

Comparative Study of the Corporate Social Responsibility of Rivers State University and University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract. Anchoring on the stakeholders and system's theories, these theories raises some central questions around the paradoxes of communicating about corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies to enhance organizational effectiveness. Through the qualitative method of obtaining data in interviews, especially from respondents considered relevant to the study; these officers are the unit Heads of the Information, Publication, and Public Relations Units of both the University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The researchers compared the corporate social responsibility of these Universities in Port Harcourt. Key to this is that communicating about CSR contributes immensely to the society. This premised however, revealed that both institutions have a similar peripheral CSR strategy that informed the need for a call for the corporate communications unit of both institutions to strategically communicate their corporate activities to the different stakeholder groups potentially interested in the institution from different contexts and sectors. This will help put the institutions of his/her learning on their toes on whether they are up and doing or otherwise.

Keyword: Corporate, social responsibility, comparative, Strategy, University of Port Harcourt.

1. Introduction

Engaging in the corporate social responsibility now is a key theme for many large corporations - and even small companies are looking for ways to improve their public image portfolio by announcing their involvement in various projects. The point that businesses operate not only the demand concerning the corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate citizenship, but also the challenges especially that experienced new communication channels such as

the social media and new communications to a key audience, especially in corporations and government offices, which have different roles than corporations. Faced with a range of internal and external stakeholders needing more to show credibility, accountability and transparency in their operations, just as many companies responded with more voluntary participation, in partnership with, which could be called a business or legal partnership.

For most businesses, these new statements pose significant challenges in issues of skepticism and accountability. Getting started on the responsibility of the company has many responsibilities. Some are as simple as allowing employees to participate in equal opportunities, participating in volunteer work, or organizing volunteers with nonprofits. Other activities are more complex and include start-ups such as public-private partnerships, multinational meetings and partnerships or draw up the fundamentals of corporate relationships through trade and other activities. More and more companies are dealing with a variety of multinational corporations, ranging from standard organizations such as the International Trade Commission to legitimate business organizations and groups. Much of the latter refers to the articulation of responsibility and the promotion of success, which includes the whole business model and deepening business ideas, While the above is mostly outward practice, it also provides a way to communicating with employees who want to reflect and engage in organizational engagement. These different types of activities are related to different types of team members working in different roles and contexts.

CSR is the specific and social or environmental context in which organizations are committed to the public (Carroll, 1979). To wit, CSR is a catalyst for the benefit of society and includes volunteering,

multinational corporations and other incentives. While incentives can sometimes be used to help an organization "do well" financially, mostly, their overall impact is adjudged above average to excellent.

Corporate Citizenship (CC), is a term often used to replace corporate responsibility (CR), and it is also broader term than CSR. CC / CR is directly involved in the business model of the company and can be defined as living companies to provide transparency and value based on business in the companies that work, respect, and treat all stakeholders who risks investing, engaging in, or communicating with the company through positively in the first instance (Waddock, 2009). For similar reasons, Boston College's Center for Human Rights defines business corporate citizenship as "ways in which businesses understand, make decisions and report on their actions to ascertain the commercial implication and environmental impact on development, operations, management and service to the public who benefit from the business policies, practices products and services"(Edelman, 2009). Both of these points and implications suggest that a broader CSR business model may be more beneficial to stakeholders, especially if more, mergers and strategies for it, as it involves not only recognition but also the impact of the business model.

2. Statement of the Problem

Universities the world over are established with a view to build a man and for the man to build the community. Hence, the Rivers State University and the University of Port Harcourt were established by act of parliament as enshrined by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The educational institutions house numerous faculties, institutes, Directorates, Departments and units aimed at promoting good neighborliness in other to still remain in business. Although, established or owned by two separate entities, via the Rivers State government and the Federal government of Nigeria but carry out the same obligation of "training ground" for total development of the country.

This study set out to compare the strategies of the Corporate Social Responsibility of both institutions and business relationship that benefit the institutions. Apart from teaching and learning, the institutions provide moral, financial, and technical support to the development of the society.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to ascertain the strategies utilized by both educational institutions to discharge their corporate social responsibility.

