

Educational News Reportage in Newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria: A Contrastive Content Analysis

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Abstract

Education is the substratum of development of any society because it equips the drivers of development with the wherewithal to perform their tasks. Therefore, this content analysis study compared how the *Daily Guide* and *Ghanaian Times* newspapers of Ghana, and *The Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers of Nigeria, reported education issues in late 2020 and 2021. The study, which was cabled on the Status Conferral theory of the media, set out to determine the extent of reportage given to education issues by the selected newspapers; to identify the story genres used in reporting education issues, and to ascertain if these journals gave prominence to education-related issues. Results revealed that adequate reportage was not given to education issues. Also, the four newspapers used more straight news stories in their reportage. Further, the study found that the newspapers did not give prominence to education issues. It was consequently recommended, among others, that newspapers should address the various issues that have to do with education. The paper also suggests how to improve the standard of education specifically in the sub-Saharan region and generally in the African continent; that newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria should report more about education issues with all the genre of story types available, and that, just as the status conferral theory dictates, newspapers should report a lot about education to draw the attention of stakeholders and make it a topic of discussion in both nations. One of the ways to achieve this is to give education-related stories, enough prominence.

Keywords

Academics; Analysis; Comparative; Education; News; Newspapers; Reportage; School

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1. Introduction

Education liberates man from all forms of slavery, be it mental, social, economic etc. It is the foundation of the development of nations, for, a well-educated society is a potentially developing one. It thrives because education avails people the opportunity to explore vast areas of human endeavour. It has the potentials to transform individuals, societies, and nations. The importance of Education to the growth and development of any country

is germane (Guanah, Uzoehina & Obi, 2018). Even though, globally, promotion of innovative educational practices is deemed as a strategy to achieving sustainable development, are the media reporting them so that the society can feel the impact of these innovations on the provision of quality education to promote sustainable development, particularly in developing countries that abound in the sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere? There are many issues about education that need to be addressed in Ghana and Nigeria.

There are significant problems that persist in Ghana's and Nigeria's education systems; prominent among them, is inadequate infrastructure. Others are in the form of adherence to obsolete teaching methods, high dropout rates of the girl child in the Northern part of Nigeria (most times due to early/child marriage and poverty), and the boy child in the Eastern part of Nigeria (due to their early involvement in trade and business), bloated class sizes, teachers who are not fully focused on teaching, and examination malpractice among others. Adelakun and Otaki (2013) declare that the Nigerian education system "has gone the 'Nigeria way' downward, nondescript and decadent" (p.63). Adebisi (2012) observes that upon the many private and public primary, secondary schools and

over numerous Universities in Nigeria today, the standard of education has depreciated to the extent that even graduates do not speak good English; this reflects the decadent nature of the education system. Kamran, Liang, and Trines (2019) attest that these similar problems which Ghana faces have led to high dropout rates in Ghana's schools, especially in the North. Hence Adu-Agyem and Osei-Poku (2012) call on the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES) to provide good infrastructural facilities in all educational institutions as a way of fostering quality education and ensuring quality delivery at all levels of the educational process.

Since education is that important, every serious-minded individual, government, or organisation like the media, especially newspapers, are expected to focus their attention on it to see how it can be enhanced and improved upon, at all strata. However, the media in sub-Saharan Africa appear to be relatively indifferent in the matters of creating awareness on education. They seem to lag in an awareness campaign on education and tend to leave it for individuals hence most people are not informed about education issues. Currently, most parts of the world, especially Africa, experiences weighty and unanticipated disorders in almost all aspects of human endeavour. There is the need not only to rejig the education system in Africa to align with that of developed countries which are experiencing fast development even in the face of challenges. However, the media, particularly newspapers, are expected to be at the fore in letting people know what is happening in the world of education through their reportage of education issues.

The media, chiefly newspapers, have significant roles to play in addressing education-related issues through drawing the attention of education stakeholders to the rot and myriad problems plaguing the sector so that solutions can be found to them. They should be able to report education news that informs policy and practice on ways to move the education sector forward. The media have the urgent duty to assume a prominent role in creating awareness on education issues. Guanah, Uzoehina & Obi (2018) insist that "hitherto the indispensable roles the mass media, especially the newspaper, can play in advancing education in Nigeria has not been adequately explored; if they are properly annexed they will go a long way to accelerate the development of our educational system" p. 36). Consequently, people have to be well informed about education. Therefore, it is vital to address the relevance of the media in reporting education stories. It is against this backdrop that this study is carried out to determine how newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria reported education issues between October 2020 and September 2021.

