Providing broadcast managers with vital information on the essential tools for managing radio and television stations in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The success of any venture is contingent upon the level of efficiency with which the planning and coordination of its activities is handled. It is thus expedient to make available to broadcast managers, vital information on essential tools that can facilitate the attainment of effective management of broadcasting. This was the main purpose of this research. The study employed the survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument for data gathering. Copies of the questionnaire which were administered on broadcast managers at a national forum were retrieved and analysed. Findings revealed that whereas many of the managers were conversant with the relevant broadcast management tools, opinions on where, when and how each tool can be applied for maximum effect were divergent. The 'Diffusion and Technological Determinism Theory' upon which the study was anchored, threw ample light on how lack of wide knowledge of the tools and techniques hindered managers from having a consensus on their descending order of importance. The paper therefore suggests that those charged with the responsibility of managing radio and television stations should endeavour to familiarize themselves with global realities by imbibing current practices that are attuned to the most effective and efficient ways of managing broadcast stations*
Keywords: *Broadcasting, Essential tools, Information, Managers, Developing societies*

I. Introduction

The mass media can aptly be described as the most powerful entity on earth. As Malcolm X (1925-1965), the great African-American human rights activists once said, "they have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power; because they control the minds of the masses." Not many are ready to dispute the enormous power of the media hence it is generally accepted that they are best positioned to change society. Indeed, the media can do and undo; they can instigate war and can, at the same time, serve as a tool for peace building among hostile communities. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the usefulness of the media is to follow the assertion of Iwokwagh (2017, p1) that "the mass media are so central to the operations of modern societies that it is inconceivable for those societies to survive without them." This powerful many-sided phenomenon is broadly divisible into two - print and electronic media. The latter, to which broadcasting and social digital platforms belong, are no doubt more effective because of their pervasive nature of transmitting information electronically. In particular, broadcasting, which is the main concern of this study is traditionally made up of Radio and Television - a combination which has capacity for virtually unlimited diffusion of messages and which Egbon (2004) says can wield an awful power on its heterogeneous and diversified audience.

Whereas the power of broadcasting is often perceived through the strength of its signals, broadcast content which is the end-product, is organized by an entity – usually called broadcast station. Iredia (2016, p218) underscores this argument with his description of a broadcast station "as a distinctive organization engaged in the utilization of human and material resources for the production and transmission of broadcast content which informs, educates and entertains people." Being an entity, which consists of people who have a common goal and is linked to an external environment, a broadcast station possesses all the qualities of a formal organization which must be constantly managed to remain functioning. The goals and resources of broadcasting are different from those of other organizations; so are the tools for managing its functions but like all organizations, its fortunes are attributable to the level of efficiency or otherwise of the planning and coordination of its activities.

The assumption that once management tools especially human and material resources are available, it is not too difficult to manage and sustain any organization is not true of broadcasting. This is because for a broadcast organization which must necessarily deal with certain sensitive or perishable tools which are changing by the day, a lack of understanding of the nature and uses of the tools can produce adverse consequences. It can

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cause delayed reports; it can engender muffled signals and it can lead to loss of listeners or viewers and advert sponsors. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to provide broadcast managers with vital information on essential tools with which to manage their channels. The goal is to contribute to the emergence of strong radio and television stations in developing societies such as Nigeria that are in search of viable tools for setting a feasible agenda for national development.

II.   Contextual Problem

As an organization, a broadcast station can be operated in several forms; it can be an entity under a public corporation or an authority whose business is wholly or partly owned by the state and controlled through a public authority. It can also operate under a partnership blend of public authorities and private interests or even entirely under private management. Since 1992, when broadcasting was deregulated in Nigeria, the country has had virtually every type, the foremost and largest being the Federal Government controlled Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Voice of Nigeria (VON). As public outfits, they are expected to be operated in the public interest, hence they enjoy subvention from public funds and other advantages not available to their private sector competitors. But unlike the latter, they suffer from certain constraints such as undue interference by government even in matters that are either routine or professional. This implies that whenever government decides to erode the autonomy of a public outfit, the interest of society is virtually mortgaged.

