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# PUBLIC RELATIONS: ADMINISTRATIVE TOOL FOR PEDAGOGIC INDUSTRY – COMMUNITY HARMONY

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## INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution heralded the era of industrialism. The movement made a commanding impact in the annals of the world. Goods and services became highly commercialized. Competition brought about production explosion. Consumer habits became discriminatory, seeking only considered quality goods. While the era's people enjoyed economic prosperity they faced problems that had not been confronted in other times. The thorniest was and even now, that of management. Management by premonition, apocalypse and presentiment became obsolete. The need for scientific theory and practice of management became apparent. To substitute precise knowledge in the running of industrial operations, scientific management principles were developed with a central emphasis on efficiency and human relations.

In this article the secondary school is considered as a pedagogic industrial complex with the fundamental objective of teaching and learning. This article articulates that the school like a conventional industry has to operate in an environment that has public goodwill. That way the goods and services are maximized.

## Public Relations

We are in an inter-dependent world. The folk wisdom that no man is an island unto himself remains relevant today. It echoes in every segment of the organization for socialization, or enculturation of the youths, to the societal norms and values (Hodgkinson, 1984). If the school is estranged from the society, the graduands become alienated and suffer from cultural shock on leaving the school after graduation. This creates imbalance in the society when the needs of the educated youths are in conflict with the society.

The school and host community must develop and promote mutual community feeling. A feeling whose concerns are necessarily viewed with deliberate degree of communality. A situation where the community sees the school as a public facility of mutual helpfulness, destructive competition is replaced by cooperation, a correlate necessary to dissolve tension and hostility. When a school builds a bridge of thorns between itself and the public, it has lost the essential element for public goodwill and growth.

This is public relations challenge. Public relations is concerned with the promotion of the planned effort of an organization to influence public opinion positively through socially responsible and acceptable performance. Gadsby (1995) in his conception considers public relations as the promotion of rapport and goodwill between a person, institution or firm and other persons, special publics or the community at large, through the distribution of interpretive materials, the development of neighbourly relations and the assessment of the public reaction. Public relations is a management function of a continuing and planned character through which organization or institutions seek to win and retain the understanding, sympathy and support of those with whom they are or may be associated. Through public relations, public opinion could be evaluated about the organization in order to correlate policies and procedures to achieve by planned and widespread information more productive cooperation and efficient fulfillment of common interests.

Marketing ideas is the province of public relations. The seed of ideas for sustainable community support for schools is to be found in attitudinal change. This could be achieved through open fora at the community levels and the exploitation of all available local cultural strength – mass media, open day, conference, exhibition and acts of distinction. Schools that do not maintain empathy with the operational community and beyond have failed in their public relations. The obvious symptoms are unfavourable public opinion and mutual misunderstanding.

### **Administration**

There is a plethora of definitions of the term administration. Despite the wide semantic dialectics, the juxtaposition of the ideas point to the enhancement of corporate objectives to ensure that organization operational fabric is frail free. Nwankwo (1987) considers administration as the careful and systematic arrangements and use of resources (human and material), situations and opportunities for the achievement of the specific objectives of a given organization. To Beech (1975), administration is that part of management which is concerned with the installation and carrying out of the procedures by which programmes, plans and targets are laid down and communicated, and the progress of activities regulated and checked against them. With this contextualization, administration is construed as a tool for operational efficiency.

Administration is a facility whereby human and material resources of organization are engineered in order to put the structures and operations in functional perspectives. Administration is a key social resource for institutional growth and development. Faced with economic recession, spiraling inflation and apparent moratorium on capital projects, school administrators face stiffer challenges. Be that as it may, school administrators are the defacto facilitators, analytic philosophers, human capital developers and value formators of the renascent school system.

## **Pedagogic Industry**

There seems to be unanimity in the view that education is vitally important. It is the best means by which the individual can acquire specialised knowledge and skills for functional and fulfilled life. It is hardly controversial to consider education as the most important instrument for effecting social change and social mobility. Any nation which toys with the education of the citizens is trampling not only the future of her children but also jeopardizing her sovereignty. The school is primarily a social institutional complex whose function is to emancipate ignorance through formal and informal educational programmes. The sole object of the pedagogic industry is to spark civilization. And civilization is a group process, it cannot flourish in isolation.

Pedagogic industry (education) provides the “raw materials” learners, with functional survival skills to help them to satisfy the man-power needs of the nation. Ideally all the “finished products” graduates of the industry should be gainfully employed. The blunt truth is that university graduates let alone secondary school graduands are finding it more difficult to find what could be described as suitable employment. The existence of the educated unemployed particularly at graduate level is within the ambit of manpower economic analysts and forecasters. That is the challenge of the experts. The attitude of education management scientist is to ensure that the business of education is carried out with thoroughgoing effectiveness by the adoption of correct regulatory mechanism.

## **Community Harmony**

Harmony is a relative affair. It represents the degree to which an organization can operate with effectiveness within the particular circumstances of the physical and cultural environment (Uduk, 1995). The vocabulary that is at the hub of the argument is “environment”. If the school provides an enabling environment for all its populations, (intra and inter), to work harmoniously, it can truly claim to promote the collective will of the community for the public good. With a good public relations image the school could offer adequate services to the ethereal body – vehicle for memory, the mental body – vehicle of thoughts, the emotional body – vehicle of feeling, and the physical body – vehicle of action. If the schools look more towards developing real community harmony, there would be diminishing violent storms in the society.