This study adopted the use of content analysis to compare how newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria reported education issues. Two newspapers, namely *The Daily*

Guide and *Ghanaian Times* were selected from Ghana while *The Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers were selected from Nigeria. These newspapers were chosen because of their national outlook, high circulation rates, availability and accessibility online, regularity of publication, publication of various contents, and their representation of both countries. The selection of newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria is the researchers' choice because they are published in West African countries. Also, Nigeria is known as the "Giant of Africa" with a large population and economy while Ghana is one of the most prominent nations in sub-Saharan Africa. It is so evident that the educational systems of Ghana and Nigeria are plagued with myriad problems which include shortage of qualified and competent teachers, poor learning infrastructure, low learning morale by students and teachers, and other varied problems which are causing the standard of education to nosedive rapidly. According to Lawal (2011) and Oyoze (2013), this challenge of the declining standard of education in Nigeria is exemplified by many indices; these are evident in unstable educational policies, abysmally low level of government's funding of this critical sector, poor quality of teachers and teaching, decrepit infrastructure as characterised by lack of adequate and well-equipped libraries, and the advent of social media, this is an ugly situation. Kamran, Liang, and Trines (2019) add that the Ghanaian education system is fraught with critical shortages of trained teachers, classroom facilities, and learning materials, particularly in rural regions. They express the fear that these problems may lead to a dropout rate and a fall in education in Ghana if they are not promptly addressed.

These problems are affecting students' formal education and have made education to dwindle drastically from what used to be tenable (Adebisi, 2012; Adelakun & Otaki, 2013). Urgent steps have to be taken to arrest this ugly trend and forestall a further decline in the standard which may impinge negatively on Ghana's and Nigeria's national development since education is linked to national development. The outcry about the dwindling standard of education in these countries has caused stakeholders in the education sector to be looking for various means to halt this negative trend and adopt means to improve as well as sustain the envisaged improved standard through an education system that is both effective and adaptable to Ghana and Nigeria. The mass media, especially the newspaper, can play a significant role in restoring as well as solving these problems, and ensuring that education gets to everybody who deserves it through the pattern of their reportage of education issues. The Ghanaian and Nigerian media appear to be lagging behind, leaving the education awareness campaign to individual efforts, thereby exposing the countries to a fall in educational standards.

With the significant place, the media occupy in society,

if they fail to report news that is beneficial to the wellbeing of the people, then they can be accused as being guilty of seeing the society rot in various aspects and not doing anything about it. Society will not forgive them for this faux pas. This calls for appropriate measures to be taken by the media (newspapers) as to how to inform the citizens of these nations about education issues. The question now is are the newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria reporting these education issues to draw the attention to stakeholders so that they could find solutions to them, being the watchdog and arbiter of the society? Thus, the objectives of this study were to: (1) determine the extent of reportage given to education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers; (2) identify the story format or pattern used in reporting education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers, and (3) ascertain if prominence was given to education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers.

1.1 The Theoretical Foundation of the Study

This paper finds support in the Status Conferral theory of the media. The Status Conferral theory was proposed by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton in 1948 (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948). According to Smith (2016), the status conferral theory was formed while Lazarsfeld and Merton were defining the functions and power of the mass media in contemporary society. The media have the ability to compel so much information from anyone, at any moment, about any topic, whether it a person, an ethnic group, a political party, a carnival, a profession, or anything else, and to make that topic appear to be the most pressing issue to date. Smith (2016) argues that the media's effect on a person's, a group of people's, or an event's perception, whether warranted or not, is what makes these things appear huge or important. The theory opines that the kind of coverage given to specific personalities, people, ethnic groups or festivals, political classes, or professions causes the public to perceive them in a certain light. "Status conferral," according to Lemert (2006), is the idea that news coverage singles out and elevates the person or organisation being covered. Hence:

Status conferral, or media recognition, signifies that one is prominent enough to be singled out from the crowd, and that one's actions and ideas are noteworthy enough to warrant media attention. The media impose status and prestige on persons and groups by legitimising their status (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 327).

Further, because media draw attention to individuals, subjects, and issues, Asemah (2011) believes that the media perform a status conferral role by providing importance to topics and persons. The focus creates a sense of importance, however, it can occasionally be excessive. It

implies that the media may elevate a person, event, or organisation to the point where members of the public begin to see that person, event, or institution as highly significant.

