

Challenges Facing Corporate Communication in Public Universities in Kenya

Jessee Mutugi Munyi

Dr. Christine Atieno Peter

University Embu Chuka University

Department Of Humanities

Department Of Humanities

P.O.Box 6 -60100,Embu P.O. Box 109, Chuka

ABSTRACT

In the management world today, it's widely accepted that the future of any organization critically depends on how it is viewed by key stakeholders. Several research studies have shown that corporate communication when effectively used can help organizations acquire goodwill to operate among their stakeholders. The bulk of these studies, however have been conducted in business organizations, government ministries and parastatals. There have been few studies investigating the effectiveness of corporate communication in academic institutions yet the phenomenon of lack of the goodwill granted by stakeholders. The study sought to investigate the challenges facing corporate communication as a management tool in public Universities in Kenya. The study was guided by the Legitimacy theory, Stakeholder theory and the Stakeholder Saliency Model. The scope of the study was four public universities in Kenya. The target population for the study was 2040 administrative staff working in public universities in Kenya where a sample size of 334 administrative staff was used. The objective of the study was to: explore the challenges facing corporate communication as a management tool in Public Universities. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Primary data was collected through use of semi-structured questionnaires. Additionally, interview guides were used to get insights from students and external publics. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis which involved identification and classifying findings based on themes. The study found that a number of challenges were hindering corporate communication including. failure by Universities to measure communication for both internal and external stakeholders, failure by Universities to take into account contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions, lack of involvement of stakeholders when implementing organizational change and lack of inducting new employees on communication skills, Universities have not put in place stakeholder communication strategies and communication policies, communication offices are under-funded making execution of communication plans a major challenge and most Universities are yet to fully embrace social media platforms by collecting statistics on their utilization in order to inform decision making. Furthermore, social media policies have not been formulated and implemented in most Universities.

Date of Submission: 10-03-2021

Date of Acceptance: 25-03-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

In the management world today, it's widely believed that the future of any organization critically depends on how it is viewed by stakeholders including members of the community in which it operates (Cornelissen, 2012). The objective of building, maintaining and protecting an organization's reputation is the core task of corporate communications.

Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) and other senior executives nowadays consider protecting their organizations' reputation to be critical and view it as one of their most important strategic objectives. This has prompted organizations to be concerned about their public profile and the need to manage communication strategically because of the possible consequences for their reputation (Steyn, 2000; Wahome, 2005; Money & Schepers, 2007; Cornelissen, 2008; Epure & Baicu, 2010).

Contemporary organizations increasingly realize that they need to communicate with their stakeholders to develop and protect their reputations (Burke, 1999). A range of stakeholder initiatives and schemes have sprung up in recent years at the industry, national and transnational levels, for example the UN Global Compact Initiative, principle 8 which requires organizations to undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility and ensure transparency and unbiased dialogue with stakeholders; the Global Reporting Initiative which helps organizations understand and communicate the impact of business on critical sustainability issues, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Guidelines for Multinational

Companies (Cornelissen, 2012). These initiatives and schemes emphasize the wider responsibilities of organizations to all stakeholders and society at large. Stakeholder management has profound implications for corporate communication and requires that managers think strategically about their organizations and about how they can effectively communicate with stakeholders.

The now widespread adoption of the stakeholder perspective in management marks a move away from the neo-classical economic theory which suggests that the purpose of organizations is to make profits for their shareholders, and that only by doing so can a business contribute to wealth for itself as well as society. In recent times however, the social economic theory has suggested, in contrast, that the notion of accountability in fact extends to other groups besides shareholders who are considered to be important for the continuity of the organization (Money & Schepers, 2007; Cornelissen, 2012).

Stakeholders are also increasingly demanding insight and information from organizations (Hartman & Lenk, 2001; Konuk, 2016). The new media landscape has added further pressures, with everyone communicating about organizations and with critical journalists looking for gaps and discrepancies in corporate messages (Aerts & Cormier, 2006). Decisions and actions of companies are increasingly put under keen scrutiny (Cornelissen, 2008, 2012). The rise of citizen journalism has also put modern day organizations under round the clock watch by their publics (Meijer & Thaens, 2010; Kiprop, 2015).

The number of Universities in Kenya has grown (30 public chartered universities, 5 Public University Constituent Colleges, 18 private chartered Universities, 5 private university constituent colleges and 13 Institutions with letters of interim authority) and more Universities are now found among local communities (Commission for University Education, 2017). It's not uncommon to find a University in any part of Kenya and more communities interact with and affect the operations of Public Universities in their locality. University managers are also more within reach and University management has been demystified. Stakeholders have interests in the activities of the Universities and as a result, many of these Universities have found themselves facing conflict situations with stakeholders especially communities within which they operate and protests by their staff and students Mamuli, Mutsotso & Namasaka (2013).

In 2015, management wrangles brought the University of Nairobi in the limelight through negative stories in the media (Wanyoro, 2015). The succession issue of Kenyatta University's Vice-Chancellor, the long standing land tussle between Kenyatta University and the residents of Kamae village, student unrest following disputed student elections at Chuka University, and the students and staff protests at Laikipia University are among other conflict situations experienced (Temesi, 2012)

The University of Embu faced opposition from elders in the community in 2015 in an attempt to get the then Embu University College chartered and renamed. The Elders wanted the University College to remain a Constituent College of the University of Nairobi and retain its name (Muchiri, 2015). This was probably in ignorance of constitutional and the Commission for University Education's (CUE) requirements for University Colleges which requires them after three years to either: become a full-fledged University, revert to a campus of the mother university or cease to operate (Universities Act, 2012).

In 2015, at least seven public universities witnessed violent protests by students that resulted to destruction of property. University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Technical University of Mombasa, Dedan Kimathi University, Meru University and Karatina University were among those that were hit by students' strikes. Six universities remained closed in parts of the year after rioting students clashed with police. Often, the battles spilled over to the streets, where motorists and businesses were caught up in the chaos experiencing heavy losses (Wanyoro, 2015).

This prompted the then Education Cabinet Secretary (CS) to call for crisis talks over rising unrest in universities with managers of the institutions to identify the causes of the unrest and possible ways of forestalling conflict. In the stakeholders meeting the CS said that the situation was compounded by lack of proper information channels by university administrations to engage stakeholders, inadequate teaching and learning facilities and sheer incompetence of some of the staff and added that irresponsible behavior on the part of some students had aggravated the situation (Wanyoro, 2015; Oduor, 2016).

The Cabinet secretary called for prudent management of universities and adequate involvement of students in the management of universities to end strikes. He also asked universities to adopt a fees policy that would be implemented in consultation with various stakeholders and warned that some vice chancellors had been accused of interfering with student elections. "That is not your business. Let them elect themselves, then involve them in running the university" (Oduor, 2016; Mamuli, Mutsotso & Namasaka, 2013)

In February 2015, The University of Eldoret experienced chaos after politicians leading villagers and local youth stormed the University claiming they were unhappy with the process of hiring and promotions at the University. Similar incidences had been witnessed at Kabianga and Karatina Universities (Munyeki, 2016). Mamuli, Mutsotso & Namasaka (2013) in a study to investigate the influence of communication on management practices at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya found that poor communication

among various actors within the university community had been identified as a contributing factor to conflict situations that characterize universities in Africa. Anyakoha, Uzuegbunam, & Ezieke (1995) & Mamuli et al, (2013) concur that African Universities are characterized by internal conflict including those between administrators and academic staff.

