



ETHICAL DIMENSION OF NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION: AN INQUIRY INTO THE FAILED EVENING NEWSPAPERS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The probing thesis in this study is anchored on the declaration that the best way to look at business ethics is by looking at how companies incorporated ethics into their operations. Since 1929 when a veteran journalist, Isaac Thomas, launched the first evening newspaper in Lagos, the Nigerian Evening News, an initiative which became the first in Nigeria, efforts by other investors or media proprietors to establish evening newspapers in the state, in spite of its sophistication and concentration of almost two-thirds of Nigerian media proved abortive. As at the time of putting together findings from this study, Lagos has become a highly dreaded business environment for publication of evening newspapers. The study found out that beyond any other measures or suggestions, a thorough injection and application of business ethics is the major panacea to successfully manage any media venture in the state. Through an in-depth interview approach with promoters and top editors-cum-management staff of the failed evening newspapers backed up with historical method of analysis, the study found out that business ethics is the panacea to rescue any distressed newspaper as well as the 'tonic' to strengthen any medium that wishes to remain healthily afloat. The study is routed through one of the traditional ethical theories, utilitarianism propounded by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. The study therefore recommended the need for media proprietors not to undermine role of ethics in the establishment, growth and sustainability of the press.

Keywords

Newspaper, management, production, evening newspapers, Ethical Dimension, Lagos, Nigeria



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ЭТИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ ГАЗЕТАМИ: ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ПРОВАЛА ВЕЧЕРНИХ ГАЗЕТ В ЛАГОСЕ, НИГЕРИЯ

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Аннотация

В основе данного исследования лежит тезис о том, что лучший способ взглянуть на деловую этику - это рассмотреть, как компании внедрились в свою деятельность. С 1929 года, когда опытный журналист Исаак Томас основал первую вечернюю газету в Лагосе, усилия других инвесторов или владельцев СМИ по созданию вечерних газет, несмотря на их изощренность и концентрацию почти двух третей нигерийских СМИ, оказались неудачными. На момент проведения данного исследования Лагос стал крайне опасной деловой средой для издания вечерних газет. Исследование показало, что помимо любых других мер и предложений, тщательное внедрение и применение деловой этики является важнейшим средством успешного управления любым предприятием СМИ в государстве. Подход, основанный на глубинных интервью с промоутерами, топ-редакторами и руководством неудавшихся вечерних газет, подкрепленный методом исторического анализа, показал, что деловая этика является универсальным средством спасения любой неблагополучной газеты, а также "тонином" для укрепления любых СМИ, желающих оставаться на плаву. В основу исследования легла одна из традиционных этических теорий - утилитаризм, выдвинутый Джереми Бентамом и Джоном Стюартом Миллем. В этой связи в исследовании была высказана рекомендация о необходимости для собственников средств информации не подрывать роль этики в создании, развитии и обеспечении устойчивости прессы.

Ключевые слова

Газета, управление, производство, вечерние газеты, этический аспект, Лагос, Нигерия



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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Across the world, funding remains a major success factor in the management of any business organization. However, when it comes to scholarly inquiry into why a business enterprise collapses, the starting point is by probing deeply into “compliance,” and “ethical” issues in the day-to-day running of such enterprise. By compliance, energy is directed at probing adherence to relevant laws while ethics is aimed at establishing right behaviour which would assist in the realization of the goals for establishing the business.

Newspapering is a form of business and in any capitalist society, the motive for going into publishing is to maximize profit. Nigeria is a growing capitalist society and in every capitalist economy, there is free entry and exit, that is, freedom to enter into any legitimate business and freedom to opt out when the need arises. Therefore, in such society, business failure is symptomatic of environmental challenges. In other words, it is a clear indicator that things are not working correctly or have fallen apart.

The story of failed evening newspapers in Lagos is a big puzzle going by the population, sophistication, literacy level, prosperity as well as concentration of several business organizations in the state whose products and services require advertisement in the press.

At the time of writing this report, there are 20 local councils in the state while the official population, based on the last census in the country, 2006 census put the population of the state at 9,013,534. However, the population of the state is currently estimated at 21 million.

