Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Education Issues in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
By using content analysis, the study examined selected newspapers in Nigeria with a view to gaining insight into newspaper coverage of education issues and to underscore the crucial role of the print media in the construction of reality dwelling on thematic content of education issues. Two newspapers, the Punch and the Nations were selected from the 2012 sampling frame. Consequently, 240 issues were content analyzed covering January-April; publications of the Punch and the Nation and a total of 536 stories were recorded as education stories. The agenda setting theory, the development communication theory and the social responsibility theory were adopted to anchor the study. The findings revealed that the understudied newspapers had a robust thematic content on education issue. It is equally revealed that the selected newspapers had weekly publication on education issue. However, the various themes covered especially critical issues bothering on standard upgrade, curricular monitoring, teachers' welfare, staff strike and students' unrest were not passionately and critically examined. Perhaps, those issues are not part of media agenda or they are not business or advertorial driven. The implication of these findings is that there is a need for interaction between the media and the education sector. The symbiotic relationship will indeed foster virile development communication. The finding is indeed an eye opener to communication scholars who will now appreciate the need for a synergy between media professional and education stakeholders for societal emancipation.
Keywords: Symbiotic, media content, egalitarian, development communication

INTRODUCTION

The media play a crucial role in the socialization and education of members of the society in which it operate. The media affect us in many ways: as a major socializing influence, a carrier of culture, a source of information , education, entertainment, a key player in political communication and participatory democracy and a communicator of ideological values, norms, attributes and beliefs (Dennis and Merrill 1999). The indispensability of the media is incontestable going by the plethora of responsibilities placed on the media by the constitutions of various democratic societies. The media as the fourth estate of the realm saddled with the responsibility of upholding and advancing democratic ideals because the press from the classical liberal theory views the press as a defender of public interests and watchdog on the workings of government. Since then, journalism is seen as truly an estate of the realm, more articulate and more powerful than other estates (Franklin, Hammer, Henna, Kinsley & Richardson (2005). Interestingly enough, if the press is allowed to perform its primary function unhindered that is, free of censorship, the press will obviously perform maximally in informing the public on issues considered critical and germane to societal development; articulate public opinion objectively guide and act as a check on government and individual. The slogan- the media as the fourth estate of the realm is what links the press to the society though an "ideological resonance' Franklin et al, 2005 conclude.

The media equally represent and construct conceptions of what constitutes a successful and valued life; along with what is considered to be deficient, deviant, marginalized or undesirable. In a way, the media exert influence on identity and character formation as well as defining who we are including other issues which have to do with stigma, self-esteem, social relations, economic and political positions. (Wimmer and Dominic, 2005).

Similarly, talking about the power of the press (media), Dennis and Merrill (1999:4) clearly assert that "the media are quite powerful." Without contradiction, Dennis obviously considered and agreed with the hypodermic needle model of media effects where the media infected the minds of individuals directly with powerful messages. In a way, the media tell us what to think about and how to think, which constitute the theoretical issues of agenda setting and framing.

As part of the perceived role of the mass media, the press or mass media are obligated to present ideas and information that will enlighten and widen the horizons of the citizens to prepare the citizens to take independent and rational decisions for self actualization. Besides, another important role of the media is that the media are obliged to provide reasoned independent information to the citizens while carrying out watchdog roles on the government (Asemah, 2011).

Education, bedrock to development, should not be classified as non-profit making reportage. However, it is believed that the media do not give adequate coverage to education as a sector, perhaps, this accounts for why newspapers in Nigeria only dedicate a day in a week to address education issues unlike politics,

advertorials, business and sports which constitute daily contents of news tabloids.

The media are believed to be at the vanguard of societal emancipation right from the colonial days in Nigeria by setting agenda for the public opinion leaders and the public. The media effects have been extensively researched by communication scholars and consensus reached that the media indeed have powerful or minimal effects on its audience. (Dennis and Merill, 1999). Then, the gaps in media effects research have not told us if thematic contents of the media are geared towards driving or making our social institutions to be more proactive to media publications. Also, it is not clear if the media see themselves as partners in progress with other social institutions and not a mere watch-dog.

Statement of the Problem

Education, a bedrock of development, the hope of common man and a catalyst to egalitarian society, used to be the pride of Nigeria in the 20th century when the nationalists, veteran journalists and human right crusaders who used their academic prowess to resist the evil of colonialism and the inglorious dominations of the British. Today, scholars, professionals and elders statement have had cause to complain bitterly on the fast falling standard in education coupled with low media coverage on critical issues which are salient to national development. It is assumed the fall in the standard of education together with the poor coverage on education beat by the press is the cause of Nigeria's societal problems. To be a progressive nation, therefore, there is the need for interaction between the education sector and the media where the media are expected to be not only a watchdog but also performing their correlation duty with the intention of leveraging and salvaging the education sector by monitoring education policy implementation, publishing education news and program and by bringing to the public knowledge what goes on in the education sector.

