Volume 20 Issue 30
Originally issued as A6



Global Journal of human-social science: a
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 20 Issue 6 Version 1.0 Year 2020
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Newspaper Coverage of the Education Sector in Nigeria

By John Chukwu
University of Nigeria

Abstract- The education sector of a state serves as a basic for its development in different spheres. Thus, the mass media are saddled with the responsibility of presenting a well-rounded report of issues pertaining to the sector as they unfold. This study focused on newspaper coverage of the education sector in Nigeria. The newspapers content analysed were Daily Sun, The Nation, The Guardian and Vanguard. The period studied was 1st January to 30 June, 2017. The research method used was content analysis while agenda setting theory and development media theory served as the theoretical base of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used in arriving at the 208 editions of the four newspapers studied. Findings from the study showed that the newspapers did cover the education sector positively and adequately. The study, also, found that out of the 257 stories on the education sector, 256appeared on the inside pages of the newspapers and 205 were not illustrated. The depth of the stories within 1 – 5 inches were 187with news, 196 stories, as the dominant story genre. More so, scholarship/learning has 71 stories which made it the most covered educational issue. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended among others things that newspapers should endeavour to place essence in the interpretation and analysis of news reports on the education sector.

Keywords: newspaper, coverage, education, sector.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 200199



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2020. John Chukwu. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Newspaper Coverage of the Education Sector in Nigeria

John Chukwu

Abstract- The education sector of a state serves as a basic for its development in different spheres. Thus, the mass media are saddled with the responsibility of presenting a well-rounded report of issues pertaining to the sector as they unfold. This study focused on newspaper coverage of the education sector in Nigeria. The newspapers content analysed were *Daily Sun, The Nation, The Guardian* and *Vanguard.* The period studied was 1st January to 30 June, 2017. The research method used was content analysis while agenda setting theory and development media theory served as the theoretical base of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used in arriving at the 208 editions of the four newspapers studied. Findings from the study showed that the newspapers did cover the education sector positively and adequately. The study, also, found that out of the 257 stories on the education sector, 256appeared on the inside pages of the newspapers and 205 were not illustrated. The depth of the stories within 1 – 5 inches were 187with news, 196 stories, as the dominant story genre. More so, scholarship/learning has 71 stories which made it the most covered educational issue. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended among others things that newspapers should endeavour to place essence in the interpretation and analysis of news reports on the education sector.

Keywords: newspaper, coverage, education, sector.

I. Introduction

Education is fundamental to the smooth running of any nation. It builds the mind and equips an individual or group of individuals with the requisite skills, and knowledge on which they could contribute meaningfully, and productively to nation building. UNESCO (2000) conceptualized education as the total process of developing human ability and behaviours. This definition reinforces the potency of education in enhancing the competences inherent in people and empowering them with the needed approach to use it not just for their benefit but the society at large. The UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (1975) as cited in Nwogu (2013) saw education as "comprising organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning" (p. 266). Thus, effective communication is a requisite for education.

Education is key to the development of any nation. Thus, Kingdom and Maekae (2013) stated that a nation develops in relation to its achievement in education. This is one of the reasons contemporary world attention has focused on education as an instrument of launching nations into the world of science and technology and with consequential hope of human advancement in terms of living conditions and development of the environment.

More so, it is common knowledge that investment in education is necessary for national development. This is why education is seen as a major instrument for achieving the goals of unity, political stability and equality of opportunity and for circumventing situations which may give rise to conflict (Thompson, 1983 as cited in Nwogu, 2013, p. 273). Musaazi (1986) as cited in Amaje (2012) remarked that both "the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) agreed that the first step to development is the education of citizens of each country around the world" (p. 5).

Abiogu (2014) stated that the Federal Government of Nigeria, declared in its National Policy on Education, which was published in 1977 and revised in 1981 and 1990, and guides the Nigerian education sector, that education is an instrument par excellence for achieving national development. It is noteworthy to state that "the policy document has been revised to ensure that the policies address the perceived needs of the government in power and to try to ensure that the education sector is supportive of government development goals" (Moja, 2000, p. 2).

This brings to light the critical nature of the education sector to the general workings of the society as far as its advancement is concerned. However, successive governments have tried to address the issue of educational development through some educational-related programmes and policies. Education in Nigeria is generally stratified into three sectors, which are basic, post-basic/senior secondary, and tertiary education. The responsibilities for administering the education sector in Nigeria are shared among the federal, state and local governments (FGN, 2009).

Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) however, stated that when the issue of Nigeria educational system today is raised, the first set of thoughts that come to mind are: Decline in standard, deterioration of facilities, examination malpractices, mass promotion syndrome and the like before any other thing else. The causes of these could be attributed to government insensitivity to education needs, government and private institutions, open encouragement of low productivity and the lack of

Author: University of Nigeria, Nsukka. e-mail: johnchukwu1@gmail.com

© 2020 Global Journals

the spirit of hard work among growing number of students.

Paucity of funds is also one of the fundamental causes of the problems that the education sector has been suffering over the years. Adedigba (2017) reported that Nigeria's education sector has been allocated much lower than the 26% of the national budget recommended by the United Nations.

Adedigba (2017) pointed out that the allocation is lower than the 7.4% the government gave the education sector in the #7.4 trillion 2017 budget. University lecturers have been protesting poor funding of universities and the failure of government to implement an agreement it signed in 2009 with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to improve facilities and enhance staff welfare at the institutions. This problem which has translated into incessant strikes in universities has its root in the lack of adequate funds to the sector." Nigeria in her attempts to transform the education sector has formulated several education policies. Billions of Naira voted to transform the education sector and various policies have shown no little improvement" (Amaje, 2012, p. 6).