Lagos is reputed to be Africa’s biggest city and largest in Nigeria. In addition, it is also said to be one of the fastest growing cities in the world.

In a brief history of the state, Okafor (1981, p.1) says Lagos was annexed in 1861 and thus proclaimed a Crown settlement. In 1886, it was declared a Colony. By 1897, most of the areas in the South-West, which had become a Protectorate, were attached to Lagos Colony. The city was the seat of power for the British Crown throughout the colonial period and after independence, it remained as Nigeria’s capital until 1991 when the capital moved to Abuja. On May 27, 1967, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon proclaimed it a state.

For many years, Lagos enjoyed a dual status; first, as a state and second as a capital for Nigeria. Till date, the city is regarded as Nigeria’s economic capital. At the time of writing this report, there are 25 print media in the state, 29 radio stations and 11 television stations.

All the above media establishments are coping with the economic crunch and succeeding. It is therefore a puzzle as to why since 1929 when



Nigeria Evening News started till date, no other evening newspaper has succeeded in the state.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A highly dreaded environment by proprietors or promoters of evening newspapers in Nigeria is Lagos state and the probable reason is the fact that Lagosians have little interest in evening newspapers. The state, going by its literacy level, which the National Bureau of Statistics put at 92 percent, following a 2010 National Survey, coupled with other factors such as concentration of several corporate establishments, healthy population and concentration of almost two-thirds of Nigerian mass media in the state had attracted the attention of several evening newspaper investors. Unfortunately, the newspapers have been disappearing as they come. Even promoters of daily newspapers who were formerly prospering in the state have been forced to hurriedly abandon their evening newspaper editions shortly after they were set up. Such newspapers include the *Daily Times*, *AM News* as well as *The Guardian*.

Lagos was also one of the foremost Nigerian communities to have a taste of representative government. The Sir Hugh Clifford's Constitution of 1923 had an elective principle in which four of the members of the Legislative Council were to be elected on the basis of three from Lagos and one from Calabar. It is a known fact across the world that politics heighten interest in newspaper readership. In spite of the fore going, evening newspaper venture rarely succeed in Lagos State.

Against this background, the study sought to unravel circumstances responsible for the problem and similarly proffer measures to guide future investors in evening newspapers in the state.

Hence, the following research question guided the study:

1. What are the factors responsible for the disappearance of evening newspapers in Lagos?
2. What are the measures necessary for evening newspapers to thrive in Lagos?

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is routed through an ethical theory, *utilitarianism*, propounded by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1893). Utilitarianism is found handy in anchoring the study because it describes much of the process of human decision making as it affects newspaper management and production. According to Hartman (1998, p.1),



“using ethics to analyze business issues is merely one form of decision making, similar to profit maximization, legal compliance or religious beliefs.”

Hartman was however quick to add that “the difference, however, between ethics and those other bases for decisions is that ethics can serve as the foundation for each of the other methods” adding that “in reaching decisions, the individual may use ethics as a guide...”

Utilitarianism as an ethical theory seeks as its end, the greatest good for the greatest number. In every media organization, it would be praise worthy if promoters of newspapers could set out with the mission to satisfy not only the greatest number of the work force, but also the reading public. Hence, Hartman (2005, p.30) describes the theory as a theory of life whose goal is that of enthronement of pleasure and happiness as well as absence of pain or unhappiness.

In a related development, Velasquez (2002, p.61) says “utilitarianism is a general term for any view that held that actions and policies should be evaluated on the basis of the benefits and costs they will impose on society”. He describes the “right” action as the producer of the happiness for the greatest number and therefore insists that utilitarianism is used for any theory that advocates selection of that action that maximizes benefits or minimizes costs.

Reflecting on an aspect of business operations where utilitarian ethics is highly strategic and vital, Hartman (1998, p.5) says when it comes to cost-benefit analysis, where it is expected that one tallies the costs and benefits of a given decision and follows the decision that provides for the greatest overall gain, utilitarianism is the most appropriate.