Objectives of the Study

The study is set to achieve among others, the following objectives:

(1) To investigate if education contents of newspapers really address crucial issues in education such as: policy implementation, funding of education, staff recruitments and training, quality control and standardization, skill acquisition etc.
(2) To find out the direction of newspaper coverage whether the direction is towards giving information or development or entertainment stories.
(3) To examine the type of stories being reported on education
(4) To investigate the position (frontal, medial and back page) education stories occupy in Nigerian newspaper to determine their prominence.
(5) To investigate which of the levels of education get more media attention.
(6) To know the sources of stories or personalities mentioned in the education stories of selected newspapers.

Research Questions

The following questions shall guide the researcher in this study:

(1) What are the educational themes covered or reported in Nigerian newspapers?
(2) What is the direction of newspaper coverage of education issues?
(3) How did newspapers report education issues? That is the type of story being reported whether it is news, editorials, features, news analysis, opinions or column.
(4) What is the volume of coverage given to each level of education (primary, secondary and tertiary)?
(5) What is the level of prominence (position) ascribed to education story reported in Nigeria newspapers.
(6) What are the sources of stories or personalities mentioned in the education stories of selected newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

We shall review relevant literature with a view to knowing what scholars have done with regard to newspaper coverage on education and also to identify the vacuum in literature which the present study intends to fill. It has been observed that there is scanty literature on the study of content analysis of education in the Nigerian media. This is because, according to Nwuneli and Idowu (2004:3) "the focus on education in any systematic manner in the Nigerian media is relatively new"

The Birth of Newspapers Globally

Literature is replete with the powerful influence of newspapers globally. Over the past few centuries, newspapers have shaped culture, influenced politics, played an important role in business and affected and still affecting the daily lives of millions (Awake, 2005). Record has it that apparently, in 1605 Germany became the birth place of the first newspaper in Europe (Awake 2005). The same Awake (2005) unequivocally refers to historians who documented that:

> *Newspapers have instigated, supported and justified wars--- the 1870-71 Franco-Russian war, the*
> *Spanish –American war of 1898 and the Vietnam War of 1955-75. Many business men, scientists,*

entertainment stars and politicians have come to grief over scandal publication newspapers. In the famed Watergate scandal of the mid-1970's investigative journalism set off a series of events that forced U.S president Richard Nixon to resign .Yes, for good or bad, the press can be a mighty power to reckon with. (Awake p. 3)

The question that readily comes to mind is: how did this influence of the press begin and how reliable is what we read in our newspapers? To answer these seemingly simple but complex questions, it will therefore suffice to remind our readers the genesis of newspapers globally and to trace the history of the press in Nigeria which we believe will answer the above questions partially.

Although, the first printing press was founded in 1446, the first printed newspaper was established in Germany in the late 1400s in the form of pamphlets and was highly sensational in contents (Eisenstein, 2005). In the English speaking world, *Coranto* was regarded as the earliest prototype newspaper established in 1621. In the English colony of North America, the first newspaper to be established was *Publick Occurrences.* This publication did not last before the government proscribed it, arrest the publisher and many copies were destroyed because it was alleged that the publisher commenced operating the press without being officially registered. The first successful news publication was the *Boston's Newsletter* established in 1704 by John Campbell. This was followed in 1720s by two newspapers in Philadelphia and New York. At the end of the revolutionary war in 1783, there were 43 newspapers in circulation.

At first, news sources were letters, other newspapers, postmasters who received news by mail and reproduced it, or simply gossip picked up by newsmen in public places. With growing competition, however, publishers worked on improving the quantity and quality of the news. They hired their first professional editors. And because most publishers could not afford an extensive network of news sources and journalists, the appetite for news led to the formation of news agencies for gathering and distributing news to subscribing publishers. (Source: Awake, 2005).

Vital Contributing Inventions

The newspaper business would not have been possible without important inventions, especially Johannes Gutenberg's method of printing with movable type. Further inventions made newspaper production practical and affordable. In the 1860's, for example, the web rotary press made it possible to print on a continuous roll of paper rather than on separate sheets. Shortly afterward, the Linotype machine was used to compose metal type into pages for printing. Then, in the latter half of the 20th century, computer typesetting replaced costly hand work.

In the meantime, news itself traveled ever faster as the telegraph began to come into common use in the 1840's, typewriters in the 1870's and the telephone at about the same time. More recently, in the lifetime of millions now living, the use of computers, e-mail, and fax machines has become common in the newspaper business. Reporters arrive at the scene of their story ever sooner—by rail, automobile and airplane. And speedy transport now delivers ever more newspapers. (Source: Awake, 2005).

