

WHEN SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING BECOMES A NUAISANCE

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of the absences of well-planned and structured policy for signages on the three of the campuses of the University of Education, Winneba. Hence the topic; When Signage and Wayfinding Becomes a Nuisance. The need for this study was the difficulty freshmen and visitors who visit the University of Education, Winneba campuses go through before finding their way to their various destinations. It was a great bother for most freshmen and visitors and there was the need to investigate how this challenge would be surmounted with design. Preliminary investigations by the researchers over a long period showed that, inconsistencies in the designing and production, installing of signages at the appropriate place, coupled with, the Ghanaian culture of indecorous maintenance and disposal of obsolete items has been an issue to be checked, forms the problem of the study. This study was grounded in the qualitative research approach and adopted descriptive design method. Population for the study was everybody who has direct interaction with the three campuses of the University of Education, Winneba and tries to navigate their way around. Convenient sampling technique was employed to sample ninety-seven (97) respondents for the study. The study spanned a period of twenty-one weeks using observation (unobtrusive) and interviews (unstructured) to collect primary data from respondents which were analysed descriptively and narratively. The study recommends that, a committee be put together and tasked to design and produce a manual that would serve as a guide for the production of appropriate signages for the university's campuses. The inconsistencies in the design, production and installing of signages on campus would be taken care of by this set committee.*

KEYWORDS: *Freshmen, labelling, signage, visitors, wayfinding,*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The University of Education, Winneba as the first mandated institution to take up the training of the nation's educational teachers at every levels of the Ghanaian educational landscape demands, as well as supplier of teachers for the nation. The University of Education, Winneba is an amalgamation of diploma institutions brought together and established in September 1992 under PNDC Law 322 (University of Education, Winneba, November, 2018). University College of Education, Winneba (UCEW) which was a collection of seven diploma awarding colleges located in different towns put into one umbrella institution viz the Advanced Teacher Training College, the Specialist Training College and the National Academy of Music, all at Winneba; the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako; College of Special Education, Akwapim-Mampong; the Advanced Technical Training College, Kumasi; and the St. Andrews Agricultural Training College, Mampong-Ashanti. The Winneba campus is the seat of the Vice Chancellor but also with three campuses in Winneba. On 14th May 2004 (University of Education, Winneba, November, 2018) the University of Education Act, Act 672 was enacted to upgrade the status of the University College of Education of Winneba to become a full fledged university.

University of Education, Winneba pride itself in its ranking positions amongst other places of higher learning today. It has chalked many successes in academics and social facilities. Past students who studied at the then University College of Education of Winneba in the late 1990's when the University was a college compared to the present are proud to attest to the great leap the University has chalked in infrastructures befitting a young university. The University has not made any effort in streamlining the production and installation of signages and wayfinding as the researchers' search turned out nor any paper presented in this direction. It is of this background the researchers sought to find out the state of signages and wayfinding within the three campuses at Winneba of the University of Education, Winneba and what plans the university has in place of constituting a board to be in charge for approving and the supervision of installing of all navigational systems in other words,

signages and wayfinding based on the extensive work such a committee would have done to bring out a manual to guide the University community to standardise its signages, wayfinding and labelling of buildings in terms of the shape, size, structure, signage hardware, font type and size; and colours acceptable by the University to be replicated on the other satellite campuses of the University.