While Hartman describes this approach as superficially easy to apply, especially as it concerns profit/loss statements, it is plausible to state that business ethics is chiefly concerned with measurement of business performance based on standards of right and wrong. Therefore, when a newspaper proprietor is confronted with a difficult decision, a reasonable tactic is simply to do what he deems fit. This is the whole essence of ethics. Ethics involves judgments as to good and bad, right and wrong as well as what ought to be. This explains why the philosopher, Epicurus cited in Hartman (1998, p.2) says “ethics deals with things to be sought and things to be avoided....”

In the context of Lunday (1998, p.303), ethical practices have the propensity to contribute significantly to the success story of any corporate body especially when it comes to an overall corporate climate which cuts waste, encourages efficiency, promotes community/marketplace goodwill, allowing the company a healthy bottom line.”



It is instructive to stress that part of the factors responsible for the failure of all the newspapers investigated by this study bothers on the inability of management to cut waste and to encourage efficiency of the work force.

To engender happiness of the greatest number of the workforce, management should be up and doing. They must engender good policies, provide good working environment which would motivate the workforce to give their best, and work assiduously toward the realization of the goals for establishing the business. Within the context of Appadorai (1975, p.43), utilitarianism has become the touchstone with which one can judge the performance of every corporate establishment.

The appropriateness of utilitarian theory of ethics for this study is further strengthened by developments and circumstances which eventually led to the disappearance of all the evening newspapers. Amongst others, they sacked workers and out rightly down-sized, an action which violated business ethics. For instance, outright dismissal or downsizing could be un-empathetic as it would surely negatively affect those who are asked to leave. Thus, rather than the policy producing happiness for the greatest number, unhappiness, pain, dissatisfaction, sickness and death were the result.

Hence, Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p.68) say the import of the utilitarian theory is that “the good that may come from an action is weighed against or balanced against the possible harm.”

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

From global perspective, the origin of newspaper has been traced to the ancient Rome where daily events were disseminated through a publication called *Acta Diurna*. According to Tebbel (1977) cited in Popoola (2015, p.114) “that was the first newspaper of any kind”. Tebbel (1977) recalled that the financial houses of Europe later took up the idea. He contended that after Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 15th century, books and eventually newspapers began to be published in France and England.

Newspaper was said to have originated in America in 1690. It was viewed from the onset as a medium through which ideas could easily spread. At this early stage of newspapering in the US, there were also those who held the view that newspapers could be valuable spreaders of propaganda for the civil authorities and propagators of the faith for the religious leaders (Tebbel, 1977)



However, in 1835, the newspaper business in the US was revolutionized with the coming on board of James Gordon Bennett, who introduced *New York Herald* to the US market. Tebbel (1927) described him as a man who did all the reporting by himself. After him, other rivals followed such as *New York Times* published by Henry J. Raymond amongst others.

The story of newspapering in Nigeria is very similar to that of the US. From the chronological account of how it all started in Nigeria, Coker as cited in Popoola (2015) identified 1859 as the take-off year for newspapers in Nigeria. He stressed that a reverend who had planted the faith of Christianity in Badagry and Abeokuta in 1842 began the publication of a vernacular newspaper, *Iwe Irohin*. The missionaries thus pioneered the foundation and early development of the press in Nigeria. On what led to its establishment, Popoola (2015, p.79) quoted, Coker from *the Memoirs of the Reverend Henry Townsend*: “My object is to get the people to read, that is, to beget the habit of seeking information by reading”. After *Iwe Irohin*, *Anglo-African* (1863-65) established by Robert Campbell was the next newspaper. It was followed by *Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser* on 12th November, 1880. Therefore, Coker described the period 1865-1880 as a ‘blank’ period due to the nonexistence of newspapers in the country during the period. From 1880 however onward, there was no dull moment again as various newspapers were established one after the other.

The journey into evening newspaper business began in 1929 in Lagos when Isaac B. Thomas, a veteran journalist cum editor-publisher started the publication of *Nigerian Evening News*. It was a partnership venture with his printer, Mr. J.T. Aganga Williams.