Mass Media and Society

The roles of mass media in rural development have attracted the attention of several scholars. According to Nwuneli (2004) many governments and nations in the developing world over the years have used the mass media extensively at one point or the other for the advancement of their development objectives. In Nigeria, these include the Currency Exchange Campaign (1971), Traffic Change Campaign (1973), Argentina Beef Import Campaign (1976), Afforestation Information Campaign (1985 — 1986), Plant a Palm Campaign (1988) Nwuneli concluded. Daramola (1986:98) also states that the role of the mass media in rural development is to teach people new norms, attitudes and behaviors in place of old ones so that they can be more productive. Lasswel (1968) believes that man has always needed something to watch over his environment and report to him on the dangers, discoveries, opportunities, opinion, changes and current trends — something to entertain people on broad scale, something to broaden trade and commerce. From what Lasswel has said, the role of the media is all encompassing in the sense that the media are expected to be life partners and keep the company of man from birth to the grave. The media are expected to be both agents of socialization and information dissemination. Majority of the people believe that the mass media have some kinds of effect on some kinds of people under some kind of conditions with some kind of consequences. Looking at the mass media as instruments of rural development, Uche (2002) posits that the mass media play the leading role of promoting the political, social and economic aspiration of rural folks. And according to Onabajo (2002), communication is a potent weapon, which makes the society tick. He added that whatever is the nature of society, be it local or international, the society depends on communication for its survival. Meanwhile, globally, it is believed that the mass media are amplifying factors in the society, which inform the people about happenings in and around them. The society is equally aware that, the mass media are to raise the level of people's consciousness in matters relating to national development. We can therefore affirmatively conclude that the media are crucial to man's life because they are not only indispensable but unavoidable necessity. (Barret and Newbold, 2007). Similarly, Merrill (1999) postulated that the mass media can contribute to the people's awareness of potentialities, dissatisfaction and

desire to change, a heightened sense of collective power among the people, either stability or disruption of the society, either instilling in the people's realistic goal or creating extravagant expectation.

Another scholar whose contribution is important to the issue of the mass media role in rural development is Moemeka (1981) who maintained that the mass media perspective reflect a structure of social relations and a stage of industrial development. Moemeka agreed that the media when skillfully applied could be agents of development; he noted that there have been studies, which correlate mass media exposure with attitude change, behavior adjustment and possession of information, relevant to social development. He supported his claim with the example that high media exposure has been related to high adoption of new farm innovations, high political knowledge and higher aspiration for children.

Schramm (1964) however agreed that mass media systems are reflective or indicative of a nation's progress, sophistication and modernization, adding that the media could never be the determinant of any event. He concluded that the safest position to adopt is what he termed the cause- effect interaction position. By that, he maintained that the media and other factors operating simultaneously within a nation bring about growth and progress. It has however, been proved that the mass media when skillfully applied play a very significant role in the development of positive behavior that supports development.

Development Communication

Lakshman (2001) sees development as a tool which brings changes in the area of political consciousness, urbanization, division of labour, industrialization, mobility, literacy, media consumption and a general participation in national building activities. Meanwhile, Soola (2002) however, warns that we should not underplay the complexity of development and as such exaggerate the power of the mass media. Soola (2002) equally adds that development should not be conceived only in the tangible rather but in the change in people's attitude and positive orientation.

This researcher and Soola seem to hold similar views in the conceptualization of development. The power of communication could interact with the socio-economic structure of a nation to bring about well informed individuals who can articulate their minds with the aim of harnessing individual potentials for societal emancipation. This study is therefore, an advocacy platform whereby the mass media are seen as the advocates of national development. This researcher is equally poised at strenghtening the power of the media in development communication which helps people to move to a higher critical state of awareness where they learn to think for themselves, analyze their situations and needs and of course, take decision on how to improve their living conditions (Asemah, 2011). It is evident that development cannot take place amidst ignorance. Certainly, the mass media, as agents of socialization, are catalysts of meaningful change witnessed in a country. To make development participatory therefore, people must have equal access and opportunities to participate in taking decisions that concerned them. The people (society) therefore need information and these pieces of informed information can only come from the mass media who will engender positive attitudinal change which will eventually drive the wheel of social development (Orewere, 2006 & Asemah, 2011).

In development, communication is pivotal because it involves deliberate well-informed and articulated codes aimed at bringing development messages to the knowledge of the targeted audience. The media therefore, serve as measuring tools in assessing the performance or otherwise of the nation's social institutions. (Little John & Foss 2008).

. It is evident that the people heavily rely or depend on the information supplied by the mass media which is the thrust of media dependency theory which holds the belief that the audience members depend on the media for information to meet their curiosity and other psycho-social needs because it is popularly believed that the media do or can "alter the beliefs attitudes and the interests of the audience" (Asemah: 181, 2011).

In conclusion, just like the utility theory of communication advances that people have different needs expected to be met, the media should therefore inform and convey programs (contents) about various activities taking place in the society so that people can contribute meaningfully as technocrats and professionals to the development of their society (Miller, 2002). The media should focus on activities at all levels of education so that people can assess and offer useful suggestions that will improve the sector.

Theoretical Perspectives

To anchor this study, we shall adopt two communication theories which are: the Agenda setting theory and the social responsibility media theory.

