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Integration of Employees in Publicity Strategies: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward for Private University Colleges in Ghana (Part II)

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Abstract:
Private University Colleges in Ghana adopt publicity strategies to promote their brand, manage reputation and increase student enrolment. However, the subject of the scope of publicity has not been researched to ascertain the feasibility of integration of stakeholders such as employees in publicity strategies. This has created a gap in extant literature on the subject of publicity. This article is a report of the findings of qualitative research on the integration of employees' in publicity strategies with special focus on the opportunities, challenges and the way forward for Private University Colleges in Ghana. The study concludes that there are no existing plans that integrate employees in the publicity strategies of Private University Colleges in Ghana even though there is general consensus from the respondents that employees should be an integral part of the publicity strategies. The study recommends that there should be a proper integration plan to guide employee centred publicity activities.

Keywords: Stakeholders, publicity strategies, private university college, publicity integration plan, employee engagement, motivation, capacity building

1. Introduction

This paper is the second of a two-part qualitative research that examines the integration of stakeholders (students and employees) in publicity strategies. The first part, examined: 'the integration of students' in publicity strategies: opportunities, challenges, and the way forward for private university colleges (PUCs) in Ghana' (Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu, 2020, p. 112). This current article examines the integration of employees in publicity activities of selected private university colleges in Ghana.

Many of the PUCs in Ghana spend huge sums of money on advertisements but the problem of student enrolments still persists (Amponsah & Onuoha, 2013). Several reasons account for this phenomenon and one key among them is the strategy. One important strategy organization use to increase their market share is publicity (Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu, 2020). But it appears that the PUCs in Ghana have not averted their minds to this less cost-effective strategy. In established cases where the PUCs engage in publicity activities, it is done in an unplanned manner. They tend to limit publicity to only the tools leaving out the role that could be played by strategic stakeholders such as employees to take the activity to a higher notch. In addition, marketing and public relations researchers and practitioners usually focus their enquiry on publicity tools, limiting the power of publicity to bring about change in organizational fortunes. Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu (2020) found that students, who are considered one of the key stakeholders, if properly integrated into publicities, strategies, leads to increase in enrolment in PUCs in Ghana.

The subject of integration of employees in publicity strategies has become incredibly relevant for practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, PUCs in Ghana play very crucial roles in providing quality tertiary education in different disciplines and fields. They do in fact contribute to the development of the human resource needs of Ghana and strategically support the few public universities. However, they are faced with the survival question occasioned by factual reasons. The President of Presbyterian University College in Ghana during a congregation summarize the reasons in a succinct manner, 'Private Universities in Ghana are currently facing serious challenges ranging from inadequate funding, low student enrolment, inadequate infrastructure, inability to recruit and retain highly experienced and qualified faculty and staff, inadequate research output, and logistical support' (Adow Obeng, 2018, para 6). In as much as it may be reasonable to agree that the solution to these identified challenges require a combination of approaches, the PUCs response in the sense of being proactive in their marketing strategy, including employee integrated publicity is critical.

Theoretically, the study adds to extant literature on the growing dynamics of field publicity studies within the greater ambit of public relations and marketing. The concept of publicity implies a deliberate attempt by an organization to manage its public's perception on a subject with the ultimate goal of promoting the latter's product or services (Eisa,

2013). Another researcher argues that publicity is 'a series of positive messages about an organization or its employees designed to improve the image of the organization or brand' (Egan, 2007, p. 249). The traditional view held by publicity researchers is that organizations including educational institutions have a responsibility beside their core mandate to 'sell' their success stories ostensibly to make themselves appealing to the public and this process is enhanced through strategic publicity initiatives. Meanwhile, the narrative tends to focus on using 'popular' means to reach out to their prospective publics whilst ignoring 'other' possible means to carry out the same activities effectively and less costly manner.