But then, whether the ownership of a broadcasting outfit is more useful to society as a public or private entity has remained controversial. There are arguments in support of both. On one hand, there is the view point that private ownership of broadcasting often increases competition and reduces the concentration of power which enhances democracy. On the other hand, it is argued that whereas private ownership of the media may lead to the reflection of only the views of a narrow group in society, public broadcasting is more capable of exposing society to desirable socio-economic and political values that can facilitate national integration. What these arguments establish is that whether the ownership of a broadcasting outfit will be more desirable under a private rather than a public concern can neither be answered in a vacuum nor can it be informed by the history or experiences of only one nation. Instead, the nature of the relevant society, particularly its level of development must be considered. As a matter of fact, it is not every public station that is better or worse than a private station as each category has both successful and failed stations making it obvious that what matters is how a station is managed. Consequently, the objective of this study is to examine how best a broadcast outfit should be organized and managed through the utilization of appropriate tools and techniques. To aid the study the following research questions were formulated:

1.   How easy is it to identify, access and comprehend essential tools of broadcast management?
2.   What technique or approach which is itself a management tool is best positioned for the optimum utilization of all the tools?
3.   What are the common challenges encountered by broadcast managers in their day to day running of their stations?

III.   Broadcast Management Tools: An overview

A tool is generally recognized as an item, implement or device which is capable of being used for a specific purpose or purposes. It can be in a variety of shapes. It can be physical, mechanical or technical. It can also be a software programme or even a concept or notion. The term tool is therefore exceedingly fluid especially where it is more than one type or a combination of many concepts. Management tools must therefore be understood to include not just implements and gadgets but all the systems, applications, controls and methodologies which help organizations to cope with changing circumstances while maintaining a viable and competitive position to enhance their fortunes. In the case of broadcast management, this study identifies five tools:

a.   Licensing

Broadcast licensing, is the act of legally authorizing an entity to operate broadcasting under certain conditions. The legal authority which is simply called a licence can be in several categories. The Nigerian Broadcasting Code recognizes Terrestrial, Satellite, Cable, Community, Networking and Signal distributor types. A licence which is usually granted for a specified period and renewable under conditions determined by the broadcast regulator can only be used for the broadcast service for which it was granted. It is therefore a primary tool of broadcast management because anyone who does not have a broadcast licence does not belong to the sector. Being an authorization tool, it may be easily perceived as a take-off rather than a management tool. But that is a rather simplistic posture because a licence is useful for all times. After obtaining it, the adverse effect of any wrong step taken in handling any aspect of a station would impact more on the licence as it can be revoked. In addition, a broadcast licence is crucial because broadcast frequencies which determine a station's

scope of coverage are allocated to only licensed stations. There is also the issue of regulatory officers subjecting it to occasional scrutiny during supervision and monitoring. This places an obligation on managers to recognize licensing as a management tool which if not properly handled, could disrupt transmission and affect the continued existence of the broadcast medium which is a sign of management failure.

b. Resources
Broadcasting is capital intensive; it requires several technical facilities such as studios, cameras, plants and vehicles. These facilities being the working tools of the sector are a pre-requisite for successful broadcasting. Other material resources required for running a station include Capital or Finance which should be enough to procure all the needs of a broadcast organization. Depending on its size, a station would also need Land to house all its components preferably in one location to reduce an all-the-time mobility process between locations such as studios and transmitter sites. Another major resource is human capital that is, the workforce needed to keep operations on-going. According to the Canadian-born American political scientist and system's theorist, David Easton cited in Gunnel (2015), an organization is an open living social system with its connecting parts functioning in the hands of people which must be integratedly managed. By inference, broadcast stations are in the functioning hands of News Reporters, Programmes Producers, Transmission, Maintenance Engineers and a host of service providers who complement operations. The relevance of 'resources' as a management tool is the ability of a management team to make personnel welfare a priority. As McLeod (2014) has found, meeting the needs of workers along the old philosophies of motivation is a pre-requisite for successful management across cultures.