The Agenda Setting

The basic premise of agenda-setting theory is that the way in which news media report particular issues influences and helps to shape public awareness and debate (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). In much the same way that a committee agenda ranks items to reflect their significance, with the least consequential matters receiving only scant attention or not being discussed at all, media agendas reflect a process of selection (prioritizing) with certain issues enjoying sustained and prominent coverage in news reports while others are relatively marginalized or ignored [Weaver et al., 1981; McCombs et al., 1997). In this sense, agenda-setting theory has clear affinities with news framing and media effects. In a classic formulation of agenda setting, the suggestion is

that while the media do not tell us what to think, they may tell us what to think about.

Agenda setting, however, does not posit a simple uni-directional model in which news media set the priorities for public debate, but suggests that typically a number of contesting agendas vie for prominence. Source: (Franklin, Henna, Kinsley and Richardson, 2005).

The relevance of this theory to our study is evident in the sense that the researcher is only interested in looking at the thematic contents of newspapers on education pages. Any content that is published in the newspaper is what the media want the public to know and subsequently telling us on what to think about. The media content therefore is a reference point to audience public sphere of discussion and any publication on education issue is therefore the media agenda set for that moment.

The social Responsibility Media Theory

The social responsibility media theory was propounded by F.S Siebert, T.B Peterson and W. Schramm in 1963 (Anaeto et al 2008). This theory was propounded to checkmate the abuse of the press freedom as guaranteed in the libertarian press theory.

Precisely, the social responsibility media theory advances that if the press enjoy absolute press freedom then such a freedom carries "concomitant obligations". That is the press is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain functions of mass communication. (Anaeto, et al 2008).

McQuail (2010) highlighted main assumptions of the social responsibility media theory as follows:

i.   That the media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society.

ii.   That through professional standard of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance, these obligations can be met.

iii.   That media should regulate itself with its framework of law and established institutions to be able to carry out its responsibilities.

iv.   That whatever might lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or offence to minority groups, should be avoided by the media.

v.   That the media should reflect society's plurality, giving access to various points of view and granting all the right to reply.

vi.   Based on the principle 1, the society has the right to expect high standards of performance from the media and

vii.   Accountability of media professionals should be to the society, employers and the markets.

The researcher adopts the social responsibility media theory based on assumption 1, ii, iii, vi and vii because the media, as the fourth estate of the realm are obligated to the society (audience) to furnish the audience with well articulated information that will drive the audience to take independent decisions for either self or societal emancipation. Today, it is practically impossible to separate man from the media and media consumption in every home is becoming immeasurable.

Consequently, if media accept and fulfill certain essential obligations, then, the education sector should partner with the media to let the education stakeholders and members of the society know about the salient problems affecting the quality and standard of education in Nigeria. As said earlier, education reportage should not be a spontaneous or reactive reportage but, there should be dedicated columns for opinion, features, editorials and analysis to focus on critical issues bothering on: curricular, education research findings, education funding and budgeting, quality control and standardization among others.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design adopted in this study was content analysis. Content analysis was chosen because the focus of the study is to study the corpus or content of selected newspapers in Nigeria. Content analysis was adopted as our research design because the researcher intended to establish or discern patterns of direction or coverage of education based issues in Nigeria newspapers. Finally, the choice of content analysis as the research design was predicated on the fact that it is systematic, objective and quantitative in nature together with its unbiased and heuristic ability in describing communication contents. (Wimmer and Dominick 2005).

Population of the Study

The research population is limited to two prominent and most read newspapers in Nigeria. So, *the Punch* Newspaper and *the Nation* Newspaper were selected. Meanwhile, the two newspapers have been chosen using the following criteria:

Ownership Structure

The two newspapers are owned by private individuals. It is expected that privately owned newspapers should be fair and objective in their reportage.

Credibility rating

The two newspapers are adjudged to be credible, reliable and dependable by the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) who have several times awarded the two

newspapers as the most widely read and circulated newspapers. Also, a good number of Nigerian elites patronize the two newspapers as a result of their fairness, objectivity and thoroughness in their reportage.

The Sampling Technique

Sampling in content analysis is always multi-stage (Ojebode, Onekutu and Adegbola, 2010). For the sampling of this study, the two newspapers were selected and a purposive random sampling was adopted because the researcher is interested in the education pages of those selected newspapers. The sampling frame was 2012 publications of the two Newspapers covering January-April 2012.

The year 2012 was chosen because it was a momentous period in education sector where Federal government, Federal law makers, Nigeria university commission, individuals and NGOs queried the issue of education quality, teaching quality and standardization and education funding including the outcry of the falling standard. In fact, it is a year the various government institutions declared "state of emergency" on education as a sector. Hence, the need for total overhaul in the sector was advocated. For unbiased conceptual content analysis, the researcher decided to examine the January-April 2012 giving a total of 240 issues of the two newspapers.

The Content Categories

Each of the following content categories was coded: direction of story, theme of story, position of story, type of story, education level and organization or institution mentioned in the story. (Sources of story).