It is important to acknowledge the fact that the media are inextricably linked to education. The media serve as a channel through which people are educated. The education role of the media is one of its primarily responsibilities to the populace. Thus, the media help educate people on various issues with which they need to live properly and relate with one another in the society. This education spans across the spheres of politics, health, religion, environment, science and technology, culture, economy among others. For example, national dailies, through their reports, strive to educate people on the policies and programmmes of the government and how they can benefit from them, the causes, prevention and cure of diseases, people and their diverse cultures etc.

Following the foregoing, the media have a major role to play. The media are bestowed with the social responsibility and agenda setting roles in reporting and putting in perspective issues of critical importance as they concern the education sector. This invariably helps in mobilizing and raising the consciousness of the government and the public on the need to work assiduously in reviving the education sector for national development.

However, Adeyemo (2015) stated that "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" (p. 2).

Therefore, it is based on the afore-stated that this paper is positioned to determine newspaper coverage of the education sector in Nigeria.

a) Statement of the Problem

The education sector is one of the most vital sectors in any given nation. It is the sector which produces people who work in other sectors such as health, economy, labour and employment, power among others.

In a survey of the opinions of 5,507 stakeholders of the education sector in Nigeria, Duke (2011) found that standards have fallen at all levels of education, with the tertiary level as the most hit. In a presidential retreat for members of the Federal Executive Council, FEC, President Muhammadu Buhari stated that Nigeria's education sector is seriously in bad shape and requires greater attention and improvement (Agbakwuru, 2017). This bad shape could be attributed to the myriad of challenges faced by the sector. Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) outlined the challenges to include: Poor funding and thus poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids (projectors, computers, laboratories and libraries), paucity of quality teachers and poor/polluted learning environment. In addition to these challenges, the sector is plagued with numerous social vices such as examination malpractices, cultism, hooliganism and corruption.

The mass media, as the fourth estate of the realm, can be used effectively to improve the quality education in the country. Moerdyk (2012) averred that the mass media perform the role of an educational watchdog and thus, help build an efficient education system through improved communication.

However, available literatures tend to suggest that there are no much studies on newspaper coverage of the education sector in Nigeria. Therefore, it is of essence to determine if newspapers adequately perform their role of covering the sector. It is based on this premise that this study is positioned to fill this gap by ascertaining the frequency of coverage, level of prominence, the story genre that receives more attention, direction of coverage, depth of coverage and the educational issue mostly covered by newspapers.

b) Objectives of the Study

This study generally aims to find out how selected Nigerian newspapers covered the Nigerian education sector. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Find the frequency of coverage given to the education sector by the selected newspapers;
2. Determine the level of prominence given to the education sector by the selected newspapers;
3. Find the type of story genre that received more attention in the coverage of the education sector;
4. Ascertain the direction of the reportage of the education sector by the selected newspapers;
5. Determine the extent in terms of depth the selected newspapers report the education sector; and
6. Ascertain the educational issue mostly covered by the selected newspapers.

© 2020 Global Journals

c) *Research Questions*

The research questions are meant to serve as a guide to the researcher in answering the questions under investigation. They, therefore, include the following;

1. What is the frequency of coverage given to the education sector by the selected newspapers?
2. What is the level of prominence given to the education sector by the selected newspapers?
3. What type of story genre received more attention in the coverage of the education sector?
4. What is the direction of the reportage of the education sector by the selected newspapers?
5. What is the depth of the coverage of the education sector by the selected newspapers?
6. What is the educational issue mostly covered by the selected newspapers?

d) *Literature Review*

Literature review is done to identify the gaps in literature which gives a work relevance and to show understanding and ability to critically evaluate research in the area under study.

i. *Education and National Development*

Education is like a torchlight which illuminates the path to national development. It brings about the sensitization and enlightenment which enable government, organization, individual or group of individuals to know the needed developmental projects to give to a community and how best to go about it. The educational height of a people is directly related to the level of development that they have.

Based on this premise, Abiogu (2014) declared that "education is believed to be the bedrock of any country's development. It is considered as the cornerstone for meaningful and sustainable growth development and achievement in art, science and technology" (p. 372). Ozturk (2001) affirmed that education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development and no country can achieve sustainable development without substantial investment in human capital. Thus, education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. These in turn translate to sustainable and meaningful national development which set a nation on a path of excellence and serve as a prototype to other nations in their quest for all round national development.

Agreeing with the foregoing, Thompson (1983) as cited in Nwogu (2013) stated that "it is common knowledge that investment in education is sine-qua-non with national development. This is why education has been seen as a major instrument for achieving the goals of unity, political stability and equality of opportunity and for circumventing situations which may give rise to conflict" (p. 273). It is pertinent to note that no development takes place in a nation where conflict has taken a seat. Conflict or war downplays national development. The government, organisations or private individuals cannot take up developmental projects in times of conflict or war. However, with sound education, people will understand the essence of peace and therefore, sit on a round table to discuss their differences in order to arrive at peaceful resolutions.

However, Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) defined national development as the "overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government" (p. 238). Lichman (1972) and Markovitz (1977) in Kingdom and Maekae (2013) stressed that "a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such society, premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members" (p. 314).

When national development is designed to be sustainable, it goes a long way in addressing the most pressing needs of a people and also lays a reliable foundation for the insurance of their future. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) averred that development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed when is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry.

ii. *Media Coverage of the Nigerian Education Sector*

The media occupy a critical position in the functioning of the various sectors of any given nation. This is why media practitioners, professionals, technocrats, scholars and the general public recognise the essence of the media in the society as purveyors of information and agenda setters. Thus, the media tell us what to think about and how to think, which constitute the theoretical issues of agenda setting and framing. Following this, Dennis and Merrill (1999) clearly asserted that "the media are quite powerful" (p. 4).

