

Undergraduates' Participation in Campus Newspaper Production and Management in South East Nigeria

Adanna Vivian OBIORA, PhD.

Department of Mass Communication,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam,
Anambra State, Nigeria.

Anthony Ogbonna UCHE, PhD

Department of Mass Communication,
Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria.

DOI: 10.56201/rjmcit.v9.no1.2023.pg24.34

Abstract

This study centered on the appraisal of undergraduates' participation in campus newspaper production and management in southeast Nigeria. It studied public universities made of up both federal and state-owned universities as well as privately owned universities in the south-eastern region of Nigeria. The sample size was 300 from 15 selected universities. The study was designed as a descriptive survey with the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. Findings indicate that two out of the five federal universities do not offer mass communication whereas two privately owned institutions (though having mass communication departments) placed their campus newspaper production on hold. Findings also indicate that printing processes are outsourced (95%) while content creation and circulation are handled by the students (100%). The study recommends that universities offering communication and media studies should not only establish a campus newspaper but also set up a printing press to expose and enhance the skills of students for a holistic newspaper production and management capacity.

Keywords: campus newspaper, production, newspaper management, community newspaper

Introduction

There is barely any society or community that can operate appropriately in this present era with the absence of the mass media because mass media give people information about the happenings across the globe. Newspapers are part of the mass media representing the print media. Campus newspaper also called college newspaper, university newspaper or student newspaper is a type of mass medium whose production and management may be solely by students but may involve contributors from the larger society in which the newspaper is rooted and supervised by university staff. Sometimes campus newspapers are run for the aim of teaching students, sometimes with the objective of writing educational or informative write-ups, and printing news statements most especially on issues involving their base community and campus at large. Wadhawan (2016) opines that the purpose of campus newspapers is not for profit-making but for educational objectives. They are funded through their educational institution, though some money may be generated through sales and advertisements; nonetheless, the majority usually comes from the school itself. So, some

higher schools of learning have precise means by which they can sway the publications through funding. Campus newspapers are presently functioning across universities in Nigeria, especially those offering mass communication and other media-related courses. This was borne out of the importance of furnishing students with the mandatory realistic practice and accomplishing one among many necessities of various regulators of university education.

Campus newspapers precisely cover school events; they are avenues through which students can express their thoughts and opinions. Mass Communication departments in most universities publish these campus newspapers as a means of molding journalism students. Nevertheless, Nwabueze (2019) asserts that it is not always the case on all campuses as people who are not in mass communication or journalism departments but aspire to expand their career path in journalism can add value to the newspaper in diverse ways. This is the reason campus newspapers are very important not just for teaching newspapers for mass communication students but for steering other students to pursue a career path in media practice while giving the public information about happenings in the university community and its vicinities. Most Mass Communication departments in Nigerian universities have training newspapers that give avenues for giving the reading community information about happenings on and off campus. Nwabueze (2019) further notes that most of these campus newspapers are not produced on a regular basis but their subsistence contributes enormously to honing the skills of student journalists.

Albanese (2014) writes that campus newspapers not only play a vital role in informing the community about campus happenings, but also serve as a check on the school's administration, and reveal stories that conventional media might miss. He further notes that many campus newspapers are the main supply of information about not only events on campuses but also their neighbouring communities. They also serve as a watchdog to expose troubles at the particular campus. For instance in the United States of America during the COVID-19 pandemic, campus newspapers played a key role in holding management and students accountable, like the case of *The Michigan Daily* that exposed a COVID-19 outbreak among some groups at the University of Michigan. Also, Arizona State University's campus newspaper reported that students were leaving their dormitories while they were expected to be under quarantine.

Castonguay (2021) stated that students who work on the campus newspaper learn a lot of workplace skills including management, meeting deadlines, and communicating well with others. School newspapers enforce a need for teamwork, which is needed to get the paper out on time. Writing and researching articles on a variety of different subjects gives students an idea of what they want to do after graduation. Interviews with professionals give students insight into various career paths available. They have a better understanding of what to expect should they choose a different area of study outside of journalism.