Thomas had the antecedent of being a celebrated columnist of the Yoruba weekly newspaper, *Eleti Ofe*. He also served under Thomas Horatio Jackson of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. At the time he commenced publication of *Nigerian Evening News*, he was not seen as a green horn. In his assessment of the paper, Popoola (2015, p.78) further quoted Coker’s saying that the paper made a sensational appearance during the first few months, but it is doubtful whether it survived up to a year.

By the end of the first six months of its existence, it was appearing irregularly and each succeeding month found the Evening News degenerating in the quality of production. Mr. Thomas was compelled to close it down and concentrated his efforts on his Yoruba weekly, Akede Eko.(Coker as cited in Popoola 2015, p.78).



In 1934, another editor-publisher, Mr. William Edward Akaje-Macaulay launched another evening newspaper, the *Nigerian Evening Standard* in Lagos. Mr. Akaje-Macaulay had his background in Law. His partner in the venture who doubled as his printer was Mr. Akin Adeshigbin. In a critical assessment of the paper, Coker (1968, p.48) says:

Again, the 1934 venture did not last for more than a year, the chief reason being that there was just not enough patronage from the public to sustain the paper.

Coker further attributed the failure of the 1934 and 1929 evening newspapers to the ownership pattern. He stressed that they were single-handed efforts of one man.

In a manner, reminiscence of the mathematical trial by error method, another evening newspaper *Evening Times* was launched and released to the Lagos public in August 1957. Unlike its predecessors which were run using the one-man ownership pattern (which was part of the reasons why they failed), *Evening Times* belonged to a larger group which since 1924 had successfully published a daily newspaper. Since *Evening Times* was part of that group, it was held that it would be a success story. Furthermore, unlike its predecessors, *The Evening Times* shared the high production qualities of *The Daily Times* and the *Sunday Times*. In spite of the above, the newspaper went the way of its predecessors.

The management of the newspaper probed deeply into circumstances leading to the crash of the newspaper. Amongst others, they discovered that:

- (i) The reading public, particularly outside Lagos, were not quite prepared yet for an evening newspaper.
- (ii) Lagos patronage was not at all sufficient to sustain the paper.
- (iii) Rivalries within the group tended to weaken team spirit, a vital ingredient of *Times* success.
- (iv) There was a big distribution problem created for the management by the young vendors.

Vendors who for many years had been used to only the morning newspapers simply refused to exert the extra effort necessary to distribute the Evening Times later in the day.

- (i) Another factor was that there were not enough news stories to sustain interest in an evening newspaper every day.
- (ii) Literacy level was also very low at that time.



However, shortly after the demise of *Evening Times*, the defunct Western Regional Government introduced the compulsory Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme and ever since, the literacy level in Lagos has been on the increase. It is however instructive to note that following failure of all the evening newspapers which came on board between 1929 and 1957, Coker (1968, p.49) in what looked like a prophesy declared:

Even though the reading habit has increased numerically... but it seems that it will take another decade for the Federal Territory of Lagos and other parts of Nigeria to be ready for a successful evening newspaper.

It was on the above premise that this study sought to find out the state of affairs of evening newspapers four decades after. The report are contained in the next section of this paper.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study uses historical method that is backed up with oral in-depth interviews (IDI) in gathering data from eight promoters of seven failed evening newspapers and where this is not possible, senior editorial members of staff of such organizations who were fully involved in the running of the failed evening newspapers were purposefully interviewed. The study was subsequently anchored through literary journalism approach. According to Sims and Krame (1995:3) literary journalism provides an opportunity for the writer's voice to enter a report, sometimes with dramatic irony. The choice of this stylistic approach is deliberate as it offers different perspectives, voices and experiences concerning the subject-matter of the study.

6. FINDINGS

The coming on board of Independent Communications Network Limited (ICNL) publishers of *PM News* in February 1994 can be described as one of the fallouts of the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election won by Basorun MKO Abiola.

The group made no pretension that they were out to promote democratic struggles and fight for military disengagement from governance.



Prior to this day, the military, in the words of Larry Diamond *et al.* (1997) had initiated one of the most ambitious, imaginative, complex and expensive transitions from authoritarian rule that has ever been attempted anywhere in the world. The programme was further described as the most protracted, controversial, unstable and unsuccessful such that Nigerians came to the conclusion that it would never end.