Simply put, media status conferral happens when the priming and framing techniques are employed to bestow prestige, clout, and importance on a person(s) or event. It could be a deliberate or unintentional activity. This could happen when newspapers are performing their duty, which is to inform, educate, and entertain the audience. This is in line with Ayakoroma's (2018) argument that "there is a chance that the general audience will look at such topics from that perspective" if the media take on an issue and is critical of it. Ibagere (2010) also believes that the media have the potential to draw attention to itself, as well as the "terrific capability" of focusing that attention on a certain event or phenomena. This theory validates the media's capability to install the toga of importance, relevance, attention, and popularity on any person, thing, or situation they choose to promote. Since they have the power to "confer" status, and influence the audience's perception of specific topics, issues, or persons based on the type of reportage they receive, newspapers may trumpet education issues and elevate them. This is why this theory is relevant to this study. The trio of Adesina, Fagbongbe, and Talabi (1985, as cited in Adiotomre, 2004) assert education is the tool for the effective integration of the individual into a society for the individual to achieve self-realisation, develop national consciousness, promote unity, and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural, and technological progress. It means that before any individual can enjoy the benefits accruable from the education they must acquire education through one means or the other. There has to be the injection of thoughtful educational reforms in Africa that is compliant with modern-day demand for new national development needs and objectives. It is in line with this aspiration that Adu-Agyem and Osei-Poku (2012) call for the careful review of educational curricula to get rid of irrelevant subjects, and subject contents and combinations in Ghana. This will make them align with what is tenable today in education worldwide.

Education avails individuals and communities the opportunity to improve their standard of living in all ramifications because it exposes them to varied experiences in terms of knowledge, values, and skills which, when applied to life situations, enables them live successful lives. On her part, Adiotomre (2004) opines that there are three major ways of using the term Education; these are: (1) as a process, (ii) as a product, and (iii) as a discipline. As a 'process', according to Adiotomre (2004), education is how men acquire the civilisation of the past and are enabled both to take part in the civilization of the present, and make the civilisation of the future. Civilization here means the totality of culture. The above is an indication

that education is a process of transmitting, preserving, developing and advancing the culture. Viewing education as a 'product', education is a means to change in behaviours (Adiotomre, 2004). As a 'discipline', education is a body of organised knowledge (Adiotomre, 2004) embracing the following: History of education, Philosophy of education, Comparative education, Sociology of education, Education psychology, psychology, Curriculum and methodology, and Educational administration. These are the branches of study, which are normally pursued under education as a discipline.

It, therefore, boils down to the truth that the quality of persons in society goes a long way to determine the quality of development that society attains (Ekwealor, 2009). The education sector deserves special concentration when it comes to manpower, monetary allocation, infrastructural provision, and other educational inputs. According to Ekwealor (2009):

once the educational system is able to launch 'products' (graduates) who are capable of being qualified as 'square pegs in square holes', or 'round pegs in round holes', into the society, that society has at least 50 percent of the wherewith alls for integral development. A harnessing of such 'powers', is like dynamo asset for achieving an all round well being (development) of the entire society (p.57).

Discussing how Africa's development can be accentuated, Guanah (2021) advocates the need for the pursuit of 'knowledge economy' which resonates under basic and sound education for Africans because when education and finance are provided there will be industrialisation. The former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Muhammad Sanusi II, also points out that the future lies in knowledge-based economy, but laments that Nigeria is behind many African countries in innovation index and ranking 114th globally (Falade, 2021).

1.2 Problems confronting the Education Sector in Ghana and Nigeria

There are challenges in almost all areas of education in Ghana and Nigeria. Nigeria's Minister of Education, Adamu Adamu attests to the fact that Nigeria's education system is facing a lot of challenges. Adio and Taiwo-Obalonye (2017) quote him as saying that members of the Federal Executive Council:

... agree that the fallen standard in education is so serious that we will need a ministerial retreat to look at all the issues. There are a lot of issues in education and all of them are crying for solution. So there will be a ministerial retreat in the next two weeks to look at the issues and from there we will take off in what we are doing (p. 2).

Also enumerating the challenges facing the education system of Ghana, Aheto-Tsegah (2011) mentions the major challenges as access and participation. He also lists the low enrolment of girls; low quality in terms of poor pupil learning achievement; inadequate supply of trained and qualified teachers, resulting in extremes of class size; and lack of resources for teaching and learning (p. 29). Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt (2007) corroborate the above position while referring to the insights got from Ghana's Ministry of Education Sector Performance Report and the World Bank commissioned report on Books, Buildings and Learning Outcomes. The report indicates that upon the fact that access to basic education improved, the case of access remains unequal and has not grown as speedily as is needed to achieve universal levels of participation through primary school and into JSS by 2015. One of the ways to ensure that no willing student drops out of school due to financial reasons is that Government should provide scholarships and students loans through the Scholarship and Loans Board to students. This will enable even the poor to have access to not just ordinary education, but quality education. For instance, Aheto-Tsegah (2011) mentions the Capitation Grants that were set up in 2005/2006 to finance the withdrawal of formal fees in primary schools in Ghana. This reduced the incentive for schools to introduce informal fees of their own. Under the Grants scheme, all public primary schools received an average amount of 4 Ghana cedi and 50 pesewas (GHC4.50) for each pupil enrolled per year.