It is evident that the campus newspaper is essential to both students and the campus community at large. Therefore, it is pertinent to evaluate the production and management of these campus newspapers to assess if the purpose of their production still conforms to the way it is run presently in the universities in southeast Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Newspapers typically operate within a particular structure and campus newspapers are no different in that regard. A key issue in newspaper management is the combination of editorial decisions with technical decisions to bring about the quality print run. However, unique challenges exist for campus newspapers operated and managed by students who negotiate with varying influences from authorities, all while operating within their own institutional structure. College media such as newspapers should be able to cater to the information, education, and entertainment of the students and its host communities, the study is meant to verify the credibility of these facts, beaming from the fact the campus newspapers should be by students and for the students with recognizing factors to media laws and ethics. Moreover, the newspaper has been a subject of research interest for academics and the majority of scholarly studies have focused on conventional newspaper, but campus newspaper is much less focused on than their conventional counterpart and the gap in current studies on this area of community communication needs to be filled. Determining how campus newspapers are produced today and how they are managed in relation to the general purpose of their existence is a relevant study. This study is intended to capture a snapshot of campus newspapers operating in South East Nigeria today and to focus on their organizational, technical, and production responsibilities in such a unique environment since campus newspapers provide the platform where many students receive their first hands-on opportunity to be journalists and learn to write professionally.

The purpose of this study is therefore to provide an updated profile of existing campus newspapers in universities in South East Nigeria focusing on the involvement of students in the production and management responsibilities. Hence, this study set out to establish the existing campus newspapers in South East Nigeria and ascertain the level of students' involvement in the production process of the campus newspaper.

Literature Review

Management and Newspaper: An Overview

Management is universal in the modern industrial world and there is no substitute for good management. It makes human effects more productive and brings better technology, products, and services to our society. Management is a vital function concerned with all aspects of the working of an organization. Management is the art of maximizing efficiency, as a social process, a method of getting things done through others, a plan of action and its direction by a cooperative group moving towards a common goal. Management is a comprehensive function of planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and motivating the efforts of others to achieve specific objectives. Managing is one of the most important activities of human life.

The four major functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (the P-O-L-C framework).

Planning

Planning is the function of management that involves setting objectives and determining a course of action for achieving those objectives. Planning requires that managers be good decision-makers.

Organizing

Organizing is the function of management that involves developing an organizational structure and allocating human resources to ensure the accomplishment of objectives. Organizing also involves decision-making about the duties and responsibilities of individual jobs, as well as the manner in which the duties should be carried out.

Leading

Leading involves the social and informal sources of influence that you use to inspire action taken by others.

Controlling

Controlling involves ensuring that performance does not deviate from standards. Performance can be measured through financial statements, sales reports, production results, customer satisfaction, and formal performance appraisals.

For centuries, newspapers have delivered the news to the reading public, informing them of important events of the day. Since its daily format became widespread in the early 19th century, newspapers have delivered first-instance news on a daily news cycle: Whatever happened on a given day, its news was printed in the paper and delivered to readers' doorsteps the following day. Tanikawa (2017) noted that notwithstanding the successful adjustments they made in response to emerging competition from radio, news magazines, and television over the past century, the position newspapers maintained as the leading purveyor of text news has been seriously challenged with the advent of online and digital media starting in the late 1990s

The newspaper has achieved a milestone in the mainstream media, with the help of a well-planned page and a good editor newspaper management and access are assured because the creative media in the field know the vital ways to pen down events in observance of the media laws, ethics, and code of conducts. The concept of management of this media is a factor that played out to show the grave need for proper coordination, supervision, and upgrade of the media with reference to the fact that the newspaper is an integral part of the media that portray the credence of information dissemination even to the grass-root audience.

Challenges of Newspaper Production and Management in Nigeria

The unavoidable reality is that the print form of newspapers is going under increasingly more with every year. Consequently, the real challenge for newspapers has not been how to maintain the traditional side of the business alive; it has not even been about "simply" changing their utterly traditional business model; ultimately, the biggest challenge comes down to innovating from the tradition into a successful digital business –and how the managers need to function in order to facilitate more desirable results (Edmonds, 2015).

Given the strong traditional nature of this business model, there is also a challenging temporal element that comes into place for the digital transformation process.

The conventional media, especially the newspaper is struggling to survive amid the technological revolution that has engulfed the media landscape. Newspapers are struggling to compete and stay relevant, as the reader can opt to be informed by Facebook status feeds or by following Tweets on Twitter. Some observers believe that the threats faced by newspapers, have to do with dwindling readership and advertising revenue, Agboola (2014) writes that the new media have caused some media outlets in Nigeria to lose their revenue. Nengra (2015) opined that newspapers rely on advertisements as a major source of revenue but over the years this has equally dwindled. “Most troubling of all for the industry is that young people are just not buying newspapers the way their parents did,” he noted.

