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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Omorodion, S. O., Ibeneme, O. T., & Ayodele, O. I. (2022). Determination of School Public Relations Activities for Improving Students' Enrolment in Technical Education Programmes in Colleges of Education in Delta State. *Puissant*, 3, 433-441. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-78592-2>

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Short Paper

Determination of School Public Relations Activities for Improving Students' Enrolment in Technical Education Programmes in Colleges of Education in Delta State

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Date received: January 23, 2022

Date received in revised form: February 16, 2022

Date accepted: February 22, 2022

Recommended citation:

Omorodion, S. O., Ibeneme, O. T., & Ayodele, O. I. (2022). Determination of school public relations activities for improving students' enrolment in technical education programmes in colleges of education in Delta State. *Puissant*, 3, 433-441.

Abstract

This study was carried out to determine public relations activities for improving students' enrolment in technical education programmes in Colleges of Education in Delta State. One research question and a null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. An 18-item questionnaire structured on a five-point rating scale was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was face validated by three experts and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient method. The population of this study was all 41 technical education educators made up of Dean, Head of departments (HODs), technical education lecturers/instructors, technologists, and technicians in the School of Secondary Education (Technical), Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta State. The population for this study was manageable; hence, there were no sampling and sampling techniques in this



study. The entire population was used as a sample in the study. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question, while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed among others the public relation activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical), Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta State technical such as; having open talk-show with basic school pupils, creating awareness of technical education to the community organizations and visiting religious and social gathering to create public awareness on the need for technical education. Consequently, it was recommended among others that Considering that schools of secondary education(technical) in colleges of education are at the forefront of areas where public relations are most intense and the responsibility of public relations is in all stakeholders, pieces of training and seminars should be given to technical education educators (dean, heads of departments, lecturers/instructors and lab technicians).

Keywords – technical education, public relations, colleges of education

INTRODUCTION

In present-day Nigeria, greater emphasis is being placed on industrial and Technological development. As a result, students are being encouraged to take up courses in technical and vocational education training (TVET). Technical education has been described as a vital form of education that provides the trained manpower needed for the industrial and technological development of any nation (Okoye & Auta, 2020). According to Audu et al. (2020), technical education is that aspect of education that provides the recipients with the basic knowledge and practical skills necessary for entry into the world of work as employees or as self-employed.

The overall goal of technical education is to provide service to society with the view of improving it scientifically, technologically and economically (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The society includes the immediate community, parents/guardians, school board, organizations, the media, industries and government and other public who benefit directly from this form of education. Regardless of the role that technical education plays in the overall economic development of society; the public in Nigeria appear to misunderstand it and does not appreciate its role in the transformation of society. Billett (2018), made an overview of the situation of TVET in Nigeria when he pointed out that this form of education has been taken to mean education suited for learners who are academically challenged and whose only option is to work with their hands, and socially maladjusted students. The works of Rawashdeh (2017) and Jweiles (2017) strongly support this negative image of Technical education in Nigeria as emphasized.

Nevertheless, there is a growing concern across countries with both developing and advanced industrial economies, that young people and their parents increasingly prefer

other forms of education over TVET as an educational pathway. This preference extends even to those university programmes that have no direct employment outcomes and, potentially, quite limited prospects of employment upon graduation. Yet, these programmes are preferred to participation in TVET, which is often viewed as a second choice or last resort, as mentioned by the report of UNESCO -UNEVOC TVeT 2018 virtual conference; consequently, student's enrolment in technical education programmes in Nigeria has remained low (Ukachukwu,2015). This development posed an inherent danger to technology education and national development; as there is a vicious cycle of a negative image, low quality and low self-esteem related to TVET, its students and even its teachers. This phenomenon is well documented and acknowledged, however, very little is being done to create awareness to change it (El-Ashmawi, 2017).

The current reform of the technical vocational education and training (TVET) system in Nigeria appears to have not fully addressed the weaknesses to technology education development in the country to date (Gowon, Auta & Ibenemen, 2019). Hence, there is a need to further intensify efforts geared towards improving the quality of technical education institutions to make them attractive to prospective students. It is in line with this fact that several studies (Ibeneme & Okwelle, 2008, Okwori, 2011; Agwi, 2016), have identified some workable approaches of enhancing students' enrolment in technical education programmes. Among the approaches canvassed by these authors is the introduction of public relations activities into the school curriculum.

Public relations in the perspective of the educational process are defined as a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programmes and services of an education system (Okwelle, 2010). 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. Nowadays people can get a lot of information about schools from different sources. In this context, public relations in schools need to establish and encourage various partnerships within the society rather than just transferring information. An effective school public relations program should not only provide information about the processes in the school but also add value to people by giving them the information they can use. In this process, while transferring the information, a school should also be able to access the necessary information at the same time. Schools should use all media tools in this process that target various groups in society (Çoruk 2018). The above explanations show that school public relations rely on a comprehensive two-way communication process involving both internal publics (students and staff) and external public (parents, government and general public) with a common goal of stimulating a better understanding of the roles, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the school.

Since technical education programmes provide beneficiaries with skills for many job opportunities, the skills in the programme can be involved in the school public relations activities to educate the community as to what the programme does and how it will benefit graduates. This type of campaign as stressed by Abdulahi (2016), may result in greater public awareness and acceptance as well as increased enrolments into technical education

programmes. Evidence (Ibeneme & Okwelle, 2008) showed that there is no proper organized public relations programme in Nigeria Technical education institutions. Furthermore, a preliminary study by the researcher shows that colleges of education in Delta State are currently experiencing dwindling technical education student's enrolment. If this development remains, it might pose an inherent danger to technology education and national development and may further worsen the poor perception of TVET in Nigeria (Gowon et al., 2019). It is thought that the results of this study will provide a point of view about the public relations practices in educational organizations and make necessary recommendations for improving students' enrolment in technical education programmes. Therefore, this study has identified a knowledge gap indicating the need to determine the public relations activities in colleges of education in delta state

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess public relations activities for improving students' enrolment into technical education programmes in colleges of education, delta state. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Ascertain the public relations activities practice by School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State

Research question

1. What are the public relations activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State to improve students' enrolment?

