

Enhancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programmes Through Public Relations for Entrepreneurial Development and Economic Inclusion in Rivers State.

IYAGBAYE, PRINCE OMOREGIE¹, AJIE, PRINCE MADUABUCHUKWU (PH. D)², DANAGOGO, TAMUNOFONYAMA³

^{1,3}*Department of Building Technology, School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State*

²*Department of Metalwork Technology, School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State*

Abstract- *The study was designed to determine strategies for enhancing Technical and Vocational Educational Training Programme through public relations for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State. Two research purposes, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 102 comprising all lecturers in technical and vocational department of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt, Rivers State. There was no sampling. A structured questionnaire instrument was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was structured on four-point response options. The instrument was validated by two experts in the school so technical education, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient formula was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded 0.71 reliability coefficient.*

Indexed Terms- *TVET, Public Relations, Entrepreneurial Development, Economic Inclusion*

I. INTRODUCTION

The place of Public relations in any society or organization cannot be over-emphasized because inherent in man the tendency to express or communicate desire, dream, aspirations and the drive to make the immediate environment better. Therefore, public relation is as old as man. Public relations is

practically as old as society. Patrick Jackson, a publisher of the public relation society of America (PRSA) opined that, public relation was initiated from the basic need of building and improving human relationship. Thus, public relations have been in practice even if only amateurish, since the beginning of human existence. In the primitive society, human communication was limited by space and time. Due to the absence of modern technology, the potentials and application of public relations metamorphosed as societies became more urbanized, civilized and complex. (Emmanuel, Ndolo & Igbara 2021).

The development of any society or organization is largely dependent on the priority given the public relations of such organization. According to Rosemary (2013) the public relations Society of America (PRSA) defines public relations as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics”. Pahwa (2022) defined public relation as a strategic communication processes companies, individuals and organization uses to build mutually beneficial relations with public. Deebom (2022) defined public relations as a management function-which evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies-and procedures for an organization with the public interest and executes programmes of action to earn a public understanding and acceptance. this explain that the school as a social organization have multiple public interest and need to exchange views with the public, hence the importance of the study. Public relation specialist is one who communicate plan intention of an organization, may

use mass media directly or indirectly to create and maintain positive brand image and a strong relation with the targeted audience. In a simple term, public relations are a strategized process of managing the release and spread of organization-related information to the public to maintain a favorable reputation of the organization and its brand. Simply put, public relations helps to influence an audience's perceptions by building relationships and shaping public conversations about a client or company. Public conversations often take place via mass media and social media, which is why public relations professionals need to understand how to work with and write effective and unambiguous messages for the media. Public relations can be harnessed to develop any society or organization including technical and vocational education and training programmes.

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), Technical and Vocational education are used as an all-embracing term referring to that aspect of educational process involving, adding to general education, technological study and related sciences and the inculcation of practical skills attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to trades in various sector of economic and social life. The Government of Nigeria, at the federal level, is aware of the need for Technical and Vocational Education in the country as a means of attaining the much desired technological growth. The awareness is clearly reflected in the goals set for technical education as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). Technical and Vocational Training/Education goals include: Produce trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business specifically at craft, advanced craft and technical level; Supply the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and Train and impact the necessary skills to trainees that shall be self-reliant economically.

One outstanding principle and theory that can never be compromised is that the training environment must be a replica of where the individual must work. It is expected that the teaching, training and education from the TVET programmes will produce versatile and experienced individual with the thinking and

manipulative habits as obtained in each related occupation of training.

it is necessary to recall that the wrong perception and misconception that technical and vocational education is for dull and never-do-well students has been the brain behind poor enrollment in TVET programmes but now that the white collar job are not forth coming, it is now obvious that to create jobs and facilitates technological growth and development in Nigeria as experienced in other nations, TVET programmes become inevitable (Edokpolor, 2015).

In Nigeria presently, it has become a common saying that if you do not say you are here, that nobody will remember you and give you what rightfully belongs to you. The same is applicable to TVET programmes and its inherent benefits. Those who have acquired and are practicing their respective occupational skills, directly or indirectly are not jobless because they possess services that people or the society needs. Thus, the society will look for them and their services hence they can be solution for joblessness through job creation, the fact and correct situation concerning the benefits of TVET programmes must be communicated and made known to our society. Operators of TVET need to enlighten the public of what is obtainable, how it can be done. It is then, they will come to embrace what TVET programmes is all about and what awaits them on acquisition of skills through TVET programmes. Campaigning and sensitizing to attract the public both inside and outside the institutions become necessary. These are the reasons for this study. Thus, communicating TVET programmes becomes inevitable especially to consumers of TVET programmes. Communication is complete when information that is passed from one point through a medium or channel to another point where the information is decoded interacted with and feedback is received by the originator of the information.

