



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

COURSE CODE :MAC 322

**COURSE TITLE:
EDITORIAL WRITING**

**COURSE
GUIDE****MAC 322
EDITORIAL WRITING**

Course Developer/Writer

Andrew Asan Ate
Igbinedion University, Okada
Edo State

Course Editor

Josef Bel-Molokwu, Ph.D
Sef Patri Services
Box 6233
Shomolu, Lagos

Programme Leader

Christine Ofulue Ph.D
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator

Chidinma Onwubere
National Open University of Nigeria**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

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Introduction

MAC 322 is a one-semester 3credit-unit course. It is designed to drill Journalism or Mass Communication students on the theory and practice of editorial writing.

The course will also highlight the opinion functions of editorials and columns in modern newspapers. It is developed for Nigerian students with typical examples from the Nigerian environment.

The course takes into account the professional and academic needs of students offering B.Sc/B.A degrees in Journalism and Mass Communication.

The course has a guide which serves as a compass towards effective use of the course materials as contained in the course units. There is also provision for Tutor-Marked Assignments which should not be handled with levity by students.

What You Will Learn in this Course

The overall aim of MAC 322: Editorial Writing is to expose students to the basic concepts in opinion writing, both from the corporate and individual points of view.

The meaning, structure, types and functions of the editorial would be examined along with creative essentials of editorial writing.

The course will also assist students to appreciate the major differences between an editorial and other forms of writing.

Your understanding of Editorial Writing will prepare you to tackle the challenges that go with analysis and interpretation of issues of public concern.

The course will professionally provoke the students' hunger for critical thinking and writing in line with the concept of editorial writing.

It will equip the students to have a better understanding of the power of public opinion and how to use same for editorial purposes.

The course will also nurture the students to understand the agenda-setting functions of the press and appreciate the power of information in the market place of ideas. Such understanding will enable the students to know why the mass media are often referred to as the court of public opinion.

A thorough exposure to the contents of this course will also empower the students in writing effective broadcast commentaries.

Course Aims

The major aim of this course is to sharpen the intellectual horizon of students and expose them to the general principles and practices of in-depth or interpretative writing.

The course is also aimed at drilling students in the art and science of column and opinion writing from corporate and individual perspectives.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to achieve the following objectives at its completion:

- thoroughly educate students to appreciate the agenda-setting role of the press by initiating public debates and measuring the effects of such debates in the market place of ideas.
- educate students on the types, determinants, audience and persuasive techniques of editorials.

Working through this Course

To effectively harness and retain the rich information in this course, the student is expected to read the recommended texts and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

The Self Assessment Exercise spelt out in each unit must be taken seriously. Students are, expected from time to time to submit assignments for periodic assessment. There will be an examination at the end of this course. Stated below are the components of the course and what you ought to do.

Course Materials

The main components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. References
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation

In addition, you must obtain the materials. Obtain your copy. They are provided by NOUN. In some cases, you may be required to obtain your copy from the bookshop. In case you have any problem in obtaining your materials, you may contact your tutor.

Study Units

There are twenty study units in this course. These are:

Module 1

| | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Meaning of Editorials |
| Unit 2 | Qualities of Editorials |
| Unit 3 | Public Opinion and Editorials |
| Unit 4 | Editorials and Other Forms of Writing |
| Unit 5 | Types of Editorial |

Module 2

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Sourcing the Editorial Materials |
| Unit 2 | Editorial Audience |
| Unit 3 | Qualities of Editorial Writers |
| Unit 4 | The Editorial Board |
| Unit 5 | Techniques in Editorial Writing |

Module 3

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Determinants of Editorial Subject |
| Unit 2 | Classification of Editorials |
| Unit 3 | Structure of an Editorial |
| Unit 4 | Pitfalls in Editorial Writing |
| Unit 5 | Ethics of Editorial Writing |

Module 4

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | The Editorial Page |
| Unit 2 | Editing the Editorial |
| Unit 3 | The Differences Between Print and Broadcast Editorials |
| Unit 4 | Editorial Writing and Economy |
| Unit5 | Editorial Writing, Politics and Governance |

Each unit is accompanied by a number of self-tests which are drawn from the materials the student have already gone through. The tests are intentionally designed to keep the student abreast of what he/she has studied from the course materials. If properly utilized, the excellent

combination of self-tests with tutor-marked assignments will in no small measure lead to the achievement of the overall objectives of the course.

Textbooks and References

The students should endeavour to get the following text books:

Ukonu, M (2005). *Fundamentals of Editorial Writing*. Nsukka: Multi Educational and Services Trust.

Okoro, N. and B. Agbo (2003). *Writing for the Media Society*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.

Duyile, D (2005). *Writing for the Media – A Manual for African Journalists*. (2nd ed.) Lagos: Gong Communication.

Anderson, D & Pater, B (1976). *Investigative Reporting*. London: University Press Bloomington.

Anim, E (1996). *Editorial Writing*. Port-Harcourt: Sunray Books Ltd.

Rystrom, K (1994). *The Why, Who and How of the Editorial Page*. (2nd ed). Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing Company.

Ate, A.A (2007). *Editorial Writing: An Academic and Professional Approach*. Akure: Pamma Press.

Assignment File

In the Assignment File, you will get the details of the work you are expected to submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtained for these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on the assignment would be found in the Assessment File itself and later in this course guide in the section on assessment.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due dates. You should guard against falling behind your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First is the Tutor-Marked Assignments; second, there is a written examination.

In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course.

The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

There are twenty tutor-marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with TMA (Tutor-Marked Assignment) form, to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the Assignment File. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination of MAC 322 will be three hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course is broken down.

| Assessment | Marks |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assignments 1-20 | 20 assignments, best four marks of twenty count @7.5% (on the averages) = 30% of course marks |
| Final Examination | 70% of overall course marks |
| Total | 100% of course marks |

Table 1: Course marking Scheme

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

| Unit | Title of work | Week's Activity | Assessment (end of unit) |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| | Course Guide | 1 | |
| Module 1 | | | |
| 1 | Meaning of Editorial | 1 | Assessment 1 |
| 2 | Qualities of Good Editorial Writers | 2 | Assessment 2 |
| 3 | Public Opinion and Editorials | 3 | Assessment 3 |
| 4 | Editorial and other forms of writing | 4 | Assessment 4 |
| 5 | Types of Editorials | 5 | Assessment 5 |
| Module 2 | | | |
| 1 | Sourcing the Editorial Materials | 6 | Assessment 6 |
| 2 | Editorial Audience | 7 | Assessment 7 |
| 3 | Qualities of Editorial Writers | 8 | Assessment 8 |
| 4 | Editorial Board | 9 | Assessment 9 |
| 5 | Techniques in Editorial writing | 10 | Assessment 10 |
| Module 3 | | | |
| 1 | Determinants of Editorial Subjects | 11 | Assessment 11 |
| 2 | Classification of Editorial | 12 | Assessment 12 |
| 3 | Structure of an Editorial | 13 | Assessment 13 |
| 4 | Pitfalls of Editorial writing | 14 | Assessment 14 |
| 5 | Ethics of Editorial writing | 15 | Assessment 15 |
| Module 4 | | | |
| 1 | The Editorial Page | 16 | Assessment 16 |
| 2 | Editing the Editorial | 17 | Assessment 17 |
| 3 | The Differences Between Print and | 18 | Assessment 18 |

| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------|----|---------------|
| | Broadcast Editorials | | |
| 4 | Editorial Writing and Economy | 19 | Assessment 19 |
| 5 | Editorial Writing, Politics and Governance | 20 | Assessment 20 |
| 21 | Revision | | |
| 22 | Examination | | |

Table 2: Course Overview

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from other materials.

