

**Evaluation of the Management of Production Problems in *The Voice*  
Newspaper Makurdi**

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**Abstract**

This paper evaluates the management of production problems in *The Voice* newspaper, Makurdi. Anchored on the Quality of Work Life theory, the survey research design was employed with oral interview as instrument for data collection. Findings from the study indicate that management is relevant in planning and directing for the achievement of an organization's goals. Further findings indicate that the problems of production process in *The Voice* newspaper range from lack of production materials, obsolete equipment to inadequate finance and manpower; findings also indicate that the problems affect production to a large extent and that the managers of *The Voice* newspaper are managing the problems through training of staff, revenue generation, coordination and motivation. The paper concludes that the problems affect *The Voice* newspaper since the managers have limited resources to effectively manage the problems. The paper therefore recommends that available resources should be judiciously utilized; grants and subvention should be sourced from state government to ensure smooth operations. The needed manpower should be recruited and management should intensify effort in coping with the problems of production process in *The Voice* newspaper, Makurdi.

**Key words:** *Management, Production, The Voice, Newspaper, Problems, Makurdi*

## **Introduction**

The newspaper industry is faced with various problems such as financial constraints, increasing cost of production, circulation/distribution difficulties and the challenges associated with the new communication technologies. These problems affect efficient production of the newspaper especially when they are not managed.

Overtime, management has been applied to achieve success in various fields of human endeavour such as in groups, institutions and corporate organizations. If the management is poor, the outcome is likely to be poor and vice-verse. In essence, before set goals are achieved, there has to be “management intervention” (Nongo, 2005, p.8). Like charity, management begins at home. This is obvious in the manner in which a poorly managed home can easily collapse. Nongo (2005, p.8) states that management is “a means for attaining set goals” for groups, institutions and organizations. Therefore, for an organization to improve or develop there has to be effective management otherwise there will be no progress.

The above view is recognized in the context that the resources of an organization will remain dormant until management skill is applied. An organization with little or no resources can achieve success through effective and efficient management while an organization with available resources without effective management cannot attain set goals and objectives. This means running a successful project requires effective management. Today, management is increasingly being recognized all over the world as an “important economic resource” (Nwachukwu, 2006, p.1). It is in this light that Dugguh (2010, p.1) regards management as a “Golden Thread” that runs through all forms of resources. In simple terms, management is the coordination of the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling with the aim of attaining organizational goals and objectives.

In newspaper operations, the hand of management plays a significant role through the ideation of news materials to how it reaches the end users. This, to a large extent, means that the managerial functions of planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating and control must be performed effectively and purposefully in the newspaper establishment to ensure its success. This is however not without challenges. The newspaper manager faces the challenge of assigning beats to reporters and ensuring that deadlines are met. Turow (2009, p.43) adds that “the editor or publisher sets up the various section managers to ensure a coordinated team play”; the editorial section makes sure stories are received and adequately worked upon to be legal, inoffensive, error free and appealing to readers as well as plan the layout of production to make the best use of the space available; the production manager takes care of print layout so as to execute the editorial space plan and ensure the optimum clarity of production; circulation unit ensures the final stage of production by ensuring that finished

copies reach the hands of readers.

In virtually every department of production, there are problems, big and small, which the manager must address to ensure the success of production. One crucial element of production which has implications for both editorial and mechanical sections of a newspaper is timing. The problems are rarely identical for different newspapers. While the experience of one publisher may suggest a solution elsewhere, each newspaper has to address its problems in line with its policies, needs, and the facilities available.

The Benue State owned newspaper, *The Voice*, established in 1979 to serve the information needs of the public, is among the newspaper organizations characterized by so many challenges. *The Voice* newspaper has become scarce on the news stand. This paper therefore, evaluates how managers of *The Voice* newspaper are managing production problems.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The newspaper industry is often faced with problems or challenges in the production process such as scarcity of newsprint, financial constraint, emergence of new technologies, poor power supply, lack of manpower and scarcity of production materials to fulfill its obligation to the public as a social institution (Esiomokha, 2014). The Benue State owned newspaper, *The Voice* has been scarce on the news stand. Its declining production, poor quality and circulation have become worrisome. Against this backdrop, this paper sought to identify the problems of newspaper production process in *The Voice* newspaper.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the problems of newspaper production in *The Voice* newspaper. The objectives include:

1. To examine the effectiveness of management in *The Voice* newspaper
2. To identify the problems of production in *The Voice* newspaper
3. To find out the extent to which the production problems affect *The Voice* newspaper
4. To find out how managers of *The Voice* newspaper are handling production problems.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### ***Management***

Management is a universal concept that has attracted a lot of scholarship but no single definition of the term has emerged yet universally. Bedeian (1986, p.6) notes that management is the process of achieving desired results through efficient utilization of human and material resources. Ivancevich, Lorenzi and Skinner (1994, p.9) define management as a process that involves certain functions and work activities that managers must perform to achieve organizational goals. Nwachukwu (2006, p.4) sees management as the

coordination of all the organizational resources through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. This means that managers use the available resources of an organization to achieve set goals through planning, organizing, directing and controlling processes, which should ultimately lead to solving problems.