Signages and wayfinding have today been part of every human environment as people continue to find new places to settle or move around in the environment as pedestrians, visitors, etc look up in locating their destination and back safely and on time from their destinations especially when that is their first time they visit to such places (Director, 2019). Lynch (as cited in Anur, Pagliari & Moxon, 2015) stated that wayfinding is the progressive process which is used by people to arrive at a destination successfully. The purpose of wayfinding is to help people to identify their location and to possibly choose the best route to their intended destination effortlessly (Carpman & Grant, 2002). Signages, wayfinding and labelling of building have left lasting impressions with visitors the time they come into contact with the environment (Hodson, 2015). Studies have shown that wayfinding in health care environments impacts nurses' behaviours, comfort, stress and performance and obviously same correlate to pedestrians who find themselves on the University community (Mustikawati, Yatmo, & Atmodiwirjo, 2017; Pati, Harvey, Willis, & Pati, 2015). Before paper was invented, man-made marks on the wall of caves which served as signage for the hunters to either locate their way back to their abode or where they left off the day before. (Montello & Sas, 2006) agreed that wayfinding occurs when people need to travel from one place to another on the intended route and direction without having accidents or getting delayed to reach their final destination. The general objective of a campus wayfinding system is to guide students, staff, and visitors to their destinations (CMU, 2017). This is achieved by using an appropriately sized signage and informational graphics placed at key locations. It should be noted however that there are basically three types of signages within a library system viz; emergency, instructional and behavioural (Nelson, 2014). This is an evidence that wayfinding system should communicate with users in a clear language without the help of a third person.

A good signage obviously aids drivers and pedestrians in locating their destination and location (Butler, Acquino, Hissong, & Scott, 1993). The study of Environmental Graphic Design as a programme suggests how important navigating the environment has become invaluable to mankind today (Calori & Vanden-Eynden, 2015). Signages and wayfinding is today synonymous with the built environment. The effort environment dwellers put into the built environment cannot be over looked without considering signages and wayfinding to make the environment safe and secure. Dalton, Hölscher & Montello (2019) opined that wayfinding involves figuring out where you are, where you want to go and how to get there, particularly when your goal cannot be directly sensed at that moment. This shows how seriously the lack of a good navigation system confuses visitors on the campuses of the University of Education, Winneba. The only signages that inconspicuous on the north campus of the University of Education, Winneba are that of a handful of new buildings which have recently been labelled within the three campuses of the University in Winneba. Hitherto, the main entrance gate, the faculty of educational studies block, faculty of social studies block, Jophus Anamuah-Mensah Auditorium, bookshop situated at the north campus of the University of Education, Winneba, the then erstwhile IEDE¹ now Institute for Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development (ITECPD), then SEMSA² and Simpa³ Hall (female accommodation) greets a first time visitor to the north campus when one decides to go pass the unmarked main administration block of the University. The National Sports College chameleonize itself by almost every now and then with different exterior colour changes without a particular colour when the structure is repainted. Visitors are unable to get to most of these facilities or buildings without seeking for direction since there is not any wayfinding systems that help visitors to get to these facilities. Similar issue is faced when one finds him or herself on the south campus to locate the audiology clinic, the transport section, the Osagyefo library, the central stores, etc. A well thought wayfinding raise the sense of arrival, increase aesthetics, and simplify vehicular and pedestrian movement throughout campus and beyond (Pittsburg State University, December, 2019).

University of Education, Winneba receives uncountable number of visitors (Director, 2019). It is based on this premise that the researchers went around to observe the state and condition of signages and wayfinding and if the University has a committee that has oversight responsibility of the signages and wayfinding that should assist freshmen and visitors who find themselves as first time visitors on the various campuses of the University of Education, Winneba or one's first visit to the main administration block which directly greets a visitor upon entering into the Winneba satellite campus which unfortunately has not been labelled. The University of Education, Winneba placed 452nd out of 516 Universities in 2018 Universitas Indonesia (UI) GreenMetric World Rankings (University of Education, Winneba, 2017). This ranking is to compliment the university's effort towards sustainability and environmental friendliness in the discharge of their mandates and

¹ Institute of educational development and extension

² Senior members and staff association club house

³ Native name of the town of Winneba; a municipality located in the Central region of Ghana

for that matter a lot of other works has to be done in this regard. Visitors keep coming back to a destination when they feel comfort and empowered which is key to creating a wayfinding system with a priority in making the connection between the people and the environment a simple one (Town of Mammoth Lakes, 2020).

