

# Rationale for the Use of Public Relation Initiatives by Teachers of Agricultural Science in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper investigated the rationale for the use of public relation initiatives by teachers of agricultural science to promote their programmes to the public. It has been observed that most of the success stories about schools agricultural science programmes hardly get to the public thereby creating a wide communication gap between what the school and the teachers of agriculture are doing and the need, interest and developmental strides of the community where the schools are located. Four (4) research questions and one hypothesis were generated for the study. The sample used consisted of 60 teachers of agricultural science, who were sampled through a stratified random sampling techniques from the three senatorial distinct in the state. Three (3) sets of questionnaire containing 25 items were used for data collection. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that the teachers of agricultural science do not publicise their programmes “success stories” to the public. They however agreed with the public relation initiatives suggested for consideration when planning agricultural science programmes to serve the public interest. There was no significant difference in the opinion of the teachers in both public and private secondary schools. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended, among others, that all teachers of agricultural science should develop effective educational programmes and success stories that are catchy in nature for “sell out” to the public on regular basis. Parents, officials of the Ministry of Education and Agriculture and other stakeholders of the school system should be invited on regular basis to observe the school farms, agricultural science activities, during PTA meetings, inter house sport competitions, agric shows and others, so as to have a first hand information about the agricultural science success stories in each school.

**Keywords:** Public, Public Relations, Agricultural Education, Success Stories, Vocational Agriculture, Educational Programmes

## 1. Introduction

The concept public can be expressed as a collection of people: That is a group of people who by their activities, will influence the person concerned or are themselves influenced by the person (Adekunle, 1994). The Americans, according to Adekunle, says that the public is a collection of people whose activities impact upon our reference or are themselves impacted upon by our reference. Adekunle expressed the concept Public Relation as the deliberate, planned and sustained efforts to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public. Adekunle, also defined public relation as the arts and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which serve both the organisation’s and the public interest.

Consequently, the concept public relations can be expressed as a process of winning “friends” keeping and influencing them, as well as others, so they can be interested in ones market or programmes. Technically, public relation can be viewed as a philosophy and function of management which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies of an individual or organization with public interest and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Lages and Simkin, 2003). According to Adekunle (1994) public relations can be defined as the art and science of developing reciprocal understanding and good will. It consists of all planned communication either outward or inward, between an organization or a school and its public for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. It also involves the establishment of two-way communication channel to resolve conflict of interest, seeking common grounds on areas of mutual understanding, interest and the establishment of programmes based on knowledge and full information.

From agricultural education perspective, public relation is either a formal or an informal education process, fully carried out in a systematic way, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation for the purpose of raising the efficiency of farmers productivity, teacher activities and students programmes or achievement in all agricultural endeavours. According to (Okorie 1979) good public relation initiatives public keep the public informed of all the schools activities and accomplishment. With good interaction between agricultural education teachers, the public and his/her programmes, new ideas, school agricultural activities and ‘stories’ are regularly ‘told’ or efficiently communicated to the school’s community for the growth and development of both the community and

the schools agricultural programmes. Okorie recommended that every modern teachers of agricultural science should initiate good public relation activities that are beneficial to their communities.

A community or public as the case may be, is a group of people who live in a certain geographical area and have a social structure that provides for their physical, economic, social and educational needs. It includes both young and adult farmers, parents, other teachers, school administrators; agriculture related professionals, prospective students of agriculture, and other organizations or agric-industries in the geographical location.

It has been observed that one of the most important criterion of purposeful living in a community is the degree or level of interaction of individual people with each other in their day to day activities; bearing in mind that individuals in the community have their various interests, beliefs, attitude, needs and wants. For example, the public needs food, and raw materials for their industries. They need to know what is happening to their farms, occupations and children studying agriculture in schools and colleges. They also want to be informed, so they too can change. Hence, the public must hear agricultural stories that could motivate and educate them to either stay off or get into the field of agriculture, to develop a sense of confidence and appreciation for agriculture as a profession, or for maximum food, and raw material production. They also want to know what their children, study agriculture in the schools are doing.