The challenges confronting Ghana's and Nigeria's educational systems are comparable, though to varying degrees and intensities. According to Adu-Agyem and Osei-Poku (2012), other problems in Ghana include a lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities, poor infrastructural facilities, a low number of well-motivated and committed teachers due to unattractive salaries and conditions of service, an insufficient number of trained and well-motivated teachers to promote quality education, a lack of proper guidance and counselling services (especially at the Junior High School level), and the absence of per capita income (especially at the Senior High School level), high pupil/teacher ratio, particularly in cities and sub-urban areas, mass or wholesale promotion at the primary level, ineffective use of contact hours, undue pressure on the few well-equipped schools in urban areas, poor management and supervision in schools by heads and education officers, a high rate of out-of-school children. Nigeria is thought to have the world's highest rate of out-of-school children. In an article for *Global Citizen*, Obiezu (2018) examines a recent UNICEF poll that shows Nigeria's out-of-school children have climbed by 2.7 million, making it the world's greatest number.

The issue of strikes, mostly in Nigeria, is a major problem to the education sector. The university is expected

to contribute to the development of society through research, teaching, and community service. Darko-Ampem (2003) quotes Caraway as restating what Daniel Gilman, the first president of Johns Hopkins University, said. He vowed that, "It is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge and to diffuse it not merely among those who can attend the daily lectures but far and wide" (p.20). However, the insistent strike by university lecturers, under the auspices of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), has continually denied countries like Nigeria the benefits of the university, one of the reasons being the Federal government's introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) which mandates all Federal establishments to pay all revenue into a single federation account. This means that all salaries, wages, emoluments and sundry ad hoc payments emanate directly from the seat of the federal government in Abuja to the individuals concerned. Poor funding of education also militates against its growth in sub-Sahara Africa. Falade (2021) reports the former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Muhammad Sanusi II, as lamenting that while Ghana with a smaller economy invests more in education, Nigeria spends only seven percent of its budget in that direction, saying that, only eight of every 100 Nigerian who start primary school completes university education.

One of the advantages Ghana's education system enjoys over Nigeria's, is the allocating of more money to education sector; this has become a popular international study destination in sub-Saharan Africa. It now hosts more international degree students whereas Nigeria hardly gets foreign students' enrolment in her schools. Nigerian students even register en masse for degree programmes in Ghana's tertiary institutions. Kamran, Liang and Trines (2019) report that Nigeria sends a large number of students to Ghana thereby contributing more than 70 percent of international degree-seeking students in Ghana. Nigeria sent about 9,172 students to Ghana in 2017 (Kamran, Liang and Trines, 2019). Kamran, Liang and Trines (2019) further claim that the number of non-degree-seeking students is higher because there were between 71,000 and 75,000 Nigerian students in Ghana schools as of 2014, thus injecting substantial funds into Ghana's economy and education system. The trio cites a former governor of Nigeria's Central Bank as saying that "the money Nigerians recently spent on education in Ghana exceeded the entire federal university budget of Nigeria—a reflection of the poor condition of Nigeria's education system, which is strained by severe capacity gaps and funding shortages" (p.6). Meanwhile, the falling standard of education in Ghana, Nigeria, and elsewhere in sub-Sahara Africa may be due to the failure of governments to accomplish their developmental goals. Hence newspapers ought to report issues on education to draw the attention of governments and all stakeholders to the state of education in Ghana and Nigeria so that they

can focus on the problems facing the sector, and proffer solutions to them.

1.3 Link Between Media and Education

Education empowers an individual and determines his/her worth in a competitive economy (Orabuchi, 2007). Hence Ejiofor and Nwanegbo (2011) argue that primarily, it is through teaching that academia builds a nation's capacity to develop and sustain itself since no nation can grow above its teachers. They believe that nations that are developed did that because their teachers did so well, or were doing well. They add, "It is therefore the role of academia to sow the seeds of development in our country through their teaching" (p.11). The media are being used in Educational Broadcasting, which is seen as the process of teaching, training or learning through the broadcast media to enhance knowledge or develop skills. It includes the dissemination of educational messages, through radio, television, film, and other electronic media to a heterogeneous audience to enlighten them or develop and improving their knowledge on an issue.