From stakeholder perspective, employees form an integral part of every organization and are often the first point of contact for product or service consumers. The stakeholder argument also reinforces the notion that beneficiaries of corporate success and profit must contribute in any way possible to create and share wealth beyond their documented duties and responsibilities. This implies that the active participation of employees in the planning, implementing and evaluating publicity strategies can be useful in dealing with some of the numerous challenges facing decision makers at PUCs in Ghana. Management and public relations theorists must examine the role that organizational stakeholders play in the process of planning, implementing and evaluating publicity activities in a coordinated manner in a dynamic and fast changing business environment. Lessons from the corporate world show that there is enormous amount of potential that human driven initiatives can generate. This current study sought to find out the extent to which employees of PUCs in Ghana could be integrated in publicity strategies to drive sustainable growth in terms of students' enrolment. A case for integration presupposes that the employees' will actively participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of publicity strategies of PUCs. The purpose of the study was to examine the integration of employees in publicity strategies of PUCs in Ghana. Three objectives guided the study namely; 1) to find out the nature of publicity activities undertaken by the PUCs in Ghana; 2) to explore the category of employees to be part of the employee publicity integration; 3) to find out the nature of employee publicity integration. In a nutshell, this study seeks to provide a framework to manage employee publicity strategies in a manner that deviates from the traditional way of doing things with the view to achieving maximum results with little or no resources.

2. Review of Literature on Publicity Perspectives

There is abundance of literature on the subject of publicity which is mostly viewed through the lenses of marketing communication in specific, and integrated marketing communication (IMC) in general (Anantachart, 2005; Allen, 2017).Laurie and Mortimer (2019) explain that the subject of publicity is treated relative to other IMC mix which 'attempts to meld all aspects of marketing communication such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, social media, and personal selling' (p. 1). Other times, the subject of publicity is treated as a major element in public relations (Apuke, 2018; Smith, 2002). The tendency of such approach is to deemphasize the scope and importance of publicity. In fact, the subject of publicity is not treated in isolation hence there is the danger to leave out other critical areas that impact practice and theory. But in this section, we contend that the subject of publicity has not been exhaustively discussed particularly in the area of how different stakeholders can be integrated in a coordinated manner. This section seeks to put publicity in perspective relative to the purpose of this study.

2.1. What is Publicity?

Jobber (2010)defines publicity as communication about a product or organization by the placing of news about it in the media without paying for the time or space directly. It is the movement of information to the general public from the media (Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). Egan (2007) describes publicity as,'a series of positive messages about an organization or its employees designed to improve the image of the organization' (p. 1). Each of these definitions is limited in terms of scope but arguably, they shed light on the concept of publicity. In our view, publicity is a process that involves a strategic attempt to design, sell and manage an idea or a product to the public in a manner that leaves lasting images in the minds of the public that subsequently influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards the idea or product. This definition has been adopted as a working definition for this study despite its strengths and weaknesses. Publicity has several benefits. Jobber (2010) argues about the importance of publicity and notes that, 'Publicity can be a powerful tool for creating awareness and strengthening the reputation of organizations' (p. 599).Publicity is sometimes confused with advertising in that both seek to project an idea or a product or both to the public (consumer) in order to receive attention and patronage. There is ongoing debate about the effectiveness of these two concepts. Commenting on the publicity and advertising discourse, another scholar writes, 'Publicity, through news release and other methods, is eminently more powerful than advertising. Publicity is often gained by dealing directly with the media either by initiating the communication or by reacting to inquiries' (Seitel, 2007, p. 184). Eisend and Küster (2011) reports on the ongoing debate as,

> Although the idea that publicity is more persuasive than advertising seems quite plausible, previous study results are inconsistent . . . In order to account for inconsistent results and variance in findings of previous studies, some moderator variables are considered. . . (p. 277-78)

Cleary (2014) argues that publicity is free and that, apart from the costs incurred on media distribution, preparation and distribution of leaflets, stickers and other souvenirs, the cost for publicity is virtually free. Rahmaad (2018) further adds that publicity enables organizations to create interest, show value and build positive image. There is no doubt that publicity offers a number of benefits to organizations. Apuke (2018) has identified the advantages and disadvantages of publicity but a cursory look at his article shows that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Cleary (2014) had established that publicity enhances the identity of an organization, builds credibility and boosts the organization's effective competitiveness. According to Cleary, the more media appearances a business makes, the more the business will be associated with success, setting it apart from the rest of the market. Spotts, Weinberger and Weinberger (2014)argue

that 'positive publicity is most important indistinguishing between firms with higher and lower sales. The effects of negative publicity and advertising are dependent on a firm's existing reputation'. These findings shed light on the power of publicity to make things happen in organizations.