Newspaper organizations do not exist in a vacuum but are owned and funded by a given proprietor. In Nigeria, newspapers are primarily owned by private individuals who perceived the outfit as a business and or political outfit, it has been observed when such purposes were not met as expected by the owner, the management staff especially the top manager is forced to live. In this scenario, it means that managers in newspaper organizations are faced with the problem of undue interference and control. On the influence on ownership, Adesoji and Hahn (2011) have noted that newspaper owners wield enormous influence that determines the slant of their publications. While it is difficult to ascertain the degree of influence owners wield in determining the content of their publications; in the Nigerian context, owners who often double as editors of their publications bear a more direct impact, both on their staff and on content.

As noted by Abati (2000), the Nigerian press (newspaper) is significantly affected by the political, regional, and ethnic contestation for state power and resources that have characterized post-independence politics in Nigeria. Although the press was instrumental in the clamor for and attainment of independence, the North/South divide in the newspaper is also reflected in the ownership structures of Nigerian newspapers that produce a press based on geographic, historical, and ideological inflections (Akinfeleye, 2011). While most newspapers claim to be fair, balanced, and objective advocates of democracy; press ownership structures and regional affinity suggest a strong degree of ethnicity and regional divergence in the press which have served as impediments to the effective management of newspapers in the country.

Many newspaper organizations in Nigeria lack technical expertise in the various department of the industry. The industry is financially incapacitated to meet the demands of these professions in terms of remuneration, allowances, housing, welfare, and many others has forced newspaper managers to do use sub-standard personnel or casual staff as alternatives. The phenomenon has led to a lack of commitment on the workers’ side, and poor newspaper production, marketing, and advertising sourcing.

Relevance of Campus Newspaper

The character of the campus newspaper makes it one of the most appealing and universal mass medium for participatory communication and development as it is the only official *newspaper* issued on campus and run entirely by university students for the university community. It provides the students with information, entertainment, and news about events

happening in their environment and in the nation in general. Campus newspaper grows out of the need to perfect the theoretical aspect of learning of students in the university environment, with respect to their future as practicing formalists. The main idea behind campus journalism is to make sure the students practice what they study.

Higher Educational Review Team (2021) noted that the campus newspaper gives avenues for students to articulate their ideas and creativity. It assists to build up their essential thinking skills and can be influential in molding peer-to-peer relationships while shaping their perspectives, opinion, and identity. They explained in detail the various ways campus newspapers can build a career path for students as thus:

1. **Work Experience:** It is simply obvious that the campus newspaper stands as a platform for students to hone their writing and editing, layout and design skills. Working as a team member, meeting deadlines, and learning how to negotiate are all critical skills that will benefit students later in their career path.
2. **Improve Writing Skills:** Writing is an ability that takes time to breed and expand; students spending time on the campus newspaper will give ample chances to do so. There will also be opportunities to research.
3. **Be Responsible:** Working as a team member of a campus newspaper will get you accustomed to submit assignments before deadlines. This will make the students work under pressure, turn in an assignment on time, and accept reviews from the team members. This will in turn make the students learn time management.
4. **Build Social Networks:** It paves the way to connect with other motivated, hardworking, and passionate students who share the ideology of producing factual news and original content. Spending a lot of time together making decisions about layout design, or thinking up a catchy lead can pave the way to long-lasting friendships with people working towards a common goal.
5. **Adds Value to Resume:** At the time to find a firm for an internship or graduate job, having work experience with the campus newspaper looks great on a resume.

In summary, a campus newspaper is powerful on many levels, but one of the most intriguing aspects is the business acumen that students gain from running a newspaper. So many aspects of it mirror real-world business, and not only is the experience invaluable, but it looks good on a resume as well.

Theoretical Framework

This study is built on the Democratic Participant Media Theory which challenged the dominance of centralized media (McQuail, 2000, p.160) and is perceived as a reaction to the commercialization and monopolization of the commercial media and the centralism and bureaucratization of public service media. Significantly, the theory advocates for citizens' ownership of the media for community expression, dialogue, and development. Some of the basic principles of this theory are summarized:

- ❖ Individuals and Minorities have the right to access the media (to communicate) and be served by the media according to their own needs.
- ❖ Media should exist primarily for their audiences, and not for professionals or the clients of media.
- ❖ Groups, local organizations, and local communities should have their own media.
- ❖ Small-scale, interactive, and participative forms are better than large-scale, one-way, professionalized media.
- ❖ Media have become socially too important to be left only in the hands of professionals.