Instrumentation

The major instrument for gathering data was a coding sheet or coding schedule. The coding sheet spelt out clearly all the content categories and sub-categories which were coded accordingly.

The Unit of Analysis

The content data analyzed included: news, editorials, features, opinion and column.

Data Analysis

Simple statistical frequencies and percentages were adopted in the data analysis. This statistical method was utilized because the study felt with nominal categories in which data consisted of frequency counts and tabulated in appropriate cells.

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Question One: What were the educational themes covered or reported in Nigerian Newspapers?

Table 1: Showing general distribution of themes in *the Punch* and *the Nation* Newspapers

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Theme					
Policy implementation	5	3	32	8	37
Educational Funding	5	3	56	14	61
Staff welfare	8	5	20	5	28
Standard upgrade	20	14	50	13	70
Education counseling/career prospect	11	8	28	7	39
Positive Education Messages	51	35	62	16	113
Crime and conflict	12	8	38	10	50
Student scholarship	6	4	27	7	33
Reports on education research	4	3	04	1	8
Admissions	9	6	45	12	54
Sex education	11	8	18	5	29
Others	5	3	09	2	14
Total	**147**	**100%**	**389**	**100**	**536**

Interpretation

The total number of cases or stories reported by the two newspapers was 536 covering the different subject matters. The Punch has 147 stories while the Nation has 389 stories published. Obviously, the Nation has more education stories representing 73% while the Punch has less education stories representing 27%.

From the Punch stories published within January-April 2012, the following themes were identified. 'Policy implementation theme' is 5 representing 3%. 'Education funding' is 5 representing 3%; while 'staff welfare-salary and training' was 8 representing 5%. 'Standard up grade' was 20 representing 14%. The issues of 'education counselling and career prospect' were 11 representing 8%. Also, 'positive education stories' were 51 representing 35% while 'crime and conflict in schools' was 12 representing 8%. The 'students' scholarship were 6 stories representing 4%. Again, 'education research' recorded 4 stories representing 3%. On the issue of 'admissions to various education levels' 9 stories were recorded representing 6%. Meanwhile, 'sex education' recorded 11 representing 8% while miscellaneous issues categorized under 'others' recorded 5 representing 3% .

Similarly, the Nation newspaper seems to be more interested in education stories, perhaps this accounts

for the 389 stories representing 73% recorded out of 536 from the two selected newspapers.Using the same table, *the Nation* recorded 32 stories for 'policy implementation' representing 8%, 'education funding' had 56 stories representing 14%, while staff welfare, salary and training had 20 stories representing 5%. The theme of 'standard upgrade' recorded 50 stories translating to 13% while 'education counseling and career prospect', had 28 stories representing 7%. Also, 'positive education' theme recorded 62 stories representing 16% while 'crime' recorded 38 stories representing 10%. On 'scholarship and other financial aid' 27 stories were recorded representing 7% as against 'educational research' which recorded 4 representing 1%. The issue of 'admission' recorded the highest number of 45 representing 12%. On 'sex education,' the Nation recorded 18 translating to 5% while unclassified theme tagged others had 9 stories representing 2%.

Questions Two: What is the direction of Newspaper coverage of education issues in Nigeria with reference to Information, development and entertainment stories?

Table 2: Showing the direction of published stories in the Punch and the Nation

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Direction					
Information	114	78%	238	61%	352
Development	27	18%	111	29%	138
Entertainment	6	4%	40	10%	46
Total	**147**	**100%**	**389**	**100%**	**536**

The above table shows that 536 stories were reported by the two selected Newspapers. While the Punch reported 147 stories representing 27%, the Nation had a higher number of 389 stories recorded representing 73%.

The Punch Newspaper had 114 out of 147 stories recorded for 'information' representing 78% while 'development' focus story recorded 27 representing 18%. Also, 'entertainment' direction had 6 stories translating to 4%.

The Nation Newspaper reported a total of 389 stories out of which 238 focused on 'information' representing 61%, 111 translating to 29% on 'development' while 40 stories are on 'entertainment' representing 10%.

Question Three: How did the Newspapers report education issues?

Table 3: Showing the type of stories published in the Punch and the Nation.

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Type of stories					
News	84	57%	294	76%	378
Editorials	16	11%	08	2%	24
Features/News Analysis	19	13%	45	12%	64
Opinion	20	14%	33	8%	53
Column	08	5%	09	2%	17
Total	**147**	**100**	**389**	**100**	**536**

Table3 above shows that education reported differently as straight news, editorial, features, opinion and column respectively. From the Punch Newspaper, 84 stories were reported as 'straight news' representing 57% while a total of 16 'editorials' were published representing 11%. In the same token, 'features and news analysis' had 19 stories representing 13% of the total story types. Also, 'opinion' had 20 stories representing 14% while 'columnists' had 8 stories representing 5%.

