external publics.

Adopting simple percentage, 11 staff, 17 students and 07 host community members were selected from the Nasarawa State University, Keffi. For the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, 31 staff, 51 students and 20 members of host community were selected. For Benue State University, 33 staff, 55 students and 22 members of the host community were selected. For Nasarawa State Polytechnic, 33 staff, 55 students and 22 members of the host community were selected while 13 staff, 21 students and 09 members of the host community were selected from College of Education, Akwanga.

In order to complement data obtained from the questionnaire, oral interview was also conducted with 18 key respondents including DVCs, Registry staff, Directors, HODs, etc. These were considered key respondents. These staff were selected because some of them are either members of management or close to the managements of their institutions due to the positions they occupy. In this regard, their views were held to represent those of the managements of their schools. The staff and students that filled the questionnaire were selected using simple random sampling method.

In all, 382 questionnaire were administered out of the 400 sampled respondents. Out of the 382 questionnaire, 301 were administered on staff and students as internal publics while 81 were administered on key members of the institutions' host communities as external publics. Out of the total administered questionnaire, only 365 (287 and 78) were collected and found fit for analysis, 17 were lost. Data collected from the field was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Results**Table 1. Respondents knowledge and awareness of PR and its application by tertiary Institutions**

Respondents	Yes	No
Staff/Students	287 (79%)	Nil
Host Community members	78 (21%)	Nil
Total	365 (100%)	

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Data in table 1 sought to determine respondents' knowledge and awareness about public relations and its application by tertiary institutions. In this regard, all the 365 (100%) sampled respondents comprising staff/students and members of the institutions host communities have claimed not to only have some knowledge about public relations but that they are aware of its application by the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States. The implication of the data collected here is that their views would be authentic and could, therefore, make the results of the study more valid and reliable.

Table 2: Public Relations Strategies Used by Higher Institutions

Respondents	Publications	Dialogue through meetings	Provision of teaching and learning facilities	Media relations	Management of staff/students and community relations	All of the above
Staff/students	65 (10%)	51 (14%)	06 (02%)	52 (14%)	12 (03%)	116 (32%)
Host community members	12 (03%)	18 (05%)	04 (01%)	06 (02%)	08 (02%)	08 (02%)
Total	77 (21%)	69 (19%)	10 (03%)	58 (16%)	20 (05%)	124 (34%)

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 2 is a follow-up of question 1. Data here is aimed at revealing the public relations strategies applied by the selected higher institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States. Data collected in this regard revealed that out of the 365 sampled respondents, 77 (21%) identified publications, 61 (19%) pointed out dialogue involving seminars, conferences and face-to-face meeting whereas 10 (03%) respondents, the higher institutions provide effective teaching and learning facilities, 58 (16%) mentioned media relations such as press releases, briefings, conferences, interviews and so on. According to 20 (05%) sampled respondents, the institutions

applied the strategy of managing staff/students and community relationships. A significant number of respondents, 124 (34%) said the institutions applied all the strategies mentioned above. Basically, what can be deduced from responses to the question on this table is that higher institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States have no single public relations approach they use in relating with their publics. They have different strategies which they commonly apply in dealings with their publics.

Table 3: Assessment of Application of Public Relations by Higher Institutions of Learning in Benue and Nasarawa States

Respondents	Effectively applied	PR not effectively applied	PR fairly applied
Staff/Students	85 (23%)	110 (30%)	92 (25%)
Host community members	22 (06%)	48 (13%)	08 (10%)
Total	107 (29%)	158 (43%)	100 (35%)

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 3 is a follow-up of Tables 1 and 2. The table sought to know how effective public relations is practised by the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States. Out of the 365 sampled respondents, 107 (29%) said public relations is effectively applied by the selected institutions in Benue and Nasarawa states, 158 (43%) respondents said it is not effectively applied. In addition, 100 (35%) other sampled respondents said public relations is only fairly applied by the institutions. From the data collected, it can be clearly deduced that public relations is practised by the selected institutions but they are not effective in applying it.