There exists formal and informal educational broadcasting, but the researchers are more concerned with formal Educational broadcasting here because formal educational programmes can be used to augment classroom teaching for students and to create opportunities for people to develop themselves academically. Educational broadcasting is the airing of educational programmes having the same or related content with the curriculum of educational institutions, which involves a well-thought philosophy of education, curriculum organisation, designated personnel for curriculum implementation, evaluation and certification process (Onwuka & Enemuoas (1990), as cited in Nwabueze, 2007). Nwosu (1990), as cited in Guanah, 2015) adds that the broadcast media, especially radio, has the power to penetrate barriers posed by illiteracy, and it is proved to be useful in the area of educational broadcasting. The fact that writers like Klapper (1960), as cited in Guanah, 2015) feels that, the mass media have limited effects, does not take away the reality that the mass media contents have effects on people, that is why Nwuneli (1985), citing Ball Rokeach and De Fleur, says people still depend on the mass media to learn, to show feeling and to readjust their lives.

The use of the media, invariably, can effectively complement the enhancement of education because they can reach a vast number of people with education-laced contents, no matter their location. Investigations by the Punch newspaper (2011) reveal that today's students do not want to read whole books and that their attention span has declined in the digital age, where surfing and scanning are the norms. They often want reading lists from professors that consist of short articles and specific chapters rather than whole books. Also, Knowlton (1999, as cited in Guanah, 2018) refers to survey researchers carried out as indicating that part of the reading problem

of students is that:

many students are put off by the arcane language that seeps from the academic literature faculty write for each other and into the textbooks faculty supposedly write for students. A well-written and carefully edited newspaper avoids that problem and provides the clear but elegant language that students say they want. It may not be too much of a reach to hope that by getting students to read and appreciate what a newspaper has to offer, we may teach them the joys of other reading (p. 103)

This aligns with Robinson (1999, as cited in Guanah, 2015), who claims that newspapers allow many students to see real-world applications of concepts learned in history, government, science, and composition classes. Students can also obtain a better grasp of these and other topics, just as many long-time newspaper readers rely on their daily newspapers for information on the day's most pressing concerns. Newspapers, at their best, may easily be integrated into an educational program; they are educational institutions in and of themselves, serving to inform their readers. For instance, even though book review (a scholarly exercise) which Ezeliora and Ezeokana (2008) observe, projects both the writer and the reviewer to the public, and are mostly published in Journals, yet, it is also evident that newspapers, both in Nigeria and other climes publish Book Reviews in their pages. This avenue can be used to review academic books and also to summarise chapters of books for easy understanding of the books' contents by students. Nonetheless, the standard of education in Nigeria has greatly dwindled. In the opinion of a one-time Minister of Education Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa, the standard of education in the country has not fallen, but rather, the government, the people, that is the parents and guardians, have failed to meet the set standard (Champion Newspaper, 2003).

Education is an important aspect of national development, with the mass media providing the avenue for participatory development. Right from time, there has been a symbiotic relationship between education and the media, particularly in the area of the adequate coverage of the various Universal Basic Education (UBE) schemes. Osinuga and Ogbonna (2008) observe that newspapers (press) have been at the vanguard of the debate on the declining states of education in Nigeria because the special advantages of performance of the print media (newspaper) have been available to learners for continued references. The Ghanaian and Nigerian mass media play the role of disseminating information, education, and entertainment in society. In the aspect of using the media to educate people for development purposes, Aniebona (1990), as cited in Nwabueze, (2007) observes that the world has

recognised the fact that broadcasting is a powerful and effective tool for widespread education for both children and adults to achieve certain prescribed goals in economic growth, healthcare, political, and social awareness, political stability, self-reliance, and national identity, among others (Nwabueze, 2007).

The media are, to the society, like multiple drones sent out to gather different types of information based on the happenings in the society, and report such, back to the society in ways they can comprehend. The media appear to have neglected this responsibility when it comes to education issues. They inadvertently tend to deny citizens of becoming more aware of current educational information and other relevant information that could help them plan how to live better lives through development. Guanah (2019), in a paraphrased form, orates that:

Guanah (2019), in a paraphrased form, orates that: Journalists have a responsibility to bring current and relevant topics to the forefront of debates that could otherwise be brushed under the rug. The press (mass media) plays such an important role in society that calling it the fourth estate of the realm is a misnomer. The press is a "government" in and of itself because it is the press that causes people to value debates on problems, and when the press is mute, society suffers. The press is to society what blood is to the body, in that it is an essential component of society. Whatever the case may be, nothing truly becomes an issue until the 'press government' gets involved (pp.81-82).

There needs to be a real handshake between the media and education; it has to be real and practicable in the sense that the media should always speak for the education sector that would eventually produce those to build the society, including future media men and women.

