

Optimizing the Role of Production Assistants: The Key to Production Efficiency for the 'Food Diary' Program on iNews

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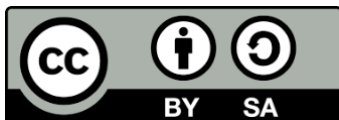
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Abstract

This study discusses the optimization of the role of Production Assistants (PAs) in improving the production efficiency of the "Food Diary" program on iNews. Although the PA position is often considered an entry-level position, this role is actually very crucial. Although PAs are not fully responsible for the entire program production, PAs hold significant responsibility in maintaining the smooth running of the television production process. The issues examined in this study include the role of PAs from the pre-production to post-production stages, as well as the extent of PAs' contribution to improving the production efficiency of the "Food Diary" program on iNews. The purpose of this study is to determine the real contribution of PAs to production efficiency and understand strategies for optimizing their role in television program production activities. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The results show that PAs are actively involved in all stages of production, from ensuring the readiness of equipment and logistics during pre-production, maintaining technical smoothness and crew coordination during production, to assisting in the editing process, searching for graphic materials, adding background sound, and finalizing the final broadcast during the post-production stage. Optimizing the role of a PA can be achieved by improving communication skills, time management, and technical knowledge in production. PAs significantly contribute to increasing production efficiency, both in terms of time, inter-team coordination, and technical smoothness in the field.

Keywords: Production Assistant, Television Production, Production Efficiency, Teamwork



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INTRODUCTION

Developments in information and communication technology have brought about significant transformations in the television broadcasting industry. The transition from analog to digital systems has not only improved broadcast quality but also changed the way people access and interact with television content. Television is a telecommunications medium widely recognized for its ability to display sound and moving images, in both black and white and color formats (Arafat & Yulianto, 2020).

According to Rasyid (2019), television is a mass communication medium that conveys information in the form of images and sound to a wide audience. The word "television" itself is taken from the Greek, namely "Tele" meaning far and "Visie" meaning sight, this can be interpreted literally as seeing from a distance. Now the development of television has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including education, entertainment, and information. The presence of television can be considered the most effective learning medium because television can capture and record real live images (Cangara, 2007).

Television plays a vital role in everyday life because it makes it easier for people to access information. Television is a combination of visual and audio media, providing information, entertainment, and education. Information delivered through television is easier to understand because it is presented in clear audio and supporting visuals. Television plays a role in conveying information (to inform), educating (to educate), entertaining (to entertain), and influencing society.

According to Morris (2008), television programs can be categorized into two main types: information programs (news) and entertainment programs (entertainment). Information programs include news and documentaries aimed at providing knowledge to the audience, while entertainment programs include drama, music, and game shows designed to entertain the audience. The programs presented, ranging from news and documentaries to entertainment, have a significant impact on public opinion and popular culture. However, with its great influence, television also has a responsibility to ensure that the content presented is in accordance with the norms and values that apply in society.

Television program planning, format, and content must be tailored to the target audience. Naratama (2013) stated that the television program format is the basic planning of a program concept that becomes the foundation of creativity and production design. This format must be designed according to the goals and characteristics of the program's audience. The television industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid development, offering a variety of entertaining and informative programs for viewers. One television station that stands out in presenting news and informative programs is iNews. iNews is present as a news television that prioritizes speed, accuracy, and depth of information, and presents a variety of programs packaged with creative and interesting concepts, one of the popular genres is the culinary program, namely "Food Diary."

One television program that relies heavily on the role of Production Assistant on iNews is "Food Diary." Culinary-themed television programs like "Food Diary" present unique production challenges. The program not only provides information about various culinary delights but also explores food history, inspiring stories of restaurant owners, the production process, and comparisons with similar cuisines from various regions and countries. This information is delivered in an informative and entertaining manner by an expressive and distinctive host. "Food Diary" is a program that prioritizes visuals and engaging narrative.