The conventional concept of education has been the attempt to initiate the learners into higher values which will help lift them out of their cultural environment. This syndrome defines clear unoverlapping boundary between the school and the community. The essence is to isolate the school (gown) from the community (crown). With the distance – off, the “crown” remains ignorant about the problems, the needs and the aspiration of the “gown”. Consequently, what goes on in the schools remains a necessary myth while what goes on in the society remains some mundane oddity. School community relations seek to obliterate the boundary between school and community, to turn the community into the school and the school into the community.

## **The Bench Marks for Harmony**

- i) **The Head-teacher:** The head-teacher is the “first citizen” of the school on whom the burden of responsibility of effective administration of the school rests. The standard and tone of a school are influenced to a great extent by the head-teacher.

Authority is power. There is no dispute about that. But power may be used well or badly. The analogy of the herdsman and the bullfighter (Marron, 1964) gives some useful insight into good and bad application of authority. In the one case the herdsman uses his authority to lead his animals to the best pasture, to improve the herd and make it fruitful. He exercises his authority in love. The bullfighter uses his authority over the animals, and to do so he engages in a wreckless fight. As in all combat, he calls upon reserves of hate. The exercise of that kind of authority by the head teacher is harmful and destructive.

- ii) **The Teacher:** It is inconceivable to have a functional school without competent teachers. A teacher cannot enlighten his students if he himself is ignorant. It is important that high academic standards must be emphasised a good deal in the recruitment of teachers. Unfortunately to many people the concept of a good teacher is only a teacher who can feed the students with best mental food. To think so and encourage that only, is fatal.

Apart from teaching the child (which most people regard as the only function of teachers) the teacher’s responsibilities are many and varied. For our purpose, the teacher must work in concert with the school head to lift and maintain in the school a good public image. The teacher must be conscious of his role as a leader both in the social and community. This could be reflected in his use of acceptable language, in setting good examples, having genuine interest in other’s problems, in having respect for people and always playing his roles in the school community as a brother, uncle, friend and a parent.

- iii) **The Student:** The school is a corporate organisation in which staff and students have the responsibility to keep its corporate image. Many of our students are so personalized or to be blunt, selfish. They think only about themselves, their interest and welfare. The students must know that they have the responsibility of helping the school to succeed. Students who help in school leadership should practice at home/community the leadership behaviour they have learnt in the school.

Today, students do great disservice to school/community relations through gangsterism, drug abuse, vandalism, formation of secret cults, stealing (recently armed robbery), sexual escapade and other incivilities. These anti-establishment acts perpetrated by students, the would be leaders of tomorrow make some critics question the relevance of modern education.

It is up to our schools to make bold, determined and sustained efforts to purge students of inglorious conducts and turn to the path of progress. That way the schools will remain the bastion of hope for improved humanity.

- iv) **The Parents:** In educational parlance, teachers act in loco – parentis (to borrow from an old Latin phrase) i.e. in “place of the parents”. This age old dogma has been thrown to the dogs. Today parents have become militant. In unisolated cases it is not uncommon for parents to march to the school to rain abuses on the school authority accusing him of maltreatment to the child. In some cases court cases are instituted. These intimidations and fear erode the traditional ties between the teachers and the parents. This is a source of storm in school – community relations.

It is not suggested that teachers should be bullies, brutal or child abusers. Teachers must be fair but firm in school discipline. Teachers should protect the interest of the school, the child, the parents and the community in the disciplinary process. The “rod” should not be spared to spoil the child. Parents should encourage their children to be disciplined. In some cases of errors of judgement, understanding, restraint and good counselling should prevail. When the parents assist the school in disciplinary matters harmony will flow between the school and the community. After all, a disciplined child is the joy of the parents and the extension the community’s progress.

- v) **The Parents-Teachers Association:** The importance of associating the school with the community invariably merited the formation of P.T.A. No doubt, much has been achieved through such arrangement. But much can still be done through such associations.

Somehow, in most of our schools bad blood has been injected into the school system, courtesy the P.T.A. In some instances, the head teachers gang-up with powerful members of the association to distabilise or to state it bluntly, to dupe the school. It is not also unusual that some powerful parents see the P.T.A. as an avenue to teleguide or pocket the school authority. These bring tension. The two extremes must be rejected if P.T.A. is to render useful services to the school and community.

- vi) **The School Community:** The school is a microcosm of the community. It would therefore be a blunder in human dynamics to isolate each from the other. While the school should know and respect the ways of life of the community, the community should be willing to cooperate with the school without being suspicious. The school should be able to help modify and supplement the existing life mode of the community for better life living.

The school should introduce programmes which can improve the culture of the community and make the people good citizens. When the community is receptive to the new ideas of welfarism and progressive innovations it will cooperate with the school.

The school has the responsibility to make the community understand its activities and the relevance to the community development. The school should mount public enlightenment campaigns to educate the community on its programmes. And it should not relent in its drive and efforts in educating the public about the need to send children to school.

## **Conclusion**

The idea of the school being a community based enterprise is not a new message. This article proffers how to establish a two-way relationship between the school and the community. The question is, what are the forces that promote the inter-relationship, and how? They include, the school, the head teacher, teachers, students, parents, parents/teachers Association and the community.

The school is a continuation of the community. The home and community constitute the baseline of all attitudes and aspirations the educational system hopes to develop. This underlines the need for a healthy coexistence between the school and the community.

## **Recommendations**

- Schools should establish public relations unit to “sale” its “products” to the community.
- School/community relations committee should be formed to keep the public aware of developments, programmes, goals, and problems of the school.
- Government should subsidise her media establishments on publishing authentic programmes of the school for public awareness.
- Such fora as “Parents Day”, “School Day” “Community Day”, should be formed for modalities worked out to advertise the school to the public.

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