2. Materials and Method

Content analysis technique was adopted in this study. Wimmer and Dominic (2000) state that content analysis looks at the characteristics of communication messages to learn something about the message, content, those who produce it as well as the effects the content has on those who receive it. Also, the Qualitative Content Analysis method is considered by Joffe and Yardley (2003) to be a suitable method for analysing detailed data, particularly in media and communications research. Although Onayiga (2016) says there are more than 50 different newspapers and tabloids, and Lagos alone is home to numerous newspapers and magazines, but according to Ekhareifo (2018), there are eighteen national newspapers in Nigeria. According to My Health Basics- MHB (2022), there are over 100 newspapers in Ghana.

The researchers purposively selected two national dailies each from Ghana and Nigeria due to their national outlook, high circulation rates, availability and accessibility online, regularity of publication, publication of various contents, their representation of both countries' education interests, and the fact that they have both the hard copy and online versions. The Daily Guide and Ghanaian Times were selected from Ghana while The Guardian and Punch newspapers were selected from Nigeria. All the editions of the four newspapers from October 2020 to September 2021 (twelve months) formed the population. Each newspaper has 365 editions in a year, therefore, the four newspapers will have 1,460 editions in a year (12 months, i.e. 365 x 4). Hence the population is 1, 460.

The multistage sampling technique was adopted for the sampling procedure. To get the exact editions to be studied, the continuous and constructed weeks as developed by Jones and Caner (1959), as cited in Ogwu & Alferd, 2018, p. 12) were employed. This means that a composite week was drawn in each of the months under investigation. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) explain that "a study might use a sample of one Monday (drawn from the four or five possible Mondays in a month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on until all weekdays have been included" (p. 163). They aver that "a composite week sampling technique was superior to both random and consecutive day sample when dealing with Newspaper or magazine contents" (p. 163).

In total, we have 12 months from October 2020 to September 2021. There are seven days in each week, meaning that 7 days were studied in a month. The dates selected applied to the four newspapers. Therefore, 7 x 12 (one year) will be 84 editions per newspaper. If this (84) is multiplied by 4 (the four newspapers), we shall have a sample size of 336. This is considered adequate for the study as recommended by Stemple 111(2003) who opines that "a selection of 14 editions of newspapers, depending on the study is enough to study one year" (as cited in Obayi, Anorue & Onyebuchi, 2016, p. 45).

The instruments for data collection were a self-developed code sheet and coding guide. Face and construct validity tests were performed on them. The instruments were tested using Ole Holsti's (1969) model for inter-coder reliability based on the ratio of coding agreement to the number of coding decisions, as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2000). With a coefficient of 0.96, they were rated credible, indicating 96 percent agreement between two independent coders. The data were collected via a page-by-page review of the online versions of the four newspapers' editions, and a story must make mention of education, school in Ghana and Nigeria in the headline or lead paragraph, the body of the story format, or pattern to qualify as an education-related story.

Table 1. Showing selection of sample editions/days in 2020 and 2021

| Months | Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Total |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2020 | | | | | | | | |
| October | 4 | 12 | 20 | 28 | 1 | 9 | 17 | 7 |
| November | 1 | 9 | 17 | 25 | 5 | 13 | 21 | 7 |
| December | 6 | 14 | 22 | 30 | 3 | 11 | 19 | 7 |
| 2021 | | | | | | | | |
| January | 3 | 11 | 19 | 27 | 7 | 15 | 23 | 7 |
| February | 7 | 15 | 23 | 3 | 11 | 19 | 27 | 7 |
| March | 7 | 15 | 23 | 31 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 7 |
| April | 4 | 12 | 20 | 28 | 1 | 9 | 17 | 7 |
| May | 2 | 10 | 18 | 26 | 6 | 14 | 22 | 7 |
| June | 6 | 14 | 22 | 30 | 3 | 11 | 19 | 7 |
| July | 4 | 12 | 20 | 28 | 1 | 9 | 17 | 7 |
| August | 1 | 9 | 17 | 25 | 5 | 13 | 21 | 7 |
| September | 5 | 13 | 21 | 29 | 2 | 10 | 18 | 7 |
| Total | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 84 |

The units of analysis were classified under straight news stories, feature stories, editorials, cartoons, photographs, advertorials, letter-to-the-editor, interviews, and opinion articles. The content categories under which each of these units were analysed were: Extent of reportage: This is the total number of times education issues were reported by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers; Story format or pattern of presentation: This refers to the genre with which education issues were reported by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers like straight news, cartoons, opinion article, etc., and Prominence: This implies where the stories on education issues were located in the selected newspapers. It could be in the Front page (FP), Back Page (BP), Inside Page (IP), or Editorial Page (EP). The collected data were presented using simple percentages, degrees and pie charts.

3. Results

Fig 1 shows that there were 637 stories on education during the period under study. Punch had 229 (35.9%), The Guardian had 150 (23.6%), Ghanaian Times had 105 (16.5%), and Daily Guide had 153 (24%).