Most of the principles highlighted in this theory can be used to describe the typical role such a phenomenon as a campus newspaper could play in society. Media are to be used to stimulate and empower pluralistic groups; small media can be directly controlled by group members. Its postulation beams light on the credence of campus media establishment and management hereby making the media accessible to the students on their different campuses. The theory supports that every individual and every part of society should have access to the media so that they can air their views about the happening in society. That is why the campus newspapers are being managed by the students under the supervision of the lecturers and the support of the school management for finances.

The Democratic Participant Media theory as conceptualized by McQuail (1987) described democratic participant media as small-scale, formed by groups, organizations, and local communities as interactive and participative in contrast to large-scale, one-way professionalized media (McQuail, 1987, p.123). The theory stipulates that small-scale media (campus newspaper), must be spearheaded by the active participation of members of the community and that the process of communication (newspaper) is decentralized to include community expression that leads to development.

The Democratic Participant theory is more suited for this study since the principles in the theory provide a more suitable framework and philosophies for the operational structure of the campus newspaper phenomenon. This relevance, therefore, informed the adoption of this theory for the study.

Methodology

In this study, the researchers used a survey research design because the topic concerns appraisal of students' newspaper production and management; it was deemed appropriate since it provided the researchers with the means of investigating the problems raised in this study under realistic settings. 300 undergraduates were drawn from fifteen universities in southeast Nigeria. They include 5 federal universities, 5 state universities, and 5 private universities covering the five states in Southeast Nigeria. 20 undergraduates from the department of Mass Communication were purposely selected from each university. Students from these universities and departments have an adequate representation of the characteristics of the population under study. Analysis of data collected from the field was done and presented with the statistical tool of frequency and percentage tables.

Federal Universities

- Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State. (FUTO)
- Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndifu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State (AE-FUNAI)

- Michael Okpara University of Agricultural Umudike, Abia State (MOUUAU)
- Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State (UNIZIK)
- The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State (UNN)

State Universities

- Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU)
- Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State (COOU)
- Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki (EBSU)
- Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu (ESUT)
- Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU)

Private Universities

- Evangel University, Okpoto, Ebonyi State.
- Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State.
- Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State.
- Renaissance University, Enugu, Enugu State.
- Hezekiah University, Umudi, Imo State

Data Analysis

The researchers used secondary administration and on-the-spot collection while administering the questionnaire; so there was a 100% response rate. However, 80 copies of the questionnaire were invalid as some universities do not have mass communication departments (FUTO and MOUUAU) and some do not have campus newspapers (Hezekiah and Evangel universities). Consequently, a total of 220 copies of the questionnaire were analyzed for this study.

Table 1: Campus Newspapers in South East Nigeria

S/n	Name of Campus Newspaper	Institution	Production Frequency
1.	Funnai Parrot	AE-FUNAI	Per session
2.	The Record	UNN	Per session
3.	Unizik Comet	UNIZIK	Per session
4.	Campus Ray	ABSU	Per semester
5.	Eagle Times	COOU	Per session
6.	ESUT News	ESUT	Per session
7.	GUU News	GREGORY	Per semester
8.	EBSU Watch	EBSU	Per session
9.	IMSU Star Express	IMSU	Per semester
10.	Vox Madonna	MADONNA	Suspended
11.	Pilot	RENAISSANCE	On hold

Source: Field Study (2023)

Table 1 above shows the 11 universities that run campus newspapers; produced and managed by each school's department of mass communication. It also shows the frequency of production. The two private universities with campus newspapers were observed to have a hitch with production frequency which was attributed to the institution's management decision to suspend and withhold production for a while due to production management issues.

Table 2: Level of students' involvement in the production process of the campus newspapers?

Responses	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Students as editorial team members	220	0	100	0
Students are the content writers	220	0	100	0
Students seek for advertorials	137	83	62.27	37.73
Students as production decision-makers	22	198	10	90
Students plan the pages	121	99	55	45
Students partake in the printing process	12	208	5.45	94.55
Students source for production fund	40	180	18.18	81.82
Students sell/circulate the newspapers	220	0	100	0
Students in charge of generated fund	0	220	0	100
Students determine production frequency.	0	220	0	100

Source: Field Study (2023)

From table 2 above, students' involvement was found to be at varying degrees. The students were the content creators, the editorial team members, and in charge of the circulation/sales. These they did 100%. Nonetheless, it was noted that production decision and printing processes were majorly handled by external bodies with 90 and 94.5% respectively instead of the students whose percentage of involvement was 10 and 5.4% respectively. On sourcing for production funds, students' input was 18%. On page planning, the students were more involved (55%) than external forces. Seeking for adverts was carried out mainly by the students (62%) yet they were not involved in administering the generated funds or in decisions regarding production frequency.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings indicate that there are eleven campus newspapers operating in southeast Nigeria. Of this number, two are yet to restore their operation. The universities where these newspapers are domiciled are both private and public universities. While all the public university campus papers are operational, the two privately owned university papers are not in operation.