c. Structure
An organizational structure identifies how the activities of an organization are divided and directed towards the achievement of prescribed goals. Consequently, every organization ought to have a structure by which relationships between its different activities and operatives can be identified. This is an essential part of management because an outdated structure can result in unnecessary ambiguity and confusion and often a lack of accountability (Corkindale, 2011). Indeed, when an organization is set up to execute a task, it should naturally divide the task into parts and assign them to its different components not just on the simple basis of division of labour but also on the principle of specialization where each relevant actor is assigned a specific role on the basis of professed expertise and competence. In which case, every part of the task must be functionally related to the specified corporate goal. The division is then formatted into a structure with which the entity as a whole is organized.
The structure of an organization differs from one entity to another with each selecting what best suits its goals or objectives. What this suggests is that structures vary making it easy for managers to select which suits their stations. The relevant structure of concern to this study is the one known as 'staff and line' that virtually every broadcasting station in Nigeria operates notwithstanding that the stations are neither of the same size nor do they offer the same services. The 'Staff and Line' structure is premised on departments headed by executives who are directly responsible to a superior officer (Griffin, 2010). This allows for control over the departments and at the same time enhances departmental autonomy and interdepartmental cooperation. In general terms, the structure involves a) Proprietor; b) Board of Directors; c) Management; d) Departments, which are further broken into Sections and Units.

d. Approaches/Techniques
Several approaches exist for managing organizations but many of them fall within the three main management schools known as: Formal/Classical, Human Angle/Public Relations and Modern. The formal/Classical approach is more concerned about increased productivity, the Human Angle approach deals essentially with improved personnel efficiency while the Modern Approach harps on organizational effectiveness (Albarran, 2002). Each school has its strengths and weaknesses, which suggests that the best approach to management is probably an aggregation of the different teachings of all the schools. In the case of broadcasting which is a non-stop business, an approach that can address an issue at a point in time in the form of situational management ought to be applied as the need arises. Broadcasters must be able to make such informed decisions which should also involve what Steinbruner (2002) describes as cybernetic decision-making; in view of the numerous decisions that are made not by workers but by machines in a broadcast operation. In other words, the dynamics of managing broadcasting must be in-built into all relevant approaches.

IV.   Theoretical Framework
With the attribution of massive development in the western world to technology, there is now a growing belief in developing societies that no meaningful societal development can be attained without technology. This is the kernel of the Diffusion and Technological Determinism Theory upon which this study is

anchored. The Theory which was propounded in 1986 by Everret Rogers sees technology as a key governing force in society and the redeeming feature of humanity. Other theorists may have couched the same idea slightly differently, but the common ground is the general acceptance that technology has a critical mission considering how it uses mass media organs for development not just as channels for general public enlightenment but also for messages of innovation. This, Esimokha (2014, p60) describes as "media determinism" because media technologies shape how individuals in a society think, feel and act, while society is transiting from one technological age to another.

Whereas innovations brought about by new technologies are usually diffused across societies, they rarely are adopted instantaneously. There are many reasons for this. In the first place, such information does not reach everyone at the same time. Besides, due to lack of uniformity in the endowment of humanity, not everyone is well disposed to new ideas. Rogers (1995) admits that there are early and late adopters. It is therefore expected that in relation to this study not all broadcast managers are early adopters but those who are; may have since experienced how new forms of outlets that are mostly internet-related have changed the posture of broadcast journalists at work in the last 10-15 years. According to Azeez, Lamidi and Doghudje (2017);Digital technology has given journalists new tools that have changed newsroom processes. The relevance of the adopted theory for this study therefore lies in its capacity to convey to members of a social system how new technologies function thereby providing people especially broadcast managers with vital information about the essential tools for managing broadcasting.

V.   Methodology

This study employs the survey research method with questionnaire as the instrument for data gathering. 100 copies of the questionnaire were administered on Nigerian broadcast managers who converged on the city of Jos, Plateau State from July 17-19, 2017 to attend a forum on 'Broadcast Content Development and Peaceful Coexistence' organized by the National Broadcasting Commission NBC. It was indeed a golden opportunity to have such often-sought-after resource persons in one location. The study's respondents being Chief Executives of radio and television stations nationwide were therefore broadcast experts whose professional responses would no doubt enhance the contribution of the study to broadcast management tools. It was also envisaged that there would be divergent opinions especially as the scope of authority differed with small, medium and large stations represented. With the kind assistance of officials of the forum's organizing body, all the copies distributed were retrieved except six only. The excellent returns recorded made it possible for the researcher to analyze a total of 94 out of the 100 copies distributed.

VI.   Findings and discussions

Research Question 1: How easy is it to identify, access and comprehend essential tools of broadcast management?

A set of items in the questionnaire sought to find out the level of familiarity of broadcast managers with five tools namely: License, Resources, Structure, Approach and Environment. As can be seen in Figure 1, all the managers appeared familiar with the tools hence they scored all the tools; no one could have scored   an item unknown to him. In other words, the issue of ability of the respondents to identify the tools is not in doubt.