People are said to be related when very often, they are seen sharing, discussing or analyzing idea or information. Thus, the concept of public relations in a school, industrial organization or business enterprises denote a purposefully sieved information intended for public consumption and obtained feedback. Similarly, while communication explain an exchange of ideas, specific or intentional, communication should be

tailored, composed and executed for an acceptable exchange of information for the wellbeing of both sources and consumers of the information is planned meaningfully and directed at specific group of people for beneficial relations to meet the needs of the people continuously, a relationship will become natural and inevitable.

Every organization (schools, factories, traders etc) needs such relationship for stability, more patronage and growth. Public relations are important in order not to operate in isolation. The role of public relations is designed to help build trust and credibility with groups that are important to your organization as well as gives opportunities to defend, control and distribute its messages to those inside and outside the organization or company. Effective public relations, help to promote your organization, according to Travis (2018), effective public relations helps to: communicate during crises and defend its reputation from attacks people made on it.

Another role public relation plays according to Mellinger (2019) include: Influencing and persuading various members of a business' public including shareholders, customers and potential customers to view your business in a positive light by showcasing its beliefs, strategies, activities and accomplishment, and to create awareness of whom you are, what you do and reputational ability you intended to cast for yourself. Similarly, Travis (2018) outlined the main objective of public relations as to maintain positive reputation of the brand of their product; and to maintain a strategic relation with the public, prospective customers, partners, investors, employees and others. To maintain positive image that make it seem too honest, successful and important etc, it allows you to leverage the popularity of the internet and social media to communicate with wider audience, and to gain attention internationally. Public relations can be a great way for company and individual that want to grow or expose the awareness of its product and services etc. Travis (2018) added that its outstanding goal is to create, maintain and protect the company's reputation, enhance its prestige and present a favorable image.

In institutions of whichever description, multiple programems are carried out likewise; TVET in tertiary

institutions runs multiple programmes which sometimes the closest neighbors are not aware of. There is need for the surrounding public to be aware of it so as either to criticize it, make suggestion for their benefits or suggestion to improve on the quality of their output. Also, marketing what the institution produces to the public in order to make profits. Public relations listen to the public on what they want, how they want it for their preference and need.

School public relations therefore, is a process of communication between the school and the community for the purpose of educational awareness, needs, practices, and encouraging intelligent citizen interest and cooperation in the work of improving the school. Inherent in the above definitions is that school public relations have two functions which includes, interpreting the organization to the public, and interpreting the public to the organization and key decision makers. Thus school public relations therefore, represent an opportunity for developing linkages between the schools and the community. (Ibeneme & OKwelle, 2018). It is on this ground that this study seeks to determine strategies for improving technical and vocational education and training programmes through public relations for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Undeniably, the relevance of technical and vocational education and training in socio-economic, entrepreneurial and technological development of any nation cannot be underestimated. The secret of rapid development experience in the developed nations of the globe has technical and vocational education and training undertone. Nuru (2017) stated that, changes in a country's economy is required to prepare young people for the jobs of the future and technical and vocational education and training have important roles to play in this process. Technical and vocational education has been an integral part of national economic and entrepreneurial development. It is necessary to recall that the wrong perception and misconception that technical and vocational education is for dull and never-do-well students has been the brain behind low popularity and poor enrollment for TVET programmes but now that the white collar jobs

are not forth coming, it is now obvious that to create jobs and facilitates technological growth and development in Nigeria as experienced in other nations, TVET programmes has become inevitable (Edokpolor, 2015). Many a times, the public is unaware of what TVET stands for, as a result it has suffered a lot of setback in terms of enrolment and funding. Developing TVET programmes demands urgent attention and could be done through public relations. This study is to establish strategies for improving technical and vocational education and training programmes through public relations for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study examined strategies for enhancing technical and vocational education and training programmes through public relations for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State. Specifically, the study determined how:

1. The media can be used to enhance technical and vocational education and training programmes for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.
2. Involving the community enhances technical and vocational education training programmes for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How can the media be used to enhance technical and vocational education and training programmes for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State?
2. How does involving the community enhance technical and vocational education and training programmes for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how the media can be used to enhance technical and vocational education and training programmes for entrepreneurial

development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how involving the community enhances technical and vocational education training programmes for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers State.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. The research was carried out in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State. The population was 102 comprising all academic staff of technical and vocational departments of both universities. There was no sampling because the population size was manageable. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and was validated by two experts from technical and vocational education department, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State. The questionnaire used was titled strategies of improving technical and vocational education training programme through Public Relations for entrepreneurial development and economic inclusion in Rivers questionnaire. The instrument has section A, B, and C. Section A sought information on selected personal data of the respondents, section B to C consisted of 14 – items relevant for answering research questions posed in the study. The response format of the instrument was a four point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The reliability of the instrument was established by using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method on data collected through administering the questionnaire to 10 Lecturers from Technical education department, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.71, which was high and above the recommended acceptable value of 0.70 for good reliability (Nunally, 1978). Therefore, the instrument was regarded as reliable enough for use in data collection for the study. A total of 102 copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents directly by the researcher with the help of one research

assistants. All questionnaire distributed were retrieved representing 100 percent return. The descriptive statistics of mean with standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. An item with a calculated mean value equal or greater than 2.50 (2.50 – 4.00) was considered agree, while an item was considered disagree if the mean rating was less than or equal to 2.49 (0 - 2.49). An inferential statistics of t-test was used to test the null hypotheses in the study. It was decided that where t-calculated value was equal or greater than the table t-value, it indicates significant differences; the null hypothesis is reject otherwise, it will accepted.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of data analysis of the study are presented in tables 1 to 4 below.

Research Question 1

What ways can the media be used to enhance Technical and vocational education training programme in Rivers State.

Table 1: Summary of respondents Responses to Questionnaire items in Research Question 1

S/N	ITEMS	RSU LECTURERS (N = 36)			IAUE LECTURERS (N = 66)		
		\bar{X}	SD	REMARK	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
1	The use of radio	2.60	0.72	Agree	3.90	0.64	Agree
2	The use of television	2.87	0.73	Agree	3.00	0.94	Agree
3	The use of newspaper and magazine	3.82	0.60	Agree	2.60	0.60	Agree
4	The use of internet	3.32	0.64	Agree	3.70	0.48	Agree
5	The use of posters and handbills	2.66	0.74	Agree	2.40	0.70	Agree
6	The use of newsletters	3.14	0.59	Agree	3.40	0.52	Agree
7	The use of paid advertisement	3.90	0.83	Agree	3.80	0.73	Agree
	Grand Total	3.30	0.71	Agree	3.13	0.62	Agree

The result in Table 1 shows that, RSU Lecturers have mean range of 2.60 to 3.90, a grand mean of 3.30, and standard deviation range of 0.59 to 0.83 and a grand standard deviation of 0.71. While IAUE lecturers have mean range of 2.60 to 3.90 and a grand mean of 3.13; a standard deviation ranges of 0.48 to 0.94 and grand standard deviation of 0.62. This indicates that all respondents are homogeneous and agree that all items in Table 1 are ways the Media can be used to enhance

Technical and Vocational education training programmes in Rivers State because they have means greater than 2.50.

Research Question 2

How does involving the community enhance Technical and vocational education training programmes in Rivers State?

Table 2: Summary of respondents Responses to Questionnaire items in Research Question 2

S/N	ITEMS	RSU LECTURERS (N = 36)			IAUE LECTURERS (N = 66)		
		\bar{X}	SD	REMARK	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
1		3.53	0.72	Agree	3.60	0.53	Agree

	Exposes the community to the aim of the TVET programmes							
2	Enhances commitment of the community to TVET programmes	2.53	0.98	Agree	2.90	0.74	Agree	
3	The community becomes advertising agent to the TVET programmes	3.14	0.83	Agree	3.10	0.74	Agree	
4	TVET becomes aware of the need of the community	3.40	0.75	Agree	3.40	0.82	Agree	
5	Enhances symbiotic relationship between the community and TVET programmes	3.36	0.69	Agree	3.10	0.90	Agree	
6	Gives the community a sense of belonging.	3.14	0.61	Agree	3.30	0.48	Agree	
7	Enhances the community's value for the TVET programmes	3.84	0.69	Agree	2.80	0.82	Agree	
	Grand Total	3.26	0.73	Agree	3.21	0.72	Agree	