Altogether, the Nation Newspaper recorded 389 story types representing 73%. For the 'straight news', it had 294 stories representing 76% and 8 'editorials' representing 2%. On 'features or news analysis,' it recorded 45 stories representing 12%. Also, 33 opinions were recorded representing 8% while columnists' contributions were 9 representing 2% aggregate.

Question Four: What is the proportion of coverage given to each level of education?

Table 4: Showing the proportion and distribution of levels of education stories published.

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Education Levels					
Primary	15	10%	34	9%	49
Secondary	35	24%	58	15%	93
Tertiary	97	66%	297	76%	394
Total	**147**	**100%**	**389**	**100%**	**536**

A total of 536 stories on Nigerian levels of education were recorded by the two selected Newspapers

out of which, the Punch had 147 stories across the three levels representing 27% while the Nation Newspaper recorded 389 stories representing 73%.

The Punch Newspaper had 15 stories representing 10% on primary education while it recorded a total of 35 stories on the secondary level representing 24% while tertiary level recorded 97 stories representing 66% of the total stories recorded.

Similarly, the Nation Newspaper followed the same trend with the Punch. 34 stories representing 9% were recorded in favour of primary level of education while a total number of 58 stories representing 15% were recorded in favour of secondary level of education and a substantial number totaling 297 translating to 76% went for tertiary level.

Question Five: What is the prominence ascribed to education story reported in Nigerian newspapers?

Table 5: Showing the story prominence (position) in the published newspapers.

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Position					
Front page	2	1.36%	02	0.5%	04
Inside page	143	97.3%	38.7	99%	530
Back page	2	1.36%	Nil	Nil	2
Total	**147**	**100%**	**389**	**100%**	**536**

Prominence is attached to the position a story occupies in the newspapers at least to make a saleable impact on the readership. A total number of 536 stories were published at different pages in the two selected newspapers out of which 147 stories were differently positioned by the Punch Newspaper representing 27% while the Nation published 389 stories representing 73%.

From the Punch Newspapers, 2 stories were published in the front page representing 1.36% while inside pages had 143 stories translating to 97%. A similar pattern was observed in the Nation Newspaper which had 389 stories spread across between its front and inside pages respectively representing 73%. The Nation Newspaper on the other hand had 2 stories in the front page representing 0.5% while a total aggregate of 387 stories representing 99% were deliberately placed inside pages.

Question Six: What are the sources of stories or personalities mentioned in the education stories of selected Newspapers?

Table 6: Showing the sources or personalities in the stories published.

Newspapers	The Punch		The Nation		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Sources/Personalities					
Federal Ministry of Education	51	35%	130	33%	181
State Ministry of Education	52	35%	144	37%	196
Local Education District	12	8%	33	9%	45
Private Institutions	14	10%	49	13%	63
Individuals	10	7%	17	4%	27
NGOs	08	5%	16	4%	24
Total	**147**	**100%**	**389**	**100%**	**536**

Table 6 shows that a total of 536 stories were reported out of which Punch recorded 147 stories representing 27% while The Nation recorded 389 stories representing 73%.

From the Punch attributions, 51 stories representing 35% were traceable to the Federal Ministry of Education, while stories credited to the various state ministries of education in Nigeria were 52 representing 35%. Meanwhile, the Local Education Districts (LED) recorded 12 stories representing 8% while private institutions recorded 14 stories translating to 10%. Similarly, 'individuals' had 10 stories representing 7% and 'NGOs' had 8 stories representing 5%.

From the Nation newspaper, a total of 389 stories were recorded representing 73%. A total of 130 stories were credited to the Federal Ministry of Education representing 33% while 144 stories were said to have emanated from the various state ministries of education representing 37% and local education districts had 33 stories representing 9%. Also 49 stories were credited to the 'private institutions' representing 13% while 'individuals' and 'NGOs' had 17 and 16 stories representing 4% and 4% respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Themes covered by the selected newspapers

A careful look at the findings reveal that core education themes that could drive Nigerian educational system to a greater height are not given proper attention by the media. For instance, issues like: education funding had a total of 61 out of 536 stories published by the two selected newspapers representing 11%. Indeed 11% coverage on education funding is rather too low. Interestingly, this finding agrees with Nwuneli and Idowu (2004) who

attested to the fact that critical issue like education funding is not properly focused.

Apart from the theme of education funding, crucial subject matter such as staff welfare, crimes and conflict in education sector receive poor attention of the media. For instance, the Punch recorded 5% each of the total stories on education themes. Also, the theme of crime and conflict in schools were below 15 percent. Again, this finding agrees with Nwuneli and Idowu (page 29:2004) who concluded that "one would have expected issues such as teachers' welfare and strike and students unrest to show significant presence but were below 10 percent".

Meanwhile, other themes such as policy implementation, standard upgrade, and education counseling/career prospect, positive education messages, students' scholarship, admissions and sex education received remarkable attention of the newspapers under study because these themes had more than 70% of the total themes covered. On this, Nwuneli and Idowu,: (2004:29) commented Nigeria Newspapers do not give considerable coverage to educational issues in the country".