Ehrenberg, Barnard, Kennedy, and Bloom (2002) had identified the means of getting publicity as comprising of print media (newspapers, journals, & magazines), television; radio; email; websites; and social media like Facebook, twitter, and blogs. Other means of publicity identified are public speech, seminars, and workshops. Cornelissen (2010) identifies publicity strategies including advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and public relations in the context of integrated marketing communication (p. 10).All these means of publicity are available to organizations that seek to deepen their publicity drive to achieve sustainable results. Modern organizations adopt several publicity strategies to enhance their corporate image and identity. Seitel (2007) contributes the emerging trends in publicity and notes,

> Internet outlets for publicity are an important complement to publicity in more traditional media. Knowledge of web hosting and web casting and online printing and chat rooms and discussion groups and investor 'threads' and all the rest are critical for modern public relations people.(p. 188)

Currently, online publicity is gaining grounds due to availability of internet connectivity and media convergence, which are features of changing business environment. Aula (2010) identifies two major types of publicity in this digital age, which is offline publicity and online publicity. Offline publicity is done without the internet. Unlike before, modern day companies or institutions have vast array of media to choose from to enhance their publicity activities. Social media driven publicity is another healthy development in the field. Social media platforms provide flexibility and promptness in disseminating information.

2.2. Evaluating Publicity Activities

The issue of measurement and evaluation in public relations has been subject of rigorous inquiry (Laskin, 2016; Watson, 2012; Michaelson & Stacks, 2011; Michaelson & Macleod, 2007). Michaelson and Macleod (2007) argue that, 'Public relations measurement and evaluation are essential elements in the creation of successful communications programs' (p. 1). However, there is lack of uniformity of measurement framework even though many theorists and practitioners agree on some common principles to guide the activity. Noble defines evaluation as a 'means of assessing communications effectiveness' (as cited in Watson & Noble 2007, p.21). Paton (as cited in Watson & Noble, 2007) defined evaluation as:

> The practice of evaluation involves the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs, personnel, and products for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs, personnel, or products are doing and affecting.(p. 21)

Paton's definition of evaluation has been criticized by Broom and Dozier (as cited in Watson & Noble, 2007). In spite of its shortcomings, the definition provides an acceptable framework to appreciate the dimensions of evaluation in the context of public relations in that it captures the focus of evaluation, the means, and its outcomes. The implication for this study is that Management of PUCs must integrate evaluation in their publicity activities to learn lessons for the future. Noble provides seven principles of standard evaluation as: 1) evaluation is research; 2) evaluation looks both ways; 3) evaluation is user and situation dependent; 4) evaluation is short term; 5) evaluation is long term; 6) evaluation is comparative and 7) evaluation is multifaceted (as cited in Watson & Noble, 2007, p. 24). These evaluation principles have guided several researches by practitioners and have stood the test of time hence can be considered as an overarching framework for publicity strategies.

2.3. Empowering Employees in Publicity Activities: A Stakeholder View

Stakeholders are the parties that have vested interest in a business (McCubbrey, 2009). Evan and Freeman (1988) in their work, 'Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation' indicate that employees have their jobs and usually their livelihood at stake; they often have specialized skills for which there is usually no perfectly elastic market. In return for their labour, employees expect security, wages, benefits and meaningful work. In return for their loyalty, the corporation is expected to provide for them and carry them through difficult times. Employees are expected to follow the instructions of management most of the time, to speak favourably about the company, and to be responsible citizens in the local communities in which the company operate. Where they are used as means to an end, they must participate in decisions affecting such use. The evidence that such policies and values as described here lead to productive company-employee relationships is compelling. It is equally compelling to realize that the opportunities for 'bad faith' on the part of both management and employees are enormous.