According to Lawasi (2017), an institution generally consists of various units or work departments that interact with each other and do not operate in isolation. Among all these elements, human resources play the primary role in driving activities within each division or unit. The same is true in producing a television program.

The production of the “Food Diary” program on iNews involves a team that works together to produce quality broadcasts, generally consisting of around 8 to 10 people with specific role divisions. This team structure includes one Executive Producer (EP) who is responsible for the overall direction of production, 1 Producer and Assistant who manage field techniques and the production process, there are 2 PAs who act as liaisons between divisions and support the smooth production process from start to finish. The team is also strengthened by two personnel from the creative team who are tasked with developing concepts and scripts, and two personnel from the support team consisting of 2 campers (cameraman), 1 audioman (sound manager), and 2 lightingmen (lighting controllers). All of these elements work collaboratively to ensure that each episode of “Food Diary” can be produced efficiently and according to broadcast quality standards.

Every program broadcast requires good teamwork to be well-received by the public. According to Tenner & Detoro (1992), teamwork is a group of individuals working together to reach a common goal. Teamwork can be interpreted as involving the joint efforts of a number of people to achieve the same goal, which tends to be more effective and efficient than if done individually. One team member who plays a crucial role in program production is the Production Assistant, as he or she holds significant responsibilities.

A Production Assistant is someone who assists with the production process of a program from pre-production to post-production (Dehaan et al. 2021). A PA has broad responsibilities, from pre-production to post-production. According to Fachruddin (2012), there are three stages in the television production process: pre-production, production, and post-production. The PA's crucial role in each stage of production allows for optimization of their performance, ensuring a more structured program production process, reducing wasted time and resources, and improving the quality of the final program.

Production efficiency is a strategic effort undertaken to run a process optimally, on target, and on time, with the aim of reducing expenses and avoiding wasteful resources. This concept of efficiency is closely related to the cost aspect, including cost functions, their characteristics, and various other factors that influence cost management (Mutiah et al. 2019). Production Assistants play a crucial role in creating efficiency in the production process. Although often invisible to the audience, PAs are responsible for coordinating schedules, ensuring a smooth production flow, and supporting communication between the various parties involved. Good communication skills, high initiative, and in-depth technical understanding are key to success in creating efficiency and subsequently have a direct impact on the overall success of production.

Based on the description above, the researcher formulated the problem: The role of the Production Assistant from pre- to post-production and to what extent the Production Assistant contributes to increasing the efficiency of the production process of the "Food Diary" program on iNews.

The purpose of this research is to determine the extent of the role of the production assistant (PA) in improving the production process, from pre-production to post-production. This research was conducted to better understand the role of PAs in increasing the production efficiency of television programs, specifically the "Food Diary" program on iNews. The duties of a PA are often invisible to the audience, but they have a significant impact on the smooth and efficient production process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, aiming to deeply understand the role of a PA in improving the efficiency of a television program's production process. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is a research method that aims to understand human or social issues by developing a comprehensive and in-depth picture. This

process is conveyed narratively, describing the participants' perspectives in detail, and is conducted in a natural context or in accordance with real conditions in the field. The data in this study are factual findings obtained by the researcher directly in the field (Sugiyono, 2016).

This research was conducted at iNews Tower located at Jl. KH Wahid Hasyim No.36-38, RT.15/RW.7, Kb. Sirih, Menteng District, Central Jakarta City, Special Capital Region of Jakarta 10340, and was conducted on January 6 – May 2, 2025. The data obtained in this study were sentences that had deep meanings originating from informants and previously observed behaviors. The data from this study were facts found by researchers in the field. This study used two types of data, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through interviews and direct observation of the production process of the "Food Diary" program on iNews. Secondary data were obtained to obtain additional information, either through broadcast archives, scientific articles or literature studies relevant to the role of Production Assistant and production efficiency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of Production Assistant is often considered as a supporting role in production activities, however, this study has proven that PA has a significant contribution in maintaining the efficiency and smoothness of the production process. According to Heriyanto (2006), the production process is a series of ways, methods, and techniques used to produce a product by utilizing available resources. The success of a production is seen from the ability of good team coordination, because production is the result of collaborative work or teamwork, not individual work (Mohyi, 1999). In this context, PA acts as a liaison between the crew and ensures that all production elements run according to plan. PA often acts as a 'supporting force' who handles various detailed matters that require immediate attention and handling (Wurtzel & Acker, 1989).