Finally, on the thematic content of selected newspapers coverage, it was observed that reports on education research had four percent of the two. What this suggests is that the media seem not to see themselves as partners or stakeholders in education sector because if findings of researches are not made known to the public, how will the public know or appreciate the efforts of the researchers in the Universities and Polytechnics. This finding perhaps corroborates with the agenda setting theory of the media. That is, any issue the media want the public to know is what is being projected in their publication.

To conclude the findings based on the first research question, the selected newspapers treated quite a number of education themes but most themes treated are the peripheral while critical education themes as pointed above were not only treated with levity but a mere lip service. West, et al (2009) published findings of media coverage of education in the United States of America wrote that "education issues are poorly covered because education coverage is only episodic, reactive and focused on events and activities hence, there is a dearth of coverage of critical issues. From this research finding, it can be concluded that here in Nigeria there is a dearth of media coverage on education.

Direction of Published Stories.

More than half of the total stories were directed at information news of education stories. Precisely, both the Punch and the Nation Newspapers directed their energy at information. Precisely 352 stories out of 536 stories were information based thus representing 66%. This finding alludes to the fact that the print media are proactive to their surveillance function.

On the direction of education development stories, a quarter percent was devoted to development stories precisely 138 out 536 stories on direction of newspaper coverage representing 26% had stories focus on educational development. Just as said previously, if issues such as educational funding, staff welfare, students unrest and reports on education research are not fore-grounded by the selected print media, then the issue of educational development cannot take news headlines because by the agenda of the selected prints such critical issues are downplayed. The quarter percent focused on development is therefore not surprising because it is assumed that the selected prints are not performing their critical, correlative and interpretative function on education developmental issues fairly enough. This finding agrees with Leo 2011 who wrote that "investigative journalism is fast disappearing in journalism profession. It is when the media are investigative and critical that is when stakeholders in education sector will be proactive to education policy implementation. But, where the media keep mute or feel unconcerned, development communication, Nwuneli and Idowu (2004:1) observed "is educational communication through which people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to actualize development decision".

Finally, the focus on entertainment had below ten percent. Education entertainment issues recorded issues like campus fashion, life and style of boys and girls on campus, campus unionism and hostel life style and hosts of other hilarious activities on campus. Though, the percentage is quite insignificant but the inclusion of entertainment in print media publication again supports the entertainment function of the mass media at least to soothe the academic nerves of students.

Types of Stories Published

Most of the stories published were straight news which accounts for three quarter of the published education stories. From table three, one can observe that one third of those stories were on standard upgrade and positive education messages, education funding and admission issues. Also, sponsored syndicated articles and columns were coming from individuals who felt education sector should be given better recognition for all round development. Unfortunately, one would have expected a handful of dedicated editorials on standard upgrade and policy implementation. Though, the Punch had a total of 16 editorials out of 147 story types representing 11% while the Nation had 8 out of 389 story types representing 2%. This unfair attitude of the newspaper gate keepers again buttress the agenda setting theory of the media where issues considered less important are technically silenced. This finding is in line what West, et al (2009) and Robinson (2010) tagged "un-educational editorials".

Education Level Coverage

From table four, it is evident that tertiary level of education had more education coverage accounting for more than seventy percent. While secondary level of education received the next attention with less than twenty percent while primary level of education received the least attention with less than 10 percent. What the lopsided attention of the print media on Nigeria education level implies is that the print media under study believed that tertiary level should receive the lion share perhaps because they are referred to as higher education. The fall in quality obviously starts from the foundation which is the primary level because it is at this level that the stakeholders can monitor curricular implementation where thorough supervision and monitoring should be done. It is equally believed that there should be equilibrium for all the levels. A close look at the so-called primary education level reportage, one sees commissioning of one or two blocks of classrooms, distribution of free lunch and other frivolities take the centre stage of reportage at the expense of issues like poor enrolment of students, poor quality of primary school teachers and possibly dedicated articles and editorials on teacher training institute and administrators of state universal primary education board and other critical issues bothering on developing or repositioning primary level of education in the country. This thinking is in line with a study carried out in Japan in 2011 which examined media focus on elementary education Alasca, (2011:25) wrote "there is media bias reportage on elementary education"

Similarly, West, et al (2009:2) wrote in their report that …despite the importance of media coverage for public understanding of education, news reporting on schools is scanty…community colleges fare especially poorly in the constellation of news coverage". Contrary to what operates in Nigeria, poor coverage of local education district reportage, West, et al (2009) pointed out that

> *Local journalists go to school board meetings, interview local education officials and keep track of debates that unfold over curricular, teacher quality and structural reforms. They are more closely tied to the actual content of education because people in the community worry about the education young people are receiving.* (West, et al 2009, p. 2)

So, if Nigerian journalists or if there are dedicated education beat reporters attached to each local education district to monitor curricular activities the less than ten percent primary education level reportage would not have arisen.

