Chapter 13

Corporate Communication, Indigenous Languages, and Community Relations: A Discourse on Practices by Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual work examines corporate communication as a tool for coordinating universities’ internal and external messages in Nigeria. It explores universities’ attempts to harness, link-up, and interact with their publics. This chapter presents effective corporate communication as the unifying principle in many institutional decisions. It emphasizes that sometimes, universities’ efforts to communicate
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effectively and profitably with their host communities end up in futility especially where indigenous language is a key environmental factor. University-neighbour relationship globally ought to be symbiotic and mutually-reinforcing. This chapter reviews scholarly commentaries on corporate communication, the relevance of indigenous language to community relations; and highlights in conclusion, the implications for universities in neglecting indigenous language during community engagements. It recommends that universities should motivate their employees to apply indigenous languages in enhancing understanding between the institutions and their host communities.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate communication is a tool for harmonizing internal and external messages by institutions all over the world. This tool is extremely important in universities’ community relations where indigenous languages are inevitable means of communication. Universities’ harness corporate communication activities to transact, link-up, send messages and interact with internal and external publics. In the corporate communication manual of the University of Gothenburg (2014, p. 2), proper corporate communication within universities could increase the awareness of universities’ activities; create, maintain and further develop relations within and outside of universities to enhance a clear and positive representation of universities. Though complex at times, nothing is as valuable to corporate entities as their ability to relate effectively and harmoniously with their various stakeholders through communication. As such, universities need corporate communication to establish, extend, maintain and sustain mutually beneficial relationships with their stakeholders (Mamuli, Mutsotso & Namasaka, 2013).

Sometimes, universities’ efforts to communicate effectively and profitably with their host communities end up in futility (Fashiku, 2016). This is because, communication for universities is becoming more complex given the fact that wherever a university is founded in Nigeria and many other places, it has to contend with the indigenous language of that environment. Language plays a vital role in all fields of human endeavour since it is a channel through which people interact. The Nigerian university structure comprises a liberal socio-educational mix of people who do not only communicate but expect to be understood. Communication in indigenous languages has been observed to enhance social attachment between all concerned (Salawu, 2006). For a harmonious existence of a university in a community, it is important for that university to be able to interact and send out messages to this external public in the appropriate language of that community.
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