Other specific objectives include:

- To identify the kind of corporate social responsibility of both the Rivers State University and University of Port Harcourt.
- To determine the extent to which these corporate social responsibility has enhanced cordial relationships with the public.
- To find out whether the CSR strategies of both institutions has helped in cementing good relationship with the students, staff and other public.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Stakeholders' Theory

A participatory management strategy emerged in the mid 1980s. An important feature of this movement was the publication of Richard Edward Freeman. He often enjoyed working as a lawyer for the people. He stated that his philosophy was based on a philosophical organization. Freeman first described the stakeholders as a group without which the organization would not exist. Freeman (2004) has continued to use definitions as group modifications that are critical to the survival and success of the organizations. Freeman (2004) further identifies stakeholders, such as a group or individual, who may be affected by the achievement of the organization's goals. Similar to how different actors interact, you need to think about groups of people who have different relationships with the organization. Freeman (2004) identifies customers, employees, communities, suppliers, and partners as key members of the organization. He also spoke; media, citizens, business partners, future generations, previous generations (founders), professionals, candidates, NGOs or managers in business, the private sector, financiers / creditors and the government / regulator / government as secondary stakeholders.

According to Freeman (2004), stakeholder theory aims in particular to develop methods for managing different groups and relationships that have resulted in a strategic manner. Freeman (2004) also believes that the idea of stakeholder leadership or approach implies that managers must formulate policies and implement processes that satisfy everyone and only

those who have an interest in the company. The main task of this process is to manage and integrate the interests of stakeholders in a way that ensures the long-term success of the Authority. The stakeholder approach goes far beyond a proactive business environment, relationship management and the promotion of common interests to develop development strategies. Therefore, the relationship between this theory and research is derived in a distracting way from the stakeholders of the Rivers State University and the University of Port Harcourt in leadership skills in building relationships, advocacy and harmonious university movement through the instrumentality of the Corporate Social Responsibility.

4.2 System Theory

System theory, according to Midley (2003), is an interdisciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena, regardless of their nature or spatial or temporal scale of their existence. It covers both principles that apply to all complex units and (mostly mathematical) models that can be used to describe them. Middles claims that he can say that the system consists of four things.

The first is objects - parts of a system, elements or variables. Midgley (2003) further suggests that they can be physical or abstract, or both, depending on the nature of the system. Secondly, a system consists of attributes - system properties or properties. Thirdly, the system had an internal relationship between its objects. Fourth, there are systems in the area. The system is then a collection of things that influence each other in the environment and form a larger model that differs from each component.

The basic interactive analysis system for organizational analysis contains flexible input, transit (processing) and output that demonstrate the concept of openness / proximity. According to Midgley (2003), a closed system has no interaction with its environment. It does not absorb information and may therefore have atrophy, i.e. disappears.

Medgley (2003) further explains that an open system receives information that it uses to effectively communicate with its environment. Openness increases the chance of survival and bloom. Physical characteristics are: merging and multiplying (anything more than the sum of all parts), affect, cause of observation, chain of bodies, levels, systems and systems, self-regulation and regulation, goals, environmental change, feedback / output, equality / homeostasis needed, change and adaptation

(morphogenesis)) and equity: there are many ways to achieve those goals. The different types of networks are: cable, city buildings, timers and managers. Communication in this perspective can be viewed as a shared process, rather than a separate event (Midgley, 2003).

In the same spirit, Littlejohn (2001) sees the system as a system of things that interact with and create the whole. He added that every system has properties: including; material, behavioral, internal, and environmental. Equipment can be determined based on system settings, content, or variables. They can be physical or abstract or both. Attributes are characteristics or characteristics of a system and its components. The internal relationships of the system components are important for determining the quality of the system. The environment places the system in a fixed position because there is no system in the vacuum.

Rivers State University and Port Harcourt University are excellent examples of a system with tools (staff, students, parents, tools, etc.) and attributes (systems, rules, answers, etc.). The persistence / impact of these links is most important among colleges as the technology emphasizes the importance of research theory. That is, how do the various departments interact and how can they interact to achieve the overall goals of the school without friction?

5. Authenticity, Trust and Relationship

Passionate communication with the paradox of communication has two major challenges. One of the challenges is to build trust with a variety of stakeholders who, in different positions and contexts, interact with businesses and measure business-to-business efforts with the view of addressing critical public enterprise issues. The second challenge is to ensure that what is communicated to different stakeholders is not based on efforts to improve the business, but on real value, beliefs and practices within a company and are not really mere rotations (Leisinger, 2007; Fernando, 2010). These two factors are not state-based, but result from an ongoing process of interaction with the stakeholders.

The paramount idea is to build trust with stakeholders in the right direction. The problem, of course, is that in the environment of skepticism, the external and internal expectations of companies continue, both for employees and the outsiders. At the same time, not only do a few communication professionals truly understand the relationships between partners, ideas and clients in general, they are not yet aware of the growing importance of the corporate citizenship and

its relation to firm's reputation, operational permit and in the community with good long-term success.