There are two major stakeholder groups' namely internal and external. Each of these groups is either affected or affects the smooth running of an organization. The concept of stakeholders has been used by management researchers to analyze several dimensions of the entity called, company (Davletgildeev, 2003). Lynch-Fannon (2004) argues that 'employees are the most significant non-shareholding corporate stake holding group' (p.155). Thomas (2000) also shares similar views when he writes, 'Workers are becoming strategic partners of top management, deciding the actions needed at the grassroots level to meet their organization's goals (p.10). Underpinning the concept of employees as stakeholders is the whole idea of employee ownership. Margaret Blair has provided a thorough and instructive discussion on the concept of employee ownership as a structure for total wealth creation and how it can have an effective tool in the governance of an organization (Blair, 1995). The concept of employee ownership in the context of stakeholder thinking provides a fair and an equitable mechanism that offers a democratic workplace environment and recognizes the rights and responsibilities of ownership for employees as stakeholders (Yener, 2002). Per these findings, it is equitable to justify that,

employees who are considered as key stakeholders of every organization have more than 'administrative and legal' duties to perform. Integrating employees into the publicity strategies may be construed as their 'functional' responsibility to their organizations which may have been overlooked in the past. The employee public, according to Seitel (2007) is made up of numerous sub-groups: senior managers, first-line supervisors, staff and line employees, union labourers, per diem employees, contract workers and others. Occupants of each of these levels of employment have a role to play in ensuring that the publicity strategy is planned, implemented and evaluated with finesse and satisfaction. One of the identified challenges in this process of integration is empowerment. Obviously, employees are recruited to perform specific tasks and duties relative to their professional or academic training. Undertaking publicity requires training and developing a certain mentality that may fall outside the 'intellectual' acumen of the employees hence empowering them in this direction is eminently useful. Empowerment manifests in several ways and dimensions. According to Palmer (2008),

> Strategies to empower employees to make effective service encounter are less likely to be successful if employees do not feel engaged in their job; motivation, consent, participation and communication form essential focal points for an organization's strategy for bringing about the sense of engagement that underlies empowerment. (p. 384)

Organizations such as PUCs must properly design strategies that empower and reassure employees of success in publicity activities. According to Palmer, the concept of human resource management emphasizes the individual employee and their importance to the organization and this importance can be made real if employees feel motivated to share organizational goals. Palmer (2008) further urges that for employees to feel motivated and be willing to participate in activities of the organization such as publicity, management needs to equate the individual's personal goals with those of the organization. This gives the employee a small stake, be it financial or in the form of discretionary control over the performance of their work functions in the organization (for more extensive discussion on the role of motivation in employee integration, see Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu, 2020).

Training is another key area that may require management's attention in the integration process. Training refers to 'the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, which enable employees to perform their job effectively' (Palmer, 2008, p. 394). The focus of employee training and development is not only the job but also concerns activities that are directed to the future needs of the employee, which may themselves be derived from the future needs of the organization. Palmer (2008) contends that,'if an organization wishes to make its employees involved in publicity, it must include such an objective within its overall corporate plan and identify the required training and development needs' (p. 394). It is essential to make employees aware of the competitive market challenges and pressures, and how the organization intends to overcome them. Employees must be given the opportunity to make their own views known and to air any concerns they may have. This will encourage employees to be morally involved in the process of change in the organization. However, if the publicity skills and knowledge of employees are not developed, the organization will lose enviable opportunities.