Anyakoha, Uzuegbunam, & Ezieke (1995) stated that some of the conflicts often lead to work stoppage or even closure of universities and they stemmed from poor communication. Anyakoha et al. (1995) emphasizes that Universities are successful primarily because of their teaching and research, not because of their management, but good management can, over time, provide the conditions in which teaching and research flourish, just as, more usually, poor management can undermine teaching and research and ultimately lead to institutional decline. One essential characteristic of successful universities is the speed and effectiveness of communication necessary between different organs. Shattock (2003) asserted that in an inter-university competitive environment, how a single staff vacancy is filled or whether a particular allocation of equipment grant is made can have strategic importance for the university's long term performance.

Despite the importance attributed to an organization's reputation, the role and contribution of corporate communication is still not fully understood. In some organizations, communication practitioners feel undervalued, their strategic input into decision-making is compromised and senior managers and CEOs feel powerless because they simply do not understand the events that are taking place in the organization's environment and how these events can affect the company's operations and profits (Pincus, J D, Rayfield, B., & Ohl, C.M., 1994; Cornelissen, 2012).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication and Corporate Governance

Corporate governance has become a crucial issue in the agenda of executives and communication practitioners necessitated by developments in management including the increasing information demanded of organisations, sophisticated stakeholders and increased legal pressure (Sparkes, 2003; Cornelissen, 2012). Scholars agree that a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics is key to organizational success and executives have to develop a management culture of service to different stakeholders (Sparkes, 2003; Cornelissen, 2004; Fombrun & Riel, 2007).

Money & Schepers (2007) pointed out a new corporate governance paradigm; from a shareholder-based approach to a stakeholder-based approach. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that "corporate governance involves a set of relationships between a company's management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders" (OECD, 2004 p. 22, 28). OECD focuses on the principles of good corporate governance that is transparency and the role of stakeholders. Beyond legal requirements in several countries, corporate governance refers to an engagement of managers with stakeholder groups (Barley, 2007). Recent happenings between Public Universities and their stakeholders in Kenya however point to a lack of favourable relations, communication and engagement with stakeholders.

Organizations are required to ensure; stakeholder mapping, a policy on management of stakeholder relationships, documentation of stakeholders' interests, expectations and their power to influence organizational operations and that reputation of organizations and linkage with stakeholders is a regular item of Board agenda (PSC & SCAC, 2015). Events in Kenyan Public Universities however, suggest a lack of awareness of stakeholders' environment and clear policy on and contribution of corporate communication as management tool for stakeholder relations.

2.2 The Strategic Function of Corporate Communication

Dolphin (2000) in a historical study on directors of corporate communications in British organizations found that corporate communication has been an increasingly important function. However, little has been published on the role and function of corporate communication executives. Corporate communication literature identifies two predominant roles of the communication practitioner: the manager and the technician (Broom & Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1984; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Steyn, B., Mateboho, G & Aské, G. 2001).

Toth, Serini, Wright & Emig (1998) identified a third role named the agency profile, since the set of activities seemed to be managerial in nature. It covered counseling; research; programming decisions; communicating with clients, peers and subordinates; handling correspondence and phone calls and making media contacts. No technical activities featured in this role. Steyn (2000) concurred with these academics on the existence of the third role.

Steyn (2000) conceptualized and empirically verified three roles for the corporate communication practitioner as one; the strategist— role at the top management level of an organisation which gathers strategic information on stakeholders and issues from the external environment by means of environmental scanning and feeds this strategic intelligence into the organisation's strategy formulation processes. This represents corporate communication's contribution to strategic decision making.

The second role was that of the manager; a departmental or functional level role of an organisation which develops corporate communication strategy. It entails identifying key strategic issues, considering their implications for strategic stakeholders and determining what should be communicated to solve a problem or capitalise on the opportunity presented. They formulate communication goals and develop strategic communication plans based on the corporate communication strategy and oversee the implementation of communication programmes by technicians.

The technician role was the third which is not considered a strategic role, since developing/implementing communication plans or programmes based on the corporate communication strategy is regarded as a role at the micro level. It is implemented through activities such as producing audio-visual materials for presentations, generating publicity e.g. writing media releases, keeping a media clipping service, editing corporate communication materials such as speeches or the annual report, writing articles for the organisation's publications and organising events (Steyn, 2000).

Corporate Communication researchers (Brody, 1985; Van Ruler, A., Moss, D., MacManus, T., & Vercic, D, 1997) have concluded that corporate communication practitioners in managerial positions still focus on daily routines and technical procedures. This was substantiated in South Africa by Steyn (2000) in a study amongst 103 chief executives. Although CEOs in this study indicated their expectations for senior practitioners to play strategic and managerial roles, their perceptions were that many of these practitioners engaged mainly in technical activities.

The source of responsibility and to whom the communication practitioner reports was also not clear. European practitioners were still struggling to attain positions of management in their organizations. Pincus, Rayfield, & Ohl, C.M. (1994) stated that perhaps to function effectively, the communications director should be aided by high visibility and status throughout the organization. Wright, (1995) stated that effective practitioners are those who are part of the management thus ensuring that the link with top management thinking is as close as possible because of their particular knowledge and skills.

These studies point to a lack of clear strategic role behavior of the corporate communication practitioner. This study therefore sought to explore the role behavior of Corporate Communication practitioners in Public Universities in Kenya.

2.3 Strategic Communication

The reputational position that an organization aims to create and maintain with its stakeholders requires communication strategies to guide specific communication events and programmes. A communication strategy is developed in interactions between corporate communication professionals and management to agree on the reputational position that the organization aims to achieve in the minds of stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2012).

Wahome (2005) in a study on the role of Corporate Communications Strategies as used by Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) found that Corporate Communications Strategies have strong impact in transforming organizations. The study confirmed that KCB used multifaceted Corporate Communications Strategies, which contributed to its turnaround. The study recommended the need for organizations to recognize and make use of multifaceted Corporate Communication Strategies which should target both internal and external publics as this will ensure an all-inclusive corporate communication process, which will motivate all to support the process, thus guaranteeing positive results. Despite the importance attributed to strategic communication no study has been carried out in Kenyan Public Universities about strategic communication. This study sought to establish the effectiveness of communication strategies in Kenyan Public Universities.

2.4 Research and Measurement

Gary & Balmer (1998) found that for communication strategies to be effective, there is need for communication managers to understand dynamics of reputation and image building by measuring any changes in reputation that would be used to inform strategy. When corporate communication is seen to be informed by research, it suggests that it is focused on demands of stakeholders rather than relying on intuition and informal feedback. This improves its credibility and its value among the senior management. This will enable it secure a seat at the decision making table and to make sure that research evidence and information about relations with stakeholders are factored into decision-making processes and into corporate strategies and actions (Fombrum & Van Riel, 2004).

A 2011 survey by the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) found out that Kenyan companies are increasingly investing large amounts of financial resources in the establishment of corporate communication departments. An overwhelming majority of top management in Kenyan companies supported the role of corporate communication in the realization of their companies' strategic objectives. This was echoed by Temesi (2012) who found out that measurement of the role of corporate communication in the organizational growth of any company is important in enhancing its contribution as a key management function. Temesi (2012) recommends that companies identify indicators for monitoring and evaluating the contribution of corporate

communication to the attainment of their organizational goals. These studies show there is lack of monitoring and evaluating of the role of corporate communication in organizational growth which is a major setback to the growth of corporate communication as a management function.