Reading Section

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course Overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should fashion out your own convenient schedule for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also on what is written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- You have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises,
- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with the tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

MAC 322 is packaged to introduce you to the basic concepts and principles of Editorial Writing. Upon the completion of the course, you will be able to answer the following questions among others:

- What is the meaning of Editorial?
- What are the qualities of a good Editorial writer?
- What are the types and functions of Editorials?
- What persuasive and propaganda techniques can one use in Editorial Writing?
- Where can you source for Editorial materials and who are the Editorial Audience?

- How can editorials be classified and what are the key issues or concepts in Editorial Writing?
- What determines an Editorial subject and what are the dos and don'ts of Editorial Writing?
- What are the ethics of Editorials?

**MAIN
COURSE**

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Course Code | MAC 322 |
| Course Title | Editorial Writing |
| Course Developer/Writer | Andrew Asan Ate Igbinedion University, Okada Edo State |
| Course Editor | Josef Bel-Molokwu, Ph.D Sef Patri Services Box 6233 Shomolu, Lagos |
| Programme Leader | Christine Ofulue Ph.D National Open University of Nigeria |
| Course Coordinator | Chidinma Onwubere National Open University of Nigeria |



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng

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MODULE 1

| | |
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| Unit 1 | Meaning of Editorial |
| Unit 2 | Qualities of a Good Editorial |
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| Unit 4 | Editorials and Other Forms of Writing |
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UNIT 1 MEANING OF EDITORIAL

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| | |
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| 3.3 | Nature of Editorials |
| 3.4 | Public Opinion and the Editorial |
| 4.0 | Conclusion |
| 5.0 | Summary |
| 6.0 | Tutor-Marked Assignment |
| 7.0 | References/Further Readings |

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is quite acceptable that journalists and mass communicators primarily have the responsibility of informing, educating and entertaining members of the society. As an institution, the mass media could set agenda, preserve cultural heritage, as well as confer status on individuals or institutions in the society. To achieve these, however, different approaches, such as news reporting, features writing, news analysis, editorial writing and news commentaries, could be employed by journalists.

This unit explores editorial writing with particular emphasis on its meaning, history, characteristics and nature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define what an Editorial is
- know the history of Editorials
- explain the characteristics of Editorials
- describe the nature of Editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Editorial

An editorial could be defined as a corporate voice of a media organisation on any given issue of public interest. Also known as the leader, the editorial is looked upon by Duyile (2005:63) as the “opinion of a newspaper simply written for the understanding of readers, leading them to take decisions on the issues being discussed.” In a simple manner, the veteran journalist describes it as the explanatory text, the opinions of the newspaper on any topic. According to him, this could be an argument exhibiting the logical reasoning of a newspaper, using thoughts of the proprietor for the purpose of persuading the readers (audience) to either kick against or accept an idea, policy or an action based on facts available.

Hoffman (2007:113) on the other hand, views an editorial as a “statement of opinion from an editor or publisher about you and your business or media coverage generated by news staff.”

In agreement with the above, Iyorkyaa (1996:4) define an editorial as “a journalistic essay which attempts to:

- a. inform or explain;
- b. persuade or convince;
- c. stimulate insight in an entertaining or humorous manner.”

In their views, Okoro and Agbo (2003:125) capture the concept of the editorial as “a critical evaluation, interpretation and presentation of significant, contemporary events in such a way as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader.”

It could be inferred from the definitions above that an editorial is based on expression or corporate opinion which usually interprets issues from a deeper out-look and entertains the average reader with its substance and depth of analysis.

Editorial writing has become a celebrated concept for serious-minded newspapers just as a news commentary is for broadcasting due to the opinion function of the mass media (Ate, 2006). However, an editorial is influenced by the newspaper policy and philosophy, ownership structure as well as political environment in which it operates.

3.2 History of Editorials

What is today known as the editorial could be traced as far back in 1880 (Yaasa, 1996:6). This was the time in which the term Editorial was put to use as a label to mark clearly a statement of the editor's opinion. The term was used then to refer to an article written by the editor. However, in the 20th century, the coast of editorials became wide-spread. This was largely due to the fact that newspapers across the globe had made editorials to be occupying separate pages or spaces in their publications. Also around this period, certain newspapers the world over began placement of editorials on left hand pages, usually in front of the section.

It is worthy to note that modern newspapers have significantly expanded and enriched the editorial page to the extent that it is been used to face lengthy opinions by columnists and guest writers. This trade mark is known as op-ed, meaning opposite the editorial page.

3.3 Features of an Editorial

An editorial topic or subject cannot emerge from the blue. (Ate, 2007). It usually comprises issues of topical interest that have been reported in the mass media by way of hard news or features, which attracts public attention and debate. An editorial could, therefore, be said to have characteristics of news and features elements.

More so, an editorial has other features like objectivity, precision, specialism and advocacy. These according to Ukonu (2005) are all incorporated into editorials for the fact that it is investigative, interpretative and newsy in nature. He contends that the editorial is a melting pot for all kinds of journalist writings.

An editorial also has some characteristics of a story because of its subjectivity biases. Editorials could be subjective in posture because their sources could emanate from thought-provoking letters to the editors which are often used for gauging public opinion on emerging controversial and topical issues of public interest.

An editorial is also characterized by borrowed ideas from other journalistic write-ups. This simply agrees with the fact that the editorial has some components of different journalistic write-ups.

3.4 Nature of Editorial

Editorial writing belongs to the print media genre. While other opinion pieces like articles, columns and essays are credited to individuals or

joint writers, the editorial belongs to a newspaper as an institution – a social institution. (Ukonu, 2005).

Naturally, an editorial is more of a corporate view. It therefore carries an institutional flavour. This explains why terms like “we” or a newspaper’s name is often used instead of “I” or the writer’s name. Since it is an organisational affair, any credit or blame in an editorial usually goes to the organisation, rather than the individual.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. In your own words, define Editorial.
2. Briefly trace the history of editorial and the changes in its trends from individual to corporate expression.
3. What are the features of an editorial?
4. Distinguish the nature of editorials from other forms of writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

I have discussed the concept of editorial from different perspectives. It is found here that an editorial is a combination of other journalistic elements. However, the editorial differs from other write-ups because of the institutional or corporate nature it wears. It is therefore a powerful weapon in shaping public opinion.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit tackles the meaning and history of an editorial. It also captures the features and nature of the subject matter.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1a. What is an editorial?
- b. Explain the features of an editorial and its relationship with its nature.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Ate, A.A. (2007). *Editorial Writing: An Academic and Professional Approach*. Akure: Pamma Press.
- Duyile, D. (2005). *Writing for the Media – A Manual for African Journalists*. Lagos: Gong Communication Ltd. P64.
- Ukonu, M (2005). *Fundamentals of Editorial Writing*. Nsukka: Multi Educational and Services Trust. P1.

Okoro, N. & Agbo, B. (2003). *Writing for the Media Society*.
Nsukka: Prize Publishers. P124.

Hoffman, M. (2007). *Academic's Dictionary of Mass Communication*.
New Delhi: Academic (India) Publishers.

Yaasa, A. (1996). "History of Editorials". Unpublished Work.