Doko and Ozohu-Suleiman (2017) stated that "throughout the years, the media have become trustworthy sources of information for individuals around the world" (p. 40).Therefore, as part of the perceived role of the mass media, they 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. They are obliged to provide reasoned independent information to the citizens while carrying out watchdog roles on the government (Asemah, 2011).

The media also interpret the meaning of events and put them into context, and also dish out their consequences. Specifically, newspaper as a mass medium is a necessity in every society so as to carry out enormous responsibility with which they have been

© 2020 Global Journals

commissioned to uphold. Newspaper is also a vehicle by which members of the public express their view, belief, opinion, and criticism about a government and its policies including different sectors of the nation of which education is not an exception. It is through the newspaper reports that members of the public are kept abreast of current and topical issues of public importance (Nwosu, 2003).

Ayodeji (2012) stated that newspapers set agenda for public discussion by bringing to their notice, important issue that is bound to have profound effect on their surrounding and immediate environment. Therefore, the media in any society exercises surveillance over the environment, illuminate social, economic and political fabric of a nation and stipulates public opinion on key issues. Thus, Sambe (2008) explained that the print media especially newspapers is not only relevant but is responsible for most of the opinion formed on public issues in any contemporary society.

More so, Nwosu (2003) stressed that most newspapers provide coverage of issues that are very important and likely to be emphasized through their placement, headlines, and extent of coverage. It is pertinent to note that the first page is usually preserved for the top item on each day's agenda. Another way of giving an issue prominence and emphasis is to present such matter as an editorial comment, subject matter of discussion by a columnist, letter to the editor. Similarly, Ciboh (2005) asserted that newspapers give a wide coverage to various activities in the society through its adequate publication.

iii. *Challenges of the Education Sector in Nigeria*

The education sector in Nigeria is deepened in a myriad of challenges. This has caused the standard of education in the country to always be on the downside. Boyi (2014) supported this by declaring that in Nigeria there seems to be a daily decline of educational standards.

Prominent among the challenges that has crippled the education sector in Nigeria include:

a. *Poor Funding*

Poor funding has remained a huge challenge to the Nigerian education sector, for years. No meaningful project could be carried out without adequate funds. Ozigi (1977) as cited in Adeyemi (2011) corroborated this stance when he argued that "no organization could carry out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal" (p. 295).

Saleh (2013) noted that in 1997 band 2000 statistics show that federal government expenditure on education was below 10% of overall expenditure. Adeyemi (2011) listed the percentage of annual federal budgetary allocation to education from 1995 to 2000. Thus, in 1995 (13.0%), 1996 (10.8%), 1997 (11.5%), 1998 (9.6%), 1999 (11.1%) and 2000 (8.7%). In 2001, it was 7%. While in 2006, it was 8.77%. In 2008 and 2009, it was 10.02% and 8.08% respectively. According to Adedigba (2017) President Muhammadu Buhari allocated only 7.04% of the 8.6 trillion 2018 budget to education.

b. *Dearth of Qualified Teachers*

The teaching profession is not attractive and valued in Nigeria. Most people take up teaching jobs because they have not been able to secure their dream job. And they ones who are in the system carry out their teaching duties with apathy and eye service. These afore-stated have contributed immensely to the tremendous fall in the standard of education in Nigeria. David (2017) opined that in Nigeria, the poor working condition, poor remuneration and allowances have discouraged capable and qualified teachers from taking up teaching jobs, they would rather apply for other better paying jobs than teaching, while the few teachers who have taken up the teaching profession did so due to lack of better jobs.

c. *Corruption*

For decades, Nigeria has remained one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The education sector has long been ravaged by corruption. Thus, the fall in the standard of education in Nigeria. Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) stated that corruption in the education sector terribly creates infrastructural deficits that result in poor instructional delivery and making many people not to have access to education which in addition to being a fundamental human right is a spring board for their empowerment and emancipation. Inability of a people to have access to education systematically renders useless the ability of the people to engineer national development as generations of citizens are left frustrated, disgruntled and disenchanted in addition to manifesting terrible immorality in the forms of militancy and insurgency.

d. *Politicization of Education*

Politicization of education is a big challenge to the education sector in Nigeria. Governments do play politics with the running of education and this does more harm than good to the sector. Saleh (2013) stated that many educational institutions are opened and run in many states on political ground or other flimsy reasons. Thus, today in universities, colleges, polytechnics, monotechnics, secondary and primary schools are sometimes guided by politicians, not academic performance. Even parents do use their political offices or influences for the education of their children. Politicians also influence the recruitment exercise of teachers. Many people today are after securing jobs for their children just to have meal ticket without bothering whether they are qualified or not.

e. *Infrastructural Decay*

Boyi (2014) described infrastructure as the physical and spatial enablers of teaching/learning. They

© 2020 Global Journals

include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, play fields, school farms and gardens as well as provision of water and sanitation. These have to be of the appropriate quantity, size and quality to meet the minimum standards for promoting any meaningful teaching and learning condition. The rotten and dilapidated nature of the infrastructures in different schools do not inspire a conducive atmosphere for learning. Isibor (2013) stressed that lack of infrastructural facilities are common sights in our higher institutions.

f. *Incessant Strikes*

Institutions of learning in Nigeria are familiar with strike. This eventually affects the academic calendar. It also demoralizes the students and make them engage in different social vices such as kidnapping, arm robbery, prostitution among others. Most times, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), and Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) including the non-academic staff union of these bodies do go on indefinite strike. This sees to the shutting down of academic or non-academic work in tertiary institutions.

e) Empirical Review/Review of Studies

The studies carried out by researchers on the coverage of the education sector were reviewed critically.