Prominence ascribed to Education story

From table four, 99 percent of the published education stories by the Punch and the Nation Newspapers were placed inside pages of the selected newspapers. By implication, it seems the gatekeepers are adhering strictly to their in-house style. It equally implies that urgency and prominence factors notwithstanding education news will always appear in inside pages. Consequently, very busy readers and free readers or passersby cannot catch a glimpse of front page headlines and see any education stories. Again, the agenda setting theory of the media is playing its role in determining what issues gets prominent front page attention.

Sources of education stories

The sources of about more than half of the stories published originated from Federal and State Ministries of education. Most of these stories coming from government agencies were either orchestrated propaganda or syndicated sponsored articles at least to showcase government agencies performance on education. So, ministerial briefing, public school bulletin and news releases form the bulk of education stories. Meanwhile, private institutions and non-governmental national or international donor agencies education stories were unfairly distributed which accounted for less down twenty percent. Worthy of note is that some of these private institutions stories, including that of individual education stories were positive education messages.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data collected from the Punch and the Nation Newspaper from January – April, 2012 were statistically presented on six tables followed by interpretations of findings based on the research question set in chapter one of this dissertation. The interpretations of the tables were followed by robust discussion of findings with scholarly justification from the similar findings and communication theories. Indeed, print media have robust thematic pre-occupations to address various subject matters on education in Nigeria. However, it was generally observed that most of the education publications were not development oriented stories but mere information and news values of those published education stories were emphasized while developmental issues such as standard upgrade, teachers/staff welfare; training and salary, including the issue of policy implementation and crisis in school were not critically touched light. By and large, the media are commended for their reactive publication of education stories though a proactive education news publication would have been much better at least for development communication.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a synopsis of the dissertation together with recommendations for further study.

Summary

The summary of the findings are hereby highlighted:

- ❖ The print media studied have robust thematic pre-occupation as educational contents.
- ❖ There is consistency in education publication weekly. For the 120 issues examined for each paper, there is no week education sector does not receive media attention or coverage.
- ❖ The print media studied consistently followed their in –house style where education issue is always reported inside the pages of the selected newspapers.
- ❖ The main direction of the selected print media is always on information/news and this accounts why developmental issues are not critically fore grounded.
- ❖ The type of stories from the print media comes mainly as news while editorials, features, opinion and column are scantly written.
- ❖ The level of education that received the most attention of media coverage is the tertiary level while secondary and primary levels of education are almost non-existence in the world of the print media studied.
- ❖ Finally, government agencies form the major sources of education news while individuals private institutions and NGOs are seldom heard.

Conclusion

This study sets out to investigate newspaper education publications with a view to gaining insight to the thematic pre-occupations of the newspaper gatekeepers. Also, the study intended to underscore the crucial role of the print media in the construction of reality with reference to education publication. Consequently, the research evaluated media content highlighting areas of strength and weakness.

From the findings, a scholarly conclusion can be drawn unequivocally that the media have robust media content with reference to education publications. However, the various subject matter especially issues such as: standard up grade, curricular monitoring, teachers' welfare and students unrest which have been identified as bane and worrisome factors hindering Nigerian education sector are not professionally or critically examined and where the papers did, those issues are not punchy or assertive enough to propel education stakeholders to action or may be those crucial issues are not media agenda hence, little were said on the said crucial education issues.

Education publication coverage should not be commoditized. Hence, journalists and education correspondents should move round the three levels of education to interact with education stakeholders and engage in intellectual discourses so that service delivery can be monitored along with national objectives and philosophy of Nigeria education. Consequently, the media should partner with education stakeholders as well as inform the public accordingly.

The advocacy is that the media should help to probe the sector at least expose the lapses in education sector so that concerned stakeholders can come to the rescue in revamping the ailing sector. The media should not think it is a favour done on Nigerians but it is part of their corporate social responsibility to inform and educate Nigerian citizens.

Recommendations

It is believed that there are a number of steps for improving the quality and quantity of education issues coverage that will make a positive difference. Therefore,:

1. Education reportage should be more proactive and less reactive because much of coverage is episodic and driven by events. Focusing on long term trends would help to inform the public about the content of education and ways schools are seeking to move forward.
2. Education beat reporters should periodically visit tertiary institutions to publish outstanding earth-breaking research findings especially findings that bother on school reforms, teachers quality and classroom practices.
3. Newspaper gatekeepers should be more passionate about education sector by doing educational editorials at least quarterly borne out of investigative journalism on important aspect of education reforms.
4. Education coverage should be issue based especially issues of staff welfare, curricular implementation, crisis in education sector, standard upgrade, course offering and other issues that directly affect teaching and learning.
5. Balance and in-depth coverage should be given to all levels of education with a view to monitoring quality delivery of education philosophy.
6. Education issues should also be part of media agenda setting since it has been discovered that there is a significant relationship between the salience of a story and the extent to which people think that the story is important. More so, that people tend to attribute importance according to media exposure.

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