Donnelly (1996) in Nongo (2010, p.4) defined management as getting things done through people. This definition is enhanced by Stoner et al's (2000, p.9) definition that management is the principal activity that makes a difference in how well organizations serve people affected by them. They see management as a key factor activity that results to organizational effectiveness. According to Cole (2002, p.5), management is a collection of activities involving planning, organizing, motivating and controlling.

From the above definitions, management is seen as a social process which involves working with and through individuals or groups of people to achieve set goals through the specific task of supervising, managing and leading. This equally means that management involves getting things done through people.

### ***The Newspaper***

The newspaper, according to Sambe (2008, p.1) is an unbound, printed publication issued at regular intervals, which presents information in words, often supplemented with pictures. The Danish Union of Newspaper Publishers and Editors on March 3, 1964, cited in Dranchmann (1999, p.32), defines newspaper as "a local, regional or national printed periodical appearing daily or several times a week, taken by readers in subscription or bought as single copies", the primary aim of which is to carry all-round news from home and abroad and to contribute to information on society's political and cultural development.

The Nigeria Newspaper Act, cited in Emenyonu (2013, p.19), considers newspaper as any paper containing public news, intelligence or occurrences or any remarks, observations or comments, printed therein for sale and published in Nigeria periodically. In this paper, the newspaper is seen as a lightweight and disposable publication (more specifically, a periodical), usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. It may be general or special interest, and may be published daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The art and science of newspaper management in contemporary societies have become very challenging. In the process of newspaper production, various problems are encountered. Production here refers to the collation, packaging and printing of the newspaper (Esiomokha, 2014, p.103). Ciboh (2013, p.168) states that problems in the newspaper industry range from macro environmental forces, legal, political, socio-cultural, demographic, economic and technological. These are the unfriendly business environment, production and operational costs, circulation problems and cover prices, advertising rates and debts to dwindling

readership and revenues, government policies and actions, types of products offered the reading publics, libel suits as well as staff remuneration and welfare.

Corroborating the above view, Esiomokha (2014) argues that production problems in the print media industry range from financial constraints, increasing cost of production through circulation/distribution difficulties to the emergence of new communication technologies. Production problems, according to Ebisemiju (1999), cited in Ciboh (2013, p. 169), include scarcity of news print, news gathering expenses, epileptic power supply, overhead cost of running generator, deadline pressure and transportation for the editorial staff during news coverage and the distribution of the hardcopies. Ciboh (2014, p. 177) further identifies finance as the problem associated with newspaper production. He also re-echoes the non-availability of production materials since newspaper production is successful when production materials are available. It becomes less successful by non-availability of production materials such as newsprint, camera films, plates, films, typing sheets as well as layout sheets. Garba (2003, p. 178) asserts that lack of manpower is also a production problem since it results from lack of finances to adequately employ staff for effective newspaper production processes. Lack of water supply in newspaper production, for the washing of production plates, is another issue. The scarcity of water therefore becomes a problem since the situation delays timely production which in turn results to deadline pressure.

### **Theoretical Framework: Quality of Work Life Theory**

The Quality of Work Life theory forms the theoretical base for this paper. The term 'Quality of Work Life (QWL)' is reported to have originated from an International Labour Relations Conference in 1972 at Arden House, Columbia University, New York (Davis & Cherns, 1975 p.23). While there seems to be no agreement upon the definition of quality of work life, it has been used as a strategy for handling organizational problems.

Mills (1972) may have first coined the term 'quality of work life' to suggest that QWL had moved into the permanent vocabulary of both unions and management. From a business perspective, QWL is important since there is evidence demonstrating that the nature of the work environment is related to satisfaction of employees and work-related behaviours. Typically, QWL is conceptualized as a general attitude towards an object or job. Some theorists view QWL as being the positive emotional reactions and attitudes an individual has towards work. Organizations are continuously looking for new ways of doing business in order to meet the challenges of today's dynamic business environment.

QWL, according to Caliskan (2010), can be defined as the process of what employees perceived as favorable circumstances of a workplace that can minimize the unexpected turnover intention and employee satisfaction by assuring proper rewards. The quality of work life theory is relevant to the study given that it provides a framework for managers of *The Voice* newspaper to

manage both existing and emerging problems in their organization with a view to enhance productivity.