A study on *Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Education Issues in Nigeria* (*The Punch and The Nation* newspapers) by Ademeyo (2015) a total of 536 issues were content analysed in both papers. Thus, 4 stories appeared on the front page, 530 stories appeared on the inside page while only 2 appeared at the back page. This shows that the papers did not attach prominence to the coverage of the education sector.

Adeyemo (2015) found out that 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 by the papers. Perhaps, those issues are not part of media agenda or they are not business or advertorial driven. This calls for an interaction between the media and the education sector. Adeyemo (2015) in furtherance of this finding, opined that "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" (p. 1).

The paper did recommend the following in relation to the coverage of the sector. Thus, education reportage should be more proactive and less reactive because much of coverage is episodic and driven by events. 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. 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. 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.

An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Federal Government, Academic Staff Union of Universities' Crisis in Nigeria (July-December 2013), (*Daily Trust, Vanguard, The Nation* and *The Guardian* newspapers) by Muhammad and Ozohu-Suleiman (2013) corroborated the finding of Adeyemo (2015) as they found out that newspapers have failed to provide adequate information required to educate and aid public understanding on the general problem in the higher education sector.

Nwaokugha and Ezeugwu (2017) researched on *Corruption in the Education Industry in Nigeria: Implications for National Development.* They opined that corruption in the education industry terribly creates infrastructural deficits that result in poor instructional delivery and making many people not to have access to education which in addition to being a fundamental human right is a spring board for their empowerment and emancipation. Infrastructural deficits and inability of a people to have access to education systematically renders useless the ability of the people to engineer national development as generations of citizens are left frustrated, disgruntled and disenchanted in addition to manifesting terrible immorality in the forms of militancy and insurgency.

In a study on the topic *Financing of Education in Nigeria: An Analytical Review,* Adeyemi (2011) found out that the funding of the education sector has not been up to 17% in any given year despite the UNESCO minimum standard of 26% of national budget.

Kingdom and Maekae (2013) in their study of *The Role of Education in National Development: Nigerian Experience*, opined that as the education sector is not properly funded, it cannot efficiently contribute to national development. They stressed further that the contributions of education to national development has been limited by poor funding, politicization of the system, unsteady political environment and corruption in Nigeria.

In another research work, *Overarching Patterns in Media Coverage of Education Issues,* O'Neil (2012) found out that "the news media represents education issues as fundamentally economic concerns and consistently employs what previous frameworks research defined as the *consumerist* frame" (p. 10). In the coverage sampled in the work, the *consumerist*

© 2020 Global Journals

frame promotes the idea that, to improve education outcomes, the education system should be run like a business in the private sector. This frame appeared in approximately one third of the coverage sampled.

In relation to the finding of O'Neil (2012), Aigbedion, Iyakwari and Gyang (2017) did a study on *Education Sector and Economic Growth in Nigeria: An Impact Analysis.* The study revealed that the education sector has a positive impact on economic growth in Nigeria. This implies that economic growth can be enhanced by improving education investment in Nigeria. This finding is in line with the assertion of Ozturk (2001) thus, education plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.

Nwuneli and Idowu (2005) did a study – *Reporting of Education Issues in the Nigerian Media.* The study adopted three methods: Personal in-depth interviews, questionnaire survey of education editors and correspondents/columnists and content analysis of national circulating newspapers (*Comet, Daily Trust, The Guardian, New Nigeria, This Day, Punch, Vanguard, Daily Champion and Daily Trust*) with education section or supplements.

The study revealed that funding, negative attitude of public officials, inadequate space and market sensitivity have been identified as constraints to the media's ability to cover education effectively. The newspapers identified funding/provision facility as the core challenge plaguing the education sector in Nigeria.

Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) in their research on *Educational System in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, they recommended that for meaningful development to take place in the educational sector; the government need to re-address the issue of funding.

Prominent among the empirical studies above is the issue of educational underfunding. This has crippled the advancement of the sector and made it to lag behind in contributing its quota to national development. This was clearly stated by Kingdom and Maekae (2013) above. It is pertinent to note that the issue of underfunding is the fulcrum of the challenges faced by the sector. When the sector is well-funded, it will have lesser challenges and thus, be on the right lane to match the educational standards of Western countries.

Moreover, inadequate coverage of the sector as noted by Adeyemo (2015) and Muhammad and Ozohu-Suleiman (2013) is one of the greatest minus the sector grapples with. When minimal coverage is given to the sector, people will not be informed of the latest developments it is faced with. Thus, less attention would definitely be given to it because the government and relevant stakeholders would not be pressured by the press to look into the needs of the sector. This could be traced to one of the reasons the federal government appears less concerned in keeping to the recommendation of UNESCO in allocating a minimal of 26% of annual national to the sector.

f) Theoretical Framework

This research work is situated on two theories: Agenda setting and development media.

i. *Agenda Setting Theory*

Anber (2012) asserted that the agenda setting theory, originated in 1922 when Walter Lippmann wrote about agenda setting in his book, 'public opinion'. It is on this foundation that Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw built the agenda setting theory (Baran and Davis, 2012). The theory came to limelight following an article they wrote in 1972 based on a research they carried out.

Asemah (2011) posits that "the agenda setting theory argues that the media may not tell us what to think, media may tell us what to think about" (p. 176). Lipman (1922) as cited in Okunna (2002) added that the media help to "put pictures in our heads" (p. 21). This explains the power of the mass media to set the agenda and raise issue of public importance. This function is closely related to public opinion generation, since it is often the mass media that raise issues upon which public opinion is expressed.