3. Methodology

This study was a qualitative one because the study sought to gain insight into how employees could be integrated into publicity strategies by examining their views and attitudes towards the subject. Qualitative approach to enquiry of this nature helps to properly understand the underlying views, perceptions and attitudes of individuals, in this case, the employees of the selected PUCs. Daymon and Holloway (2002) argues that most studies conducted in the field of public relations and marketing communication use qualitative research approach which presents an interpretative and realistic worldview. More so, the subject of this enquiry is relatively new in extant literature hence developing a critical foundation through the use of qualitative method is in order as Lynn and Lynn (2014) supports that the qualitative design is used for a research problem where there are few or no previous studies to refer to. The population for this study comprised the employees of PUCs in Ghana. The categories were senior management (president, registrar), middle level managers (senior members-teaching and non-teaching) and senior and junior staff from three purposively selected institutions namely Christian Service University College (CSUC), Ghana Baptist University College (GBUC), and Garden City University College (GCUC). The three out of seven PUCs were purposively selected on the grounds that; 1) they were prepared to assist the researchers to obtain relevant information on publicity from their employees;2) they had been in existence for at least five years and run various programmes and; 3) they undertake publicity activities. The total numbers of interviews conducted from the three PUCs were 18 which is representative of the different employee categories of PUCs. Their responses generally reflect the views of PUCs in Ghana. Table 1 below shows the summaries of the category of employees interviewed relative to their institutions.

Name of Selected PUCs	No. of Management Members	No. of Senior Members	No. of Senior Staff	Total Interviews Conducted
Christian Service University College	2	2	2	6
Ghana Baptist University College	2	2	2	6
Garden City University College	2	2	2	6
Total interviews	6	6	6	18

Table 1: The Breakdown of PUCs and the Category of Employees Interviewed

According to table 1 above, two management members, two senior members, two senior /junior staff were purposively selected from each of the PUCs and interviewed for the study. Structured in-depth interviews, which is a qualitative data collection instrument was used for the study. A qualitative interview seeks to preserve the form and content of human interaction and explore the complexity of human behaviour (Keyton, 2006; Dey, 1993). Each stratum of employee categories as identified in table 1 was properly scheduled and interviewed. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and manually analyzed using deductive approaches to sift out the emerging themes and discussed along the objectives of this study in the next section.

4. Discussion of Key Findings

Three objectives guided this study namely; 1) to find out the nature of publicity activities undertaken by the PUCs in Ghana; 2) to explore the category of employees to be part of the employee publicity integration; 3) to find out the nature of employee publicity integration. The key findings have been discussed alongside these objectives.

4.1. Publicity Activities Undertaken by PUCs

To find out the nature of publicity activities undertaken by the PUCs, a question was asked, what are some of the publicity activities undertaken by the PUCs? In response to question 1, the following publicity tools were mentioned namely: 1) radio adverts; 2) television adverts; 3) senior secondary schools and church outreaches; 4) radio appearance; 5) newspaper adverts; 6) branded banners; 7) billboards; 8) community radios; 9) sponsorship activities; 10) funfair programmes; 11) media interviews; 12) documentaries; and 13) distribution of fliers/pamphlets to people by staff during university events such as congregation and matriculation. From a theoretical perspective, these findings show a lack of understanding of publicity on the part of decision makers and employees of the PUCs. This lack of understanding arises because of the lack of distinction between advertising and publicity. Eisend and Küster (2011) clearly argue that both advertising and publicity serve a critical function in an organization's integrated marketing communication effort but the two concepts are fundamentally different. It is important to point out this misunderstanding at this stage in that it may create confusion in the minds of decision makers about the choice of strategy that may be less expensive but effective in the context of judicious use of scarce resources. Publicity offers institutions the opportunity to spend less or nothing but benefit tremendously in selling their ideas and messages to the public. For example, an initiative like the senior secondary school and church outreaches can provide tremendous opportunity for PUCs to reach out to thousands of potential markets for admission when it is properly planned and coordinated. However, the findings largely confirm other studies that have identified means of getting publicity done (Rahmaad, 2018; Cleary, 2014; Cornelissen, 2010; Seitel, 2007; Ehrenberg, et al. 2002).