2.5 Internal Corporate Communication

Cornelissen (2004) states that Internal Corporate Communication (ICC), has not attracted substantial research. His study observed that studies have narrowly considered ICC to refer only to few official channels of communication such as internal newsletters, notice boards or staff meetings. Others have defined ICC narrowly as simply a process that goes from top to bottom. Based on this observation, Cornelissen (2004) observes that ICC ought to be taken to refer to the almost constant interactions within the organization that convey meaning. ICC encompasses both overt communication like meetings, memos et cetera, and more casual forms of communication such as gossip, pleasantries and body language.

Cornelissen (2004) suggests further that studies of ICC ought to explore its significance in the organization because it is the building block of organizational culture which is the atmosphere of the organization based on its values, mission and work processes. Effective ICC can go a long way towards building an organizational culture where people work together effectively towards a common goal. Argenti (2009) found that organizations plan for external communication, but often fail to strategically plan their internal corporate communication. In other words, ICC is usually either arbitrary or incomplete and if planned, tends to be planned only in reaction to specific events

2.6. Challenges Facing Corporate Communication Corporate Communications as Intellectual Capital

Nando (2007) proposed the assessment of intellectual capital from a communications perspective which sees the role of communications and communication competence as success factors in organizations. Corporate communication is still understood simply in terms of press releases and media relations, or staff presentation and negotiation skills (Nando, 2007). Communication is however more broad as a function that cuts through and involves the whole organization and comprises both internal communications within the organization and communications with stakeholders.

One of the major strategic challenge faced by organizations today lies in the development of intellectual capital—an asset that is created out of intangible sources of value that are related to staff skills and competencies, as well as stakeholder relations. Intellectual capital is tied in with communication in many ways and therefore it is important that it is studied closely from the point of view of the management and development of organizational communications. The idea of communication capital has however received only a few mentions in research literature (Hartman & Lenk, 2001).

It is increasingly important to see communication as an organization-wide activity managed by communications professionals. Many forms of intellectual capital such as relations, networks, competencies and trust require strong communication skills of staff, while the organization itself must have appropriate communication structures as well as an organizational culture that promotes openness and dialogue (Nando, 2007). Business performance is adversely affected by inadequate communication and poor management, which together create an unmotivating organizational culture. It is no exaggeration to say that a large part of problems in organizations could be avoided by better management of communications (Covey, 2013).

Kupa (2015) in a study on acquisition of verbal skills by employees in state corporations in Kenya revealed that the employees rarely attended trainings and were not inducted in verbal communication skills posing a challenge in acquisition of the skills. Employees however have a positive attitude towards acquisition of communication skills. Respondents agreed that the tasks identified by the organization could also be used to transfer this skill to employees. The study recommended that organizations to ensure that employees were inducted in organizations verbal communication skills.

Communication Competence

Communication competence is crucial to organizational survival because every contact with stakeholders reflects upon the company's brand and reputation. Communication competence is based on knowledge which finds expression in a different kind of organizational asset, namely information and competence (Cornelissen, 2004). (Cornelissen, 2012) qualifies everything in an organization as involving communication. Stakeholders that come into contact with an organization or its representative form opinions and perceptions about the organization. Every such interaction with stakeholders is an opportunity to further the achievement of the organization's objectives. Equally, every interaction between organization and a stakeholder that goes wrong may have adverse effects on the company's brand. Communication competence is required of people working at virtually all levels of the organization.

Nando (2007) states it is the job of communication experts in the organization to strengthen and develop the communication competence of the whole organization through providing training for all members and also to improve and strengthen management's understanding of the role of communication. There has certainly been much improvement in many respects, but overall the development of communication and marketing competence as an organization-wide effort is still very much in its infancy (Nando, 2007).

Varttala & Tanja (2010) in a study of working graduates in Finland reported challenges in specialized English terminology and varied communication situations. The study suggested the key to business can reside in good support materials that employees can resort to and in the ability to react quickly and creatively when unexpected communication needs arise. These include corporate training materials, in-house instructions and organizational support including printed and electronic resources that employees have access to in their work which could be used for support in routine tasks or when sudden needs arise.

Existing literature points to a gap in communication competence among employees in most organizations. Varttala & Tanja (2010) in interviews with communication directors emphasized the need to improve employees' communication, language and culture skills which are taken as self-evident professional requirements. Each employee must be able to make the crucial link between communication, corporate goals and reputation.

Top Management Commitment

A common and rarely questioned reasoning in academia argues that the rising impact of reputation, public trust, legitimacy, and authenticity in the business world leads to an increasing importance of corporate communications (Cradden, 2005; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Carroll, 2013). However, empirical research indicates a gap in the perceived importance of corporate communication in organizations. Zerfass (2013) in study of 2,027 professionals working in communication departments across Europe, a large majority (87%) stated that communication has become more important for their organizations, but only 14.8% reported increased budgets compared with other functions (Zerfass et al., 2013).

This gap is usually explained by a lack of power of communication departments and professionals. Researchers and professional associations alike argue that by communication managers having a seat at the board or being a member of the dominant coalition would solve the problem (EACD, 2013).

Murray & White (2005) interviewed 14 CEOs and chairpersons in the UK. The respondents reported that communication professionals contribute to corporate success through ensuring that decision makers are aware of the views and sensitivities of stakeholders, thus enabling better board-level decision making. However, this was mainly wishful thinking. Strategic communication was mainly seen as media relations. Arthur W. Page Society (2007, 2013) commissioned two subsequent, qualitative surveys among the CEOs of up to 30 large companies in the USA and other countries.

The studies showed that CEOs see a rising value of reputation for their organizations (Arthur W. Page Society, 2007, 2013). The heads of communications, are "more valuable than ever" and act as trusted advisers through monitoring or anticipating stakeholder reactions and public opinion are drivers of corporate success. They report that active listening has become a reality. When talking about the objectives and priorities of strategic communication, many CEOs focus on employees and internal communication.

Opiyo (2006) identified another gap in that merging of Corporate communications within other managerial functions not only substantially reduces the potential and impact of corporate communication but tends to reduce the status of corporate communication to a mere function of the branch in which the role is situated.

Communication Budgets

Zondi & Koradia (2015) investigated challenges and issues of corporate communication in South African organizations and found that the quality of Corporate Communication is largely dependent and constrained by budgets. Similar findings were reported in a survey among communicators in Europe (EACD, 2015).

To ascertain the value of corporate communication in Chinese companies, (Feng & Goodman, 2011) asked respondents whether their department would be the first to bear the blunt of corporate downsizing. 72.9% reported that their department would be impacted "neither sooner nor later" than other departments. The literature shows that organizations have not fully recognized the importance of corporate communication and do not allocate adequate budget for it.

Measuring Communication

A study by European Association of Communication Directors (2015) on effectiveness of corporate communication in organizations stated that in order to establish a clear picture of communication impact within an organization, measurement of communication needs to be undertaken to determine outputs and desired

outcomes, track the effectiveness of communication channels and look at the content—whether it is received, understood and prompts action among stakeholders.

Melcrum (2004) states that, of the communication practitioners sampled, 66 percent did not have a measurement strategy in place. Kalla (2005) also found out that most communicators did not recognize a connection between communication performance and organizational goals.

Wambua (2013) in a study on measurement and evaluation of interventions by public relations agencies in Kenya found that agencies are conscious about the importance and the need to measure and evaluate communications. However, lack of formal guidelines, standards, expertise and clear understanding of the role and value of PR by the various corporate clients emerged strongly as some of the factors that pose a challenge and lead to failure or weak undertakings of measurement and evaluation of PR interventions in Kenya. Media monitoring appeared to be the main approach employed by agencies to measurement and evaluation PR work by agencies.