The data on Fig 2 indicate that the newspapers had 581 straight news stories (91.2%), 29 feature articles (4.5%), 18 opinion articles (2.8%), 7 photographs (1.1%), 1 Cartoon (0.2%), 1 Adverts (0.2%), and no Editorial (0%).

Fig. 3 shows that the four newspapers had 535 inside pages (83.9%). Their front page stories were 81 (12.7%), and their back page stories were 21 (3.4%)

4. Discussion

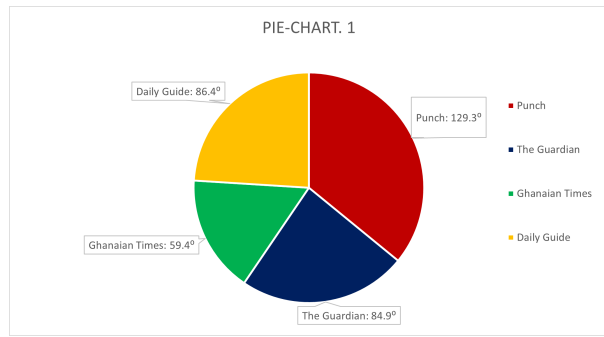


Figure 1. Extent of reportage of education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers. Scale: $1\% = 3.6^\circ$

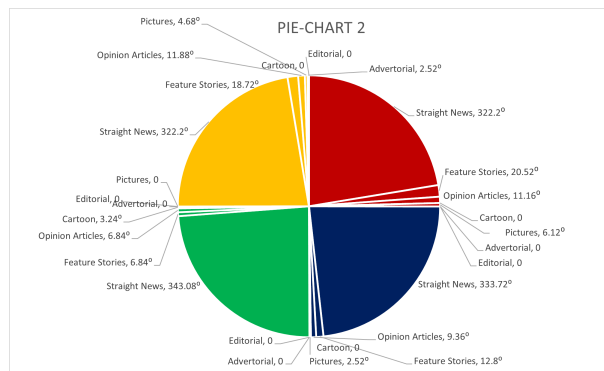


Figure 2. Story format used in reporting education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers. Scale: $1\% = 3.6^\circ$

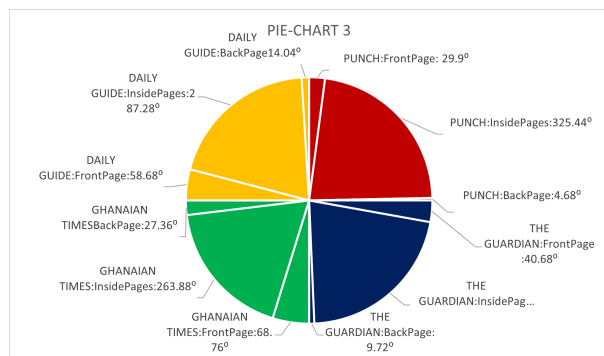


Figure 3. If prominence was given to education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers. Scale: $1\% = 3.6^\circ$

On the extent of reportage given to education issues by the selected Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers, data show that the Nigerian newspapers (Punch and The Guardian) had 379 (59.50%) stories on education while the Ghanaian newspapers had 258 (40.50%) stories on education. With the importance attached to education, if four newspapers could only report 637 stories about education in a whole year, it indicates that they did not give adequate coverage to education issues. However, this finding is contrary to the outcome of another study carried out by Guanah (2018) which reports that “the data gathered and analysed were able to prove that the newspapers gave adequate coverage to education issues. All the stories under the volume of coverage in the three selected newspapers got attention, that is to say, the volume of coverage of education news is high” (p.111). Newspapers should report more about education issues, and attach importance to them through the instrumentality of Status Conferral that they possess. The media (newspapers inclusive) can elevate an issue to the extent that members of the public begin to see that issue as highly significant.

Newspapers must treat education issues with circumspect and attach importance to education generally. If newspapers are silent about education issues the adverse situations about education may persist. The dwindling rate of education is high in West Africa, and the media ably represented here by the newspaper, have the responsibility to investigate and confer status on education issues to increase the standard of education in the sub-region. This can be achieved by utilising the important place the media occupy in the society, which can invariably accelerate the development of the sub-region. Ajayi (1996), as cited in Adedokun & Otaki, (2013) posits that in the contemporary world, the strength of a nation is based on the soundness of her education.