Prior to the coming on board of the newspaper, its promoters, Bayo Onanuga and Babafemi Ojudu had resigned from the *Concord* group of newspapers in protest against the publisher's request that they should apologize to President Ibrahim Babangida over a news report which was critical of the government. Having resigned, they incorporated Independent Communications Network and began the publication of four titles: *AM News*, *PM News*, *The News Magazine* and *Tempo*. All the titles were dedicated to democratic struggles and military disengagement from governance.

Mr. Lanre Asiwaju (2018), a senior editorial member of staff of the organization put the daily print run of *PM News* at 60,000. To succeed, the newspaper made it mandatory for reporters to file-in their stories, latest 11.00am in a bid to hit the newsstand and streets by 2.00pm.

The organization believed the market was there and had the goal of taking the shine off the daily newspapers which had to wait till the next day to publish. The paper lived up to expectation as it was available consistently on the newsstands for 20 years. However, with the exit of the military from governance, guerrilla journalism ceased and misfortunes set in for the newspaper and the paper is now available online.

Another top management staff of the organization, Babatunde Johnson (2018) who held sway as Deputy Editor identified the emergence of internet as the major factor responsible for the crash of *PM News*.

Because people now have access to news as they break, they became less dependent on PM News as a source of news since people can get details of most breaking news which PM News was publishing, you would agree with me that there would be no need for them to buy PM News since they already have it through social media. (Johnson, 2018)

Johnson further revealed that advertisers never rated *PM News* as a medium to advertise their products.

As management of *PM News* rested production of hard copies of the paper, some members of staff protested against the decision and in protest floated another evening newspaper, *PM Express*.



The agenda was to fill the vacuum left behind by the disappearance of *PM News*. However, this study learnt, it went out of circulation within three months of its appearance in 2016.

Giving insight to factors responsible for its sudden disappearance, Johnson (2018) says:

One of the main factors is the internet. People now have access to breaking news via the internet. With their smart phones, they can read everything online virtually free of charge. So they don't bother about buying the hard copy of a newspaper on the newsstands. (Johnson, 2018)

Johnson (2018) similarly identified economic hardship in the country, which has eroded the disposable income of the average newspaper buyer:

Rather than use his N150 to buy a newspaper or magazine, he will prefer to use it to buy food and eat to stare off the hunger gnawing at his ribs. Dwindling readership is the major reason. The dying reading culture in Nigeria is having negative impact on newspaper business in the country (Johnson, 2018).

While suggesting the need for what he called “a thorough feasibility” before the establishment of future evening newspapers, Johnson contends that factors responsible for the failure of the newspaper could be outlined thus:

- Heavy overhead cost.
- Poor distribution/circulation.
- Fraud on the part of sales team.
- Sharp practices by the people in advert department.
- Embezzlement of sales proceeds by accountants.
- Desire of impatient publishers to recoup their investments overnight, and when that is not forthcoming, they shut down the outfit.

The editor of the paper, Paul Dada, further blamed the newspaper's woe on absence of a clear-cut manager following the relocation of the publisher to the United States. In the words of Dada (2018):

The printer started to cheat the publication in the area of number of copies to be printed and cost, among others. There was also infighting among the heads, a development which affected them. (Dada, 2018)



Another evening newspaper, *Ikorodu Evening News*, was established on February 17, 1997 following military clampdown on some newspapers. The plan again was to fill a vacuum. Its publisher was Isaac Akinlade, a retired public servant. The paper lasted 12 weeks with 11 publications.

Dwindling patronage, shortage of catchy news stories, inadequate manpower among others were major reasons why the newspaper collapsed.

Western Avenue Post was another evening newspaper experiment that was established in 1999 upon the return of the country to democratic governance.

Established by Chief John Ogunrinde, with the objective of inculcating the habit of evening newspaper in Nigerians. In his words:

Newspapers report events of today tomorrow. My newspaper would have broken the news that happened today by 4pm. I wanted Western Avenue Post to compete with radio. I tried to introduce a paradigm shift in Nigerian newspaper industry.

However, like its predecessor, the paper went out of circulation after few months of its appearance. Recalling why it failed, Ogunrinde identified the following reasons.

