

A Case for Incorporation of Public Relation Techniques In The Curriculum for Training Secretaries

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Abstract

This study examined application of Public Relations as tools for enhancing secretarial practice in Ogun State. Public relation is a strategic communication between and among individuals within a society or organisation. It is a wide-ranging field that is sometimes misinterpreted due to poor message control in public relation. The population used for the study comprised of all employees from selected Institutions in Ogun State ICT Polytechnics: Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Itori, Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Igbesa and Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Saapade. One hundred and fifty (150) employees of the selected Institutions were proportionally stratified. Three research questions were raised, and some items were generated for the instrument used to collect information from respondents. All respondents filled and returned the administered copies of the questionnaire back to the researcher, where results were gathered for the study. Three Likert scale of rating (Agree, Disagree and Undecided) was used. Data collected was presented in table using percentage method. It was gathered that the secretary as a public relations officer is an ambassador who links her organization with the outside world and contributes greatly to the accomplishment of the organizational objectives. The secretarial work ranges from taking shorthand notes, transcribing verbatim on the typewriter, to handling all administrative duties of a large modern organization. It was recommended among others that Secretaries need to understand the public well and be willing to serve whole.

Keywords: Public Relation Tools, Secretarial Practice, Secretaries, Organization and Performance.

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1. Introduction

The job function and duties of secretaries depend mostly on the type, size and objectives of the employing organization. In circumstances where the duties are undefined, the secretary combines clerical and secretarial duties. However, some of the well – known duties of a secretary include taking dictation in shorthand and transcribing same on the typewriter, typing of documents, reception duties and of course public relations, which form the subject matter of the study. In addition to handling all administrative duties, the secretary is an ambassador who links the organisation with the outside world. In the workplace, however, where the secretary serves as receptionist, is the first contact point for the outsider or visitor and hence the secretary becomes an image-maker and a public relations officer of the organization. Unfortunately, however, the Secretarial Studies (now Office

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Management Technology) the training programmer for Secretaries do not take cognizance of the public relation aspect of the job function in secretarial practice (NBTE Curriculum Specification, 1985). The curriculum for secretarial studies training is limited to subject areas such as typewriting, shorthand and transcription, office management and practice, record keeping, etc. and omits conspicuously principles and practice of public relations. The implication is that the training has no connection with the job function of the trainees. Indeed, Webster (2010) described a Secretary as a person responsible for dealing with the correspondence and records of an organization or individual employer.

The advent of information and communication technology gadgets, particularly computers in the office practice has introduced another jeopardy in the secretarial profession. The use of computer has completely erased the need for the use of the typewriter, record-keeping through filing, reprographic services, etc. either to taught in the secretarial studies curriculum. Also, the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) at the reception to some extent can replace the presence of secretarial staff because of the ‘do-it-yourself’ being encouraged by AI technology. The public relations work schedule of the secretary remains the only aspect that is less threatened. Unfortunately too, it is the aspect absent from the Secretarial Studies curriculum for the training of secretaries.

The present study examined the impact of public relations on secretarial practise by providing answers to the questions – what are the public relation tools applicable to secretarial practice? To what extent and how would Public Relation Tools enhance secretarial Practice? Results obtained in the studies would be helpful in re-designing of the Secretarial Studies’ curriculum.

2. Methodology

The study examined incorporation of public relation techniques in the curriculum for training secretaries. The population used for the study comprised of all employees from selected Institutions in Ogun State ICT Polytechnics, namely: Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Itori; Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Igbesa; and Gateway (ICT) Polytechnic, Saapade. One hundred and fifty (150) employees of the selected Institutions were proportionally stratified. Three research questions were raised and some items were generated for the instrument used to collect information from respondents. All respondents filled and returned the administered copies of the questionnaire to the researcher, where results were gathered for the study. Three Likert scales of rating (Agree, Disagree and Undecided) was used. Data collected were processed using percentage frequency analysis.

3. Results

The table below shows the results of frequency and percentage analysis of responses gotten on perceptions of respondents, relating to the effects of public relation techniques incorporated in the curriculum for training secretaries.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Analysis of Responses for each Research Question

Items	Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
RQ1: What are the Public Relation Techniques incorporated in the curriculum for training Secretaries?						
1. Effective communication is incorporated in the curriculum for training secretaries.	100	60	45	30	5	10
2. Partnering with the media and effective use of social media can also be included in the curriculum for training secretaries.	120	80	30	20	0	0
3. Sending out press release as at when due by secretaries is a good public relation technique that can be incorporated in the training.	120	80	30	20	0	0
RQ2: How would the Public Relation techniques training incorporated in the curriculum affect secretaries' performance?						
4. Secretaries are informed with public relations code of operations and how to deal well with people within and the public.	130	90	20	10	0	0
5. Secretaries performance are boosted positively as a result the training acquired in public relations	125	83	25	17	0	0
6. It enables secretaries to communicate effectively with customers, suppliers, investors and the community.	130	90	20	10	0	0
7. It makes secretaries to be social media compliance leading to organization productivity.	130	90	20	10	0	0
RQ3: To what extent would Public Relation techniques training impact secretarial practice?						
8. It helps to build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.	130	90	20	10	0	0
9. It projects the goodwill of secretaries and the organizations they represent.	130	90	20	10	0	0
10. Having trained with public relation techniques by secretaries, influences attitudes of people toward the management of organisations.	125	83	25	17	0	0

4. Discussion

The responses given in Table 1 indicate that majority agreed on the submission of the research. For instance, an average of 87% (that is, 60%, 80% and 120%) agreed that the public relation techniques should be incorporated in



the curriculum for training Secretaries as evaluated by research question 1. Responses to research question 2 established that 90% of the respondents agreed that public relations techniques have assisted secretaries to relate well with outsiders, communicate effectively with customers and be of social media compliance while 83% agreed that secretaries performances have been boosted positively. On average, 88.25% of respondents agreed that incorporating public relations techniques has greatly enhanced the job performances of secretaries. With these opinions having a greater percentage of the respondents who strongly agreed that “a secretary is necessary for the organization to achieve their goals, secretaries stand as a tool necessary for the management, public relations performance is relevant to secretarial practice, an active secretary knows how to relate with the public, recruitment of secretaries to perform public relations activities are carried out by the management” Bernays (2017). The study found that the application of public relations on secretary affects the efficiency of management in Gateway Polytechnics in Ogun State. Organizations see public relations as comprehensible tools necessary for managerial development. It makes management to work effectively and be active in all aspect, due to the control of the top management through competition among members of staff, Mbeke (2008). Besides, the researcher also found out that the main obstacle militating against the complete acceptance of public relations; is how the secretary can cope with the behaviour of people, (Ombara, 2001).

5. Conclusion

The important role of public relations in promoting secretarial practice in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. This is to say that Public relation officers, the secretaries inclusive are indispensable and strategic tools that can cause a stir-up the success of information delivery to its immediate audience towards achieving organization goal by the way of relating well with its public. PR is ‘planned’ because a public relation practitioner is always in control of what is being done; he leaves nothing to chance, so he must work to a plan and on a planned basis. The thought is sufficiently vital for it to demand the double emphasis of ‘deliberate’ and ‘planned’. It is also “sustained” because a public relations practitioner always tries to implement a thought or an idea and it continues for long time. Public Relations as a tool forms mutual understanding between the organization and its publics is necessary, because no man can work in a vacuum. Everybody works for somebody. A public relations practitioner works for an organization- a govt., a public sector undertaking, business, charity or any other. The PR deals with the ‘Public’, because the organization for which he works, wants to be understood and appreciated by the people around it, who affect what it does or are affected by what it does.

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