UNIT 2 QUALITIES OF A GOOD EDITORIAL

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- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Qualities of a Good Editorial
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorial, just like human beings have qualities. This unit shall discuss the qualities of editorial. This is aimed at assisting the student in writing a professionally acceptable editorial.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to comment on the:

- qualities of a good editorial.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualities of a Good Editorial

It is important for a good editorial writer to imbibe certain guidelines on the concept of editorial writing. These guidelines will enable the writer to appreciate the qualities of a good editorial. Ate (2007), Onabajo (2000), Ukonu (2005), Okoro and Agbo (2003) capture the general hints guiding the concept of editorial writing. These are:

1. Institutional Flavour

The editorial must be written using the institutional name. It should be regarded as the corporate voice of the media establishment and not that of the individual.

2. The Language should be plain and Unambiguous

Whatever purpose is intended of an editorial, the writer should make the language simple, so it could be understood by the target audience. For the editorial writer to achieve this, there is a need to avoid beating about the bush.

3. Editorials should be exact and Straight-To-The-Point

It is expected of a good editorial writer to make the point as it is. This is a good quality of editorial that makes it to be punchy and short.

4. It must be Human Interest Oriented

Man is generally interested in affairs of fellow men. He therefore looks for such knowledge. An editorial that has human interest is bound to win the affection of people, as they would get interested in it than others. It is therefore essential to make this a good quality of an editorial.

5. Editorials should be Catchy and Attention Arresting

A writer should avoid dull and weak editorials because they cannot create a desired effect on the target audience. Strong words that are persuasive in nature should be used in an editorial to make it catchy and attention-arresting.

6. It should be Original in Tone and Substance

Editorials are not copied from other newspapers. Rather, they are generated by ideas obtained from researches. Editorial writers should be original in the art and science of editorial writing. They should avoid copying other people's work, but rather contribute new ideas and agenda for public opinion.

7. It must be well Researched

Just as it is mentioned above, editorial writers should research before writing the editorial. This could make the editorial timely, authoritative and qualitative. A highly profound editorial is a product of good research.

8. Editorials should be Factual, Concrete and not speculative

Editorial writers should make sure that their opinion pieces are credible enough for publication. It is wise for such editorials to be cross-checked to avoid falsehood and ensure accuracy.

Capturing the qualities of a good editorial in harmony of the above views, Folarin (1998:36-38) identifies the general tips on editorial writing:

- select a current topic and stick to it, albeit looking at it from all relevant angles. Sometimes an advocacy or propagandistic editorial chooses a specific point of view and sticks to it, disregarding other possible angles. The purpose of the editorial decides the approach adopted.

- find a sound premise for your position and let your reasoning on that premise be equally sound.
- make the editorial short and crisp. A long editorial is an aberration and must have a strong justification – such as a special occasion (military coup, an independence anniversary, the signing of a bilateral treaty etc). In many cases, long editorials are broken down into installments, each installment looking at a specific aspect of the topic. More than two editorials on a given topic becomes an “editorial campaign”. Such campaigns are rare in Nigeria.
- the language of editorials, more than that of any other item in the paper, is expected to be flawless, since the editorial is the “intellectual powerhouse of the newspaper”. The expression is forthright and masculine, and does not leave the reader in any doubt about the paper’s position on the pertinent issue. Simplicity is not a leading quality of editorials in Nigeria. But each one should be clear, concise and definitive.

For any editorial to create the desired effect and win the affection of the audience, it must have the above qualities. It is therefore important for editorialists to have a mastery of what constitute good editorials. Good editorials are not supposed to be dull. They are not supposed to be emotional and illogical. They are not supposed to be based on rumour or untested facts but on concrete and logical facts. They are not supposed to be based on irrelevant issues but on topical issues of public interest.

Good editorials must have a segmented audience but its message must be understood by all who are exposed to it. A good editorial must also have visual or pictorial qualities. As the reader is exposed to it, he or she should be able to appreciate the issue under probe in real terms.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the qualities of a good editorial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Knowledge of editorial qualities is important to every editorial writer. This is the key to writing good quality editorials. This unit has however, highlighted certain qualities of a sound editorial to enable students to become efficient in the craft of editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discusses the qualities of a good editorial. It emphasizes the need for editorial writers to be acquainted with such qualities for a worthwhile journalistic mission.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the qualities of a good editorial with examples from Nigerian newspapers.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 PUBLIC OPINION AND EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definitions of Public Opinion
 - 3.2 Importance of Public Opinion
 - 3.3 Formation of Public Opinion
 - 3.4 Opinion Functions of Editorials
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mass media are known for their roles in the formation of public opinion. Thus, this has earned them the title “the court of public opinion.” This unit examines issues that revolve around the importance of public opinion and its formation. A thorough examination of the opinion function of editorials would be the focal point of discussion. This would enable the student to appreciate the importance of editorials in modern day newspapers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define public opinion
- discuss the importance of public opinion
- state the factors that are responsible for the formation of public opinion
- discuss the opinion function of editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Public Opinion

Public opinion is, simply, the aggregate views of members of the society on a given significant issue, be it political, social or an economic one. Put simpler, public opinion is a collection of views and feelings of members of the public on current topical issues. Take for instance, the voting pattern of 2007 election. Public views can be harvested on the issue and the position of the public can be made known through the mass media.

3.2 Importance of Public Opinion

The mass media are indisputably the mouth piece of society. Because of the aggressive expansion of societies in recent times as a result of population explosion, the mass media remain the only sure voice or platform whereby members of society will express their feelings, views and opinions.

Public opinion is useful or beneficial in the following ways:

- i. provides the resources for determining the current image of an individual or organization. If, for instance, a political office holder wishes to measure or test his/her popularity, public opinion will be the way forward. The media will only take the individual concern to the court of public opinion and either the vote of confidence or no-confidence would be passed on the person. The same thing could be applicable to an organization that wishes to measure its profile in the eyes of the public.
- ii. reveals need for social change. Social change, according to Wilmot (1985:174) cited in Ojo (2004), is the alteration in the sources or organization of society or its component parts overtime. Mac Gee *et al* (1977:589) cited in Ojo (op cit) describes social change as the transformation in patterns of social organization or activity.

An adage says nothing is permanent except change. The mass communicator through his interaction with diverse members of the society is an agent of change. The mass communicator keeps a tab on human and organization behaviours and in line with public position or opinion may champion the cause of social change in a society.

- iii. predicts financial and developmental future of an organization. The mass media may keep its watchful eyes on a particular organization and predict the organization's future financial status through the help of public opinion.
- iv. provides raw materials for research purposes. By exposing some grey areas of a phenomenon through public opinion or debate, researchers could benefit much in the art and science of public opinion.
- v. aids policy formulation and planning in society. Through public opinion, government can know the views of the people and can formulate policies for their good governance.

vi. sets agenda for the society. One of the major functions of the press is to set agenda for the good governance of the society. The journalist without getting in touch with the views of members of the society cannot set any effective agenda. Acknowledging the agenda-setting power of the press, Cohen (1963:13) cited in Daramola (2003:60) said:

- The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling them what to think about.

The ability of the media to determine public thinking is an agenda-setting exercise.

According to Daramola (2003:61), “when the press seizes a great issue to thrust unto the agenda of talk, it moves action on it.” That underscores the importance of the agenda-setting function of the press which is only made possible through public opinion.

It is important to note that public opinion can be measured through opinion polls, elections, referenda and by meeting with the people.

3.3 Formation of Public Opinion

Generally, controversial issues are batteries for formation of public opinion. However, public opinion can be formed in other diverse ways.