II. METHODOLOGY

In addressing such a critical gap, this research paper adopted the descriptive design approach and the narrative analysis method was used to analyse the data. This work is grounded in the mixed method research paradigm to make room to source for answers for the demands of this paper considering the scope of work it contains. The convenient sampling technique was employed by the researchers to enable them work with only subjects who were available to assist with their views. This research span a period of twenty-one weeks using interviews, observations and description to collect data as elaborated below. Thirty-two university students representing 32.990% of the total subjects, nine university senior staff from the departments of art education and graphic design representing 9.278% of the total subjects, twenty-six school pupils of the university practice schools representing 26.804% and four teachers also representing 4.124% of the total subjects teaching at the university practice schools, ten administrative and supporting staff of the university representing 10.309% of the total subjects, four traders also representing 4.124% on the university campuses and twelve visitors representing 12.371% made up a total of ninety-seven were the subjects for this research work. These subjects were conveniently sampled from the three campuses viz; north, south and central as users of these campuses access and navigate through the university campuses on daily basis. The subjects' ability to easily navigate through the campus has been a concern to the researchers and the subjects provided the requisite primary data required for this paper. The researchers interacted with these ninety-seven visitors spread over a period of twenty-one weeks at various locations of the university premises spending a minimum of thirty minutes on each visit for data collection. The times of meeting were mostly determined by the researchers and the research assistants assigned to assist in the data collection. The schedule which spanned across a semester and the holidays when sandwich students had reported to campus to start and continue with their studies included the weekends. The thirty-two students the researchers interacted with were made up of fifteen freshmen representing 46.875% of the total students; of both the regular and sandwich programmes run by the University of Education, Winneba; and the remaining seventeen students representing 53.125% of the total number of students were continuing students. Nineteen of the interacted thirty-two students representing 59.375% are females while the remaining thirteen translating into 40.625% were males. The interaction with the subjects sought to solicit from them how easily they find their ways to the various lecture rooms, offices, locations, other facilities, etc on campus on daily bases, otherwise how signages have come in helpfully.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The University bookshop that was in the 1990 conspicuous as well as the SEMSA block, the Sports College, Simpa Block 'A' cannot be found anywhere within the current landscape of the University of Education, Winneba signage system. Broken down signages chassis left at their original places of installation, installing as well as maintenance of the signages were the major points at which the researchers looked at. The shape and sizes of the signages were of a great bother to visitors and freshmen to the University of Education, Winneba campuses but rather confuses them while identifying buildings and venues for lectures, gathering or meetings. The researchers observed the inconsistencies in the production and installation of signages on the campuses, the sign hardware as well as the culture of maintenance or removing and disposing of such works of art. The inscriptions of some of these signages have faded out and cannot be read which are neither renovated, replaced or disposed away neatly but rather left standing (mostly rusted) with the chassis is an eyesore. The deplorable state of these signages and wayfinding facilities has a dent on the reputation of the University. Visitors are not able to identify and reach their destination effortlessly while there are not any wayfinding facilities to destinations on the three campuses upon entering the campuses than asking for assistance. These faded and rusted signages within a time span of three years has been ascribed to some factors including the salty nature of the environment in Winneba as a coastal town and the quality of printing inks on the Ghanaian market which does not take the harsh Africa weather into consideration; applying and using appropriate finishing sign hardware or chemicals to slow down the fading processes of the signages during the production stage is an obvious solution artist should look at. Another school of thought has it that the fading of the signages has also been based on the type of substrate used for the production of these signages.

The most worrisome result that came up during the researchers' interactions with the subjects for this paper was the sign hardware, style, shape, size and quality of signages identified on all the University's campuses on the Winneba campuses. Due to the poor-quality standard of sign hardware used for these signages, the easily fade; an example of such work is the newly Food Production Unit (restaurant) opened on the north campus next to the main administration block which has a nicely large size signage to draw people's attention to it. This Food Production Unit signage has faded within a space of a little over twelve months after production and

installation. The university did not have an appropriate streetscape design which included a system of pedestrian wayfinding signs and other environmental graphics to supply directions to pedestrian. (Walters & Brown, 2004, p.255) opined that streetscape designs “should be done in a unified comprehensive manner for mixed-user centres”. The single streetscape on the north campus does not take mixed-users into consideration due to its location and its accessibility to users because where such a facility is installed makes it inconvenient for visitors to use and the height of the streetscape makes reading difficult. Freshmen and visitors are unable to even locate the central administrative block, the administrative annex, lecture rooms, the university clinic, the central auditorium, residential blocks for both students and staff, etc upon entering the main gates of all three campuses. The signages and wayfinding are not well laid to aid visitors and freshmen effortlessly get to their destinations but they rather get confused locating their destinations when they are given verbal directions to their destinations. This development has often confused and frustrated freshmen and visitors in reaching their destinations on time or often times missed their appointments on schedule. When wayfinding does not detail how to get to a destination within the shortest time, it fails to fulfil its intended purpose but rather confuses the user (Montello & Sas, 2006).