4.2. Category of Employees to Be Integrated Into Publicity Activities

In response to the question, *which category of employees in your opinion should take part in publicity activities?* The focus of this objective was to find out whether the integration should be en masse or specially targeted. In response to this question, there was unanimous agreement by the respondents that all categories of employees must actively engage in publicity activities of the PUCs. One of respondents said, 'Everybody is a stakeholder so for me, wherever a person is, you are a stakeholder and you have a responsibility to hold up the banner of [your] institution'. Another respondent said: 'If we involve staff, it will be tremendous because we are the embodiment of the university apart from students because we work hand-in-hand with students. I think it will be tremendous if we sell the school together with students. 'Two other significant ideas that were expressed were: 'If we involve all of them [employees] it will act positively because when people come, then the university generates revenue to pay these employees'; and 'Involving all staff will help the school to grow'. One striking response that summarises the affirmative support for inclusion of all categories of employees in publicity strategies was:

Why not? Because every employee depends on the resources of the institution and the greater funding comes from students. The more you have students, the more you have money. So, it is in every employee's interest for [them] to get the students we need.

Another respondent said that, 'It is a do or die affair'. Notwithstanding the positive responses toward the question, there were few contrary views expressed. For example, one of the respondents said, 'It is not a core function of the employees to publicize the University College, and therefore management needs to look for employees who are committed to the effort and have something positive to contribute'. Some other views were expressed along this line of thought showing that integrating employees in publicity strategies may not happen by chance. Despite the overwhelming support for the idea, some employees may feel reluctant towards it. As a democratic space, this phenomenon may sound normal and provide opportunity for decision makers to understand that unless proactive steps are taken, some employees may not partake in the publicity strategies to increase enrolment and build the reputation of their PUCs. Below are few statements to support this assertion,

'Honestly, some are not willing. I don't think they even talk about it.'
'People don't know what is even going on. The involvement of everybody is low.'
'Only a few employees are involved and that, other employees do not know about the publicity activities.'

Even though few 'opposing views' were expressed on active participation of employees in publicity strategies, generally, the supportive ideas point to the stakeholder thinking which affirms that employees have considerable interests that include among others, wealth creation (Blair, 1995). Employees can serve as the conduit to sell the messages of the PUCs in a close contact experience that affords them to share information about programmes, learning opportunities, scholarship and other related stunts that may interest the public. The concern will be how do we manage the 'professional'

duties and the functional publicity duty which is 'superimposed' on the employee by virtue of his/her association with the institution? Two views support this concern, 'The effective roles limit it primarily to those who have the capacity to convince people'; 'It's difficult involving everyone; … they would not have the knowledge to be able to do [publicity]'.

The response to this concern bothers on two issues backed by research; 1) empowerment and 2) motivation. These two variables seek to address the overarching concern of efficiency and effectiveness in publicity strategies. Palmer (2008) argues that employees will feel motivated and willing to participate in [publicity] activities of the organization when management aligns individual goals with that of the organization. It is a management problem. To assure and reassure employees to engage in publicity activities, managements of PUCs must design employee friendly policies on publicity integration and communicate same to them. Palmer (2008) argues that, 'if an organization wishes to make its employees involved in publicity, it must include such an objective within its overall corporate plan and identify the required training and development needs' (p. 394). Naturally such integration will not happen without teething challenges considering that employees have different needs, interests and concerns. It behoves on the managements of the PUCs to fashion out versatile and responsive publicity policies that evoke a sense of duty to the institutional course on the employee (See Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu, 2020 for extensive discussion on the role of motivation in employee publicity integration process).