These include:

- Through the mass media. That is the expression of people’s views through Radio, TV, Newspapers, and Magazines.
- Peer groups. A group of people moving together and sharing common ties and influences.
- Pressure group and political parties. Pressure group, professional leanings and political parties provide a bazaar of information that forms and shapes public opinion.
- Symposia and lectures. Symposia and public lectures provide avenues for brainstorming of ideas whose molecules can be used in constructing public opinion.
- Election – Political advertisements and other kinds of electioneering campaigns often provoke important public issues that result in formation of public opinion.
- Individual orientation or background. A person who, by geographical, professional or social background, is thoroughly exposed to public issues or debates can serve as a useful resource in the formation of public opinion.

3.4 Opinion Functions of Editorials

There is a striking relationship between public opinion and editorial writing. Issues in the mass media, you will agree, may start at the running-fever level (insignificant level) but later explode into public knowledge. It is at this stage that the editorial writer comes in either to support or oppose the vexed issue in the court of public opinion.

Editorials in modern newspapers and magazines, according to Ate (2007:21-28), perform the following functions:

- i. Criticise or attack socio-political, economic and moral dilemmas of the society. An editorialist sometimes performs the job of a human rights activist raising alarm on blatant abuse or annihilation of certain norms and acceptable social order in the society. Exploitative and autocratic government policies can be attacked by editorials. On the side of the governed, when a particular section of the society decides, for instance, to take laws into its hand, editorials are bound to criticize such an anomaly.
- ii. Illuminate the day's intelligence. By throwing more light to complex issues of the day, editorials often try to look at the two sides of an issue. They highlight and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of public issues while proffering solutions to complex issues of public concern.
- iii. Bring to fore debatable issues and provide an intellectual compass for society to discuss and resolve burning issues.

Editorials give direction for discussion and resolution of burning issues in the society. They provoke debate on diverse issues of public concern especially for the elites.

- iv. Defend the underdogs in the society. In every given society, there exist different dimensions of natural and artificial economic gaps between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the educated and the uneducated, etc. When the rich, for instance, tend to unjustifiably exploit and manipulate the poor, editorials rise up in defense of the latter. The relationship among different members of the society is often monitored by the media and an advocacy role played by editorials to defend the course of the wretched of the earth.
- v. Endorse or support an issue of public significance. Editorialists are not a dogmatic set of barking and biting professionals, whose

stock-in-trade is only attacking. Editorials can also support noble causes of public concern. For instance, any time policy formulators and executors are on the right track, some editorials acknowledge their efforts. In supporting or endorsing a policy, there might be some grey areas where the “supportive” editorials may call for fine-tuning. Nigerian government-owned media establishments are fond of supporting the policies of their proprietors through their opinion columns for public acceptability.

- vi. To influence policy formulation or decision making on certain issues. Editorials galvanise policy makers to set proactive agenda for good governance of the society.

Capturing the characteristics of editorials in harmony with the aforementioned functions, Idemili, cited in Uwakwe (2005:107-108), observes:

- a. That the editorial helps the reader to bring order out of chaos of news.
 - b. That on the editorial page, special reporters or columnists have a place, for explaining behind-the-scene events and that freedom of style and deep backgrounding is permitted.
 - c. That the editorial can fight battles for the newspaper reader.
 - d. That the editorial plays agenda-setting functions or role; exposes public debate, the good and bad ideas in circulation.
 - e. That the editorial page should give readers the opportunity to air their views by providing space for letters to the editor.
 - f. That the editorial makes room for the editor to express his views.
 - g. That the editorial serves as a source of personality to the newspaper.
- vii. Appeal or Persuade. Editorials appeal to or persuade the readers to accept the rightness or wrongness of an issue. Some editorials often woo individual members of the society, corporate bodies or government to accept a particular course of action for the interest of the society. Such editorials are sandwiched with concrete facts and spice-up with tantalizing persuasive techniques which create indelible marks on the psyche of readers.

A good and powerful editorial usually has impact. In Nigeria, for instance, good editorials often galvanise policy formulation on the side of government and relevant stakeholders for the betterment of the society. On the side of the governed, editorials mobilize them either to reject or accept a policy or a burning issue of the day.

Editorials can in a detailed manner, indicate, inform and entertain members of the public and divergent issues in the society. Ideas harvested from editorials can also help in preserving the nation's sacred institutions like marriage, religion, etc.

Through broadcast commentaries, members of the community can be mobilized to participate in meaningful developmental projects in the society. Such projects may include head count, election, immunization exercise, to mention only a few.

Editorials can create a pathway for legislators for instance, to initiate bills that would eventually become laws in the nation's statute books. If an editorial is to create impact on its audience, it must reflect the wisdom, integrity and voice of the society.

An impact-creating editorial must represent the hopes and aspirations of the community in which the newspaper is located or published.

Okoro and Agbo (2003:127) did a compendium of an impact-driven editorial. Such an editorial in their view must intend to do the following:

- Create and sustain a high culture for humanity
- Mobilize the populace to support a good cause
- Uncover inefficiency, maladministration and corruption in both public and private sectors of the economy
- Expose brutality by law enforcement agents or in mental institutions or home for juvenile delinquents or fight the evil of child abuse, drugs, destitution, etc.
- Fight intolerance and make the nation a better place to live
- Support civic projects to build up a better citizenry
- Simplify the complexities of modern society
- Help puzzled readers to find their way in the maze of complex economic developments and baffling statistics
- Promote interactional good will, understanding and acceptance
- Instill a sense of patriotism/nationalism for the survival of nationhood
- Become the articulate voice of the populace
- Be the vanguard for the formation and crystallization of public opinion
- Promoting and sustaining good government

It is crucial to stress at this juncture that any editorial or broadcast commentary that is constructed or built in the light of the above guidelines is bound to have an overwhelming impact on readership and viewing.

It is an indisputable fact that the style, tone, language coupled with the substance of an editorial are needed ingredients in packaging effective editorials both for print and broadcast media.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define public opinion.
2. Outline the importance of public opinion.
3. Identify at least six factors that can be used in the formation of public opinion.
4. Discuss the functions of editorials in the mass media.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Editorials have major opinion functions they perform in the mass media. This makes the mass media to be a leading force in public opinion formation. Editorials will, therefore, remain relevant in the mass media due to the important views of society members on issues at all times.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit considered the meaning of public opinion, its importance and factors responsible for its formation. The unit particularly dealt with the opinion functions of editorials in modern society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Editorial piece is the backbone of serious-minded newspapers. Justify this statement with particular emphasis on Nigerian newspapers.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Ate, A.A. (2007). *Editorial Writing: An Academic and Professional Approach*. Akure: Pamma Press. P21-28.
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**UNIT 4 EDITORIALS AND OTHER FORMS OF
WRITING**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials and other forms of newspaper write-ups are based on subjective opinion about issues. This is unlike straight forward news reporting which is mostly objective and based on facts.

This unit examines the relationship between editorials and other forms of writing, such as features, columns and news.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the relationship between editorials and factual news reporting
- appreciate the relationship between editorials and features
- state the relationship between editorials and columns.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Editorial and News

For a rewind, the editorial is the corporate expression of media organisation on given issues of public interest, while news is the recounting of factual and timely events in the society.

It is instructive to know that editorials are “opinionated” or subjective, while news is objective in nature. Editorials are written out of news stories, while news is influenced by events, reports and the audience. The major elements of news are:

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Oddities
- Prominence
- Consequences

- Human interest

Straightforward news reporting or factual news is a kind of report that says it as it is. Factual news serves as sources for editorials and features, as most issues addressed in editorials do emanate from news reports.

Editorials also stimulate news. This is clearly shown when the public reacts to editorial contents either in support or objection of an issue. It is, therefore, clear that both concepts complement each other.

3.2 Editorial and Features

Editorial writing is research oriented. The same thing is applicable to features writing.