Table 4: Relationships between the Institutions and their Publics

Respondents	It is not very cordial	It is cordial	It is very cordial	It is very poor
Staff/Student	198 (54%)	62 (17%)	18 (05%)	09 (02%)
Host community members	52 (14%)	19 (05%)	02 (01%)	05 (01%)
Total	250 (60%)	81 (22%)	20 (06%)	14 (03%)

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

If the institutions do not effectively apply the above public relations strategies in an ineffective manner as revealed in Table 3, Table 4, therefore, sought to ascertain the effect of that on their relationships with their publics. Data collected indicated that out of the 365 sampled respondents, 250 (68%) said the relationship between the institutions and their publics is not very cordial, 81 (22%) revealed that their relationship is cordial. It is, however, the belief of 20 (06%) sampled

respondents that there is a very cordial relationship between the selected institutions and their publics, 14 (03%) respondents, however, felt that the relationship between the institutions and their publics is very poor.

The implication of data obtained here is that even though the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States apply public relations, they do not have a very cordial relationship with their publics. This appears not to be very good for the institutions

Data from Oral Interview

Data was also collected qualitatively to complement the one obtained quantitatively. In this regard, an oral interview was conducted with 18 key staff of the selected institutions with the following questions guiding the interview:

- i. How is public relations recognized and applied in an effective manner in managing relationships between selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States and their publics?
- ii. What are the public relations strategies used by the selected higher institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States?
- iii. What is your own assessment of the way and manner the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States apply public relations strategies to manage relationships with their public?
- iv. How does effective or ineffective application of public relations strategies affect the ability of the selected tertiary institutions to manage relationships with their publics?

In response to the first question, all the 18 (100%) respondents claimed to have knowledge about what public relations is and the way the institutions under study practice it. They also, all said that different public relations strategies are applied by the selected tertiary institutions.

According to them, some of such strategies include inviting members of their host communities for meeting, and events in the institutions, organizing press conferences, visitations, employment/admission of qualified members from their communities, providing sound teaching and learning facilities and many others.

According to 78% of the interviewees, the institutions do not, however, apply public relations strategies effectively in managing relationships with their publics. The effect of this situation is that the selected tertiary institutions do not have a very cordial relationship with their publics. The position of the remaining 04 (28%) of the interviewees is that the institutions effectively apply public relations strategies and because of this have a very cordial relationship with their various publics.

Discussion of the Findings

All respondents in Table 1 and those interviewed orally (18) are not in total dark about what public relations entails. This appears true because public relations is not theoretically inclined, it is practically inclined. It is, according to the Mexican Statement in Keghku (2005, p.6), concerned with executing planned programmes that will serve both an organization and its publics. Since they are the ones that constitute the immediate publics of the selected tertiary institutions, they are in the best position to know whether the institutions recognize public relations or not. Moreover, as the immediate publics of the institutions, they are the ones to be more affected by the actions of the institutions. They are therefore, in a better position to know whether the institutions effectively apply public relations strategies in dealing with them or not.

It is also clear that the selected institutions are not totally ignorant about public relations and its value. This explains why they apply it by embarking on publications, meeting with their publics in a face-to-face manner, interacting with members of the press, managing crises, providing facilities for effective teaching and learning, managing staff, students, host communities, and members of the press and so on. This is the belief of 124 (34%) respondents in Table 2 and 14 (78%) respondents orally interviewed who said the institutions apply all these strategies in managing relationships with their publics.

It is, however, clear that although the institutions recognize and utilize public relations, the manner in which they apply it in managing relationships with their publics leaves much to be desired. It appears the institutions do not use public relations excellently. This is attested by almost all the 18 selected staff of the institutions interviewed who said the institutions do not practice public relations perfectly. This position is further strengthened by 110 (38%) and 48 (62%) respondents in Table 3 who said the institutions do not effectively public relations.