In this era of increased accountability, communicating the results of PR programmes to the management is critical (Eisenmann, Paine, Pestana, Walton, Weiner (2012)). Too many PR programmes get eliminated or have their budgets severely cut back because no “value” could be attached to them (Excerpt, Workbook of PR Pundits, 1999:1). Watson & Noble (2007) argue that if PR practitioners are to become advisors at strategic levels in organizations, then a major requirement on them will be their ability to quantify the value of the advice that they offer.

In Kenya, not much of significance seems to have been done in as far as measurement and evaluation of communication interventions is concerned. Rather than measure impact, practitioners in Kenya tend to measure outputs, including the number of brochures distributed, number and size of events, clicks on websites and the amount of media space and airtime. PR practitioners should provide facts and figures to support their strategic counsel, without which, the counsel remains a mere opinion and not of value (Tikolo, 2011).

The Digital Challenge

The communication landscape is becoming more complex, both in terms of channels as well as how to manage, engage with and impact stakeholders. The rise of social, digital and mobile communications is the standout change that communication departments have had to deal with. The biggest change is the higher speed and transparency as a consequence of digitization. The media always want faster and more detailed answers and keeping pace while ensuring quality of engagement and consistency of messages is a challenge to communicators.

CorpComms Magazine (2013) in an online survey on digital challenges faced by communicators among 450 communication managers showed that a communicator has an armory of tools and platforms available to engage with stakeholders. From Twitter to Instagram and blogs, the range of ways to spread a corporate message has moved far beyond a static press release distributed to traditional news outlets. Communicators can now bypass traditional media and talk directly to stakeholders ensuring their message is delivered intact, without distortion or misinterpretation. Many multi-national organizations have already seized this chance by building in-house editorial teams that create content produced to the standards of leading media organizations and designed to engage partners (CorpComms Magazine, 2013).

The challenge for many organizations is to generate content on social media that will engage followers and prompt action. Such opportunities bring challenges. One of the directors stated that there is need to rethink PR strategy to meet the digital fast environment. Lack of resource, time and money are seen as the three most common hurdles faced when tackling a digital communications strategy CorpComms Magazine (2013)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret data for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2002). Descriptive surveys are conducted to establish the nature of existing condition (Gay, 1992). It can be used when collecting information about people’s opinions, habits or any variety of social issues (Orodho, 2002). Since the events have already occurred, the researcher merely selects the relevant variables for analysis of their relationships (Kahn & Best, 1993). Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) give the purpose of descriptive research as determining and reporting the way things are. The design was appropriate for this study as the researcher sought to establish the role of corporate communication on legitimacy of universities without manipulation of variables.

Population and Sample Size

The target population was all the 2,040 administrative staff working in the thirty three (33) Public Universities—thirty (30) Chartered Universities and three(3) public university constituent colleges operating in Kenya as listed by the Commission for University Education (CUE).

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study used the multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage involved the selection of Universities from which data was collected while the second stage involved the selection of the respondents to participate in the study. The researcher started by randomly selecting four (4) public universities—Kenyatta University, Laikipia University, Rongo University and the Technical University of Mombasa to represent 10% of the 33 public Universities in Kenya. This was in line with the recommendation of Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who recommended 10% as adequate sample size from a given population. In the second phase, the researcher selected respondents from the pool of administrative staff working in the Universities.

Three variables usually will need to be specified to determine the appropriate sample size: the level of precision (sampling error), the level of confidence or risk, and the degree of variability in the attributes being measured (Kumar, 2005). A simplified formula using these three variables was provided by Yamane (1967) to calculate sample sizes as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where

n = sample size

N = Total population

*e*² = Level of precision (sampling error)

Assuming a rule of thumb as suggested by Ngulube (2010) of 95 percent confidence level, degree of variability of 0.5 and 0.05 sampling error the above formula was used to produce a sample size of 334 respondents as shown below:

Target population = 2040 Administrative staff

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Sample size } n &= \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \\ &= 2040 / (1 + 2040 * 0.05^2) = 334.426 \\ &= 334 \text{ Administrative Staff} \end{aligned}$$

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) contend that a researcher can purposefully select respondents he/she considers to have the required information or with capability to provide credible responses. Therefore, the researcher selected additional respondents to participate in interview so that they could provide additional information regarding corporate communication in the University. These respondents were external publics and students. For the external publics, the researcher purposively selected 20 opinion leaders (five for each University) including: Government Officers, Religious Leaders, Hostel Owners, Members of the press and Suppliers. Five student leaders were also purposively selected from each University to make a total of 20 students. The respondents selected were believed to be conversant with corporate communication practiced by the University and were therefore in a position to provide credible responses necessary to make valid conclusions regarding the study objectives. Table 3.1 depicts the overall sample size used in the study.

Table 3.1: Sample Size

	Administrative Staff	Students	External Publics
Target Population	2,040	-	-
Sample size	334	20	20

Research Instruments

Questionnaire

Primary data was collected by use of semi-structured questionnaires. Questionnaires are suitable for obtaining important information about the population and are said to reach large number of subjects who are able to read and write independently (Orodho, 2004). Gay (1992) maintains that questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views or opinions and also make suggestions. For the closed-ended questions the Five – Level Likert scale was used. The open-ended questions were also added to capture qualitative data from the respondents. The instrument comprised four sections. Section A sought demographic information about the respondents. Section B sought information about types of corporate communication embraced in Universities. Section C was used to obtain responses regarding challenges facing corporate communication while the last section D sought responses regarding the implication of corporate communication on the legitimacy and license to operate for public universities.

Interview Guide

To get views of the students and external publics in regard to corporate communication in Universities, separate interview guides were used for each group of respondents. Mugenda & Mugenda (2012) contend that an interview guide is an important tool a researcher can use to collect data from respondents by probing them to clarify issues under investigation in order to obtain information that can enrich research findings based on quantitative data as was the case in this study.

Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Questionnaire Response Rate

This research study had a sample size of 334 respondents who were administrative staff working in the four randomly selected Universities which included Kenyatta University, Laikipia University, Rongo University and the Technical University of Mombasa. Out of the total of 334 questionnaires issued, 168 (50.3%) were correctly filled representing a response rate of 50.3 percent of the total number of questionnaires issued. Unreturned questionnaires were 112 representing 33.5 % while the disqualified questionnaires due to incompleteness and inconsistencies were 54 representing 16.2 percent of the total number of issued questionnaires. Table 4.1 represents the summary of the response rate.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Administered questionnaires	334	82.4
Unreturned Questionnaires	112	33.5
Disqualified questionnaires	54	16.2
Returned and correctly filled questionnaires	168	50.3

Source: Survey Data (2018)

According to Babbie (2004), Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) and Saunders *et al.* (2007), a response rate of 50 percent is adequate, a response rate of 60 percent is good, and a response rate of 70 percent is very good. The response rate of 50.3 percent observed in this study was therefore adequate and as such sufficient for further analysis and for drawing conclusions based on the stipulated research objectives.

Demographic Information

The researcher wanted to find out the characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study before making conclusions of the study variables. The items collecting data on these characteristics were contained in section A of the questionnaire that was administered to administrative staff working in the public Universities. Table 4.2 summarizes information on respondents' characteristics.