First, he said the populace had a stigma against evening newspapers. “They did not understand the idea of evening newspapers. They believed it was a sensational and unserious newspaper.

Secondly, he said the populace likened it to a gossip newspaper while others see it as a machinery of propaganda.

The third reason he identified was that the targeted audience were returning late from work. He described this reason as very devastating adding that:

Most people were still in their offices by 4pm when the newspaper would come out. The vendors and motorcyclists would turn back to the press with the report that offices had not yet closed for the day. It was a terrible circulation experience (Ogunrinde, 2018).

Today's News Today (TNT) was another evening newspaper that stormed that Lagos market with the objective of reporting news of major happenings in the society same day.

The paper made no pretense that it meant business. Published by an experienced journalist, Muyiwa Adetiba, the paper effectively competed with *PM News* to the extent that several news editors of national dailies



operating in Lagos had to wait for every edition of the paper before preparing their News Schedule for the following day's edition of their newspapers.

The paper which circulated beyond metropolitan Lagos to other places such as Ikorodu, Badagry, Sango, Abeokuta and Ibadan ran into trouble waters and later crashed out.

Top of the problems which led to the grounding of the paper included high cost of production. Salaries of workers were not paid as at when due rising cost of newsprint and other production materials in the market. Other factors included low advert patronage by advertisers and leading advert agencies. The advertisers prefer national dailies with nation-wide spread for them to reach their target audience.

Mention could also be made of the sudden increase in interest on bank loans. These problems amongst others, led to the resting of the paper in 2001.

Vision Express was another evening newspaper with the shortest history of existence. It came on board on 8th May 1996 and crashed out under three months. From the onset, it was clear the paper wouldn't last. First, mistrust existed between the chairman, Jarett Tenebe and the Managing Director, Mr. John Ugbodagah. On many occasions, they could not agree on vital issues affecting the newspaper.

At the take off stage, the newspaper operated at Iyana Ipaja while typesetting was done at *Satellite Press*, Ogba, a distance of about five kilometers (both in Lagos).

Following the disagreement between the chairman and the MD, the MD was edged out and the paper relocated to 15, Abule-Oja Street Yaba in Lagos while typesetting was also relocated first to a business centre in Ikeja and later to another business centre at Oju-elegba (all in Lagos).

Throughout its existence, only one-month salary was paid to staff. There were no operating tool apart from tables and chairs in the offices, no transistor radio, no television set, no communication facilities, no circulation vehicles, no printing press and above all, the paper was poorly funded.

The flagship of the Nigerian press, *The Guardian* also floated an evening newspaper in 1988. The editor of the newspaper, Gbenga Omotoso revealed that the paper was established to close the gap between the morning papers, that is, the dailies. He was in charge as editor between 1991 and 1993 when the paper was shut down.

In a retrospective fashion, Omotoso (2018) recalled that:



Guardian Express was doing fine at that time. In fact, it was number 1 in all round news sourcing and gathering. It was an 8-page newspaper with 1 page dedicated for advert and there was no day we didn't have adverts to flood the page, either semi, quarter, and so on. The paper was doing so well even better than the main Guardian itself. We sold up to 35,000 copies per day. (Omotoso, 2018)

The paper circulated to places like Sango-Otta, Epe, Ikorodu and Ibadan, covering every aspect of life including oil and gas, health, education, arts and life, entertainment, ICT, crime, sports and general news.

The paper's failure in the words of Omotoso (2018) can be attributed to political strangulation of the paper by the regime of late General Sani Abacha. Tied to this was the high cost of production as well as economic downturn in Nigeria.

In an insightful manner, Omotoso (2018) rendered a full account of circumstances leading to the collapse of *Guardian Express*. His words:

The paper was not killed by economic reasons but circumstances beyond the publisher's control who was also a member of the government. During the June 12 crisis, The Guardian was shut. By the time it returned after a year of inaction, there was no way the paper could have published all its titles at the same time. It was supposed to be a gradual return to the market. Then, the management decided to stop Guardian Express. (Omotoso, 2018)

7. DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

In colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, the picture painted above was the true picture of newspaper management in Nigeria. Only the *Guardian* and *PM News* carried out feasibility studies before hitting the newsstand. They also organized something close to Toffler's compliance enlightenment programme. It was a sort of orientation programme for the staff at the take off stage.