This theory is important to this study because educational issues are of public importance; which the masses and government as well have to know about and based on the amount of coverage given to it, the media, therefore, work in emphasizing how much important it is to the development of the people and the society.

ii. *Development Media Theory*

According to Wogu (2008) "development media theory was propounded by African experts with the aim of channelling communication to development needs in third world countries. The theory believes in regulating press freedom according to socio-economic needs of the society" (p. 75). Baran and Davis (2009) stated that the theory is a normative theory calling for government and media to work in partnership to ensure that media assist in the planned beneficial development of the country.

Mcquail (1987) as cited in Wogu (2008), listed the major tenets of the development media theory as follows:

1. Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
2. Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
3. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language(s).
4. Media should give priority to news and information gathering and dissemination tasks.

The development media theory is important to this study based on the premise that a good coverage

© 2020 Global Journals

of events in the education sector in Nigeria has the potential to bring development to the sector. Hence, newspaper coverage of the Nigerian education sector.

g) Methodology

i. *Research Design*

The research method adopted in this study is the content analysis method of research. This is because it deals with the examination of the manifest content of communication.

ii. *Population of the Study*

The population of this study comprises all the editions or issues published by the four selected newspapers: *Daily Sun, The Nation, The Guardian,* and *Vanguard* newspapers from 1st January to 30th June 2017 which amounted to 724 editions.

iii. *Sample Size*

The sample size for the study is 208 editions of the four selected newspapers. This implies that 52 editions each of the newspapers – *Daily Sun, The Nation, The Guardian and Vanguard* –were selected for the study using purposive sampling technique.

iv. *Sampling Technique*

Purposive sampling technique was adopted as the sampling technique for this study. Mondays and Thursdays, in the weeks of the months (1st January to 30th June, 2017) under study were purposively selected to be studied. This is because the selected newspapers publish stories from the education sector on those two days.

Table 1: Details of the Selected Days in the Months

Month	Monday	Thursday	Total
January	2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th	5th, 12th, 19th, 26th	9
February	6th, 13th, 20th, 27th	2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd	8
March	6th, 13th, 20th, 27th	2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th	9
April	3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th	6th,13th, 20th, 27th	8
May	1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th	4th, 11th, 18th, 25th	9
June	5th, 12th, 19th, 26th	1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th	9
Total	26	26	52

Therefore, 52 editions multiplied by 4 – which is the number of selected newspapers – amounted to the 208 editions that will be studied.

v. *Instrument of Data Collection*

The code sheet was used as an instrument of data collection. It is the most appropriate tool for analyzing manifest contents of messages and information.

vi. *Content Categories*

The precise make up of content categories, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) varies with the topic under study. The content categories used for this study includes:

a. Tertiary Education Stories (TES) –these are education stories from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education.
b. Secondary Education Stories (SES) – these are education stories from commercial, technical and secondary schools.
c. Primary Education Stories (PES) – these are education stories from primary schools.
d. Pre-Primary Education Stories (PRES) – these education stories from nursery and pre-nursery schools.

vii. *Unit of Analysis*

The units of analysis for this study include: news stories, editorials, letters-to-the-editor, feature stories, pictures: photographs, cartoons, charts and graphs, and opinion articles.

h) Unit of Classification/Categories

The units of analysis were coded into categories which will serve as a guide for the study. Thus:

Frequency of Coverage

A (01)Tertiary Education Stories
A (02) Secondary Education Stories
A (03) Primary Education Stories
A (04) Pre-Primary Education Stories

Placement (Prominence)

B (01) Front Page
B (02) Back Page
B (03) Centre Spread
B (04) Inside Page

Illustration

C (01) Photographs
C (02) Cartoons
C (03) Charts
C (04) Graphs
C (05) Not Illustrated

Story Genre

D (01) News
D (02) Features
D (03) Editorials
D (04) Letters to the Editor
D (05) Opinion Articles

© 2020 Global Journals

Direction of Coverage

E (01) Positive
E (02) Negative
E(03) Neutral

Depth (Length of Coverage)

F (01) 1 – 5 Inches
F (02) 6 – 10 Inches
F (03) 11 – 5 Inches
F (04) 16 Inches and above

Educational issues Covered in the Newspapers

G (01) Research
G (02) Scholarship/Learning
G (03) Funding
G (04) Staff Welfare
G (05) Admission into Schools
G(06) Crime and Conflict
G(07) School Strike
G(09) Policy implementation
G(11) Others

i) Description of Sample

The period studied was 1st January to 30th June 2017. All data analyzed were collated from the four national newspapers studied – *Daily Sun, The Nation, The Guardian* and *Vanguard*. Out of the 208 sample editions of the newspapers selected for the study, there were 257 stories (from the four newspapers) on the Nigerian education sector.

Research question 1: What is the frequency of coverage given to the education sector by the selected newspapers?

Table 1: Frequency of Coverage * Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Frequency	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
Frequency	143	76	31	7	257
Total	143	76	31	7	257

Research question 2: What is the level of prominence given to the education sector by the selected newspapers?

Table 2: Placement of Stories * Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Placement	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
Front Page	0	1	0	0	1
Back Page	0	0	0	0	0
Center Spread	0	0	0	0	0
Inside Pages	143	75	31	7	256
Total	143	76	31	7	257

Research question 3: What type of story genre received more attention in the coverage of the education sector?