Table 4.2: Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	80	47.6
Female	88	52.4
Total	168	100
Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 25 years	18	10.7
25 – 35 years	53	31.5
36 – 45 years	56	33.3
46 – 55 years	31	18.5
Over 55 years	10	6
Total	168	100
Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	26	15.5
Diploma	54	32.1
Bachelors degree	68	40.5
Masters degree	20	11.9
PhD	0	0
Total	168	100
Time Worked in Current Position	Frequency	Percent

Less than a Year	24	14.3
1-2 Years	52	31
3-5 Years	55	32.7
Over 5 Years	37	22
Total	168	100
Office	Frequency	Percentage
Admissions	16	9.5
Corporate Communication	17	10.1
Council Matters	13	7.7
Dean of Students	18	10.7
Finance	15	8.9
PC & ISO Office	11	6.5
Procurement	20	11.9
Registrar's Office	15	8.9
University Reception	13	7.7
VC's Office	30	17.9
Total	168	100

Source: Survey Data, 2018

Table 4.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of demographic information relating to the respondents. From the table, female respondents had the highest percentage rate of 52.4 percent while male respondents were 47.6%. This indicated that most administrators working in public Universities are female. The slight difference in the percentage and frequency of respondents in terms of sex additionally implied that there was a likelihood obtaining balanced findings.

In terms of age, the highest percentage of respondents working as administrators were aged between 36 and 45 years with 33.3% followed by those aged between 25 and 35 years with a percentage of 31.5%. The number of respondents aged between 46 and 55 years were 31 representing 18.5% of the total respondents. Those aged below 25 years were 18 representing 10.7% of the total respondents while those who were over 50 years were the least with a score of 6%. The implication of these findings are that most University administrators are middle aged necessitating the need to come up with corporate communication strategies majorly focusing on this group as they constitute the bulk of the administrators likely to handle corporate communication in public Universities.

In terms of education, majority of respondents were Bachelor's degree (40.5%) and Diploma holders (32.1%). The respondents with certificate level of education were 26 representing 15.5% of the total number of respondents while those with Master's degree represented 11.9% of the total number of respondents. There was no respondent with a PhD degree.

In terms of length of time worked in the current position, majority of respondents (32.7%) had worked in their current position for a period ranging between 3 to 5 years. Accordingly, 31% of the respondents had worked in their current position for between 1 and 2 years while those who had worked in their current position for over 5 years were 37 representing 22.0% of the respondents. Finally, 14.3% of the respondents had worked in their current position for less than a year. The implications of these findings are that there could have been regular inter-departmental transfers within Universities which made it impossible for administrators to stay for long in a particular office. It could also be possible that there was high turn-over amongst administrators, something that could adversely affect corporate communication as prolonged stay in one position comes with additional experience in doing tasks pertaining an office.

In terms of office worked, majority of the respondents were drawn from Vice Chancellors' offices (17.9%) followed closely by procurement (11.9%), Dean of students (10.7), corporate communication (10.1%) and admissions (9.5%). Respondents drawn from finance departments represented 8.9% of the total respondents which was same case with those drawn from the offices of registrars. University Receptions and council matters had the lowest respondents with each having 7.7% of the total number of respondents. The implication of these findings is that the study obtained balanced findings due to representations of all offices where corporate communication between the University and both internal and external stakeholders is likely to take place.

Challenges Facing Corporate Communication Used in Universities

The study sought to find out how various challenges influence the practice of corporate communication in public universities. The following challenges were explored: corporate communication as intellectual capital, communication competence, top management commitment, communication budget, measuring communication and the digital challenge. Each of these challenges was operationalized using a number of items on the

questionnaire. To compute the aggregate index of each challenge, arithmetic mean was used as recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (2012) and as used by Mugo, Muathe & Waithaka (2016).

Corporate Communication as Intellectual Capital

Intellectual capital is an asset that is created out of intangible sources of value that are related to staff skills and competencies, as well as stakeholder relations. Intellectual capital is tied in with communication in many ways and therefore it is important that it is studied closely from the point of view of the management and development of organizational communications (Hartman & Lenk, 2001).

The study sought to establish whether corporate communication was being treated as an intellectual capital likely to give an organization competitive edge over others. Scholars have argued that corporate communication plays a strategic role in organizations and as such should be treated as intellectual capital. If the challenge of using corporate communication as intellectual capital is not addressed, the organization is likely not to communicate its identity to those audiences or constituencies that are important to the organization in such a way that they develop and maintain a positive and favourable view of the organization (Pupavac, Maršanić & Babić, 2009).

As shown in the Table 4.5, five items were used on the questionnaire (Section C) to capture data on corporate communication as intellectual capital based on a five point Likert scale.

Table 4.3: Corporate Communication as Intellectual Capital

Corporate Communication as Intellectual Capital					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The University takes into account the contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions	168	1.00	5.00	3.2679	1.56868
The University considers stakeholder perspectives in management decisions.	168	3.00	5.00	4.3155	.75137
The University provides staff with adequate information about itself to deal with unexpected communication needs	168	1.00	5.00	2.1607	1.42825
The number of personnel dedicated to Corporate Communication/Public Relations is adequate	168	2.00	5.00	2.9702	.77711
The university provides an opportunity for feedback from stakeholders during organizational change	168	1.00	5.00	1.8631	1.03198

Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.5, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent that the University takes into account the contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions as shown by the mean score of 3.2679. This indicates that corporate communication was not deeply integrated in governance of Universities, a challenge that harbor the realization of benefits of corporate communication. However, majority of the respondents agreed to a large extent (mean score = 4.3155) that the University considered stakeholder perspectives in management decisions indicating that although communication practitioners’ views were not considered to a large extent, views of stakeholders were being considered in making management decisions. Moving forward, it is prudent that communication experts are considered in governance of organizations as they are better placed in collecting stakeholder’s views which could drive organizations towards enhancing the goodwill won from the stakeholders.

On whether, the University provides staff with adequate information about itself to deal with unexpected communication needs, most of the sampled respondents agreed to a small extent (mean score = 2.1607) indicating that this was still a major challenge likely to affect which and how communication is done by University staff.

Asked whether, the number of personnel dedicated to Corporate Communication/Public Relations is adequate, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean score = 2.9702) that there was adequate personnel. This indicated that sampled Universities had not done enough in having adequate personnel for corporate communication, which could be a major challenge in having corporate communication being harnessed as intellectual capital to enhance the goodwill of the University.

From Table 4.5, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent that their University provides an opportunity for feedback from stakeholders during organizational change with a mean of 1.8631. This means

organizational change whenever planned or being implemented risked destroying the goodwill of the University due to lack of involvement of the stakeholders.

Communication Competence

Communication competence is based on knowledge which finds expression in a different kind of organizational asset, namely information and competence (Cornelissen, 2004). Communication competence is required of people working at virtually all levels of the organization since interaction with stakeholders is an opportunity to further the achievement of the organization’s objectives and every interaction between organization and a stakeholder that goes wrong may have adverse effects on the company’s brand.

The study sought to establish whether communication competence was a challenge likely to affect the practice of corporate communication in the Public Universities. Based on a five point Likert scale, four items shown in Table 4.6 were included in the questionnaire with the descriptive statistics:

Table 4.4: Communication Competence

Communication Competence					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The university officers dealing with Corporate Communication are well trained for the job	168	3.00	5.00	4.3155	.75137
The University inducts new employees on communication skills	168	1.00	4.00	1.8333	1.12493
The University promptly responds to information sought by stakeholders	168	2.00	5.00	3.2560	1.05534
The University keeps stakeholders informed about developments that may affect them in the University	168	1.00	5.00	3.2679	1.56868

Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.6, majority of the respondents agreed to a large extent (mean = 4.3155) that the University officers dealing with Corporate Communication are well trained for the job, which indicates that Universities were keen on recruiting highly qualified staff for corporate communication. However, asked whether their University inducts new employees on communication skills, majority of respondents agreed to a small extent (mean = 1.8333) that this was being done. Universities should, as much as they try to attract competent staff for corporate communication, induct new employees on communication skills as corporate communication is not just a function of the staff in the communication docket.