**Figure 1: Broadcast Management Tools: Order of importance**
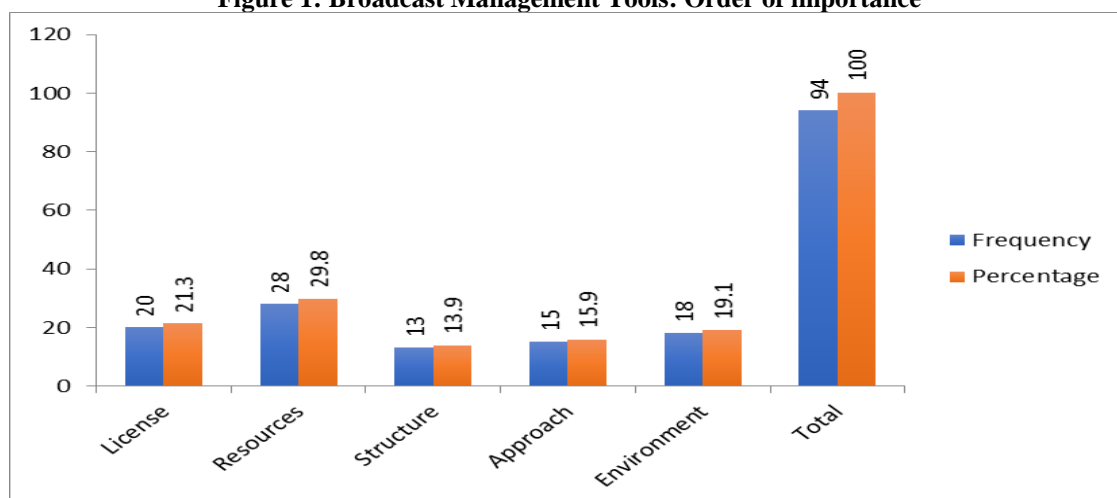
The lowest score of 13.9% for 'structure' by 13 respondents only, is to a large extent explicable because the structure with which a broadcast station is run is so flexible and fitted to its size prompting some managers to see the subject as the least important. This may have been the position of managers of small sized stations with skeletal structures. The same is also true of the 15 respondents that scored 'Approach' a paltry 15.9%. Such respondents probably held on to one approach of management without realizing the concept of 'change management' which requires managers to alter a subsisting approach to one that better suits a given occurrence 28, respondents saw 'Resources' as the most important tool hence the item attracted the highest score of 29.8%. This appears in order because broadcasting is technology-oriented making it easy for managers to quickly appreciate the quantity and quality of human and material resources especially technical facilities. What cannot be said with a measure of confidence is the extent to which the respondents have had access to such technical facilities which is controlled by each station's financial viability. As for human resources, respondents know that broadcast organizations are formed by people; it is people too who evolve and operate the procedures and processes for running the stations. And whether a station would survive over time or not, is determined by its people. Besides, the respondents may have also taken cognizance of the almost a century old conclusion of the Hawthorne experiment scholars that organizations are human cooperative systems instead of mechanical contraptions.

Only 18 respondents recognized the importance of 'Environment' as a management tool thereby giving the item a low score of 19.1 %. The score would probably have been rational if the study was on the media in developed societies but for Nigeria or any developing nation, the role of a broadcast station's environment is too crucial to be so downplayed. It is submitted that poor infrastructure, low literacy rate, massive unemployment among other challenges are strong enough to adversely impact on the management of stations. For instance, how to manage a station without public power supply is best imagined.

'Licensing' as a management tool is relatively well rated with a score of 21.3% by 20 respondents but considering that it is the tool that turns an organization into a broadcast station, there is doubt if it is not sufficiently important enough to be at par with the highest. Quite often, some proprietors and their managers think that the importance of a licence is the authorization which its procurement confers thereby doing nothing thereafter to protect it. The reality is that a licence-holder can lose it either for failure to renew it as at when due, or inability to adhere to the guidelines in the broadcasting code.

Research question 2: What technique or approach is best positioned for the optimum utilization of all the tools? To answer this question, respondents were required to determine the strategy that would produce the best results for broadcast management. They were also asked to rate a merger of all the listed strategies. Responses showed that the urge for productivity and the need to ensure organizational effectiveness are almost at par with 25.5% and 24.5% respectively as reflected in Figure 2. The presumed reason for this is not hard to identify.