Table 4: Story Genre * Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Story Genre	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
News	122	67	30	7	196
Features	9	4	0	0	43
Editorials	4	2	1	0	7
Letters-to-the-Editor	1	0	0	0	1
Opinion Articles	7	3	0	0	10
Total	143	76	31	7	257

© 2020 Global Journals

Research question 4: What is the direction of the reportage of the education sector by the selected newspapers?

Table 5: Direction of Coverage* Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Direction	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
Positive	101	63	29	6	199
Negative	23	8	2	1	34
Neutral	19	5	0	0	26
Total	143	76	31	7	257

Research question 5: What is the depth of the coverage of the education sector by the selected newspapers?

Table 6: Depth of Coverage * Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Depth	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
Inches 1-5	124	66	27	5	187
Inches 6-10	9	7	1	2	54
Inches 11-15	4	1	2	0	7
Inches 16 and above	6	2	1	0	9
Total	143	76	31	7	257

Research question 6: What is the educational issue mostly covered by the selected newspapers?

Table 7: Educational Issues Covered * Content Categories Cross Tabulation

Educational Issues Covered	Content Categories				Total
	TES	SES	PES	PRES	
Research	11	4	0	0	15
Scholarship/Learning	42	27	17	3	71
Funding	22	8	3	0	43
Staff Welfare	2	0	1	1	7
Admission into Schools	8	15	0	0	29
Crime and Conflict	13	9	0	0	21
School Strike	26	7	0	1	37
Policy Implementation	16	5	1	1	25
Others	3	1	9	1	9
Total	143	76	31	7	257

II. Discussion and Implications of Findings

Research question one sought to know the frequency of coverage given to the education sector by the selected newspapers. Data presentation in table 1 displayed that most of the educational reports by the newspapers were on Tertiary Education Stories (TES), 143. This was followed by Secondary Education Stories (SES) which were 76 while Primary Education Stories (PES) and Pre-Primary Education Stories were 31 and 7 respectively.It is pertinent to reaffirm that a total of 257 education stories were found in the 208 editions of the four newspapers studied. Thus, the frequency of coverage given to the education sector was adequate.

Contrary to this finding, Nwuneli and Idowu (2004) averred that "Nigeria newspapers do not give considerable coverage to educational issues in the country" (p. 29). Also, Adeyemo (2015) posited 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" (pp. 1-2).

The implication of this finding is that as they newspapers give adequate coverage to the education sector, people and even the government stand a great chance of attaching relevance to the issues bordering on the sector. This is corroborated by the agenda setting theory which states that "audience not only learn about public issues through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it"

© 2020 Global Journals

(McCombs and Shaw, 1972, as cited in Ojobor, 2002, p. 21). Therefore, as much emphasis is attached to the coverage of the education sector it will directly play on the relevance people and government attach to what is happening in it.

Research question two sought to ascertain the level of prominence given to the education sector by the selected newspapers. In the placement of stories, it was found that almost all the stories were placed on the inside pages, 256. Only one story was placed on the front page – which was a SES. There were no stories placed on the back pages and centre spread. This portrays that the prominence attached to the placement of the stories on the education sector is very low. Front pages are very strategic in attracting the attention of readers. People easily get to buy newspapers and read them due to the stories they see on the front page. Also, newspaper readers do believe that any story that is given a front page treatment is important and critical to the workings and happenings in the polity. This is based on the understanding that "newspapers are a major force in forming public opinions on matters affecting national and international efforts towards economic progress and global understanding" (Olusoji, 2012, p. 6). Thus, the non-placement of much stories on the front pages puts a stamp on the fact that the newspapers did place low prominence on the coverage of the education sector.

The research finding of Adeyemo (2015) on *Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Education Issues in Nigeria*, supports the finding on the placement of education stories, mostly, on inside pages of newspapers by the selected newspapers. Thus, he found out that 99% of the published education stories by *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers were placed on the inside pages of the newspapers.

On the illustration of stories, a majority of 205 stories, were not illustrated while only 52 stories were illustrated with photographs. None of the stories were illustrated with cartoons, charts and graphs. This finding tallies with that of placement of stories as it gives credence to the fact that the level of prominence attached to the coverage of the education sector by the newspapers is low.

Pictorial illustrations serve as attention grabbing devices to newspaper stories. They attract people's attention to read. Newspaper editors are known to attach pictures to stories that they want to attach importance to and want people to read them. Stories without illustrations hardly elicit the attention of newspaper readers. Photographs help to tell a story in a better and understandable manner.

The implication of these findings are that the possibility of people being lured into reading stories on the education sector will be very low as not everyone flips through the newspaper to read stories that did not appear on the front page. Bearing in mind that people hold stories which were given a front page treatment in high regard and believe that they are very crucial to the society, they may likely not ascribe such essence to stories on the education sector as most of them appear on the inside pages. More so, people may not have the motivation to read any story that was not published with a photograph.

Research question three sought to find the type of story genre that received more attention in the coverage of the education sector. In the presentation of data as seen in table 4, the story genre that received more attention out of the 257 stories studied is news.

News, been the dominant story genre, with 196 of the entire reports on the sector, points to the obvious fact that the coverage of the education sector was not given much interpretation and analysis. The research finding of Ademeyo (2015) on *Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Education Issues in Nigeria* corroborates this finding. Thus, Ademeyo found that most of the education stories published by *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers were straight news and they accounted for three quarter of the published education stories.

The coverage was merely on news reports which only informs people on the happenings in the sector without educating them on the significance, effects, expectations, implications, lessons, consequences among others; inherent in the reports. The implication of this finding is that as less attention was given to interpretation and analysis of the reports on the sector, the reports may not yield fruits in making people to understand the varied angles of the information conveyed and in influencing government, organisations and/or bodies in implementing policies and pursuing actions targeted at making the education sector better. While explaining newspapers' influence in giving interpretation and analysis to reports, Ukonu (2013) posited that "newspaper influence is exerted the most through opinion and interpretative writings, which guide and mould social discourse" (p. 12).