Olaitan (2010), remarked that agricultural science programmes have been successful in developing a number of desirable qualities in students, in providing educational, developmental and improvement services to the community, and in enhancing the overall image of the school because of the excellent public relation initiatives of agricultural education teachers in most developed countries. It has been observed that an informed public is the teachers advertisement medium. In which case, to be a successful teacher of agriculture in secondary school, involves more than getting involved in only classroom activities. It involves developing educational programmes, interactions with the public and selling the school's agricultural programmes and success stories to parents and the community.

The community also demands several things from a teacher of agriculture. For instance, an agricultural education teacher may be asked to be the adviser of an agricultural youth association, plan community agricultural development projects, coordinate a seminar or workshop, plan field trips, serve as resources persons to farmers in rural areas, participate in community development activities, and implement agricultural programmes or act as a leader in the community. The personality and public relation initiatives of the teacher in any of these cases depends on the public relation strength and initiatives of the teacher.

It has been observed that the more the public understands a teacher and his agricultural programmes, the more likely it is easy for the public to become involved in the schools acceptability and vice visa. This is because a prerequisite to a successful agricultural education programme in both the school and community is a strong, well organized teacher of agriculture cum activities and programmes of instructions which are tailored to the current needs of the students, their parents and the public Seweje, R.O. and Jegede S.A. (2005).

## **1.2 Science Education and Science Teaching Methods.**

Good public relation tells the success stories. It also facilitate the 'sell out' of agricultural education programmes, teachers competency, students accomplishment and schools agricultural projects. Effective public relation strategies, tell the success stories with diplomacy, understanding, and improves the public interest and involvement – in schools agricultural education projects.

According to Randle (1978), Okorie (1979) and Olaitan (2011) to reach the public effectively and ensure programme success is to have something worthwhile to publicize. To develop agricultural programme that will meet the need and interest of the public and the students, the teachers programme should be such that are meeting vital public needs. The programme should be made to inform the public. It should however be remembered that public needs are many. They are a composite of many individual needs. So, to determine whether agricultural education programmes will meet vital public needs is to determine if it will meet the need of majority of the people. The need may include, food, raw materials, or education that necessary for adjustment, innovations in agriculture, or to ensure that their children or wards are benefiting from the schools educational programmes.

It has also been observed that parents and the public interpret the programmes of the departments of agriculture, teachers activities and schools programmes based on their level of understanding and involvement in the school's activities. To develop an effective public relation programmes with any community, it is important for

teachers of agriculture to: inculcate the habit of relating appropriately with the public. The National Fadama Development (2013) reported that the use of public relation skills and methodologies are poorly integrated into total extension programmes; but the agricultural teachers are living with the farmers. Even in the most remote part of every local government areas in Nigeria.

## 2 Statement of the Problem

Vocational agricultural education programmes in schools and colleges will be successful in developing a number of desirable qualities in students, providing educational services to the community and enhancing the overall image of the school and community if and when well planned public relation strategies are employed by the teachers of agricultural science as a catalyst (Olaitan 2010). The teachers of agricultural education know the importance and relevance of food production and raw materials to the society and industries. One pertinent question is that – does the community and the public know and understand what the school is doing to enhance the production process of these goods? From personal experience, it has been observed that even right within the school system, fellow teachers and principals or administrator do not fully understand the relevance of the teachers of agriculture and their programmes to the school or towards community improvement, growth and development. It has always been difficult for even the other teachers and the public to actualize or appreciate the different vocational agricultural activities and programmes embedded in the agricultural science curriculum in secondary schools (NERDC, 2009).