This problem is partly due to the fact that companies themselves go through various stages of improving their corporate performance. In this process, leaders need to learn how to negotiate public engagement as soon as the business itself grows.

6. Reputation and its way Forward

Corporate membership communication has grown in importance in recent years as the reputation has grown significantly. Reputation, one of the unknown traits, became a key factor for business success in the 1990s and early 2000s, when 75% of the corporate value was questionably produced (Reich, 2007). The growth of business profiles and branding does not require companies to learn how to communicate their brand personality and improve corporate reputations that can be damaging the long-term reputation damaging (for example, of what happened to BP's green reputation immediately after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010), but also consider building trust around your CC as they begin to popularize it with the general public (Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009). In a recent, the drivers of business are increasingly tied to corporate reputation as pointed out by Makinsey in (2009)

Building reputation with key stakeholders can also lead to market growth and the uncovering of new market opportunities. It aids in establishing trust in its relationship to regulators, NGOs and others (Fernando, 2010; Veleva, 2010), often providing a seat at the table that might not have been possible without this investment.

The growing importance of reputation as a critical CSR component also brings with it considerable challenges to organizations in terms of authenticity, transparency, and accountability, and it has been shown to have an indirect relationship to organizational performance (Surroca, Tribó & Waddock, 2010). Further, some firms that have done unethical things have been found to use their philanthropic initiatives to attempt to overcome these issues with respect to public perception of them (Koehn & Ueng, 2010). The public and the increasingly savvy group of NGOs and media outlets are quite tuned into the spin of traditional public relations approaches, which still remain surprisingly present as first responders in corporate communications strategy and efforts.

7. Stages of Corporate Citizenship and Communications Strategies

Companies develop their corporate responsibility strategies — and the need to communicate them to different stakeholders — through a series of documented stages (Mirvis and Googins, 2006). These stages reflect the changing social (and ecological) context within which corporate citizenship is evolving and more importantly how it is communicated both internally and externally. Companies are in an active mode of learning about the contextual factors that shape critical outcomes, such as reputation, trust, employee engagement and stakeholder management. By progressing through these stages, companies increase their awareness of the contextual complexity, create new mechanisms for dealing with these contextual factors, and incorporate them into their overall business and citizenship strategies.

They also need to become increasingly sophisticated in their communication strategies to different stakeholder groups operating in various contexts. According to Brammer and Pavelin, (2006) as they move through the stages, particularly as their commitment to responsibility and sustainability begins to become more deeply embedded or, is described as the “part of the corporate DNA.”

The one-way communication does not engender much of a trusting relationship, but companies at this stage perceive little need to engage proactively with their stakeholders in any case, since any transparency they engage in tends to be what Mirvis and Googins (2006) called “flank protection”. Companies may be “authentic” in this stage about their business strategy, but any commitment to or communication with external stakeholders, particularly those in non-business sectors, seems somewhat of an afterthought.

According to Mirvis and Googins' (2006) the second stage is called ‘Engaged’. It is at this stage that companies begin introducing philanthropy and perhaps some degree of environmental management because their more supportive leadership becomes aware of the need to maintain their societal “license to Operate.” Issues are still managed reactively, but because companies' leadership has become aware of the interest of various stakeholder groups in their activities and impacts, they may begin some form of stakeholder engagement and communication in a limited way. A dramatic rise in social and environmental reports was found at this stage of development, with the early efforts often more public relations-based than substantive.

It is at this ‘Engaged’ stage where charges of window dressing, spin, or public relations become noticeable, as the company has not yet engaged its business

model in any real way. Because philanthropic efforts are generally aimed at civil society and nongovernmental organizations, however, the company may find itself having to deal with these new audiences in a more serious manner.

8. Tough Demands from Stakeholders

In addition to the tough accountability and transparency demands, the prevalence of social networking media make organizations visible in ways that might not previously have even been imagined, creating rising stakeholder demands and expectations for disclosure about the company's responsibility practices (Holder-Webb 2009).

These developments pose enormous challenges for businesses, particularly in communicating across sector boundaries, where norms, standards of practice, and goals are quite different from those in business. In years past, communicating to employees was a major concern, and communications to outside publics could be handled by the public relations or communications departments. Today, however, global Internet access means that companies are in an ever-brightening spotlight from which it is virtually impossible to escape, and where stakeholders of all stripes can and do seek and obtain information.

Although corporate communications and corporate responsibility staff are often at the front line of receiving and hearing about stakeholder issues and concerns, increasingly departments and functions across the organization are faced with these challenges. Investor relations are witnessing a dramatic spike in shareholder resolutions.