Research question four sought to ascertain the direction of the reportage of the education sector by the selected newspapers. From the presentation in table 5, it was found that out of the 257 stories analysed, a majority of 199 were positive. Thus, the direction of the reportage of the education sector by the selected newspapers was positive. This was followed by 34 stories which were negative while 26 stories tilted toward a neutral direction. This means that reports on the education sector were positioned in good light. Thus, the coverage was largely favourable to the education sector.

This finding implies that the selected newspapers covered the education sector in such a way that the reports will serve as a tool towards building a goodwill to the education sector. However, the negative

© 2020 Global Journals

reports are not principally meant to paint the sector bad. They are meant to make public the rot in the sector and thus, champion a cause towards righting the several wrongs in it. For example, a report which exposes the embezzlement of funds by a certain official in the Federal Ministry of Education is not just tilted towards positioning the ministry as corrupt but to curb if not terminate corruption in the ministry and thus, make it more functional and productive for the benefit of the education sector.

Research question five looked at the depth of coverage of the education sector by the selected newspapers. It was found that the depth of coverage given to the education sector by the selected newspapers was mostly within the range of 1 – 5 inches. The number of stories within this range is 187.

This finding accentuates the afore-stated finding in *research question two* that the level of prominence attached to the education sector by the selected newspapers is low. This is based on the short spaces which the education stories occupied in the selected newspapers. It also gives credence to the finding in *research question three* that news is the story genre that received more attention in the coverage of the sector. News reports are always straight to the point without opinions, interpretations, analyses, or explanations which might make it lengthy. Thus, the shortened nature of the stories.

The implication of this finding is that based since almost all the stories were given a small depth of 1 – 5 inches, it is not out of place to assert that the coverage of the Nigerian education sector is highly abridged.

Research question six was positioned to find the educational issues covered by the selected newspapers. It was found that the most covered educational issue is scholarship/learning. Out of the 257 stories analysed, a majority number of 71 stories were on scholarship/learning. This was followed by funding which had 43 stories, staff welfare had 37 stories, admission into schools had 29 stories, policy implementation had 25 stories, crime and conflict had 21 stories while research had 15 stories, others had 9 stories and staff welfare had 7 stories.

Crime and conflict issues cannot help the education sector to grow and match up with the education standards obtainable in developed countries. When issues like research and staff welfare which are important toward the betterment of the sector are under-reported, it is a clear indication that the media are yet to understand that they have an important role to play in taking the sector out of the dungeon of its falling standards. Research is of essence in every human endeavour. It can go a long way in uplifting the sector. When the media report the important research findings of lecturers in different tertiary institutions, it will not only be beneficial to the sector but the society at large. The under-reportage given to staff welfare is one of the main reasons why teachers' welfare in schools are still not given high priority. The members of staff in the sector needs incentives that would inspire them to work better. The coverage of issues that will facilitate a better working condition for them oils the sector.

Even as the coverage given to funding cannot be dismissed as poor, it is still not encouraging as funding is a big important factor that can change the workings of the education sector for better. Nwuneli and Idowu (2005) found that critical issues like education funding is not properly focused by the media. Under funding is one big problem that the sector has been grappling with for years. It is actually the fulcrum on which other challenges the sector faces creep from. The federal government have not been able to meet up with the UNESCO recommendation of allocating 26% of national budget to the education sector. Adedigba (2017) revealed that President Muhammadu Buhari allocated only 7.04% of the 8.6 trillion 2018 budget to education. Thus, if education funding could be given more attention by the media, it will help mount pressure on the federal government to do the needful.

This finding, however, implies that as the newspapers channel attention to reports on learning, they play down on sensitive issues like staff welfare and research which can help position the sector for better.

a) Conclusion

This study concludes that the newspapers were merely out to dish out news of the latest developments in the education sector without an attachment of suitable amount of interpretation and analysis to them. The newspapers, despite reporting education stories, mostly, once in a week, they had it as a tradition to position majority of them on the inside pages which downplayed the prominence level of the coverage. The low amount of illustrations attached to the stories gives credence to the fact that the media are yet attach essence to education reportage just like they do to other sectors such as politics, sports, economy among others. Moreover, the failure of the newspapers in giving much coverage to important educational issues points to their nonchalance in contributing effectively towards the upgrade of the education sector in Nigeria.

b) Recommendations

Following the findings of this research, the following recommendations are given.

1. Newspapers should endeavour to place essence in the interpretation and analysis of news reports on the education sector. This would make the government and people understand the different shades of meanings, causes, effects, significance, implications etc of the stories making round in the sector.

© 2020 Global Journals

2. Newspaper editors should strive to devote more days of the week for the publication of stories from the education sector. This is predicated on the fact that all the newspapers did devote, mostly, one day in a week especially Thursdays, for the publication of education stories.
3. Newspapers should use more pictures in their coverage of the sector. There should be more injection of appropriate photographs to depict and explain reports. The use of information graphics in terms of charts, graphs etc should be used to capture issues on the education sector.
4. Newspapers should focus more in covering very pertinent educational issues. The low attention given to educational issues such as research and staff welfare by the newspapers does not in any way breathe fresh air to the Nigerian education sector.
5. Newspaper editors should expedite effort in placing education stories on the front page of their newspapers. This would help attach importance to what is happening in the education sector and spirit the attention of the government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and well-meaning individuals to come to the its aid where necessary.
6. Newspaper journalists should devote more attention to conducting investigative reportage of critical issues that are happening in the sector. This will not only help get rid of the mess in the sector, it will see that the bad eggs are fished out and prosecuted according to the dictates of the law.