Source. Fired survey, 2024

The result in Table 2 shows that, RSU lecturers have mean range of 2.53 to 3.84, a grand mean of 3.26, and standard deviation range of 0.61 to 0.98 and a grand standard deviation of 0.73. While IAUE lecturers have mean range of 2.90 to 3.60 and a grand mean 3.21; a standard deviation ranges of 0.48 to 0.90 and grand standard deviation of 0.72. This indicates that all respondents are homogeneous and agree that all items in Table 2 are how involving the community enhance technical and vocational education training

programmes in Rivers State because they have means greater than 2.50.

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how the media can be used to improve Technical and vocational education training programmes in Rivers State.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Responses of RSU lecturers and IAUE lecturers on how the media can be used to improve TVET programmes.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Remark
RSU lecturers	36	3.30	0.71	100	0.43	2.00	Accepted	No significance
IAUE lecturers	66	3.13	0.62					

The result in Table 3 shows that t-cal is 0.43 and t-crit is 2.00 at 0.05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (0.43) is less than t-crit (2.00). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that, there is no significant differences in the mean response of lecturers of Rivers State university and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how the use of media enhance Technical and Vocational education training programmes through public relations in Rivers State is accepted. The implication of the result is that both lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education hold the same

opinion on how the use of media enhances Technical and Vocational education training programmes through public relations Rivers State.

H₀2: There is no significant differences in the mean response of lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how involving the community improves Technical and vocational education training programmes in Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Responses of RSU lecturers and IAUE lecturers on how involving the community improves TVET programmes

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Remark
RSU lecturers	36	3.26	0.73	100	0.64	2.00	Accepted	No significance
IAUE lecturers	66	3.21	0.72					

The result in Table 4 indicates that t-cal is 0.64 and t-crit is 2.00 at 0.05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (0.64) is less than t-crit (2.00). As a result, the stated null that, there is no significant differences in the mean responses of lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State on how involving the community enhance Technical and vocational education training programmes in Rivers State is accepted. The implication of the result is that both lecturers of Rivers State University and lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State hold the same opinion on how involving the community enhances Technical and vocational education training programmes through public relations in Rivers State.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of the study indicates that, the Media can be used to improve the TVET programmes. This is in line with Cutlip *et al* in Okwelle (2011), who opined that, public relations is a management function that seeks to identify, build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and all of the public on whom its success or failure depends. Deebom, in 2022 posited that, there are so many ways which public relations can be carried out which includes the use of the media of all kinds; mass media, (radio and television), press release, newsletters, magazines, paid advertisement, and internet to target both external and internal publics for the purpose of developing linkages between the institution and the community. It remains the responsibility of TVET institution management to select those approaches that have the greatest impact on the public in the particular locality.

The finding of the study also indicates that, involving the community improve the TVET progrmmes. This is in line with the assertion of America Planning Association (APA) (1951) that, some communities,

recognizing that the amount and kind of organizations within their vicinities will, in large part, determine the economic opportunities, development and level of living for their inhabitants, have devised means of attracting industries. The industry is rightly recognized as providing jobs, not only through direct employment, but also through the encouragement of commercial services for the industries themselves, and for the persons employed in the industries. The industry is also recognized as a major provider for public revenue to the community. Communities also often feel that they must compete with each other in attracting new industrial enterprises, and in enticing industrial enterprises away from other communities by ensuring they are involved in the running of the industry.

CONCLUSION

Public relations activities are needed in the TVET programme in order to communicate adequately and effectively to both internal and external public the aims and objectives of TVET programe, this is critical to the development of the TVET. The use of PR in the TVET is of paramount importance if it must experience development and achieve the aims for which it was established. The management of the TVET institutions should be sensitive to the peculiarity of the immediate public and devise means of reaching out to her. This involves being strategic in dealing with the public to get results. It is necessary that they make some sacrifices in achieving a positive corporate image in the eyes of the public to get the attention of the public and develop a symbiotic relationship to foster mutual development.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The managers of TVET programme should create and or revitalize her public relations units to reach out to target public via the utilization of the media.

2. The management of the TVET programme should adopt appropriate strategy for Public Relation by involving the immediate communities.
3. All necessary steps and avenues available to the TVET programme should be used to reach the public.
4. TVET institutions should ensure to maintain positive corporate image with the public.

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