Production Assistant A PA is a supporting position that acts as a liaison between the technical crew, creative team, and other production teams. Although often considered an entry-level position, this role is crucial in ensuring that all technical and non-technical needs are carried out on time and according to instructions. The PA is the busiest person in the job because of the many tasks that must be carried out from the beginning to the end of production. Their work starts from preparing, finding, recording, collecting and coordinating all production facilities, studios, wardrobes, makeup, cameras, audio, lighting, and multiplying rundowns and scripts (Latief & Ubud, 2015).

A Production Assistant does not only complete his/her work during production, according to Fachruddin (2012), there are three stages that a PA can go through in carrying out the television production process, namely pre-production, production, and post-production. These three stages are the basic structure in the television industry's work system which demands high efficiency and coordination.

Pre-Production

According to Putra (2019), pre-production is the initial stage that includes the preparation of all shooting needs, both from an administrative and technical aspect. This stage aims to increase the efficiency of the production process in the field, especially in terms of time, energy, and costs. The role of the PA in the pre-production stage is very vital because the PA ensures technical and administrative readiness before shooting begins. The PA is responsible for compiling and sending a list of production needs via official email to the relevant departments, including the need for technical equipment such as cameras, lighting, audio, and others, as well as non-technical needs such as crew consumption, ATK (office stationery), filming properties, and ensuring that editing and broadcasting needs run according to plan.

In the pre-production stage of the “Food Diary” program on iNews, the Production Assistant (PA) has a crucial responsibility in ensuring technical readiness before the filming process begins. One of the main roles carried out by the PA is to prepare all production equipment that will be brought to the location. Standard equipment usually brought includes two camera units complete with batteries and memory cards, a tripod, an audio recorder, four clip-on mics (small wireless microphones for sources), two sets of lights for lighting needs, and cable equipment such as two rolls of plugs and electrical connections.

The equipment is prepared and double-checked by the PA to ensure optimal function. The PA is also tasked with coordinating with other technical teams to determine any additional equipment needs depending on the location and episode concept. The PA not only brings the equipment to the location but also ensures its safety and completeness, both before leaving and upon returning from the location. This role is crucial to prevent technical obstacles during filming, which could hamper production efficiency. In other words, the PA's thoroughness and readiness in bringing and ensuring the function of equipment are essential foundations for a smooth production process.

Production

During the production process, the Production Assistant plays a role no less crucial than the rest of the main production team. The PA acts as an active liaison between the field crew and the producer, as well as a technical executor who ensures every element in the field runs according to the plan established in the pre-production stage. The PA is at the forefront of coordinating technical and non-technical matters directly on the shooting location. The PA is present as the main liaison between planning and technical implementation in the field. Their duties include bringing all previously requested tools and equipment, such as cameras, tripods, lighting, and props or wardrobe to be used by the talent.

Based on research findings, during the production process, the PA is not only responsible for maintaining equipment but also for carrying out various interrelated responsibilities, from setting up the location to assisting other crew members. First, upon arriving at the shooting location, the PA immediately conducts a thorough site inspection. The PA not only ensures that the location is safe and comfortable but also adapts the set to meet visual needs. For example, if natural lighting is lacking, the PA collaborates with the lighting team to install two additional sets of lights brought from the office and ensures that electricity is available through pre-arranged power cords. This is crucial because not all shooting locations provide adequate facilities. Furthermore, the PA is responsible for preparing the two main cameras and their tripods, as well as the audio recorder and four clip-on microphones. During the shooting process, the PA must not be passive. A PA must be active throughout the shooting process, not just observe (Dharma, 2019). If there are blocking errors, they must assist with repositioning the camera or subject, and always be on standby if there are instructions to move equipment, change batteries, or rearrange props. Beyond technical matters, the PA also handles emergencies, such as if a source needs to be directed or if there are external obstacles such as noise on site, passing visitors, or weather disturbances.