A feature is a creative journalistic article which informs, explains, analyses, interprets, and exposes issues for the sake of readers.

Awoyinfa and Igwe (1991:5) describe a feature as a “colourful story about people, events, places, life... It is written in an interesting and creative manner with information drawn from people involved, eye-witnesses, experts on the subjects and those affected by the subjects”.

Both features and editorials give room for deeper and logical analysis of issues. However, Okoro and Agbo (2003:96) provide the parting point between features and editorials as follows:

- (a) Most features carry bylines, i.e they are signed by their writers. Usually, editorials do not carry bylines.
- (b) Features can be accompanied by illustrations. In most cases, editorials are not illustrated (photographic illustrations).
- (c) Features are usually the result of individual effort, while editorials are the result of group effort, that is, the editorial board.

3.3 Editorials and Columns

An editorial is a journalistic article or essay which critically and rationally informs, educates and entertains its target audience on socio-political and economic issues of the day.

A column on the other hand is an article which carries the personality, style, and individual identity of the writer. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines a column as an article on a particular subject or by a particular writer that appears regularly in a newspaper or a magazine.

Editorials and columns have striking resemblance in tone and substance, especially public affairs columns. That notwithstanding, columns and editorials have some demarcation lines.

According to Onabajo (2000), most editorials have institutional flavours while columns have personal flavours, a distinction that goes beyond the use of “we” and “I”.

In writing an editorial, the word “we” or the name of the newspaper or magazine is often used as an attestation of the corporate concern while “I” is used in columns to showcase personal appeal.

In columns, the author’s byline and style are made manifest in the write-up. This is opposed to editorial writing where all credits, glories and blames, as the case may be, go to the media establishment and not to an individual.

Duyile (2005:69) gives the demarcation line between columns and editorials. According to him, “writing a column is not writing an editorial. It is a kind of feature which expresses your personality to readers. The readers will always remember you for your expressions, your style, and your treatment of issues from your own personal ways.”

Under columns, the writer’s names or pseudonym can be used but this is not applicable to editorial writing.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Explain the relationship between editorial and factual news reporting.
2. Describe the meeting and parting points of features and editorials.
3. Explain the differences between editorials and columns.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we looked at editorials and news, editorials and features as well as editorials and columns. Specifically, we x-rayed the relationship between editorials and the afore-mentioned forms of writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit focused on editorials and other forms of writing. The unit examined the relationship between editorials and news, editorials and features as well as editorials and columns.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the parting points of columns and editorials.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 TYPES OF EDITORIALS

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials do address issues from different angles. They therefore, have different approaches and types for achieving their aims and objectives. This unit looks at the various types of editorials.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Categorise editorials

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Types of Editorials

There are three basic types of editorials. These are:

- i. Interpretative Editorials
- ii. Controversial Editorials
- iii. Explanatory Editorials

Interpretative Editorial: These are written to explain issues at stake. They, therefore, place factual points for readers to assess and decide a right action to take. They could be positive, negative or even neutral to issues, depending on the views of the media organisation. Let's take a look at a sample of this kind of editorial.

Nigeria's Future

- A report by a US intelligence agency on the future of Nigeria by 2020 has generated concerns. The global report of the US National Intelligence Council examined the social, political and economic future of countries and continents, identified areas of strengths and weaknesses worth consolidating or redressing, and made some projections.
- Specifically, the report predicted that Nigeria might break up within 15 years if the leaders disregard people's wish and insist on an unworkable union. According to the report, the country's "leaders are

locked up in a bad marriage that all dislike but dare not leave.” The document expresses the possibility of “a junior officer coup that could destabilize the country to the extent that open warfare breaks out in many parts in a sustained manner;” adding rightly that a failed Nigeria will be difficult to reconstitute.

- The report also notes that Africa's hope of benefitting from globalization will depend on the extent to which each country improves governance, reins in corruption, resolves conflicts, and firms up the rule of law. Leadership, the report says, will be the key to progress for sub-Saharan countries that are lucky to evolve it. The report does not spare the US, which it says might lose its global economic dominance to upcoming China and India.
- While dismissing the report as “glib talk” by detractors, President Olusegun Obasanjo has confessed that the gloomy forecast poses a serious challenge to him and all Nigerians. He has, therefore, passed the report to the National Assembly for action.
- There is no doubt that almost everyone wants a united Nigeria. But the injustices that precipitated the 30-month civil war in 1967 appear to have grown deeper and more widespread. Over the years, successive governments have failed to forge a national identity. So, the citizens still feel more comfortable sticking to their ethnic identities. Since democracy reemerged in 1999, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in ethno-religious crises that sprouted from the unsettled national question over indigene/settler dichotomy. There are standing ethnic militias in the north, south, east and west. Just recently, President Obasanjo reportedly gave out several millions of naira as ransom to stave off the threat to blow up oil installations by a Niger Delta militia group.
- Except the deceitful ones, therefore, only a few would require a US intelligence to predict that Nigeria's fragile unity may snap if urgent steps are not taken to redress a flawed and unjust structure that has only fueled mass poverty and frustration. For now, the ruling class may continue to delude itself that there are no dangers ahead. Blinded by the filthy reward they get from a corrupt and dysfunctional system, the nation's unruly politicians often wrongly assume that citizens will forever tolerate injustice via rigged elections; executive rascality in flagrantly disobeying Supreme Court verdicts; and abuse of incumbency powers to brutalize or kill political opponents.
- Obasanjo's anger that government's ongoing promising reforms were not reckoned with in foreseeing a brighter future for Nigeria is

instructive. But the truth is that the reforms are half-hearted and so yield slow, insignificant and unnoticeable returns. Six years of reforms, for instance, has produced a more epileptic regime of power supply, posing a serious threat to industrialization and job creation. That is just one indication that the nation's economy is far from being export-oriented and, therefore, vulnerable to the adverse impacts of globalization.

- To prevent the doomsday forecast from being fulfilled, the nation's leaders must be bold enough to dismantle an unjust fiscal structure that has alienated the constituent parts. The nation's unity depends on how quickly the centre is whittled down for a truly federal Nigerian state to emerge.

Source: *The Punch*, June 2, 2005.

Controversial Editorials: Controversial editorials are written with the particular mission or mandate to propagate a particular or specific point of view. Such editorials often attempt to convince the reader on the desirability or inevitability of a particular issue while painting the opposing side in bad light. These kinds of editorials are either positive or negative. There is no room for neutrality in such editorials because they can out rightly support or oppose an issue with all vehemence (Ate 2007:16). Below is a specimen of a controversial editorial.

Kalu's Comedy of Errors

- The People's Democratic Party (PDP) is undoubtedly a big party. Its bigness derives from a lot of variables. These variables include size, geographical spread, religious spread, membership and even quality of individual members. For a country whose previous democratic collapse could be partly traced to the failure of electoral politics, the PDP held hope for the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.
- Yet, its strength contains the ingredients of its weakness. As a rainbow coalition, it was an amalgam of all-comers. There was no attempt to use the factor of antecedents to sift membership. The resultant effect is the emergence of some leaders who ordinarily should not be admitted into a serious party. More embarrassing and depressing is the fact that some of them hold offices that can make one equate them with the party.
- Such a person is Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State. Right from the beginning, he comes across as an undisciplined party-man. He seems to have an inflated opinion, not only of his popularity in his state of Abia, but of an erroneous position in Nigerian history. He

plays all forms of pranks to reconfirm his fable of historical expectation. He situates his ambition on very faulty premises and dishes out to himself over-seasoned salad of political relevance. Ordinarily, one should not be bothered about such illusion except for the Yoruba adage which counsels that if your neighbour chooses to eat dangerous insects and you refuse to caution him, his restlessness at the dead of the night would disturb your own sleep.