9. Internal Focus: Employees and Associate Staffers

At the earliest stages of corporate citizenship, communications tend to be primarily focused on external issues. Environment, community relations, supply chains, and even contributions were always focused on external environments. Only recently have CR professionals and communications specialists begun to realize that internal constituents, employees, are absolutely critical to an authentic reputation and outcome. There are good reasons for this internal focus. Many managers and recruiters have noted that today's potential and current employees express both interest in and concern about how the company is fulfilling its obligations to societies. For companies in the Elementary, Engaged, and even Innovative stages of CC, the communications focus is likely to initially actually be

public relations and corporate social responsibility-oriented, that is, it represents an effort by the company to potentially improve employee morale, recruiting and retention efforts, and make employees feel good about working for the organization by highlighting the discretionary good things that are done by the business.

Many surveys suggest that both potential and actual employees are deeply concerned about their employer's (or potential employer's) reputation for corporate responsibility (e.g., Greening and Turban, 2000). Heightened employee engagement is bringing a highly valued dimension not only to CSR, but to corporate reputation and vitality. Innovations are arising from areas where employees can use social networking technology (think blogs, for example) to express their views, or, more constructively to connect with emerging entrepreneurs, activists, and others, and engage directly in community and economic development, as does the social entrepreneurial organization, Kiva. These new avenues create amazing communications possibilities that have huge payoff to corporate reputation and increase employee engagement when they are positive, but also have the potential to be negative if employees spread dissatisfaction among their own networks and local communities (Fieseler, Fleck and Meckel, 2010; Cortini, 2009).

Largely disconnected from business activities, many CSR activities do have a certain "feel good" quality to them. They can be highlighted in internal vehicles, like the company's intranet, internal blogs, employee newsletters (either paper or online), and the like. In addition, company awards for community and internal service, employee of the month (week, year) recognition for volunteer activities or the organization of employee service activities (e.g., participation in groups can be highlighted in these types of outlets. Such activities inherently cross sector boundaries, as employees are working in the community, typically in NGOs or CSOs, creating relationships and establishing goodwill.

10. Research Methodology

This paper which is qualitative in nature, utilized a contextualized and interview/observation based research instrument to compare the Corporate Social Responsibility of the Rivers State University and University of Port Harcourt towards juxtaposing the outcome with the available body of knowledge in order to propose an up to date and appropriate style of deploying corporate social responsibility for institutional progress.

This approach recognizes the difficulty and complexity associated with changing environment and increasing private disposition of the 21st century society (Blalock, 2005) To match words with action, the study made use of two subjects relevant to the study being the Deputy Registrar in charge of Information, Publications and Public Relations of the University of Port Harcourt and the Head of Information, Protocol and Publications Unit (IPPU)

of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt while the former was reached through a long telephone conversation cum interview, the latter was personally approached. The two unit heads/study participants are believed to be most fit and relevant to talk about the corporate social responsibility of their respective institutions given the fact that it behooves the units they head to superintend over CSR.

Data Presentation

Participant	Question	Response
University of Port Harcourt	Tell us about your professional background	My name is Dr. Williams Wodi. I had my first degree in English Literature at Uniport in the early 80s and have since then went ahead to get other professional certification from NIJ, NIPRS and so on. I have been in the services of this institution for over 20 years now.
	How does Uniport go about corporate social responsibility if at all?	First I must say that the University of Port Harcourt is one that is very mindful of its stakeholders and at such we hold corporate social responsibility in high esteem because it is a way to reiterating the importance of our stakeholders. From time to time we seek ways of bettering the lot of those we consider as co-owners of the university. We have constructed few roads around the Choba and Aluu communities, we give the host community some slot when we admit, employ or execute projects. We carry parents along in some decision making, infact we have a parents forum in this school. One thing you should know is that our strategies are not cast on stone, we adjust as the occasion demands.
	How it steers the wheel of progress in the institutions.	One thing I need to remind you is the fact that humans are largely insatiable, so while we may be making efforts tom reach out to our esteemed stakeholders as an institution, one may still experience pockets of uprisings that could indict our sincere efforts. But in summary I will boast that our CSR efforts positively affect the University of Port Harcourt especially in terms of relationship building which is a precursor to sustainable development.

