



STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

In order to improve and encourage the cooperation that exists between the school and the community, the communication gap between them must be bridged. Every person in the school has a role to play in the communication improvement process, especially the students being the direct beneficiary of the school system; hence the establishment of school-public relations. This research was therefore conducted to find out the strategies that could enhance students' involvement in school-public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State. Two research questions and a hypothesis guided the study. Data were collected using questionnaire. Research questions were answered using mean statistic while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha significant level. Result showed that one of the problems why students have not been participating in the school-public relations is lack of proper enlightenment of the programme. Also, the result of the study revealed that organizing awareness programme of school-public relations for students will enhance their involvement in the programme. There was no significance difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the strategies that could enhance School Public Relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

Keywords: Strategies, Public Relations, Technical Colleges, Students.

Introduction

The success and productivity of organizations somewhat depends on their relationship with the environment. School is a social organization. It receives human beings as input and gives out human beings as output. They pick up the input and return the output to the environment after a specific training period (Adil, 2018). This is why school-public cooperation is very vital. Public relation is the medium through which the school can actualize this. Promotion of the educational institution, adoption of the social environment and provision of the support of the community will be ensured by the establishment of the relations with the public (Adil, 2018).

This implies that where adequate public relation is lacking, the school is poorly or not sold to its environment. One of the dire consequences is that the school will never actualize the set goals and may fold with in the process of time.

Schools have suffered setbacks due to inability to understand the community and to develop the community's understanding of the school, its services, objectives, problems, and successes. In order for a school to thrive, it must connect with its stakeholders, the surrounding community as well as the global environment. Ugoji, Idibia, and Thomas (2022) defined public relations as a deliberate, planned and sustained



effort to establish and maintain understanding between an organization and its public. Public relations in the school are processes of revealing the best aspects of the school and receiving positive messages for obtaining the support of the community (Omorodion et al. 2022). It refers to the strategic communication from an organization to the public to maintain or cultivate public image and/or respond to public discourse.

It is more important than ever that the public be intelligently informed about what the schools are attempting to do. The public will continue its support of the best in education only when it is kept well informed of the progress of its schools, when it is involved in promoting the total school programme, identifying concerns, and seeking solutions to problems. Public relation is the duty of everyone in an organization. In most technical colleges in Nigeria, there is no planned public relations unit in the educational institutions. This confers on all the schools' stakeholders the responsibility of public relations. Students, as pivotal stakeholders, have a critical role to play in projecting the school in positive light.

Students, by virtue of their role as the most direct beneficiaries of educational programmes become the schools' most important public relations agents. Therefore, they should be aware of their roles in public relations and, consequently should be involved in the school public relations activities of the school system. School public relations is a strategic way in which schools can connect with their communities, typically using the media to deliver messages (Callahan, 2023). One vital tool that can sell the school to the community is the students. They are the mirror with which

the public sees the technical education programme.

There is no doubt that our technical colleges are not yet pronounced largely due to poor public relations. Many believe that public relation is management function (Greg, 2012). This belief has obscured schools and technical colleges in particular despite the capacity of the technical colleges to equip the people with salable skills. It is therefore very important to search out strategies to get students fully involved in projecting the good image, products and services of the technical colleges. This is the thrust of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies for enhancing students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State. Specifically, the study was to identify:

- 1) The problems associated with students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.
- 2) The strategies for enhancing students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for the study. They are:

1. What are the problems associated with students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State?
2. What are the strategies for enhancing students' involvement in school public



relations in Technical
Colleges in Kwara State?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the rating of male and female students on the strategies that could enhance students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

Research Method

The design of this study was descriptive survey. Nworgu (2015), define descriptive survey as those studies that aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic feature about a given populations. It was considered as most appropriate because the study examined current situations affecting involvement of technical education students in school public relations. It involved the use of structural questionnaire to elicit information which was analyzed. The population of the study consisted of all the senior secondary school year three (SS3) in all the five Technical Colleges in Kwara State totaling 250. The total population was used, no sampling was made. The respondents' anonymity was guaranteed in the study. A response rate of 68% (170 out of 250) was achieved. Most respondents were male (n=119, 70%). The survey instrument completed by students of Technical Colleges in Kwara State consisted of: (a) six questions soliciting demographic information, and;

(b) A five point Likert – scale type with responses along a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Decided (D) and Strongly Decided (SD) with 25 items. The instrument was adopted by the researcher to identify problems associated with students' involvement in school public relations and strategies to enhance students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State. A pilot test was conducted two months prior to the full – scale administration of the survey to estimate the reliability and validity of the instrument. Based upon the input from the pilot test, the instrument was revised to enhance its content and face validity. The internal consistency of the revised instrument was determined to be 0.81. Internal consistencies greater than 0.71 are generally considered accepted for research instruments (Gay, et al. 2006). Mean and t-test statistics were used to answer the research questions and to test the null hypothesis respectively. A mean rating higher than 3.5 was accepted while the calculated t-test value was compared with what was obtained on the tabulated t-value table. A null hypothesis was accepted if the calculated t-test was less than the critical t-value. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant.

Research Question 1: What are the problems associated with students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State?

Data related to this research question are analyzed and presented in Table 1.