Most communities and individuals within the school setting are either sparingly or never aware of the agricultural education programmes in the school because of the little or no effective communication between the school's programmes and the community. (Okorie 1997) and Olaitan, (2010). This lapses might have been causing a lot of set back in the interaction between the school and community. To reverse the communication gaps between the school and the public, all success stories of the agricultural science programmes are expected to be told or sell out to the public to enhance better understanding of the relevance of the schools curriculum to community development and the development of both the citizens and students interest in agriculture. This study therefore investigate the rationale for the use of public relation initiatives by teachers of agricultural science in secondary schools in order to improve the interaction and communication between the school and the public for agricultural development continuum.

## 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were drawn and answered in the study.

1. What are the perceptions of Teachers of Agricultural Science about “telling their success stories” through public relation initiatives?
2. What are the public relation initiatives to be considered by teachers of Agricultural Science when planning their programmes?
3. What are the perceptions of the teachers of Agricultural Science about the need for effective public relation initiatives to publicise their programmes?
4. Have the teachers of Agricultural Science benefited from selling their success stories on agricultural programmes to the public?

## 4. Hypothesis

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of teachers in public and private secondary schools about the rational for publicizing agricultural science programmes to the public in Ekiti State.

## 5. Methodology

A descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The population were the 60 teachers of Agricultural Science in both public and private secondary schools in Ekiti, sampled through a stratified random sampling technique from the three (3) senatorial district in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The instrument used was face and content validated. The reliability of the instrument was established through a test-retest method; yielding a reliability co-efficient of 0.83. The data used were collected using a research made questionnaire titled Public Relation Initiative (PRI) questionnaire. The research instrument consisted of 25 items.

## 6. Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using percentages, mean and standard deviation for the research question while the hypothesis was analysed using mean, standard deviation and t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

### 6.1 Research Question 1:

What are the perceptions of Teachers of Agricultural Science about telling their success stories through public relation initiative?

Statement	Option	Type of Secondary School				f	%
		Public		Private			
		f	%	f	%		
I publicise my school agricultural science programmes to the public	Always	2	(3.33%)	3	5%	5	(8.33%)
	Seldom	1	(1.67)	2	(3.33%)	3	(5%)
	Not at all	27	(4.5%)	25	(41.67%)	52	(86.67%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results presented in Table 1 shows that only 8.33% (5) teachers publicise their schools agricultural science programmes to the public, while 86.67% 52 teachers do not publicise their success stories (programmes) at all.

### 6.2 Research Question 2:

What are public relation initiatives to be considered by teachers of Agricultural Science when planning their programmes?

**Table 2:** Rating assigned to public relation initiatives to be considered by teachers of Agricultural Science.

	Statements	School type	Mean	SD	Remarks
	Teachers of Agriculture are to considered the following when designing their programmes for the public				
1.	Community norms and belief	Public Private	4.57 4.4	0.77 1.04	Agreed Agreed
2.	Community ecological zone	Public Private	4.27 4.17	1.11 1.02	Agreed Agreed
3.	Special characteristics of the community	Pubic Private	4.27 4.5	1.31 1.01	Agreed Agreed
4.	Appropriate communication channels and tools	Pubic Private	4.59 4.82	0.95 1.34	Agreed Agreed
5.	Interest and need of the community	Pubic Private	4.62 4.80	1.48 0.48	Agreed Agreed
6.	Specific message or ideas to communicate	Pubic Private	4.33 4.13	1.18 1.25	Agreed Agreed
7.	Assistance of a community leader	Pubic Private	4.10 4.07	1.03 1.2	Agreed Agreed
8.	Select occasional key resource person from the community	Pubic Private	4.35 4.57	1.35 0.77	Agreed Agreed
9.	Constantly develop success stories to tell	Pubic Private	4.67 4.77	0.71 0.63	Agreed Agreed
10.	Appropriate channels of feedback from the public	Pubic Private	4.43 4.33	0.94 1.27	Agreed Agreed
11.	Public relation files and records	Pubic Private	3.93 4.27	1.02 1.08	Agreed Agreed
12.	Catchy success stories	Pubic Private	4.59 4.85	1.14 0.48	Agreed Agreed

Private school (N) = 30, public school (N) = 30 Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree.