On whether, the University promptly responds to information sought by stakeholders, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean = 3.2560) indicating that competence in promptness of communication was a challenge affecting corporate communication in the Universities. Additionally, on whether, the University keeps stakeholders informed about developments that may affect them in the University, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean = 3.2679) that this was indeed taking place. This finding shows that Universities should be competent in addressing stakeholders concerns as this is likely to affect the goodwill and favourable relations between Universities and stakeholders.

Based on the qualitative responses that came from the questionnaire, communication departments have an obligation of creating awareness on communication policies and practices since most administrative employees have inadequate communications skills especially with regards to passing information to management, students and external stakeholders. The inadequate orientation of administrative employees results to creation of a workforce that has limited knowledge of the objectives, goals, vision and mission of the respective university. The universities should therefore integrate administration staff into the communication processes through training and induction to ensure that the employees participate effectively in corporate communication and corporate social responsibility activities.

Top Management Commitment

In order to establish whether top management in public Universities was committed to corporate communication, a number of questions were included in the questionnaire as shown in Table 4.7 :

Table 4.5: Top Management Commitment

Top Management Commitment					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The University has stakeholder communication as part of the agenda in management meetings	168	3.00	5.00	4.3155	.75137
The University has a stakeholder communication strategy	168	1.00	5.00	2.3750	1.69072
The University has a stakeholder communication policy in place	168	2.00	5.00	3.2560	1.05534
The University has all external communication controlled in central office	168	1.00	5.00	3.2679	1.56868
The University implements the guidelines for stakeholder communication and engagement stipulated in the Mwongozo	168	4.00	5.00	4.7798	.41565
Top management is committed to implementation of ISO quality management standards	168	5.00	5.00	5.0000	.00000
Implementation of ISO quality management standards has enhanced corporate communication within the University	168	2.00	5.00	3.2560	1.05534

Source: Survey Data, 2018

It is worth noting that majority of the respondents agreed to a large extent (mean = 4.3155) that their University had stakeholder communication as part of the agenda in management meetings. This shows top management of the sampled Universities were doing fairly well in tackling stakeholder communication in their meetings. However, there was a challenge in the sense that majority of respondents agreed to a very small extent that their University had a stakeholder communication strategy (mean = 2.3750). In addition, there was also a challenge of Universities having a stakeholder communication policy in place as indicated by the mean of 3.2560. Additionally, majority of respondents agreed to a small extent that their University had all external communication controlled in central office (3.2679). This shows challenges that have to be dealt with by top management to fully support the realization of goodwill likely to come with top management commitment towards corporate communication.

It should be noted however that Universities were implementing the guidelines for stakeholder communication and engagement stipulated in the Mwongozo as reflected by a majority of the respondents who agreed to a very large extent (mean = 4.7798) that this was happening. This implies that most administration staff members were aware of the university guidelines on the code of governance for State Corporation in Kenya. One respondent from the open ended questions noted “The administration staff in our University is implementing the guidelines as stipulated in the Mwongozo, which to me enhances corporate image of our University”

Again, all the respondents noted that top management in their Universities was committed to implementation of ISO quality management standards (mean = 5.0000) although implementation of ISO quality management standards had enhanced corporate communication within the University to a small extent (mean = 3.2560). Therefore, most of the administration staff members believe that their universities have not effectively implemented all policies of corporate communication as indicated in the guidelines of ISO certification. The benefits of ISO certification should be understood fully for it to be embraced. One student had this to say during the interview, “I hear our University is ISO certified, although nothing much has changed”.

Generally, findings in this section point to a mixed conclusion with regard to top management commitment being a challenge to corporate communication. While evidence of commitment has emerged, there is still a challenge in ensuring that Universities have a stakeholder communication strategy and communication policy, issues that call for high level of commitment by management.

Communication Budget

The study sought to establish whether budgetary allocation was hindering corporate communication in public Universities. The finding on communication budget as a challenge to corporate communication is shown in Table 4.8:

Table 4.6: Communication Budget

Communication Budget					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The University allocates adequate budget for corporate communication	168	1.00	5.00	3.2679	1.56868

Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.8, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean = 3.2679) that their University was allocating adequate budget for corporate communication. This implies that most universities do not allocate enough financial resources to their corporate communication department to facilitate research and development as well as acquisition of the important resources that facilitate effective communication. The limited finances contribute towards ineffective policies, training and orientation of current and new employees on existing corporate communication processes. Asked how the University can use corporate communication to win goodwill of stakeholders, one respondent had this to say “the moment our management will realize the importance of corporate communication and start allocating enough financial resources to it, that’s when we can seriously talk of the goodwill”. Therefore, for Universities to gain the goodwill that goes with corporate communication, increased budgetary allocation to communication department is of paramount importance.

Measuring Communication

The study sought to find out if communication impacts were being evaluated in the Public Universities. Measuring communication is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights key issues and pinpoint critical areas for action. Additionally, measuring communication is important in establishing a baseline from which to measure progress and success which comes from an initial assessment of problem areas. Measurement of communication can also show the numbers behind your efforts, document progress and help leaders understand how and why to make smart decisions that will ultimately help you achieve your business and communication outcomes. To get views on this challenge likely to hinder corporate communication in public Universities, two items were included in the data collection instrument with the findings being as shown in Table 4.9 shown below:

Table 4.7: Measuring Communication

Measuring Communication					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The University measures impacts of communication with internal stakeholders	168	2.00	5.00	3.5655	1.10870
The University measures impacts of communication with external stakeholders	168	2.00	4.00	2.6786	.84995

Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.9, majority of the respondents agreed that to a large extent (mean =3.5655) their University was measuring impacts of communication with internal stakeholders. However, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean = 2.6786) that their University was measuring impacts of communication with external stakeholders. This indicates that Universities still have to enhance their measuring of communication particularly communication with their external stakeholders.

Communication measurement can find out if key stakeholders have received and understood key messages Universities want to deliver, and/or if the channels used are effective enough at delivering those key messages. The results can help Universities modify and focus future communications, while also reinforcing to their stakeholders that they care enough to listen and take action on their feedback. The bottom line is, what gets measured is what gets done. This was echoed by Temesi (2012) who found out that measurement of the role of corporate communication in the organizational growth of any company is important in enhancing its contribution as a key management function. As recommended by Temesi (2012) Universities should therefore identify indicators for monitoring and evaluating the contribution of corporate communication to the attainment of their organizational goals.

The Digital Challenge

The study sought to establish if current trends in technology particularly social media pose a challenge to corporate communication. The findings are captured in Table 4.10 :

Table 4.8: The Digital Challenge

The Digital Challenge					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The University has mainstreamed Social media as a corporate Communication tool	168	2.00	5.00	3.3274	.60435
The University monitors what stakeholders say about it on social media	168	1.00	5.00	3.0536	1.59061
The University carries out statistics on Likes, shares, tweets and viral spread on stories about it on social media	168	2.00	5.00	3.2679	.99398
The University considers the statistics from social media in decision making	168	1.00	5.00	2.1607	1.42825
The University has a specialist communication officer managing its social media plat forms.	168	2.00	5.00	3.2560	1.05534
The University has a social media policy	168	1.00	5.00	2.6131	1.54348

Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.10, Majority of the respondents agreed that to a small extent (mean =3.3274) their University had mainstreamed Social media as a corporate Communication tool. This is evidence of a challenge considering the immense opportunities that have been afforded by social media for communicating with organizational stakeholders. Additionally, majority of the respondents agreed to a small extent (mean =3.0536) that their University was monitoring what stakeholders say about it on social media. If this is not monitored messages likely to adversely affect the University’s image might spread unnoticed and by the time discovery is made, the damage might be too serious to reverse. For instance, from the interviews conducted, one student leader noted, “we use Facebook to vent our frustrations when management refuses to listen to our concerns”. If such messages remain on Facebook and are not dealt with promptly, they can escalate to strikes as one student leader noted, “...with social media today, organizing a strike is very easy...”