Table 1: Problems associated with Students’ Involvement in School Public Relations.
(N=170)

S/No	Problems	Respondents’ Mean Rating	Remark
1	Lack of proper enlightenment of the programme.	4.65	SA
2	Lack of interest by students.	1.74	SD
3	Lack of facilities for learning the skills.	3.59	A
4	Lack of fund for the programme	2.69	UD
5	Lack of encouragement from school management.	3.82	A
6	Poor orientation and co-ordination of the programme.	3.56	A
7	Poor communication skills on the part of the students.	1.64	SD
8	Poor image of the programme by the public.	3.35	UD
9	Students not having leisure to themselves.	1.53	SD

The data in Table 1 showed that items 1, 3, 5, and 6 have mean rating values that are above 3.5, they are therefore accepted. On the other hand, items 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9 have mean ratings that are less than 3.5 and are therefore rejected.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies that could enhance students’ involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State? Data related to this research question are analyzed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Strategies for enhancing Students’ Involvement in School Public Relations
(N=170)

S/No	Strategies	Respondents’ Mean Rating	Remark
10	Organizing awareness programme of public relations for the students.	4.62	SA
11	Sensitizing the students on the need for their involvement in the school public relation activities.	4.65	SA
12	Students’ representatives being part the school public relations.	4.10	A
13	Adequate information on aims and objectives of technical education programme.	3.51	A
14	Students encouraged to organize exhibitions and other outdoor activities.	2.97	UD
15	Students body being represented in parents and teachers’ association meetings.	3.91	A
16	Students involved in school games and winning laurels in community national sporting activities.	3.64	A
17	Students involved in marketing their products.	1.49	SD



18	Students allowed to contribute on issues affecting their welfare.	3.68	A
19	Recognizing outstanding students' achievement through awards.	4.55	SA
20	Schools' new letters to include news of technical programmes and activities.	2.47	D
21	Exhibition of projects handled by students.	4.13	A
22	Photographic display of technical education projects by students.	4.20	A
23	Integrating public relations into vocational and technical education curriculum.	3.94	A
24	Providing information regarding students' qualification for jobs when requested by employers.	3.63	A
25	Equipping the technical education workshops adequately for achieving the practical skills needed for performance.	4.51	SA

The data in Table 2 showed that items 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18 and 19 have mean rating values that are above 3.5. Others with mean rating value over 3.5 are 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25, with item 11 having the highest mean rating of 4.65, they are therefore accepted. On the other hand, items 14, 17 and 20 have mean ratings that are less than 3.5 and are therefore rejected.

Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the strategies that could enhance students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

The mean score obtained by male and female students were computed and the summary of the result is as shown on the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Male and Female Students' Rating on Strategies that could Enhance School Public Relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

Group	Number	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
Male Students	119	4.38	0.77	196			
Female Students	51	4.64	0.50		0.72	1.96	Accept

Table 3 showed that the mean for Male Students was 4.38 while that of Female Students was 4.64. The standard deviation were 0.77 and 0.50 respectively. The degree of freedom was 196. The t-calculated value was 0.72 while t-critical was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-calculated is less than t-critical value, the null hypothesis is

therefore accepted and the alternative rejected. This means that there is no significance difference in the mean rating of Male and Female Students on the strategies that could enhance School Public Relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.



Summary of Major Findings

The findings observed in the study are based on the data collected and analyzed for the research questions and the hypothesis. These are that:

- (1) Lack of proper enlightenment of the programme
- (2) Lack of encouragement from school management
- (3) Students need to be sensitized on the need for their involvement in the school public relations activities.
- (4) The school management should organize awareness programme of public relations for the students.
- (5) The students also wanted technical education workshops to be equipped adequately for achieving the practical skills needed for performance.
- (6) Outstanding students' achievement should be recognized through awards.
- (7) There was no significance difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the strategies that could enhance students' involvement in school public relations in Technical Colleges in Kwara State.

Discussion

Findings of the results of this study show that there is poor enlightenment of public relations in technical colleges in Kwara State. This is in consonant with Omorodion, Ibeneme & Ayodele (2022) that there is a vicious cycle of a negative image, low quality and low self-esteem related to TVET. The findings also revealed that technical colleges management are not encouraging the programme as expected in technical

colleges in Kwara State. This is in agreement with Ugoji, Idibia, & Thomas (2022) who said that technical and vocational education schools may experience resentment from teachers and administrators and that outside public are having a say in the educational process, and making demands on their already overworked schedules.

Moreover, the findings showed that Students need to be sensitized for them to get involved in the school public relations programme. This finding is consistent with that of Okwelle (2011), who identified poor orientation and coordination as obstacles to students' participation in school relations' activities. Furthermore, this study's findings indicate that outstanding students should be recognized through awards. This is in consonant with Bliven (2021) who reported that a positive impact occurs after a student receives recognition for their efforts.

Similarly, the finding of this study also revealed that respondents wanted technical college workshops to be equipped adequately for achieving the practical skills needed for performance. This agreed with Olaitan (1996) who stated that the end product of the training given to students in any technical education is the skills acquired by the students. If a student performed credibly in performance skills and he/she is employed in an industry, his/her outstanding performance will speak for him/her thus making him/her a public relations agent.

The findings also show that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the strategies that could enhance students' involvement in school public relations in technical colleges in Kwara State. This



means that both male and female students could be employed to enhance the programme.

Conclusion

Communication between the school and the community is an important pre-requisite for developing more accurate information on the part of both, and as a result, a more positive attitude towards each other. Students are the most important public relations agents being the direct beneficiaries of the educational programmes and also a link between the school and the community.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that the school should adequately sensitize the students on their roles in school public relations activities. Adequate materials that would facilitate public relations activities should be provided for technical colleges in Kwara State. Also, effective and functional school public relations programme needs to be created in all technical colleges in Kwara State. Professional public relations officers could be recruited to man the programme.

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