The institutions do not have full-fledged department of public relations. In almost all the institutions in Nigeria, studies by different scholars such as Soho (2007), Okpoko (2004) and Salau (2001) have shown that the tertiary institutions in Nigeria place public relations in the registry department as a unit. The chief public relations officer, who heads public relations office in the institutions is usually referred to as Assistant or Deputy Registrar but can, in most cases, hardly rise to head the registry department. The implication of this is that public relations office can be staffed by anybody who is a registry staff regardless of his educational and professional background. Also, it implies that public relations' input at the time of taking decisions is always absent.

Since public relations is absent at the time decisions are taken, it is expected to only play the role of ensuring that such decisions are successfully implemented regardless of their outcomes. Where such decisions are unpopular or met with negative reactions from the publics, public relations is expected by managements to magically change the situation to a positive one. According to Iyorkyaa (1996) in Chile (2003, p.67) where public relations does not do this, it is

considered a never-do-well profession. Findings in this study, therefore, show that, there is no significant relationship between recognition of public relations and its effective application by selected higher institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States.

If public relations is not applied in an effective manner by institutions of higher learning, as also attested by findings from respondents orally interviewed, it might not be far from share ignorance and wrong conceptualization of what the profession really is. In line with this belief, Nwosu (1995, p. viii) posits that public relations appears to be one of the least misunderstood areas of modern management particularly in developing societies. Towing the same line, Ajala (2001, p.45), Benson-Eluwa (2005, p.215), Oliver (2010, p.3) and Oyeneye (2013, p.53), state clearly that public relations is part and parcel of modern management in organizations. According to Ajala, Benson-Eluwa, Oliver, and Oyeneye, public relations is a management function due the numerous functions it performs for the smooth operation and achievement of organizational goals. The functions, however, essentially border on communication. Communication is managed to achieve team work or cooperation among the publics of an organization in order to help it attain its goals more effectively.

Findings further indicate that institutions, however, apply public relations to achieve certain fundamental objectives. One of such objective is to manage conflicts and crises, to manage their image and reputation, to create awareness to members of the public, to maintain good relationship with communities, government and attract positive coverage from the media. Specifically, the institutions apply public relations in order to cultivate and sustain a harmonious relationship with their publics. Black (1990, p.5) shares this view as he considers public relations as the art and science of achieving harmony with environment through mutual understanding based on truth and full information. Unfortunately, higher institutions do not practise public relations in an effective manner. This implies that their ability to apply public relations so as to successfully and effectively achieve harmony with their publics is reduced to some extent.

Conclusion

From the major findings in this study, it is concluded that public relations is recognized by the selected institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States. They do not, however, utilize it in an appropriate manner in managing relationships with their publics. The relationship between the selected tertiary institutions in Benue and Nasarawa States and their publics is, therefore, not very cordial due to the inability of the institutions to apply public relations effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Seminars/Conferences:** To solve the problem of recognizing but not applying public relations effectively, the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) should be consistent in organising seminars/conferences for managements and other relevant stakeholders in higher institutions. Through these, they will be more equipped with knowledge about what public relations is and how best it can be applied in managing relationships with their publics.
2. **Creation of Department of Public Relations:** Managements of tertiary institutions should recognise public relations as a management function by creating independent departments for it instead of merging public relations with Registry departments. The institutions should also be consistent with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.
3. **Need for a Very Cordial Relationship with their Publics:** If the relationship between tertiary institutions and their publics is only cordial, it is not very good. It implies all is not very well between the two. It also implies that a little problem that may arise tomorrow may likely break the relationship. As a result, the institutions should strive to have a very cordial relationship with their publics. This, they can do by practically demonstrating concern for regular meetings with key community members, making themselves accessible to their publics, always making money available for public relations activities etc.
4. **Awareness Creation through Persuasive Communication:** To do away with ignorance and negative attitude towards public relations, it is the responsibility of not only NIPR but also that of public relations experts to embark on advertising and other persuasive strategies through the conventional media and interactive media to change their ignorance to knowledge, apathy to interest, hostility to hospitality, and prejudice to acceptance.