- Governor Kalu's latest antics relate to an alleged assassination threat on his life by Chief Tony Anenih, the Chairman Board of Trustees of the ruling PDP. An accusation of murder or threat of it is so grievous that the ingredients of such accusation must be unassailable. In Kalu's case, he said his Deputy Governor, relayed to him the threat of assassination after meeting casually with Chief Anenih. The Deputy Governor has since denied that he relayed such a message. In fact, his memo to Governor Kalu on the chance meeting with Anenih does not contain such an accusation.
- But Kalu's bag of mischief and character assassination seems inexhaustible. He had earlier accused the same Anenih of collecting over N300 billion Naira as minister without anything to show for it. Official figures revealed that within the period of his ministerial responsibility, Anenih collected a little over N200 billion. One would ordinarily expect a state governor to speak with reliable facts and figures in honour of the respect of the office he holds.

Even on the assassination threat, Kalu added a cheap shot to seek the support of the Yoruba people by alleging that Anenih said he would deal with him, the way he dealt with the late Chief Bola Ige. It does not stand to sense within a short chance meeting to be so frivolous and flippant like a chatter-box to let so loose. More so, when the meeting was in the presence of other people.

- A simple dictum in law is that, he who asserts must prove. The onus of proof lies on Kalu. But it seems to us that he has not, and cannot, discharge such a burden of proof. The problem is compounded by the juvenile reliance on his mother anytime he chooses to run into problems. When he engaged in an undue adversary relationship with President Obasanjo sometime ago, it was his mother who was raising the olive branch for peace. In the current one, the flag of surrender is being raised by his mother. Governor Kalu, as a public office holder, must be told to grow or at worst, be made to grow. The image of a baby who causes problems outside and runs to mama at home is repulsive at this stage of our political development.

- The Hope believes that Governor Kalu's dangerous drama can heat up the polity and even perhaps, dislocate it. The PDP as a political party should by now have an effective machinery of disciplining its members irrespective of how highly placed. The PDP for now holds in its hands the destiny of this country and the action or inaction of any of its members can truncate the democratic experiment. This is why it must urgently cage Kalu and polish him to measure up to the image of a matured state governor.

Source: *The Hope*, March, 23-31, 2004.

Explanatory Editorials: These usually present a catalogue of issues at the doorstep of readers for their judgement or appraisal. Here, a writer only opens-up thought-provoking issues for readers' attention, by identifying and explaining it and allowing the reader to proffer solutions. Here is a sample of an explanatory editorial.

Taylor and the Interpol

- Since the United Nations-backed Special Court for the trial of those who bear the greatest responsibility for the war crimes in Sierra Leone indicted and issued a warrant of arrest on Charles Taylor of Liberia, several curious twists have dogged the development. The indictment and the warrant of arrest were made on Taylor in June, last year, while he was still a sitting Liberian president attending peace talks in Ghana on his country's civil war. His status as a sitting president presented a dilemma for his arrest, for it would contradict the law of nations to arrest an incumbent president. Of course, Nigeria, Ghana and other African leaders in attendance at that meeting rightfully ignored the order and never arrested Taylor.
- Subsequently, owing to the pressure for peace in Liberia, Nigeria, reportedly backed by the United States' government, offered asylum to Taylor in order to remove him from the Liberian political scene and create some prospects for peace. During his tour of four African countries in July, last year, President George W. Bush was reported to have said that Nigeria's offer of asylum to Taylor was timely and the best solution to the Liberian conflict.
- In fact, the peace that is gradually returning to that country today is partly a function of the removal of Taylor from Liberia via his asylum in Nigeria. But the curious twist and irony to it all is that the same United States government implicitly flawed the asylum by offering a \$2 million ransom on Taylor. Although the ransom on Taylor has been fruitlessly denied by the US government, the International Police, Interpol, has followed the US' footsteps to issue

a warrant of arrest on Taylor. And since Interpol's own warrant of arrest, a British firm has offered to kidnap Taylor in Nigeria.

- Without prejudice to the merit of the Special Court's case against Taylor, what we caution here is against using it to trample on Nigeria's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. By putting a ransom on Taylor, and by subsequent warrant of arrest by the Interpol, an encouragement is being given to international brigands to violate Nigeria's sovereignty by illegally abducting Taylor against the will of the Nigerian government. Although Taylor has become a sufficient albatross to the Nigerian government, great care should be taken to ensure that he is not forcibly removed or abducted from Nigeria by any gang, whether sponsored by a foreign government, organization or not. Meanwhile, the Nigerian government should seriously spare a thought on how to dispose off the Taylor matter in order to bring these undue wrangling and harassment of Nigeria to an end.

Source: *Daily Sun*, Friday, December 19, 2003.

It is instructive to state that some communication experts consider types of editorials from the perspective of the functions they perform. Uwakwe (2005: 111-112) captures the following types of editorial:

1. **Persuasive Editorial:** This type attempts to influence the reader to a cause. It tries to convince. It is frequently found in the dailies. To be able to present a good persuasive editorial, the writer has to “play up” the two sides to the coin. This will show that even though the writer has taken side, he is not out of prejudice because he has been deemed to have carefully weighted all the issues before taking a stand.
2. **Praise Editorial:** Editors cannot sometimes help but pay compliments for achievements. Such achievements could be individual or corporate.
3. **Explanatory Editorial:** This is also called the Expository Editorial. The purpose is to provide answers to questions lurking in the minds of readers. This, the editor can achieve through furnishing the reader with adequate information. This kind of editorial thrives on some sorts of interpretation.
4. **Attack Editorial:** This type of editorial berates an individual, public figure or corporate organisation for irresponsible behaviour. This kind of editorial protects the “watchdog” role of the press.

- 5. Crusading Editorial:** Some events demand that a news organ fight for a particular cause. This is especially if the issue in question has generated some controversies and divided opinions. Editorials in support of such issues are known to be crusading in nature.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the major types of editorials you know.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have explained three basic types of editorials. We also considered other types of editorial based on the function they perform.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit featured types of editorial – interpretative, controversial, explanatory and other forms of editorials.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List and explain the different types of editorial you know.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

| | |
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| Unit 1 | Sourcing the Editorial Materials |
| Unit 2 | Editorial Audience |
| Unit 3 | Qualities of Good Editorial Writers |
| Unit 4 | Editorials Board |
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UNIT 1 SOURCING THE EDITORIAL MATERIALS

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| 1.0 | INTRODUCTION |

Editorial writing usually combines news and features elements. Its sources must be in accordance with such elements.

Editorial writing involves thorough research making. Efforts must, therefore, be made by a writer to gather information in order to accomplish such a meaningful task. An editorial writer must be social and highly literate in order to establish meaningful sources for achieving this task.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the importance of research in editorial writing
- discuss the sources of editorial materials
- highlight the procedures for testing the materials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Importance of Research in Editorial Writing

- Research helps an editorial writer to gather true information on issues, before it can be written meaningfully and truthfully. This is important because no journalist can succeed without research. Mass communication as a discipline is research based and oriented.
- Research is also important because it helps in giving enough background information on topical issues in an editorial. Editorial writers must have a deeper understanding of issues before writing an opinion piece. This is usually achieved by digging into the background of an issue, through sound research.
- Through the use of survey research, an editorial writer can gather information on the target population, using questionnaires, face-to-

face interviews, historical methods and other research techniques. Such data could be used to proffer solutions to identified problems on a phenomenon.