Hypothesis

1. A null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male technical education educators and female technical education educators on the public relation activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State to improve students' enrolment

METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey research design and was carried out in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta State since is the only public college of education offering technical education in Delta State. The population of the study comprised

of all the 41 technical educators (male and female) including the Dean, heads of department, lecturers/instructor and workshop technicians of the School of Secondary Education (Technical), Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta State.

The population for this study was manageable hence, there were no sampling and sampling techniques in this study. The entire population was used as a sample in the study. A 10-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled “Technical Education educator Public Relations Questionnaire” (TEEPRQ) was used for data collection. This instrument was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts in industrial technical Education and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State and the other from the public relation office of Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State. Thereafter was administered to fifteen (15) teachers who were not part of the sample of the study.

The scores obtained were subjected to an internal consistency reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha method. The reliability yielded 0.79 which was considered adequate for the study. A total of 41 copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents directly by the researchers. The total number of copies retrieved was 35 representing 85 per cent return. The data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions whereby a mean cut-off point of 3.50 was used for decision making. Any mean score of 3.50 and above was agreed upon while any mean score below 3.50 was disagreed upon.

Standard deviation values were used to determine the level of homogeneity among the respondents. T-test was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. In testing the hypotheses, the null hypotheses were accepted if the calculated t-value is less and equal to the critical t-value. On the other hand, where the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value the null hypotheses were rejected

RESULTS

Research Question 1: public relations activities

Table 2 reveals that technical education educators agreed on two items (5, 6 & 18) as public relation activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State to improve student's enrolment. It can be inferred that the other eight items which had mean responses less than the 3.50 cut-off point were not accepted as public relations activities practised. The standard deviation below 0.99832 for all responses of respondents indicates that the responses were closely agreed. Based on the data presented, technical education educators agreed on three public relations activities as stated in Table 2 as the only practised by School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State; these includes having open talk-show with basic school pupils, creating awareness of technical education to the community organizations and

visiting religious and social gathering to create public awareness on the need for technical education.

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the public relation activities practised by School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State to improve student's enrolment

S/No	Public Relation Activities Practiced	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
9	Organizing career day activities	35	1.17	0.38	Disagreed
10	promoting Cooperative work experience program	35	2.09	0.61	Disagreed
11	providing local firms with publicity and information about the program	35	2.26	0.50	Disagreed
12	organizing exhibition programmes during speech and price giving days	35	2.06	0.99	Disagreed
13	having open talk-show with basic school pupils	35	3.83	0.45	Agreed
14	creating awareness of technical education to the community organizations	35	3.50	0.51	Agreed
15	Publicizing technical education using different media outlets	35	1.89	0.86	Disagreed
16	Production of newsletter periodically	35	1.86	0.77	Disagreed
17	Providing information about technical education for press release	35	1.54	0.78	Disagreed
18	visiting religious and social gatherings to create public awareness on the need for technical education	35	3.51	0.56	Agreed
	Valid N (listwise)	35			

Hypothesis

Table 3 revealed that t-cal is 1.29 and is less than the t-crit of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male technical education educators and female technical education educators on the public relation activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State to improve students' enrolment.

Table 3. t-test analysis of the difference between opinions of technical education educators on the public relations activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical)

S/N	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	α -level	t-cal	t-tab	Remarks
1	Male	30	4.31	.73					
2	Female	5	3.91	.64	33	0.05	1.29	1.96	Accepted

DISCUSSION

The result of the study in Table 1 revealed some of the public relation activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State as; having open talk-show with basic school pupils, creating awareness of technical education to the community organizations and visiting religious and social gathering to create public awareness on the need for technical education. This finding aligns with the findings of Okolocha(2006) who posited that Technical education institutions are not involved in public relations activities concerning media, business organizations, and industries. The only aspect they are involved in is in the activities of visiting religious and social gatherings to create public awareness on the need for technical education. The public relations activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State within their immediate communities to improve enrolment in technical education programme was below average as shown. Only three out of the 10 activities were agreed upon to have been practised. The non-performance of the seven public relations activities by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State might have contributed to the sustenance of the negative attitude of the public toward this form of education thereby resulting in continued low students' enrolment in a technical education programme.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male technical education educators and female technical education educators on public relations towards improving students' enrolment in technical education programmes. This is in agreement with Çoruk (2018), who posited that the responsibility of public relations needs to be shared by both male and female stakeholders in education. The result, therefore, means that both male and female educators are fully aware of the public relations activities practised by the School of Secondary Education (Technical) in Colleges of Education, Delta State.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that school public relations are a significant tool for improving students' enrollment in technical education programmes which in turn will create skilled manpower. When assessing the results of this research findings, it is seen that the level of awareness of the technical education educators as related to the impact of public relations is adequate and in the positive direction, however,

activities carried out are more social and religious (unconventional) activities rather than planned and programmed activities. Within the framework of these conclusions, the following recommendation was made:

1. Considering that schools of secondary education(technical) in colleges of education are at the forefront of areas where public relations are most intense and the responsibility of public relations is in all stakeholders, pieces of training and seminars should be given to technical education educators (dean, HODs. lecturers/instructors and lab technicians)
2. To help the schools conduct public relations activities, relevant units should be established in a school of secondary education (technical) in colleges of education.

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