During the production phase, the PA is also tasked with documenting the details of the filming process for production and post-production reports. They record audiocodes, shooting times, locations, sources' names, and any unforeseen events that may need to be considered during editing. This role may seem simple, but it is crucial in the process of compiling the rundown and when the editor constructs the visual narrative flow in the final stages. The PA can be called a walking documentation center because all incidents in the field, including technical obstacles and creative improvisations made during production, are generally recorded by them. Multitasking skills are essential at this stage, as the PA must remain responsive to the producer's instructions, pay attention to technical details, and maintain a productive work

rhythm for the crew. Therefore, during the production phase, the PA is not just a complement to the crew. The PA becomes a field support that can bridge technical and non-technical needs, ensuring time efficiency, technical smoothness, and work comfort for all parties.

Post-Production

Post-production is defined as the final finishing or refining stage of production (Putra et al. 2018). The post-production stage is crucial and still involves the active role of the Production Assistant (PA) in ensuring a smooth transition from the field to the editing room. The PA is responsible for transferring all recorded footage, both visual and audio, to storage media such as an external hard drive. This process goes beyond simply copying data; it also double-checks file integrity, ensuring nothing is corrupted, damaged, or missing.

The collected data is systematically named and labeled. PA organizes footage based on production date, location, and shooting type (e.g., interviews, b-roll, supporting footage), a process they call grouping, to facilitate the editing process. Neat file naming and folder grouping serve as a preventative measure against technical errors and narrative confusion in post-production.

In addition to data management, the PA also compiles a comprehensive production report. This report includes technical notes, shooting location sequences, shooting times, and important timecodes that mark crucial moments during the production process. These notes serve as a guide for the editor in developing an efficient and scripted storyline. At this stage, the PA also inputs important data for CG (character generator) needs, such as restaurant names, locations, sources' names, and sponsor information that must be displayed. Accuracy in recording and compiling this information is essential for ensuring the resulting presentation looks neat, accurate, and professional on screen.

Production Assistant The PA is also tasked with finding and collecting additional footage, such as supporting graphics, illustrative video clips, and background music that matches the program's character. This material is sourced from external sources like YouTube, Instagram, and others, while still considering copyright and tone compatibility with the main content. For example, the background music selection must align with the mood of the segment being shown, such as lighter, more cheerful music for a food segment, or slower-paced music for a narrative atmosphere. Once all the material is collected, the PA participates in the initial broadcast review process with the editor or producer. In this session, the PA ensures that all footage, visual elements, and audio align with the script and sponsor requirements. Finally, when the broadcast is declared final, the PA is responsible for submitting the final results to the relevant parties, both the television station's broadcasting department and the sponsor if needed. Furthermore, the PA is responsible for tidying up and transcribing data for backup purposes, ensuring easy access when needed. With all these duties, the PA is not only a technical supporter but also someone responsible for obtaining material and maintaining the quality of the broadcast. Optimizing the role of PA at this stage clearly has a significant impact on the efficiency and smoothness of the entire production process.

According to Sandika & Prasetyawati (2020), production assistants have significant responsibilities, including preparing all production needs, preparing equipment for production, and evaluating and organizing broadcast data during post-production. In this study, the PA contributed significantly to the smooth and efficient production process of the "Food Diary" program. The PA is responsible for ensuring all stages of production run according to the established schedule. The presence of the PA allows for a more organized division of labor, enabling optimal use of work time and production resources.