- Again, field research, used in direct observation of social phenomena could be of assistance to the editorial writer in the course of gathering materials.
- The descriptive research is also important in editorial writing. It helps in describing a given phenomenon, which assist an editorial writer by understanding the present happenings, thus giving him an idea about possible causes and effects of issues.

Historically, research also offers editorial writers the opportunity of researching into the past, with a view to explaining the present, and predicting the future of an issue. It is clear to note from the foregoing that editorial writing is research-oriented and, without research, no meaningful impact could be made in the task of crafting an editorial piece.

3.2 Sourcing the Editorial Materials

Editorial materials can be sourced primarily from topical events that are reported from the mass media. The reported events must be captivating and of public interest (Ate, 2006). Other sources are as follows:

- **Internet:** Editorial writers in a computer-minded society can browse through the net and download relevant materials to write or enrich an editorial.
- **Public and Printed Records:** It is important to note that catalogues of records exist, documenting society's doings and misdoings. The editorial or leader writer can reach out to such records, e.g taxes, marriages, books, journals, government gazettes, biographies, Assembly proceedings Constitutions, etc. Little wonder, an anonymous reporter in Botch and Muller (1978:78) justified the importance of printed records thus: "*Do anything from records that you can, because the records will stand and they will be there when people run out on you*".
- **Social Functions:** A good editorial writer is not supposed to be a social illiterate. He/she must be rich in human relations and mix freely with people of different classes in order to get insight into the goings in the society. Attending parties, conferences, seminars, etc with the top shots in the society would help the editorial writer to understand their likes and dislikes and that would assist the

editorialist in making profound analysis concerning the people in question.

- **Law Enforcement Officers:** An editorial writer can get additional information on his subject matter from the law enforcement officers like policemen, state security service men, etc if the issue under probe demands their attention.
- **Experts:** Professional and highly technical issues would compel the editorial writer to contact the appropriate experts. For instance, it will be necessary for an editorial writer to clear a controversial legal issue from a lawyer before writing. That would prevent the editorial writer from committing a costly mistake. Medical doctors, engineers, educationalists, etc can also be contacted for scoops in their own disciplines by the editorial writer.
- **Files:** Here, you have things like press clips which are usually classified according to subject matter for bibliographical exactitude. The editorial writer can also keep files of important events and related materials carefully dated and arranged for easy referencing.
- **Libraries:** Books of all kind, thesauruses, dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, maps and charts etc can be obtained from the library for use in the course of writing an editorial.
- **Specialized Sources:** E.g Embassies, Nigerian Office of Statistics, INEC, Population Bureau, etc.

3.3 Testing the Materials

A good editorial writer usually examines the materials obtained for writing an editorial piece. According to Duyile, (2005:66), the procedures for testing good quality materials for editorial purpose are as follows:

- Give your materials a stiff test by reading them thoroughly again and slowly and comprehend the aspect to be used.
- Write down, first, your main points, the facts of the topic, before considering what comment to add.
- Now, begin to form an opinion using the contributions of your colleagues who have either participated in a group editorial discussion of the topic, or who share another view on the matter. You have to rely on your paper's editorial policy for proper guidance.

- Check your points, facts and opinions again for slips in logic. Now write the editorial.
- Always be on the side of professional ethics and submit yourself to ethical consideration in your editorial judgments, prescriptions, suggestions and remedies.
- While writing your comment, be brief in your background information which must precede the body of the editorial. Treat all references in brief. Avoid repeating yourself. Go straight to the issue at hand. Do not be too verbose. Say what you want to say intelligently and withdraw. Be polite in your choice of words: be positive in your application of words; be forceful and make valid statements. Do not leave your readers in doubt where your newspaper stands on the issue. Be categorical.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Discuss the importance of research in editorial writing.
2. As an editorial writer, list the sources you can use in obtaining your data.
3. Outline the stages or procedures in testing the editorial materials.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit discussed sources of editorials that can be explored by writers through research. It also examined the procedures or stages in testing the editorial materials.

5.0 SUMMARY

The importance of research in editorial writing, sources of editorials and procedures for testing the editorial materials have been extensively treated in this unit.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Research is important in editorial writing. Justify this assertion taking into cognizance some research problems in mass communication in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ate, A.A (2006).“*Editorial Writing*.” Unpublished Material.

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UNIT 2 EDITORIAL AUDIENCE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 How to Write an Editorial
 - 3.2 Editorial Audience
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials are usually written out of probing issues of public interest. They are also targeted at an audience. In this unit, focus shall be on how to write a sound and audience-focused editorials. We shall discuss in a special way, the editorial audience, and the main feature in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- learn how to write editorials
- determine editorial audience.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 How to Write Editorials

Editorial writing is a task that requires diligence and creativity by a writer. It is not enough for one to source for materials and arrive at a good editorial. A writer must be sound and logical in presenting the data. The editorial topic should be current, meaningful and in-depth in all ramifications. The editorial should reflect the socio-political and economic values of the society. There is a great need for the writer to be disciplined in selection of words. Such a writer should never lose focus of the ideas he/she is putting across in an editorial. The language of the editorial should be simple but mature in style in order to show seriousness.

Every writer of editorial must/should endeavour to recognize the philosophy and editorial policy of his newspaper house, while taking a position on an issue of public interest.

Ossai (2002) cited by Aneato and Onabajo (2007:64-65) identifies six stages in writing an editorial.

- The first stage is conducting research or the fact-finding stage. An editorial written in a hurry without proper research could be shallow and woolly.
- The brainstorming exercise of an editorial conference is another stage.
- This is followed by outlining of points to be used in the writing.
- The next stage is forming opinion on the issue.
- Give another check on your materials to ensure accuracy.
- Finally, give a brief background, which should be concise and then say what you want to accomplish intelligently and withdraw.

3.2 Editorial Audience

All forms of writing generally have audiences. So, it is with editorials. There are three categories of editorial audience. These are, the very skeptical audience, the very selective audience, and the obscure or

obstinate audience. A good knowledge of editorial audience is important because it enables a writer to package his message to the right readers with excellent impact.

Ate (2007:41-42) examined these audiences in details.

- **The Very Skeptical Audience:** These are sophisticated audiences with high aura of excellence. They question facts, figures, grammar, tone, style and content of every editorial until they are satisfied. They are the learned and curious beings who are conscious of their fundamental human rights. They believe in the power of public opinion.

The editorial writer should therefore recognize this group of audiences and tailor his/her message to meet their standard and idiosyncrasies.

- **The Very Selective Audience:** These are specialized audiences who care only about what goes on in their chosen fields. They are addicted to the knowledge in their fields or disciplines and are glued to same without bothering about things outside their areas of interest or professional attachment.

For an editorial writer to meet the yearnings and aspirations of this group of people, he/she has to segment his market (editorial) in tandem with the selectivity of this audience.

Experts argue that an editorial can hardly be for everybody at the same time. The editorial writer must mentally define his audience before writing his piece.

- **The Obscure or Obstinate Audience:** These groups of people are blind critics. Anything that is said outside their frame of reference by someone else is wrong. Their worldview is very limited and does not go beyond their local assemblies where they often feed on rumour mongering and worthless *abracadabras* of the day. These groups of people are more of intellectual lumpen and they believe that holding an opinion is a transgression against public order. They are mere chatter-boxes who read editorials not to learn anything but to attack the writers with blind and worthless criticisms.

According to Iyorkyaa (1996:15), this group “does not belong to power. It does belong to the group shaping Beer Parlour Policy (BPP).”

That means that this group of people is irresponsible and uncoordinated members of Homo sapiens who are fond of analyzing public policies from the shallow and at time tipsy.