Furthermore, only *PM News* organized severing pay-package for the staff when the medium was shut down. *Guardian* only re-deployed staff of *Guardian Express* back to the newsroom where they were seconded to the *Guardian Express*.

Within the context of Toffler (1998, p.80), two other factors that could make or mar the realization of the objectives for establishing a newspaper outfit are 'compliance' and ethics'



Compliance has to do with application to relevant laws of the land to newspapering, while ethics includes emphasis on the right behaviour which would assist in the realization of the goals for establishing a newspaper outfit. Expatriating on these factors, Toffler (1998, p.80) says corporate establishments should seldom organize compliance programme in which lawyers, internal auditors, internal affairs officers would enlighten workers on what they must do and what will happen to them if they disobey. The tone of such address according to him “is often punitive or paternalistic, neither of which makes employees feel respected and capable.

Toffler equated the ethical aspect to Sunday school or sermon arguing that it should be delivered by human resource personnel or corporate social policy groups, with focus on being a good person and doing the right thing.

It is instructive to stress that newspapers in Nigeria hardly do this. The common practice is for editors or managing directors to do the briefings themselves. Absence of these kinds of parleys are part of the contributory factors to the story of the failed newspapers in Nigeria.

That a newspaper venture failed is symptomatic of corporate irresponsiveness. Quoting Toffler (1998, p. 81) once more, “the word responsible encompasses both complaint and ethical. A programme that focuses on responsible employee behaviour begins with an assumption that employees want to do the right things, but recognizes that they may face impediments to doing so effectively”. Toffler then itemized four things that could be done in removing such impediments. They include:

- (i) Instructing the employees in the laws, regulations, policies and procedures which they ought to know and follow.
- (ii) Assisting them in understanding the kinds of dilemmas they may face in their jobs as well as the role their institution could play in such dilemmic situations.
- (iii) Guiding them in applying the laws, regulations etc.
- (iv) Assisting them to develop skills to resolve their dilemmas

Meanwhile, Lovey as cited in Hartman (1998, p.106) observed that many leaders confuse ethical with legal issues or they take a departmental or compartmental approach rather than an integrated and organic approach to ethics. According to him, “with an organic approach, an executive naturally sees everything through an ethical lens; consequently, everything is integrated, not seen in different frames”.

Alluding to the need for constant parley between employers and employees as part of measures to achieve corporate goals and objectives, Toffler (1998, p.82) says this is necessary to tackle some of the reasons



why people do wrong. Some of the reasons which address the subject-matter of this paper are:

- ❖ That people do wrong because they do not know right from wrong. In other words, their character.
- ❖ That people do wrong because they do not have the information they need or they have the information but do not understand it or have information they need, understand it but do not know how to apply it.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The absence of ethical principles and compliance played a major role in the collapse of all the evening newspapers in Lagos, Nigeria. This manifested in the high display of unprofessionalism by the promoters of the evening newspapers, leading to barbaric dismissal of the entire workers who were asked to go home without severance pay.

The paper further observes absence of education cum enlightenment programmes that could strengthen the various professionals employed by the newspapers.

Consequent upon the above, the study put forward the following recommendations to guide future investors in evening newspapers in Nigeria.

1. Proper feasibility study must be carried out before any investor could venture into the business.
2. Future promoters of evening newspapers should be properly screened by the government through the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) at the point of incorporation of the publishing company in order to prevent unserious minded publishers who could not sustain the paper from coming into the business.
3. Promoters and media managers in Nigeria do not have management background. Future editors or managing editors of evening newspapers must have a sound academic background in business management.
4. The capitalist principle of free entry and exit must apply to evening newspapers in Nigeria the same way it is applied to the establishment of radio and television. In other words, there must be a prescribed take off seed.



5. Future investors in evening newspapers must embrace online publication.

Training and re-training of staff is also necessary for staff to enhance professionalism and performance.

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