4.3. Level of Employee Publicity Integration

Publicity like all other public relations activities has three key levels - planning, implementation and evaluation. To assess the level of employee integration, three questions were asked namely: 1) *What role(s) do employees play at the planning stages of the publicity activities?* 2) *What role(s) do employees play at the implementation stages of the publicity activities?* 3) *What role(s) should employees play during the evaluation of publicity activities?* In response to question 1, three key themes emerged; one theme was that in order not to restrict the employees from performing their core duties, management must undertake the planning of the publicity activities and communicate to employees across the various categories of employment for implementation. One respondent explained, 'Publicity is communication, and communication is a strategy, so, you just can't involve everybody at every point in time. It depends on who you want to use and what purpose'. The second theme suggests that there must be a combination of management and lower level participation in the planning of the publicity activities. The last theme suggested that a special unit should be created to handle planning and coordination of the publicity activities. Each of these perspectives reflects the general understanding of employees in the planning process.

In response to question 2, there was convergence of opinion that all employees should be part of the implementation process. However, it emerged that management must explore various ways that employees may function effectively in the publicity strategy. For example, some staff members may undertake publicity outreach to churches whilst others may target senior secondary schools particularly during vacations. Another theme that came up strongly was that a committee made up of employees of different units and departments be formed. Employees have different gifts and talents and enable them to function in other areas beside their core duties. Management can harness the soft skills of employees to improve their publicity efforts.

In response to question 3, several opinions were expressed. According to some of the respondents, one way of evaluating the publicity activities is by asking students to indicate on admission forms, where they heard about the institution. Another way is by looking at the number of people who have applied to the institution. Better still one respondent indicated that evaluation is done by asking students how they heard about, or who referred them to the University College. One of the respondents said that their institution has evaluation forms for students to indicate how they heard about the University College. These findings point to evaluation variables rather than who does the evaluation. The responses point to sources of information for evaluation rather than their participation in evaluation. The responses point to two factors; 1) either the respondents have no idea about evaluation of publicity activities or 2) evaluation is not formalised and properly done. Each of these situations presents a problematic picture. The responses provide an idea of the focal areas that evaluation must cover. One of the respondents reported that they do evaluation based on the report presented by the publicity teams. This is an indication that evaluation is handled at the management level. The question is, does this happen across all the PUCs? One of the respondents said that they conduct research periodically to find out where most of the students are coming from as a basis of evaluation. Another respondent said, 'After each academic year, we have to sit down and look through various admissions [records] to see if the adverts, contacts, interviews, and presentations rather translated into bringing students to beef up the enrolment numbers. No evaluation is carried out at the end of their publicity activities.' Evaluation is a very useful activity in the publicity process. It addresses the fundamental issue of value for money (Watson & Noble, 2007). There is the need for clear evaluation strategy to guide future publicity efforts. Several principles of evaluation have been proposed, tested and are user friendly by Paul Noble (as cited in Watson & Noble, 2007). These principles can be adapted to suit institutional needs whilst maintaining the core principles of achieving effectiveness and efficiency in future publicity endeavours.

4.4. Challenges of Employee Integration

4.4.1. Motivation

The respondents expressed concerns about the integration process. One of them was the issue of motivation. The respondents expressed the view that the integration of employees in publicity will be enhanced if motivation is made an integral part of the strategy. Below are a few supported responses:

'[Management] must recognize and acknowledge employees' efforts and contributions to publicity activities as well as give them some incentives which will increase employees' participation in publicity activities.'

'[Management of] institutions must take good care of the employees in order for them to be proud of talking about their colleges to others.'

'We must appeal to the conscience of the employees to do it for their own sake as a duty.'

'You can't sit in your office as a registrar without having students. When we meet them, we tell them we have budgeted for this number of students. If we don't get, we are all leaving. So, they all have to do their best.'

Motivation has two main dimensions – intrinsic and extrinsic. The views expressed above point to the two main dimensions of motivation and are supported by Palmer (2008) who argues that motivation plays a critical role in building ownership and a sense of engagement. Motivating employees to engage actively in publicity activities is not out of sync with organizational realities. There is extant literature on the subject of motivation and the role it plays in achieving organizational goals (Velnamy, 2008; Wright 2001; Thomas, 2000). Pokumensah & Sarkodie Owusu (2020) on the subject of motivation and how it plays out in integration of employees in publicity strategies).