References

- Ajala, V.O. (2001). *Public relations: In search of professional excellence*, 2nd Edition. Ibadan: May Best Publications.
- Baran, S. J. (2002). *Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture*, 2nd Edition. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Benson-Eluwa, V. (1998). *The practice of human, industrial and public relations*. Enugu: Virgin Creations.
- Black, S. (1989). *Introduction to public relations*. London: The Modino Press Ltd.
- Chile, C. T. (2003). Public relations and image management: approaches in the nigerian banking industry. Dissertation for the Award of Master of Science in Mass Communication, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

- Folarin, B. (1998). *Issues in applied communication*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd.
- George, A. (2012). Exploring stakeholder relations in a regulated environment: The Technology Story Board Initiated as Lesson from Nigeria. A Compilation of Papers Presented at APRA Mombasa Conference. Kano: Nadeem Media Consults Ltd.
- Gregory, A. (2010). *Planning and managing public relations campaigns*. 2nd Edition. Philidophia: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Igben, H. G. O. (2001). Public relations: A useful tool for effective crisis management in tertiary institutions. *Public Relations Journal*, 2(2), 36.
- Ireport.cnn.com./docs-cult crisis in Abia State University, Umuahia, Retrieved on July 2, 2013.
- Keghku, T. (2005). *Public relations and the Nigerian economy*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers.
- Littlejohn, S. (1996). *Theories of human communication*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Matera, F. and Artigue, R. (2000). *Public relations campaigns and techniques building bridges into the 21st Century*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Newson, D. Turk, J. V. and Kruckeberg, D. (2010). *This is PR: The realities of public relations*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Nwosu, I.E. (2005). Mass communication: One course, many professions (general introductory overview.). In Nwosu, I.E., Aliede, J.E. and Nsude, I (eds), *Mass communication: One course, many professions*. Enugu: Prime Targets Ltd.
- Offonry, K. (1985). *Guide to PR practice in Nigeria*. Owerri: New Africa Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Okpoko, J. I. (2004). Public relations and crises management in Nigerian higher educational institutions: A case study of ABU, Zaria, Nigeria. In Nwosu, I. E. and Wilson, D. (eds) *Communication, Media, and Conflict Management in Nigeria*. Enugu: ACCE/Prime Targets.
- Olanipekun, O. (2011). Organizational communication and harmony among the internal publics of Adekunle Agasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Unpublished B.A. Research Project, Submitted to the Department of Mass Communication, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
- Oral Interview with 18 respondents from the selected tertiary institution in Benue and Nasarawa States.
- Osho, S. (1999). *Political public relations and national stability*. Abeokuta: Jedidiah.

- Osunbiyi, B. (2004). Public relations strategies for repositioning tertiary education in Nigeria. In Dokunmu, F. and Odetoyinbo, A. (eds) *Public Relations for Good Governance and Reputation Management*. Ogun: Nigerian Institute of Public Relations.
- Oyeneye, P. (2013). *Ultimate PR resource: Public relations, management and leadership resource for PR executives*. Abuja: Royal Mark Consulting.
- Salau, S. (2001). Theory and practice of public relations in Nigerian educational institutions in Mallam, M. M. (ed) *Public Relations Journal*, 2(2), 56.
- Sambe, J. (2005). *Introduction to mass communication practice in nigeria*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers.
- Soho, A.V. (2007). Public Relations Activities and Tertiary Institutions: An Assessment of University of Agriculture, Makurdi. Unpublished Master's Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Mass Communication, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.
- Spagnolia, N. (1998). Universities and their communities: What fosters positive town-gown relations? Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation. Rowan University.
- The U.S. Legal Code (1992). *Institutions of higher education*. Retrieved Feb. 21, 2014 from www.law.cornell/uscode/text.102.
- Ugbah, G. H. (2011). *An evaluation of public relations practice in Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev and College of Education, Katsina-Ala, Benue State, Nigeria*.
- Yamane, T. (1964). *Statistic: An introduction analysis*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- www.assu.gov.ng – ASUU – Retrieved July 4, 2013.