Concerning the story pattern, format, or genre used by the newspapers to report education issues, it was discovered that the four newspapers from Ghana and Nigeria used more straight news stories in their reportage. The Ghanaian newspapers had 237 straight news stories while the Nigerian newspapers had 344. The Feature Articles in the Ghanaian newspapers were 10 while in the Nigerian newspapers they were 19. The Opinion Articles in the Ghanaian newspapers were 7 while Nigerian newspapers had 11. There was a cartoon in one of the Ghanaian newspapers while no Nigerian newspaper reported education stories with a single cartoon. The photographs in the Ghanaian newspapers were 9 while the Nigerian newspapers had 5. The Ghanaian newspapers recorded only 1 advertorial while no Nigerian newspaper had a cartoon. None of the Ghanaian and Nigerian newspapers had an editorial on education issues.

From the foregoing finding, it is obvious that the newspapers had more peripheral reports on education

issues because the bulk of their reports was in the form of straight news. Usually, straight news does not give an in-depth analysis of issues, rather it leverages its immediacy prowess over some other forms of news genre. The use of other news formats like Feature and Opinion articles would have given education stakeholders more insight into the state of education in Nigeria and Ghana. For instance, a feature article could have been used to give profound information in a manner that would draw the attention of stakeholders. This is achievable because "feature can be employed to "flesh" up the bones of the straight news" (Guanah, 2014, p. 88). Similarly, Opinion articles could be utilised in massively conferring status on education issues by shoring up their popularity.

In addition, photographs which function as powerful tools of communication that can be used to effectively send out messages because of their aesthetic values, and advertorials (advertisements in the form of real editorial content) that are usually fashioned in editorial styles to authenticate its contents were sparingly used by the newspapers under study. Though funnily portrayed most times, newspaper cartoons are widely read. They have the potential of simply passing an avalanche of factual messages commendably through caricature while, at the same time, amusing its readers; however, only one newspaper published one cartoon that relates to education among the four newspapers. Most regrettably, editorial, which stands as the mouthpiece and position of a media organisation in any public important matter, was not utilised at all by the four selected newspapers to deliberate on education issues.

Hence, Internews Europe (2014) asserts that without genres like features, editorials and opinion articles there is a lack of in-depth, thoughtful, well-discussed reporting. Oyero (2010) likewise reiterates that newspapers' reports on salient issues that do not include editorials and opinion articles show that the reports lacked more authoritative opinions on such issues. Further, this study found that, on average bases, prominence was not given to education issues by the four newspapers even though education is an important factor of growth and development. Out of the 637 stories published by the four newspapers, only 81 (12.7%) were on their front pages while 21 (3.4%) were on their back pages, but the inside pages had a whopping 535 (83.9%) stories. This finding aligns with the stand of Ifeanyi-Obi and Agumagu (2008) that most often, front-page headlines account for only 4% of newspaper stories. The importance and prominence of a news story are determined by the location and placement of such story(ies) in any publication. The front page (prominence) normally has the most important information, this is followed by the back page, before the inside pages which have news stories that are less important compared to what is published on the front and back pages of newspapers. Taking the importance

of education into consideration, education news deserves mention in headlines and given more prominence than what it enjoys presently. According to Nwabueze (2006, p. 176), the audience assigns greater weight to subjects that are regularly covered and given priority in the media, and the media set an agenda for public discussion by doing so. As Guanah (2018) observes, the synergy between newspapers and education "can be further strengthened, not only in the way(s) newspapers report education news, but also in the quantum and frequency of education news reported, and the prominence given to such news as per placements in the pages of the newspapers" (p. 104).

5. Conclusion

Without a doubt, education is sine quo non for any society's growth because it can boost the socio-economic well-being of the people. However, they have to be conversant of what is happening in the education domain, and the media (newspapers) must go the whole hog to regularly and efficiently report education news to create sufficient awareness by reporting or creating agenda around its importance. They should dissipate their energy in reporting issues like education that can ensure growth and development of the society more than about politics which enjoys more space in the media even though politics tend to benefit individuals more than the larger society.

If newspapers give adequate coverage of education issues with different genres of story types, and give prominence to education stories, taking into consideration most of the recommendations put forward, the standard of education will rise, not only in Ghana and Nigeria but in the entire sub-Saharan region because of the positions they occupy in the African continent in terms of economy, trade and politics. Newspapers in Ghana and Nigeria should report more about education issues with all the genres of story types available and should address the various issues that have to do with education, and suggest how to improve its standard specifically in the sub-Sahara region and generally in the African continent. Also, just as the status conferral theory dictates, newspapers should report so much about education to draw the attention of stakeholders and make it a topic of discussion in the nations. One of the ways to achieve this is to give education stories prominence. Since Education is a very serious investment, infrastructures and facilities to make teaching and learning run smoothly must be put in place if the education sector must move forward. Newspapers should draw government's attention to the decaying and lack of infrastructure in most schools, and cause government to do something about them.

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