The PA's ability to manage unforeseen situations is also a crucial factor in maintaining work efficiency. Technical issues or logistical constraints that arise on the production site can be resolved quickly and appropriately without disrupting production. Television production

efficiency is largely determined by the team's ability to respond to technical challenges directly and in a timely manner, and the PA plays a strategic role in this context.

Coordination between production departments is another crucial responsibility. The PA maintains effective communication between the technical crew, producers, talent, and editors to ensure everyone has a shared understanding of the workflow. When communication is well-maintained, the potential for errors or delays can be minimized. Building a strong team that can boost work productivity and performance requires a deep awareness of existing human resources (Fitri et al. 2022).

Production efficiency is also aided by the PA's ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously. During production, the PA not only ensures smooth technical operations but also manages crew schedules, documents progress, and anticipates additional needs that arise in the field. This readiness is key to avoiding downtime, maintaining a stable production rhythm, and supporting smooth content execution. An organized work system and the PA's ability to combine creative and technical aspects in one efficient production workflow. This role is a crucial pillar in supporting the success of a production-intensive television program like "Food Diary," where time, visual consistency, and technical accuracy are crucial for the quality of the final product.

In the "Food Diary" program, PAs divide tasks among their team members. One PA typically focuses on pre-production and production, while the other PA handles the post-production stage. This arrangement speeds up the workflow and helps ensure smoothness in each phase. The PA who handles the initial stages takes care of equipment preparation, filming equipment, and crew coordination during shooting. The PA who handles the final stages focuses on finding graphic materials, selecting background music, and finalizing the show before it is broadcast to the public. This division of labor is one strategy to increase the efficiency and productivity of the production team.

The ability to communicate clearly and convey information to the entire crew is fundamental to building good coordination. When information is received and processed smoothly, various work stages can be carried out in harmony and without overlap. A PA who can create a realistic work schedule and closely oversee its implementation will help the production team avoid delays and maintain an efficient workflow. Cross-disciplinary knowledge is a significant plus. Understanding technical aspects such as lighting, sound, and shooting, as well as creative aspects such as visual composition and scene continuity, allows PAs to make a more comprehensive contribution. In this context, they are not only technical implementers but also the link between creative ideas and technical implementation on the ground.

Improving operational efficiency in television program production is greatly influenced by the quality of training provided to production assistants. The greater a person's ability to handle problems accurately and quickly, the less likely production disruptions are to impact time and budget. Good training not only equips production assistants with technical skills but also strengthens their communication, coordination, and decision-making skills in the field. In the era of the creative industry, which demands speed and precision, production assistants are able to maintain the stability and quality of television production.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the presence of Production Assistants in supporting the smooth production process of the "Food Diary" program on iNews is significant. The PA's function extends beyond technical implementation to include logistical organization, time management, and coordination between crew members. Their involvement from pre-production to post-production creates a more structured work process with minimal obstacles. The presence of PAs allows all production elements to work according to schedule and

program requirements.

The Production Assistant's significant contribution to production efficiency is evident in their ability to manage time, resolve technical challenges, and support editorial needs such as sourcing footage, graphics, and post-production audio. Effective task allocation, equipment availability, and strong communication between teams streamline the production process and prevent resource waste. The PA's ability to simplify complex processes into more structured steps played a significant role in helping the "Food Diary" program complete on time and maintain high-quality results.

This study is limited by its observational scope, which focused on only one television program on one TV station, namely "Food Diary" on iNews. Furthermore, the information obtained is qualitative and descriptive in nature, making it impossible to generalize broadly to all television programs or other broadcast media.

Based on the conclusions above, it is recommended that further research explore the role of PAs in the context of other programs or across various broadcasting institutions. A quantitative approach can be applied to obtain more measurable data regarding the PA's contribution to production efficiency and quality. Furthermore, further research could examine the relationship between PA skills and production crew satisfaction levels, as well as their impact on the quality of the resulting broadcast.

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