Campus newspapers have a great impact on students as they gather experiences and build competencies to help them even after their studies. This is in line with Nwabueze's (2019) submission that campus newspapers contributes greatly in enhancing the skills of student journalists. From the findings, we noted that production decisions: such as when and how to produce were not handled by the students. Nonetheless, students are the content creators as well as the editorial members of their respective campus newspapers.

Conclusion

Campus newspaper production and management in southeast Nigeria can be said to be the practice in the department of mass communication across several universities in the region. Whereas the students are the main focus of such papers, administrative issues often include the staff of the department and sometimes university management. The students gain from such in-house exposure. Their reportorial and writing skills are enhanced while also offering them a platform for creativity and expression of their ideas. The experience and skills acquired are expected to make the students at graduation better equipped for the workplace. Few of them can even at the end of the day team up to set up their own newspaper outfit thus making them job creators. The study recommends the setting up of a campus newspaper in every institution offering communication and media studies. It also recommends that the day-to-day management of such newspapers should be the sole duty of students with staff performing only a supervisory role. Furthermore, the students should have a say in production frequency. The situation whereby production decisions and printing processes are handled by external bodies leaves much to be desired. Therefore, universities offering mass communication should also try to set up a printing press to further expose and enhance the skill-set of the students and thus help the students to imbibe a holistic newspaper management capacity for the marketplace at graduation.

References

- Abdulmutallib, A. A. (2015). An Assessment of the Managerial Challenges of the Daily Trust Newspapers. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319914357_An_Assessment_of_the_Managerial_Challenges_of_the_Daily_Trust_Newspapers
- Albanese K, (2014) School newspapers and why they matter. Available at <https://www.graduationsource.com/blog/school-newspapers-matter/>
- Aliagan, I. Z. (2015). Examining Survival Strategies Employed by Nigerian Newspapers against Loss of Readership and Revenues, *New Media and Mass Communication*, 35, (2).
- Apuke, O. D. & Tunca, E. A. (2020). the challenges of managing newspaper organizations in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research Volume 9, Issue 03*
- Castonguay, C. (2021). 10 Reasons to Work for a Student Newspaper. Available at <https://www.masterstudies.com/article/10-reasons-to-work-for-a-student-newspaper/>
- Ekhareafu, D., Asemah, E. S. & Edegoh, O. N. (2013). The Challenges of Newspaper Management in Information and Communication Technology Age: The Nigerian Situation, *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 13 (1).
- Franklin, B. (2008). The future of newspapers. *Journalism Studies*, 9(5), 630–641. doi:10.1080/14616700802280307

- Higher Educational Review Team (2021). 8 Top Reasons to Have a School Newspaper. Available at <https://www.thehighereducationreview.com/news/8-top-reasons-to-have-a-school-newspaper--nid-779.html>
- <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/09/in-a-hamster-wheel-world-is-there-room-for-journalisticcreativity-evidence-from-the-new-york-times/>
- Jatula, V. (2017). News Production in the Nigerian Press: Prospects and Challenges, *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 5, (5).
- MacKay, S. & Dallaire, C. (2009). Campus newspaper coverage of varsity sports: Getting closer to equitable and sports-related representations of female athletes? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 44/. 25–40
- McQuail, D. (1987). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- McQuail, D. (2000). *Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage
- Nwabueze, C. (2019). List of campus newspapers In Nigerian universities. Available at <https://massmediang.com/list-of-campus-newspapers-in-nigerian-universities/>
- Silas, U. (2018). Print Media and The Challenges of Social Media, *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, Volume 2 Issue 3.
- Tanikawa, M. (2017). What is news? What is the newspaper? The physical, functional, and stylistic transformation of print newspapers, 1988–2013. *International Journal of Communication* 11(2017), Available at <http://ijoc.org>.
- Usher, N. (2010, September 20). In a hamster-wheel world, is there room for journalistic creativity? Evidence from *The New York Times*. *NeimanLab*.
- Wadhawan, R. (2016). 7 Benefits of Joining Your Campus Newspaper. Available at <https://www.tun.com/blog/college-campus-newspaper/>