Data contained in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed with the 12 (twelve) statements about the public relation initiatives to be considered by teachers of Agricultural when designing on planning their school agricultural science programmes to touch the hearts of the public. The result shows that the teachers should constantly develop success stories to tell the public with public  $\bar{X}$  4.67, private  $\bar{X}$  4.77 and SD 0.71, SD 0.63 respectively. The respondent least agreed that public relation files and records should be created with public  $\bar{X}$  = 3.93, private  $\bar{X}$  = 4.27, SD = 1.02, SD = 1.08.

### 6.3 Research Question 3:

What are the perceptions of the teachers of agricultural science about the need for effective public relation initiatives to publicise their programmes?

**Table 3:** Perception towards the need for effective public relation

Statements	% responses	% response	% response	% response	Remark
	<b>On very useful and helpful</b>	<b>on useful and helpful</b>	<b>on not so useful and helpful</b>	<b>no not useful at all</b>	
Perception of teachers of Agricultural science about the need and usefulness of publicising their programmes	N = 48 % = 80%	N = 10 % 16.67	N = 02 % = 3.33	N = 0 % = 0%	Very useful and helpful

Data contained in Table 3 shows that 80% of the teachers opined that the use of public relation initiatives will be very useful and helpful while none (0%) opined that it will not be useful at all.

### 6.4 Research Question 4:

Have the teachers of agricultural science ever benefited from publicising or telling the success stories of their programmes to the public?

**Table 4:** Teacher perception about their benefits from publicising their agricultural programmes.

Statements	Option	Type of Secondary School				f	%
		Public		Private			
		f	%	f	%		
My school have benefited from telling the success stories of my agricultural science programme to the public	Yes	1	(1.67%)	3	5%	4	(6.67%)
	No	2	(46.67%)	26	(43.3%)	54	(90%)
	Not sure	1	(1.67%)	1	(1.67%)	02	(3.33%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>(50%)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>(50%)</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data contained in Table 4 indicates that 54 teachers of agricultural science have not benefited from the public. Only 4(6/67%) of the school/teachers have benefited from the public, while 2(3/33%) of the school/teachers are not sure if they have ever benefited from publicising their success stories to the public.

**Table 5:** Mean, t-test and probability level of public and private teachers of agricultural science perception.

Item	School type	Mean	SD	tcal	ttable	P
1.	Public	4.57	0.77	0.705	2.000	0.483
	Private	4.4	1.04			
2.	Public	4.27	1.11	0.363	2.000	0.718
	Private	4.17	1.02			
3.	Public	4.27	1.31	0.773	2.000	0.443
	Private	4.50	1.01			
4.	Public	4.30	0.95	1.890	2.000	0.064
	Private	3.73	1.34			
5.	Public	4.33	1.18	0.636	2.000	0.528
	Private	4.13	1.25			
6.	Public	4.67	0.71	0.578	2.000	0.565
	Private	4.77	0.63			
7.	Public	4.10	1.03	0.115	2.000	0.909
	Private	4.07	1.20			
8.	Public	4.35	1.35	0.822	2.000	0.414
	Private	4.57	0.77			
9.	Public	3.57	1.36	0.288	2.000	0.774
	Private	3.47	1.33			
10.	Public	3.93	1.02	1.232	2.000	0.223
	Private	4.27	1.08			
11.	Public	4.43	0.94	0.348	2.000	0.729
	Private	4.33	1.27			
12.	Public	4.57	1.14	1.36	2.000	0.305
	Private	4.80	0.48			

df = 58, at 0.05 level of significance (Private schools = 30, Public schools = 30)  
 (5 Strongly Agree, 4, Agree, 3 – Neutral, 2 Disagree, 1 Strongly Disagree)

Table 5 shows the t-value statistics to differentiate between the opinion of teachers of agricultural science in public and private secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The table shows no significant difference in the opinion of the two groups of teachers on the twelve (12) rationale for selling the schools agricultural success stories to the public at 0.05 level of significance.