Figure 2 Best result-oriented strategy
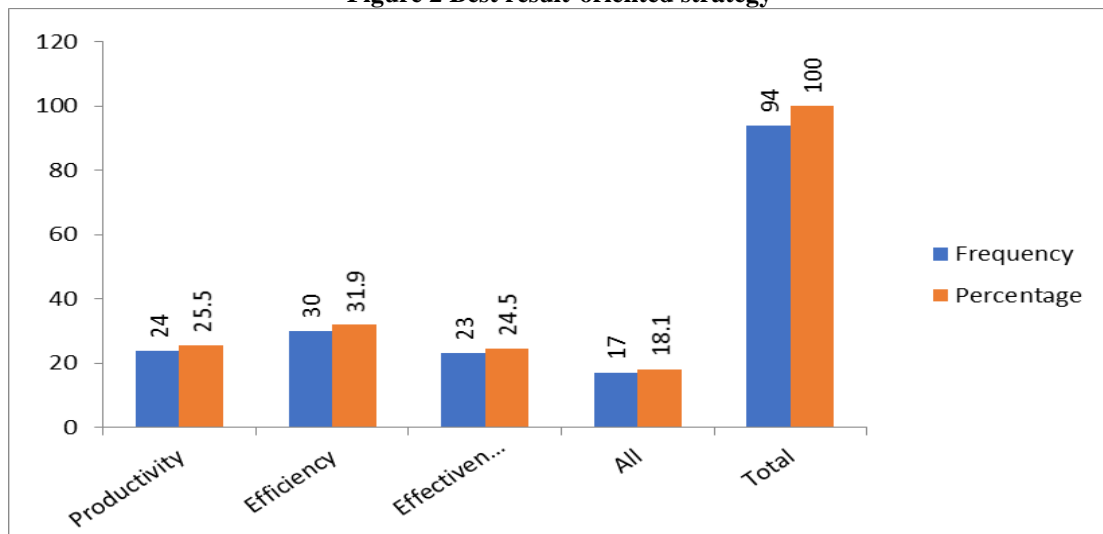
With digitization, broadcast stations now operate non-stop transmission which puts a lot of pressure on management to source large quantities of broadcast content to fill airtime. This may have recommended an approach that could always increase productivity for which the classical school of management has remained famous since the industrial revolution era.

The score of 24.5% for effectiveness by 23 respondents is equally high because the modern school of management which is premised on organizational effectiveness teaches managers several techniques. First, it illuminates how to undertake periodic staff appraisal using the famous principles of Management by Objectives MBO. Second, managers can rely on leadership theory of the school to apply the qualities of vision, passion and integrity which can influence a leader to lead by example and attract good followership. Such proactive leaders can then premise the management of a station on the organization's objectives in such a way that an aggregation of the total quality of its collective staff strength would add immense value to the system.

Efficiency has the highest score of 31.9%. Again, this is explicable. The score was probably influenced by the human angle approach to management which harps on the expedience of constantly motivating broadcasters who are engaged in non-stop operations. Besides, it is difficult for respondents to overlook the strategic role of human resources not simply on the time-honoured postulation that organizations are best managed as human cooperative systems but also out of fear of growing labour movements in the industry. The umbrella body for Journalists in Nigeria – the Nigerian Union of Journalists NUJ and the Radio Theatre and Allied Workers Union RATTAWU, can combine to disrupt operations in any broadcast station at the slightest provocation.

The 4th choice which is a combination of all the approaches surprisingly had the least score of 18.1%. Having scored each approach on its strength, it stands to reason that a combination of all would be stronger than anyone. It is therefore hard to support the score. Perhaps respondents have any tried to employ combined strategies. A combination of all the strategies means using the classical school for the management of structures, job schedules, as well as close supervision and monitoring of workers; merging it with the use of human angle school t effective motivational strategies that can influence more commitment of workers leading to improved personnel efficiency; and then, once increased productivity and improved efficiency are assured, the manager can then rely on management by objectives and other strategies of the modern school of management to attain organizational effectiveness. If all these can be gained by using a combination of all the strategies, it is obvious that responses in Figure 2 concerning the usefulness of a combined strategy cannot stand the test of time.