At least, some sign hardware used for the production of signages of some principal buildings and structures is in sharp contrast to the issues the researchers sought to raise in this work. An example is the signage on the main security post of the north campus of the university, the entrance of the central campus (a student’s final project work), Pecku Building, the School of Creative Arts block that comprise of offices, seminar rooms and theatre block, etc. The substrates and sign hardware used for the production of these good examples of signages will prolong the lifespan of such signages. Such substrates and sign hardware would not fade nor rust and easily break down; and does not often carry with itself the multiple colours which often make the works unappealing to read. A lot of work has not been done in this regard on the south campus probably because the main administration block has moved from the south campus to the north campus. A lot of deplorable signages and wayfinding systems are seen haphazardly scattered on the once vibrant south campus which inherited the then Advance Teacher Training College befitting buildings.

The interactions with the subjects also revealed their concern with the type of sign hardware used for the production of signages considering the fact that Winneba is a fishing town lying on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. The environmental hazards that come with a coastal region has direct effect on the choice of materials and sign hardware used for the production of signages and wayfinding systems. The subjects were quick to commend some good ones on the University campuses. The type and type sizes often make it difficult to read some of these signages as well as the information the signages contain. An interviewee was of the opinion that the design and installation of the signages may not come with the University’s approval and for that matter the University did not bother itself to clear these signages when the signages break down. Some interviewees pointed to the unordered manner, poor quality, type and shape of some of these signages that are installed on the campuses does not paint a good picture for a well organised young University that is making waves in the academic endeavour today. Another interviewee was surprised why broken down, old and; faded and chassis of signages were not disposed away but then left at where they are originally installed. It is clearly evident that often, the executives of the various departments’ associations financially produce and install these departmental signages even without seeking the approval of their heads of departments. The students’ representative council has often been culprits of producing and installing of such signages without any authority’s approval.

The researchers interacted with the university seeking to find out the department that is in charge of the production, approving body and the supervising body who see to the installation of signages on campus. The researchers further found out how and who disposes off the broken-down chassis of old and abandoned signages too. The researchers’ search for these answers led them to the estate department of the university. The estate department of University of Education, Winneba made it clear that their outfit has never been approached by anybody or group seeking approval for the construction, installing and clearing up of broken-down signages chassis. The estate department was not up to date with the type of sign hardware used for the production of these signages on campus. The estate department did not even know the number of signages on each campus since the estate department has never been part of the design, production, installation of signages and clearing away of old and broken-down signage chassis. Since the estate department is not in the known of signages on campus, they are not able to advise on the quality of sign hardware, fonts, size and shape, where and how to install these signages as well as the clearing of these signages when they are broken down or does not serve its purpose any longer because there is not any committee in charge of such an important exercise.

Some departments of the university have signages which come with lights embedded in them to illuminate them but the lights bulbs are blown out and virtually such signages do not serve its purpose in the night. The rampant servicing of such signages by way of replacing the blown out bulbs, retouching some of the signages or the signages cleared away nicely is very important as visitors have often relied on these facilities to find their way to and fro their destinations. The story is not different from the case of signages produced and

installed by departmental association executives and when such signages do not serve their purposes anymore are not also attended to.

The researchers further gathered that the university has turned a blind eye on its responsibility of designing, installing, labelling, maintaining of signages, wayfinding systems and then clearing away any form of signages when the need be that assist in navigation. In the quest of the various departmental students' association who often for want to support their departments, produce all manner of signages and wayfinding to aid students and visitors locate their way to and from destinations while on campus offer such help when they are in power and it is often not part of the association's constitution to maintain or clear these signages and directional signs when they do not serve the purpose for which they were produced.