## 7. Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that 86.7% of the teachers of agricultural science do not publicise the success stories of their programmes. According to the Lages and Simkin (2003), the act of communicating with the public is often thought of as “spin” with the goal being to present the teacher, the school or agricultural programmes in the best light possible. An inference from this is that publicising the agricultural activities in the school is an effective public relation strategy to “sell” the school, teacher and the value of the curriculum to the public. It was further revealed that only 6.7% of the teachers have ever benefited from selling their success stories maybe because they seldom publicise their programmes. The analysis of the data also shows the twelve (12) public relation initiatives to be considered by teachers of agricultural science in order to effectively publicise their programmes to the public. The teachers opinion is in agreement with the notion that public relation is about managing and shaping public perception about ones school, product, services and individual. In which case can be seen as an effective channel of communication between an organization, the school in this case, and its various stakeholders both internal and external (Reber and Berger, 2006).

According to Reber and Berger (2006) and Randle (1978) relating vocational agricultural science programme success of the public has multiple advantages and influence. It helps in shaping the public decisions and actions and the ability of the teacher to persuade the public and win their interest.

The study also found out that 80% of the teachers of agricultural science opined that public relation initiatives are very useful and helpful to their programmes. This finding is in line with the findings of Okorie (1997) and Olaitan (2010) that an informed public is the teacher advertisement medium. In which case, to be a successful teacher of agriculture in secondary school involves more than getting involved in only classroom activities. According to Olaitan, it also involves developing educational programmes, interaction with the public and selling the school’s agricultural programmes and success stories to the parents and the immediate community.

The null hypothesis showed that there were no significant difference in the perception of both the teachers of agricultural science in both public and private secondary schools on the 12 suggested rationale for effective publicising of agricultural science to the public in Ekiti State.

## 8. Conclusion

The findings of this study have justified the need for teachers to frequently publicise the success stories of their agricultural programmes and activities to the public because one of the overall goals of agricultural programmes in secondary schools is to add value to the community, the school and people in the society.

The finding also revealed that an informed public is the teachers advertisement medium. The outcome of this study have also established the rationale to be considered in designing agricultural science programmes to meet the public’s interest, needs, ecological zones and the need to use appropriate communication channels to “tell” the school’s agricultural success stories to the public. This is in order to build positive relationship, with relevant stakeholders and ultimately build a supportive community of influencers and interested parties around the school and for further success of the schools agricultural education programmes.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended.

1. All teachers of agricultural science should develop effective educational programmes and success stories that are catchy in nature for sell out to the public on regular basis so as to publicise the school and relate the value of the curriculum to the public.
2. as part of the public relation initiatives, schools should participate in different developmental activities in their communities such as landscaping, public places like, the community hall, round about and parks, maintain drainages, sell farm products to the public, tree planting, participate in discussions and debates, organize maize day, yam day, field trips, youth organization activities and the likes.
3. Government at National, State and Local levels should provide more funds in cash and kind to run agricultural programmes in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
4. Philanthropists in every community in the country should be encouraged to finance, fund and sponsor agricultural education programmes in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
5. Students interest should be more stimulated and sustained to study agricultural science by encouraging them to participate in challenging activities while in school.
6. Students work should always be displayed outside the classroom to interest other students and visitors to the school.
7. Parents, Ministry of Education and Agriculture Officials, other teachers in the school and other stakeholders should be invited to the school on regular basis to observe agricultural activities in each

- school during P.T.A, Inter house sports, days, agric shows, for first hand information about the agricultural programmes of each school.
8. All teachers of agricultural science should provide interesting and catchy titles for all their courses and agricultural programmes.
  9. The identified rationale should be adopted by all teachers of agricultural science in secondary schools and lecturers in the department of agriculture in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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