4.4.2. Capacity Building

One other theme that emerged is building the capacity of the employees. There is the need to recognize the fact that some publicity activities require skills and expertise. One response indicated that,' to increase employees' participation in implementing publicity activities, management needs to increase information flow, give incentives to the employees and show trust in their capabilities to deliver.' Employee empowerment is critical in the integration process (Palmer, 2008). Publicity is a communication activity hence basic understanding of the process of persuasive communication is key – a case for communication and media literacy. The services of experienced publicity experts may be secured in this direction. One of the respondents urged that there must be a 'free flow of information on publicity'. Publicity is a form of communication and the latter answers the question of 'what' must be shared. The call for an open flow of information sharing on publicity is in the right direction. The communication competencies of the employees must be developed through a systematic orientation programme.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that PUCs in Ghana engage in different publicity activities even though their understanding of the term is limited; and that there is general consensus that employees should be an integral part of their publicity strategies. However, there are no existing plans by the PUCs to deal with the issue of integrating employees. The study shows that employees are rather engaged in an unplanned and uncoordinated manner. The result of this approach has made publicity outcomes not desirable and beneficial. This study contributes to the body of literature on publicity perspectives and provides a basis for the integration of organizational stakeholders in their publicity strategies. This is an area that publicity theorists and practitioners have not fully exploited. This study has demonstrated that organizational stakeholders may be willing to do more than their contractual obligations captured on their employment contracts.

It is highly recommended that Management of PUCs must design an effective and efficient publicity integration plan to address the gap identified by this study. Planning constitutes the first of the three key steps in the publicity process. This task can be handled by the marketing or public relations department or better still, handled by a permanent committee. The plan must capture issues such as the mode of integration, motivation factors, issue of capacity building/empowerment and evaluation processes. It is the disease of many organizations to design workable plans but leave out the employees who will implement them. In this regard, the employees must contribute to the process of developing the publicity strategy integration plan by sharing ideas and experiences.

Motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic play a critical role in getting a buy in from employees especially in engaging them in a venture that they may consider as 'unorthodox' or out of the scope of their normal duties. Pokumensah and Sarkodie Owusu (2020) has discussed extensively on the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in employee publicity integration.

Communication is a specialized field and publicity falls under the domain of persuasive communication. It is therefore important for the management of PUCs to build the capacities of their employees to facilitate the integration process. Literacy in media usage is very important. There are many employees who may have access to complex social media platforms and tools but have little understating of how they can be fully utilized for the publicity effort. We are in an era where new social media dominates social discourse and engagements. It is therefore imperative for all employees to be well grounded on how to use social media to achieve publicity goals for their respective PUCs. The managements of PUCs must demonstrate commitment by investing resources in the empowerment of their employees to execute the publicity mandate in a coordinated manner.

Monitoring and evaluation are twin concepts in public relations management. They work together to make sure that the plan works efficiently and effectively. Whereas monitoring takes care of the ongoing, evaluation focuses on the end of the campaign. The publicity integration plan must consider this duo and ensure that they are properly formulated to avoid measurement errors. Executing publicity activities require time, resources and collective effort hence the Management of PUCs must design monitoring and evaluation frameworks that will keep them on track as well as provide relevant data for future publicity activities. The seven principles of evaluation suggested by Noble (as cited in Watson & Noble, 2007) can serve as an orienting framework for the Management of PUCs. These are, 1) evaluation is research; 2) evaluation looks both ways; 3) evaluation is user and situation dependent; 4) evaluation is short term; 5) evaluation is long term; 6) evaluation is comparative and 7) evaluation is multifaceted. The principles have been tested and proven by public relations and marketing practitioners

6. Future Research

This current study is not without limitations. Admittedly, the scope of the study was narrow even though the findings of the study have significant implications for the practice of publicity for PUCs in Ghana. It is suggested that the scope of the study be broadened and replicated in other countries or continents to corroborate the findings of this study or otherwise. A response to this invitation may further strengthen the literature on the integration of stakeholders in publicity strategies which has not been given much attention by theorists and practitioners alike.

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