Participant	Question	Response
RSU	Tell us about your professional background?	My name is Mr. Lekia Gonee. Thank you for this opportunity. I am a journalist by training having obtained a B.Sc degree in Mass Communication and I am equally a lawyer. I hold an LLB degree from the Rivers State University.
	How does Rivers State University go about corporate social responsibility if at all?	Rivers State University in several forms of strategic communication one of which is corporate social responsibility. In carrying out this all important function, we fact many variables into consideration. First of all we consider our internal publics and then our external publics. In practicing CSR on internal publics like staff and student, we reward hard work amongst staff, give out Christmas packages and amongst students we reward academic excellence. On the other hand, we also care about our external

How it steers the wheel of progress in the institutions.

publics like host community, contractors, the media, security outfits and parents. In reaching out to this category of stakeholders by way of CSR we foster constant engagements, provide utilities such as calendar, diary etc. consideration is also given during recruitment and admissions. So as you can see. We are up and doing.

Oh I can tell you that CSR is hugely contributory to the seamless progress of Rivers State University. For example, when last did you hear of student or community protest? Have you heard of our staff complaining in recent past? That should tell you that we are working, CSR is a strong factor when it comes to boosting the morale of stakeholders, so it's working for us.

11. Discussion

The data obtained from the participants of the study so far has been revealing. On the professional background of the participants, Wodi said he had his first degree in English Literature at University of Port-Harcourt and have since then went ahead to get other professional certifications from NIJ, NIPRS and so on. For Gonee, he obtained a Bsc degree in Mass Communication as well as LLB degree from the Rivers State University. Both participants have experiences advantage having been working for over 15 years which puts them in good positions to occupy their respective offices. The second question dealt with how participants go about CSR in their respective institutions, for this Wodi said that the University of Port Harcourt intermittently seek ways of bettering the lot of those they consider as co-owners of the University. He summarized that they have done a few projects for the host community and are in such with parents of students as well as other stakeholders of the University. For his part, Gonee gave a breakdown of the CSR of Rivers State University to include staff welfare and the provision of Christmas bonuses, academic excellence reward for students, consideration of host community in terms of employment and admission and so on. The both participants said CSR has contributed to the progress of their respective institutions. In particular, Wodi said it has been helpful in terms of relationship building which according to him is a precursor to sustainable development. Gonee responded that student protests, community agitation and staff lethargy are all things of the past all thanks to CSR. This corroborates the view of (Fieseler, Fleck and Meckel, 2010; Cortini, 2009) which stipulates that CSR is anew avenue that creates amazing communication possibilities that have huge payoff to

corporate reputation and increase employee engagement when they are positive.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Despite the growth in the need for transparent, trustworthy, and accurate communications about corporate social responsibility in recent years, Rivers State University and the University of Port Harcourt appear not to have come in terms with coherent and integrated strategies around these CSR in accordance with International Standard. Yet increasingly, the both institutions of learning are of the thinking that they are doing well CSR wise. University of Port Harcourt for example, is operating a partial CSR system given its focus on external CSR, a reality that may not be unconnected to why the institution often has altercation with students who are the most critical stakeholders of the citadel of learning. Rivers State University which attempts to run both external and internal CSR especially after it started given members of staff Christmas bonus still falls short of adequate publications of its CSR efforts. The researcher observes that the school's magazine production is not regular and that was why Strand, (2008) noted that communication professionals need to recognize that engagement means interaction, reporting, not simply one way communication: when organizations begin to pursue stakeholder engagement strategies, they need to be aware that they are sharing information that they think is relevant and important which must be taken seriously to encourage continues reliance and trust of the organization by stakeholders.

Ultimately, for communications to reflect the desired authenticity that can overcome the widespread skepticism that underlies organizational settings today, performance on social and environmental

issues has to be linked to its reporting and communications to elicit trust, confidence and reliance of stakeholders on the University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University. We have tried to make it clear that constituencies in different sectors need to be dealt with authentically and by developing engaged and ongoing relationships rather than through one-way, one-time communication strategies only when issues arise. Particularly when stakeholders operate in sectors with values different than those of business, it is essential that the business engage in person over time to understand those values, the perceptions that, for example, University of Port Harcourt or Rivers State University, other-sector leaders have about the institution, and where issues and problems might arise.

Thinking holistically about the institution's corporate citizenship, understanding what stage of development the University is in, fully articulating and implementing the Universities' values throughout the campuses and beyond. Valuechain is a necessary component of an effective communications strategy. That is because only with an effective and authentic strategy with elegant practices, and a workable model that actually incorporates corporate responsibility integrally. Achieving this level of integration involves the communications professional, along with the corporate responsibility officer, and other key functional leaders within the university in an ongoing strategic process of change for the institution that attempts to create internal coherence in a value- and values-added fashion.

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