As shown in Table 4.10, majority of the respondents agreed that to a small extent (mean = 3.2679) their University was carrying out statistics on Likes, shares, tweets and viral spread on stories about it on social media. Further, majority of the respondents agreed to a very small extent (mean=2.1607) that their University was considering the statistics from social media in decision making. Similarly, most of the respondents agreed that to a small extent (mean = 3.2560) their University had a specialist communication officer managing its social media platforms. Moreover, most of the respondents agreed that to a small extent (mean = 2.6131) their University had a social media policy to guide issues regarding official communication in the University by use of social media platforms. Since social media is fast becoming a de facto channel for corporations to share information with their stakeholders for diverse business functions such as marketing and sales, customer support, recruitment and retention, product innovation and strategic communication, Universities should move to overcome this challenge (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011).

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Understanding corporate communication by University top management, employees, students and external stakeholders in public universities is essential to effective attainment of goodwill and a license to operate of the Universities from stakeholders. The study sought to establish the major challenges facing corporate communication as a management tool in public Universities. A number of challenges were found to hinder corporate communication. Key among these challenges are, failure by Universities to measure communication for both internal and external stakeholders, failure by Universities to take into account contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions, lack of involvement of stakeholders when implementing organizational change and lack of inducting new employees on communication skills. Additionally, Universities have not put in place stakeholders communication strategy and stakeholders communication policies. Corporate communication offices are also under-funded making execution of communication plans a major challenge for Universities. Additionally, most Universities are yet to fully embrace social media platforms by collecting statistics on their utilization in order to inform decision making. Furthermore, social media policies have not been formulated and implemented in most Universities.

From the findings of this study, corporate communication plays a pivotal role in enhancing the goodwill of Universities with its stakeholders. However, for this to happen, multi-thronged approach to implementation is required in bringing contribution of all involved stakeholders may they be internal, external and University management. In addition, budgetary allocation needs to be enhanced for communication departments. The Universities should also continuously engage in evaluating the effectiveness of

communication in order to determine if indeed the Universities are gaining from investments in corporate communication as far as enhancement of their goodwill is concerned. The challenge of new forms of communication brought about by advancement in technology and the internet must also be dealt with. Particularly comprehensive policies governing use of social media for corporate communication should be put in place by the public universities.

The study sought to address the following research question: What are the challenges facing corporate communication as a management tool in public Universities. Based on this question, the study found out that, failure by Universities to measure communication for both internal and external stakeholders, failure by Universities to take into account contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions, lack of involvement of stakeholders when implementing organizational change and lack of inducting new employees on communication skills were major hindrances for corporate communication. Additionally, Universities have not put in place stakeholder communication strategies and stakeholder communication policies. Corporate communication offices are under-funded making execution of communication plans a major challenge for Universities. Furthermore, most Universities are yet to fully embrace social media platforms by collecting statistics on their utilization in order to inform decision making. Besides, social media policies have not been formulated and implemented in most Universities.

V. CONCLUSION

Corporate communication has a role to play in enhancing the goodwill of the Universities. This however calls for identification and dealing with challenges likely to affect implementation of corporate communication policies and strategies. Corporate communications should be seen and utilized as intellectual capital. Universities must achieve this by taking into account contribution of communication practitioners in governance decisions, providing adequate information about themselves to staff so that they can deal with unexpected communication needs. Universities must also strive to ensure the number of personnel dedicated to corporate communication is adequate and highly qualified to deal with all matters relating to both internal and external stakeholders.

Top management commitment is also paramount if corporate communication is to yield goodwill for Universities. This calls for Universities' top management being involved in formulation of communication policies and strategies. Additionally, the management should ensure communication is not haphazardly done by establishing communication offices and adequately facilitating them with required financial resources and manpower.

Given the rapid technological evolution which has seen exponential growth in social media platforms, Universities should ensure mainstreaming of social media platforms as corporate tools for communication. Universities should continuously monitor what stakeholders say about it on social media and should carry out statistics such as likes, shares, tweets and viral spread on stories about them on social media with a view to enhancing decision making processes. Additionally, Universities should consider having specialist communication officers managing their social media platforms to deal with issues promptly. Finally, every University should have a social media policy to guide on utilization of the platforms for the right purposes in order to gain positively from the platforms.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Aerts. W, and Cormier, D. (2006): The Association between Media Legitimacy and Corporate Environmental Communication. *Academy of Management Journal* 21(5)
- [2]. Anyakoha, E, Uzuegbunam, A. & Ezieke, K. (1995). Channels of Communication between Students and Administration in Nigerian Universities: Obstacles, Enhancement Strategies and Implications for University Governance. Research Report, Social \Science Council of Nigeria/Ford Foundation National Research Programme on University Governance in Nigeria.
- [3]. Arthur W. Page Society (2007), *The Authentic Enterprise*. Arthur W. Page Society: New York, NY, available at: [www.awpagesociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/2007Authentic Enterprise.pdf](http://www.awpagesociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/2007AuthenticEnterprise.pdf) (accessed 10 January 2014).
- [4]. Arthur W. Page Society (2013), *The CEO View: The Impact of Communications on Corporate Character in a 24 x 7 Digital World*, Arthur W. Page Society: New York,: www.awpagesociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/The-CEO-View-2013.pdf (Accessed on 10 January, 2014).
- [5]. Barley, S. (2007), Corporations, democracy and the public good. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 16(3), pp. 201-215.
- [6]. Brody, E. (1985). Changing roles and requirements of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 11:22-28.
- [7]. Broom, G. M., and Dozier, D. M. (1986). Advancement for public relations role models. *Public relations review*, 12(1), 37-56.