Out of thirty signages and wayfinding systems sampled for the purposes of this research work spread across the three campuses of the University of Education, Winneba which comprise of signages and wayfinding for auditoriums, seminar rooms, administrative blocks, campus entrances, lecture rooms, libraries, production units, restaurants, bookshops, halls of residents for students, practice house, recreational facilities, health facilities, science blocks, computer laboratories, etc dotted on the three campuses of the university has five translating into 16.666% of the total sample are produced with appropriate materials and sign hardware considering the salty environment and location of the University and the same materials and sign hardware are in a good condition. These upheld five signages mentioned must be noted that came in various shapes, colours and sizes which are not standardised. The remaining 83.333% of the thirty samples of signages and wayfinding systems are in a deplorable state and needs to be replaced or done away. The sampled projects come in various shapes, sizes, colour, etc. while some came with blown out bulbs, faded signages, broken down chassis of abandoned signage structures and did not serve its purpose but rather confused visitors in getting to their destination effortlessly.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chaos and nuisance these abandoned, broken chassis, blown out bulb illuminated signages and wayfinding systems on the University of Education, Winneba campus needs to be immediately checked as one of its priority issues. From the discussions above, it is obvious current signages on the University of Education campuses are not serving its purpose. With the springing up of new buildings on the various campuses to make room for the large intake of the first batch of the double track system of the "free" senior high school students preparing to enter into the various tertiary institutions in the 2020/2021 academic year before it gets out of hand. This effort by the university authorities will curtail the confuse state freshmen and visitors go through in getting to their destination and the valuable time students may require to arrive at lecture room for lecture. The researchers recommend that a team is put in place to see to the clearing of abandoned and broken down signages and directional signs immediately while a committee is formed to produce a guide for the production of signages and wayfinding systems for the University of Education, Winneba. The researchers are quick to say that the approval and the production of any signage and wayfinding systems for navigation as well as labelling of premises should be the sole responsibility of the setup committee which should include some seasoned graphic design lecturers and the transport department.

The responsibilities of such committee should include the approval, suggesting minimum of only three models of signages, wayfinding and labelling designs, shape and style, that befits the University of Education, Winneba for its infrastructures that may be acceptable. This extensive work should take into consideration of sign hardware for the production of signages and wayfinding, colours and font style and sizes; and the mandate to remove any of such signages that does not meet the demands of the blueprint document. The blueprint document's main purpose should make wayfinding within the campuses easy to reach destinations than confusing visitors like it stands today. The researchers also recommend that this committee is tasked to insist that the produced manual serve as the only guide for the production of an appropriate signages as the only acceptable form on the premises of the University campuses and that the committee should be the sole body to oversee the production or sole producers of the signage, wayfinding and labelling systems. The committee should have the mandate to remove any signage and wayfinding system that does is not approved and installed by the committee and surcharge whoever that breaches the authority of the committee. Due to the rampant blown out of bulbs of illuminated signages to be replaced, such type of signages and wayfinding should not be encouraged but rather reflective materials can be an alternative.

Furthermore, student associations, clubs and societies should be mandated to produce and install any signage or wayfinding only through the set-up committee where such projects will go through scrutiny and approval. It is proper to say that the production and installation of signages and wayfinding systems of the University should be the sole responsibility of the University in achieving the decorum it seeks to find in this area than leaving it in the hands of any student association, club or society. Student associations, clubs and societies executives should be educated through the office of the dean of student affairs during their annual orientation to desist from contracting sponsors who visibly paint structures these student associations, clubs and

societies have put up with the sponsor's company colours as such a new craze is springing up on University campus lately. The researchers recommend this paper will be a guide for similar tertiary institutions that may find themselves with such a challenge. These recommendations should be adopted by the various municipal and district assemblies in curbing such menace within their jurisdictions. Signages developed using a standard guideline will provide a confident wayfinding (Milone&MacBroom, 2016, November).

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