### **Research Methodology**

Interview was conducted among the staff of *The Voice* newspaper who were purposely sampled to share their experience and knowledge about the production of the newspaper. The choice of interview was to enable the researchers generate adequate data for the study.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study is the entire staff of *The Voice* newspaper, Makurdi. According to *The Voice* newspaper official Gazette (2015), *The Voice* newspaper has a population of 121. The samples included all the heads of the various departments.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

On the effectiveness of management in *The Voice* Newspaper, the administrative manager notes that management is important in *The Voice* as it ensures that available resources (personnel and finance) are properly managed to ensure efficient production at all times. According him, management employs strategies like maintenance, caution of erring staff to check future occurrence, printing at private publishers to maintain and service the information needs of the audience.

On the problems that affect *The Voice* newspaper in the process of production, the production manager stated that they are often faced with challenges in the production process like lack of production materials ranging from paper, ink, chemicals, plates, hand gloves, tunnels and finances that are not forthcoming from the state government since it depends on grant from government for survival. He further states that the organization uses obsolete printing machines instead of modern production equipment that would enhance production quality. Thus the newspaper has not adopted the use of desktop publishing and software to enhance efficient production and this often delays production. Worse still is the fact that analogue production process coupled with lack of maintenance culture. These problems are compounded by epileptic power supply because of lack of an alternative source of power. This has hindered daily production leaving them with weekly publishing rather than daily. Furthermore, the finance manager stated that the state government does not give grants to the management of *The Voice* so they depend on internally generated revenue which is grossly insufficient, thereby negatively affecting the output of the paper. Though he stated that vehicles have been provided to convey the hard copies to their destinations, the same does not apply to conveying staff to assignment areas. To crown it all, he said, there is shortage of personnel.

On the extent to which the problems of production affect *The Voice* newspaper production manager averred that the fore-going problems daily affected production to a very large extent, on a general note. Due to the existence of the problems, efficient production becomes a mirage and an uphill task.

On the management of production problems, the acting editor said efforts are made in each department to address the various production problems. However, when it gets worse they resort to the marketing manager to source for funds from the state government agencies to ensure continued production. He further stated that the general manager had also been useful in this regard as he calls on the editor to do certain write ups on the achievement of various institutions in the state as a way to raise funds or generate revenue. The general manager equally directs the finance manager to approach the state government for funds. The management uses the available resources to ensure production. For this reason, internally generated revenue (IGR) is used for the production process. He also stated that revenue drive, involving canvassing for adverts and commercial jobs like printing of calendars and documents which come annually are other management efforts to generate funds.

## **Discussion**

The first objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of management in *The Voice* newspaper. Qualitative evidences indicates that management is relevant in *The Voice* newspaper in the areas of planning, directing, coordinating, organizing and motivation. The findings tallies with Akhator (1997) validation that management is the process of combining and utilizing or allocating an organizations' inputs (materials, machines, money and manpower) by planning, organizing, directing and controlling for the purpose of producing outputs so that the organizational objectives will be achieved.

The study also sought to identify production problems that affect *The Voice* newspaper. Findings indicate that *The Voice* newspaper is faced with various problems such as poor power supply, lack of production materials, obsolete equipment and inadequate finance. These agree with Ebisemiju (1999) in Ciboh, (2013,p.169) that production problems in the newspaper industry include scarcity of newsprint, news gathering expenses, epileptic power supply, production inputs, inadequate finance, and lack of man power.

Findings from the study also indicate that these problems affect *The Voice* newspaper to a very large extent. This explains the inability of the management team to put the newspaper on the newsstand daily, thereby resorting to weekly production instead. With this myriad of production problems, it is impossible for a newspaper to be on the street daily.

Finally, the study was conducted to find out how the managers of *The Voice* newspaper do try to cope with production problems. Findings also indicate that the managers of *The Voice* newspaper do manage production problems

through staff training, internal revenue generation, coordination and motivation. This agrees with Mills' (1972) quality of work life theory assumption that organizations are continuously looking for new ways of doing business in order to meet up with the challenges in today's dynamic business environment.

### **Conclusion/ Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the paper concludes that these problems affect production process in *The Voice* newspaper despite management's efforts to effectively and efficiently manage them to enhance quality production. The paper also concludes that the major production problem of *The Voice* is finance. These problems affecting production in the organization are manageable once finance is available. The paper thus recommends that:

1. Managers of *The Voice* newspaper should judiciously utilize the available resources to turn around the fortunes of the organization.
2. Grants and subvention should be provided by the state government to enhance smooth operations. In other words, the Benue State government should provide funds to enhance the day to day running and operations of *The Voice* newspaper..
3. The needed manpower should be recruited to complement the efforts of the available once especially in the production department where the need to operate production machine is paramount. This is a sure way to put an end to the problem of inadequate manpower especially in the production department.
4. The issue of obsolete equipment or machines should be tackled head-on by the state government. Standard machinery is the bedrock of optimum production. If there are enough personnel, enough power supply, delivery vehicles and enough newsprint but the machines are obsolete, smooth production process will still be a mirage to *The Voice* newspaper, thereby hampering the fulfillment of the objectives that it was established to achieve.

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