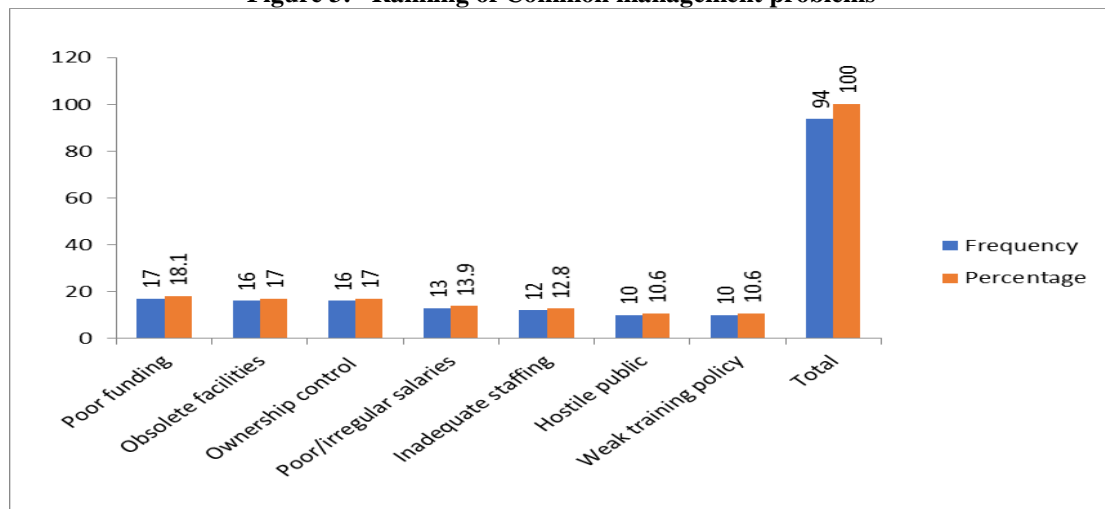**Figure 3: Ranking of Common management problems**

Figure 3 clearly explains constraints which may have informed choices in Figures 1 and 2. With poor funding ranking as the highest problem experienced by 17 respondents, it is easy to appreciate why scarcity of resources due to poor funding was identified earlier as the most important tool in Figure 1. It is partly responsible for poor and irregular salaries as well as inadequate staffing which 13 and 12 respondents reflected respectively in Figure 3. It also explains why as many as 16 respondents that is 17% of the respondents were more familiar with obsolete facilities. The major consequence of a weak training policy which 10 respondents that is, 10.6% indicated is that a station which does not give priority to training would have managers who are neither proficient in handling new facilities nor familiar with new processes in the workplace. The same managers can hardly serve as agents of innovation diffusion in a hostile environment characterized by police brutality, elite cynicism and low literacy rate. This is confirmed by 10 respondents who allocated a score of 10.6 to hostile public. Painfully, while managers struggle to cope with the challenges, their proprietors compound the situation by not allowing their managers ample initiative and discretion to professionally redress the challenges. That undue interference of broadcast owners and authorities is a major challenge can be deduced from the second highest score of 18.1% by 17 respondents.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

A major point underscored in this study was the inability of managers due to several conditions such as poor funding in developing societies to have access to operational tools which they may have heard of or read about making it hard for them to fully comprehend their uses and when best to apply each. It was indeed observed from the responses to the questionnaire that many managers did not fully comprehend what to emphasize in the utilization of management tools to run their stations. The study clearly showed that because of disparity in human endowments, the diffusion of technological innovations may have recorded late adopters which explained the knowledge-gap in some of the responses to the questionnaire especially how a combination of the approaches was poorly rated. It is for the same reason that some managers rated structure low against the backdrop of its size in their stations rather than its intrinsic value. It was therefore suggested that:

1. Whether large or small, the structure of any organization is important because it is the framework upon much the management of a station revolves. Flexibility cannot justify any attempt to under rate structure as a management tool. As a result, broadcast managers should always manage the adopted structures of their stations in such a way as to ensure effective coordination that can forge synergy in the system.
2. A broadcast organization should not function in isolation but as part of a given environment. The gain of such a viewpoint is that it would help the stations cope with societal expectations which can exert unavoidable influence on them and their operatives.
3. For synergy among departments and smooth running of stations, all operatives must have the same goal; consequently, units, divisions or departments of a station should not be handled as an end but as a means to an end which would achieve interdependence, cooperation and collaboration

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