- [8]. Broom, G. and Smith, G. (1979). Testing the practitioner's impact on clients. *Public Relations Review*, 5(3):47-59.
- [9]. Burke, E. M. (1999). *Corporate community relations: The principle of the neighbor of choice*. ABC-CLIO.
- [10]. Burke, W. W., Lake, D. G., and Paine, J. W. (Eds.). (2008). *Organization change: A comprehensive reader* (Vol. 155). John Wiley and Sons.
- [11]. Carroll, C. (Ed.) (2013). *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation*, Wiley-Blackwell: Malden, MA.
- [12]. CorpComms Magazine (2013). *The digital PR challenge*, London
- [13]. Commission for University Education (2017). *Status of Universities*. Accessed from www.cue.or.ke/index.php/services/Accreditation/Status-of-Universities on 17-March-2017
- [14]. Cornelissen J. (2004). *Corporate Communication: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- [15]. Cornelissen J. (2008). *Corporate Communication: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- [16]. Cornelissen J. (2012). *Corporate Communication: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications Inc.
- [17]. Covey, S. (2013). *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*. London: Simon and Schuster:
- [18]. Cradden, C. (2005). *Repoliticizing Management: A Theory of Corporate Legitimacy*. Gower Publishing, Ltd
- [19]. Dolphin, R. (2000). The corporate communication function: how well is it funded? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 8(1), 5-10.
- [20]. Dozier, D. (1984). Program evaluation and roles of public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, 10 (2), 13-21.
- [21]. Eisenmann, M., Geddes, D., Paine, K., Pestana, R., Walton, F., and Weiner, M. (2012). Proposed interim standards for metrics in traditional media analysis. Chandler Chicco Companies for the IPR,7.
- [22]. European Association of Communication Directors (2015). *The future of Corporate Communications: Cutting through the noise*. London. Brunswick Goup LLC.
- [23]. European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) (2013). *The Chief Communication Officer and the C-Suite*, EACD, Russel Reynolds and University of Amsterdam, Brussels, available at: www.eacd-online.eu/sites/default/files/c-suite_brochure.pdf (accessed 10 January 2014).
- [24]. Feng, J & Goodman, B. (2011) *Corporate Communication Practices and Trends: A China Study*. Corporate Communication International, New York.
- [25]. Fombrun, C. & Van Riel, C. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communication: implementing practices for effective reputation management*. Routledge.6
- [26]. Gay, L. (1992). *Educational Research: Competence for Analysis and Applications*. (4th Ed) New York: Macmillan Publishers.
- [27]. Gilmore, J. and Pine, J. (2007). *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*, Harvard Business School Press.
- [28]. Hartman, J., & Lenk, M. M. (2001). Strategic communication capital as an intangible asset. *International Journal on Media Management*, 3(3), 147-153.
- [29]. Kalla, H. (2005). *Integrated Internal Communications: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 10 (4), p. 302-314.
- [30]. Kiprop, K. (2015). *Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication in Public Organizations in Kenya: A Case of Kenya Pipeline Corporation and Mukuru-Sinai Fire disaster*. *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences*. Accessed from <http://www.ijmra.us> on 20th May, 2016
- [31]. Kombo, K. & Tromp. A. (2006). *Proposal and Thesis Writing—an Introduction*. Nairobi: Paulines Publishers
- [32]. Konuk, V. (2016). *Stakeholder representation in sustainability reports*.
- [33]. Kupa, A. A. (2015). *Acquisition of verbal communication skills by employees in state corporations in kenya: a case study of sports kenya*. (Doctoral Thesis)
- [34]. Mamuli, L.C.; Mutsotso, S.N. and Namasaka, D.B.(2013) *The Influence of Communication Channels on Management Practices in Kenyan Public Universities*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1
- [35]. Meijer, A. & Thaens, M. (2010). Alignment 2.0: strategic use of new internet technologies in government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27 (2), 113-121.
- [36]. Melcrum. (2004). *How to Measure Internal Communication (Report to Communication Professionals)*. London: Melcrum Publishing.London: Routledge.
- [37]. Money, K. & Schepers, H. (2007). Are CSR and corporate governance converging? A view from boardroom directors and company secretaries in FTSE 100 companies in the UK. *Journal of General Management*, 33(2) 1-11

- [38]. Muchiri, J (2015, October 28). Elders want Embu University College to remain as UoN campus. The Standard. Retrieved from <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke> on 12.01.2016
- [39]. Mugenda, O. and Mugenda, A. (1999). *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- [40]. Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.
- [41]. Munyeki, J. (2016) *The role of Internal Communication in Communication Strategic Management Kenya: a case study of Magadi Soda* (Doctoral dissertation, Laikipia University).
- [42]. Nando M. (2007), "Communication capital", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 12 Iss 3 pp. 298 – 310
- [43]. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2004), *OECD Principles of corporate governance*.
- [44]. Orodho, J. (2002). *Techniques of Writing Research Proposals and Reports in Education Social Sciences*. Nairobi: Masola Publishers.
- [45]. Pincus, J D, Rayfield, B., and Ohl, C.M. (1994) *Public relations in MBA programme: Challenges and opportunities*, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 20(1), 55-71
- [46]. Public Service Commission of Kenya and State Corporations Advisory Committee. (2015). *Code of Governance for State Corporations: Mwongozo*. Retrieved from <http://www.icpsk.com/index.php/membership/e-library/finish/9-cs-practioners-corner/459-mwongozo-code-of-governance-for-state-corporations> on 2nd May, 2016
- [47]. Republic of Kenya (2012) *The Universities Act, 2012 No. 86 of 2012*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- [48]. Shattock, M. (2003). *Research, administration and university management: What can research contribute to policy?*. In *The dialogue between higher education research and practice* (pp. 55-66). Springer Netherlands.
- [49]. Sparkes, R., (2003), *From corporate governance to corporate responsibility: the changing boardroom agenda*, *Ivey Business Journal*, 67(4), 1-5.
- [50]. Steyn, B., mateboho, G., and Aské, G. (2001, July). *Investigating strategic Management Roles of the Corporate Communication function in the department of housing, South Africa*.
- [51]. Steyn, B. (2000). *CEO expectations in terms of PR roles*. *Communicare*, 19(1):20-43.
- [52]. Temesi, M J. (2012). *An investigation into the role of corporate communication in organizational growth: a case study of the National Oil Corporation of Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi, Kenya).
- [53]. Tikolo, K. L. (2011). *The practice of public relations in Kenya: Future growth prospects*. Public Relations Society of Kenya Draft Report.
- [54]. Toth, E.L., Serini, S.A., Wright, D.K. and Emig, A.G. (1998). *Trends in public relations roles: 1990-1995*. *Public Relations Review*, 24(2):145-163.
- [55]. Vasilescu, R., Barna, C., Epure, M., and Baicu, C. (2010). *Developing university social responsibility: A model for the challenges of the new civil society*. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2, 4177-4182.
- [56]. Wahome, G. R. (2005). *Strategies in corporate communications: a case study of Kenya Commercial Bank* (Doctoral dissertation).
- [57]. Wambua, M. N. (2013). *Measurement and evaluation of interventions by public relations agencies in Kenya: a case study of Gina din corporate communications* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- [58]. Wanyoro, C. (2015). *The role of media relations in crisis management in Kenya: a case study of Kenya Railways Corporation* (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta University).
- [59]. Watson, T., & Noble, P. (2007). *Evaluating public relations: A best practice guide to public relations planning, research and evaluation*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- [60]. *Workbook Excerpt, PR Pundit's Workshop, Mumbai (March 1999). Evaluating Public Relations Effectiveness*, 1
- [61]. Wright, D K (1995). *The role of corporate public relations executives in the future of employee communications*, *Public Relations Review*, (23)
- [62]. Yamane, T. (1967). *Elementary sampling theory*.
- [63]. Kahn, J.V., and Best, J.W. (1993). *Research in education*.
- [64]. Van Ruler, A. A., Moss, D., MacManus, T., and Vercic, D. (1997). *Communication: Magical mystery or scientific concept? Professional views of PR practitioners in the Netherlands*. *Public relations research: An international perspective*, 247-263.

- [65]. Varttala T. and Vartalla V. (2010): Challenges and Successes in Multicultural Corporate Communication, Haaga-Hella Publication Series. Discussion, 1, 2010.
- [66]. Zerfass, A., Moreno, A., Tench, R., Vercic, D. and Verhoeven, P. (2013), European Communication Monitor 2013: A Changing Landscape – Managing Crises, Digital Communication and CEO Positioning in Europe. Results of a Survey in 43 Countries, EACD/EUPRERA and Helios Media, Brussels.
- [67]. Zondi, S. & Koradia, A (2015). Internal communication challenges and issues: a case Study of transnet freight rail-kwazulu natal province, South Africa. *Journal of Business Management Review* 4(6).

Jessee Mutugi Munyi . “Challenges Facing Corporate Communication in Public Universities in Kenya.” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(03), 2021, pp. 46-64.