References Références Referencias

1. Abiogu, G. (2014). Philosophy of education: A tool for national development ? *Open Journal of Philosophy, 4,* 372-377. Retrieved from file.scrip.org
2. Adedigba, A. (2017). *2018 Budget: Buhari allocates 7% to education.* Retrieved from www.premium timesng.com
3. Adedigba, A. (2018). *JAMB reacts to 'money swallowing snake' report.* Retrieved from www. premiumtimesng.com
4. Adeyemi, T. O. (2011). Financing of education in Nigeria: An analytical review. *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences, 2,* 295-303. Retrieved from www.scihub.org
5. Adeyemo, J. A. (2015). Content analysis of newspaper coverage of education issues in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication, 40,* 1-13. Retrieved from www.iiste.org
6. Agbakwuru, J. (2017). *The state of education in Nigeria calls for a serious concern –Buhari.* Retrieved from www.vanguardngr.coma
7. Aigbedion, I. M., Iyakwari, A. D., & Gyang, J. E. (2017). Education sector and economic growth in Nigeria: An impact analysis. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Economics and Public Sector Management, 5*(3), 58-69. Retrieved from www.internationalpolicybrief.org
8. Amaje, S. (2012). *The impact of public policy on the education sector in Nigeria: A study of Kogi state, 1992-2011.* A Project Report Submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of Master of Science (M.Sc) Degree in Political Science (Public Administration). Retrieved from www.unn.edu.ng
9. Anber, F. (2012). Second level agenda setting theory. Retrieved from www.academic.edu/3355 247/secondlevelagenda
10. Asemah, S. E. (2011). *Selected mass media themes*. Jos: Jos University Press.
11. Ayodeji, O. (2012). *Newspaper readership in Nigeria: A study of Ikeja populace.* Retrieved from www.scibd.com
12. Baran, J. S., & Davis, K. D. (2009). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment and future (5thed)*. Canada: WADSWORTH Cengage Learning
13. Boyi, A. A. (2014). Education and sustainable national development in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 14,* 65-72. Retrieved from https://www.scipress.com
14. Ciboh, R. (2005). *Newswriting.* Makurdi: Aboki Publishers
15. David, A. (2017). *Challenges facing education in Nigeria.* Retrieved from infoguidenigeria.com
16. Doko, M. I., & Ozohu-Suleiman, Y. (2017). An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Federal Government, Academic Staff Union of Universities Crisis in Nigeria (July - December 2013). *MCC, 1*(1), 39-52. Retrieved from www.unimaid.edu.ng
17. Duke, O. C. (2011). Falling standards of education in Nigeria: An empirical evidence in Delta state in Nigeria. *Africa Journals Online*, *8,* 1-12. Retrieved from www.ajol.info
18. Federal Government of Nigeria. (2009). Report of the vision 2020 national technical working group on education sector, Abuja.
19. Kingdom, E. O., & Maekae, J. (2013). The role of education in national development: Nigerian experience. *European Scientific Journal, 9*(28), 312-320. Retrieved from https://eujournal.org
20. Lawal, T., & Oluwatoyin, A. (2011). National development in Nigeria: Issues, challenges and prospects. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, 3*(9), 237- 241. Retrieved from https://www.academicjournals.org
21. Moerdyk, C. (2012). *The important role of mass media in education.* Retrieved from m.bizcommunity.com

© 2020 Global Journals

22. Moja, T. (2000). *Nigeria education sector analysis: An analytical synthesis of performance and main issues*. Retrieved from siteresources.worldbank.org
23. Nwaokugha, O. D., & Ezeugwu, C. M. (2017). Corruption in the education industry in Nigeria: Implications for national development. *European Journal of Training and Development Studies, 4*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from www.eajournals.org
24. Nwogu, G. A. (2013). Education and national development in Nigeria: A philosophical perspective. *African Research Review, 7*(2), 266-276. Retrieved from afrrevjo.net
25. Nwosu, I. (2003). *Basics of newspaper journalism: For print media students and professionals.* Enugu: CECTA Nigeria.
26. Nwuneli, O., & Idowu, L. (2005). *Reporting of education issues in the Nigerian media.* Retrieved from www.adea-comed.org
27. O'Neil, M. (2012). *Overarching patterns in media coverage of education issues: A core story of education report.* Washington, DC: Frame Works Institute. Retrieved from https://www.frameworks institute.org
28. Odia, L. O., & Omofonmwan, S. I. (2007). Education system in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Social Science, 14*(1), 81-86. Retrieved from krepublishers.com
29. Okunna, S. C. (2002). Development communication. In S. C. Okunna (Ed.), *Teaching mass communication: A multi-dimensional approach.* Enugu: New Generation Books.
30. Ozturk, I. (2001).The role of education in economic development: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Rural Development and Administration, 33,* 39-47. Retrieved from papers.ssrn.com
31. Saleh, S. M. (2013). *Education: Problems and challenges in Nigeria, what to be done?* Retrieved from www.dailytrust.com.ng
32. Sambe, A. (2008). *Introduction to mass communication practice in Nigeria.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
33. Ukonu, M. O. (2013). *Fundamentals of editorial writing.* Nsukka: Charisma Publishers.
34. UNESCO (2000). *Nigerian human resource development and civilization: Education and world Affairs*, New York.
35. Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction.* US: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
36. Wogu, J. O. (2008). *Introduction to mass communication theories*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.

© 2020 Global Journals