In writing an editorial, the writer should out rightly jettison this group of people. This is because, obstinate audience are no audience and cannot appreciate the robust illumination of public policies and case making stuff which editorials often deal with.

Having a mental picture of your audience as an editorial writer is a right step in a right direction. Any editorialist who writes for “no audience” may end up embarking on a wasted journalistic exercise.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Outline the stages in writing a good editorial?
2. Discuss all you know about editorial audience.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed how editorials can be written in order to have an impact on readership. A high premium was placed on editorial audience, consumers of editorial diet.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit captured the guidelines on effective editorial writing. It also examined the concept of editorial audience.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss major audience of editorials.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ate, A.A. (2007). *Editorial Writing: An Academic and Professional Approach*. Akure: Pamma Press.

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UNIT 3 QUALITIES OF GOOD EDITORIAL WRITERS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Editorial Writers
 - 3.2 Qualities of Good Editorial Writers
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing an editorial is usually a challenging task which involves team work. It is a collective efforts made by editorial board members. Editorials are assumed to be the back-bone of serious minded newspaper houses. Editorial writers are expected to acquire certain skills and qualities for effective discharge of their responsibilities. Being a corporate voice of newspapers, an editorial should be written by experienced and tested professionals and not just any body. This unit examines the ingredients of a good editorial writer.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge about editorial writers
- appreciate the qualities of a good editorial writer.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Editorial Writers

An editorial writer is a professional journalist who writes a journalistic essay or opinion, expressing the corporate position of a newspaper or media establishment on a topical issue in the society.

Editorial writers are usually brought together in a common forum of editorial board members. These people are usually intellectual giants who are brought from different professional fields and are appointed to the board by media organisations due to their powers of analysis on complex and topical issues.

The editorial board is usually headed by a chairman who presides over meetings. He is also responsible for assigning topics to other editorialists. The chairman also edits write-ups submitted to him by other editorial writers, and as well guides the house, using his wealth of experience in choosing topics that would not betray the philosophy and policy of the newspapers involved.

Editorial board members could be made up of internal or external ones, depending on the financial strength of the newspaper house. Capturing the concept of the editorial board, Folarin (1998:35) amplifies the above position:

- These days, most Nigerian publications have editorial boards, so that the writing of the editorial as well as the choice of topic is not the work of a single person. In most cases, too, the editorial board contains not only top staff of the media house but also external people who are usually chosen for their known expertise, experience and/or facility with the language of publication. However, the Editor-in-Chief or Managing Editor still has substantial control over what gets written upon, and the angle from which it is written, even though he may not be the Chairman of the board. This is understandable, since the editorial (that appears on the editorial page) represents the policy stand of the paper on the pertinent issue.

3.2 Qualities of Good Editorial Writer

Never, can editorial writing be looked upon as a simple form of journalistic writing, that can be carried out by anybody. Professionally, it is tasking and demands good skills and qualities by whosoever aspires to be a writer. In order to live above water level, Ate (2007:8-10) identifies certain qualities that a good editorial writer should possess. These are:

- a) Intellectual curiosity: This refers to ability to probe issues from academic and critical point of view.
- b) Analytical mind: The editorial writer must be able to look deep at the props and cons of an issue and harmonize both the opposing and supportive variables in an editorial superstructure.
- c) Mastery of language: An editorialist must have a good command of the language in which the editorial is to be written. For an English-speaking audience, for instance, a good command of English language is a non-negotiating factor. It is, indeed, a child of necessity.
- d) Care for details: In editorial writing, issues are supposed to be logically and meticulously thrashed. It is only people who care for details that can unveil tiny but significant molecules underlying any conceptual phenomenon under probe.
- e) Good knowledge and professional skills of writing for the mass media: The fact that somebody is a professor or doctorate degree holder in an area does not automatically make him/her a good editorial writer.

In fact, there are some academics that can make a monumental mockery of editorial writing if they are not drilled in the art of writing for the mass media. An editorial writer needs to understand the workings of mass media outfits including the house style of the establishment he/she is writing for. The knowledge of writing for the mass media is very crucial for any editorial writer.

- f) Rational Reasoning: Editorial Writing is a serious-minded business for serious-minded people. It is a house that cannot be built on bricks of emotionalism which cannot stand erect in the sea of reasoning. Strong and profound editorials can only be built on rational and logical raw materials mixed with concrete facts.

- g) Knack for research: Editorial writing is research-oriented and therefore an editorial writer must love the art and science of research. He/she must be a curious and searching being with good leg work.
- h) Nose for news: Since most editorials emerged from the controversies surrounding some news stories, it is expedient for an editorial writer to have nose for news. The understanding of what constitute “good” news by an editorial writer would in no small measure add a cubit in the analysis and interpretation of news in form of an editorial.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Discuss the basic functions of editorial board members.
2. John Kuhe is an aspiring editorial writer. Educate him on the qualities of a good editorial writer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit established the fact that, editorial writing is a challenging task. It demands certain qualities from a writer for him to perform effectively.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit comprehensively tackles the meaning of editorial writing and highlights the qualities of good editorial writers.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the term Editorial and discuss the functions of good editorial writers.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Ate, A.A (2007). *Editorial Writing: An Academic and Professional Approach*. Akure: Pamma Press Ltd.
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UNIT 4 EDITORIALS BOARD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Key Concepts in Editorial Writing
 - 3.2 Editorials Board
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorial writing is a complex and cumbersome job. It is a task that is carried out by a team and not a single individual. The team (editorial board members) must understand some concepts guiding the general operations of editorial writing for them to communicate effectively. This unit takes a look at some key concepts in editorial writing. The unit prominently features the editorial board, the think-tank behind editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- outline editorial concepts
- discuss editorial board.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Key Concepts in Editorial Writing

There are some many things that are usually taken into account while writing an editorial. In this unit, we shall take a look at some of the concepts that directly or remotely influence or define the posture of an editorial. These include:

1. Editorial Policies & Orientations
2. Editorial Credibility
3. Editorial Appeal
4. News Peg
5. Editorial Contact
6. Editorial Integrity
7. Editorial Calendar

1. Editorial Policies and Orientations: An editorial policy can be referred to the beliefs of a media organization which it would like to manifest in its news coverage (Ate 2006). A policy is a definite course of action selected from among alternatives to guide and shape present and future actions. Okoro and Agbo (2003) define editorial policy as “the overall attitude, position or outlook, which governs a publication. It is a path a newspaper elects to follow as it answers two basic questions:

- (1) What shall we publish?
- (2) How shall we publish it?”

Orientation concerns itself with the aims, objectives or interests of a particular activity or organization or establishment.

Newspaper policies and orientations in the views of Ate (2006) can be influenced by the following factors:

- Readers’ interest
- Personal interest and preference of the publisher or owner of the newspaper
- The socio-political and economic environment in which the media establishment is operating
- The degree and dimension of competition in the industry.

How can an editorial policy be determined? Okoro and Agbo (2003) provide the answer. Determinants of editorial policy, according to them, include the followings:

- News stories the paper carries
- The paper's slogan (motto) which is often carried in the name plate or below the masthead.
- Explanatory editorials usually written as occasion demands to restate its editorial policy.
- Platform code in which the paper enumerates the number of projects or principles for which it stands.

Editorial policies can be expressed through diverse ways. Some of the ways are:

- First editorial or leading article, news story published by a newspaper.
- Editorial cartoon. These are caricatures that reveal the editorial dimension or direction of a newspaper. According to Ukonu (2005), cartoons may argue, criticize or explain an issue or a phenomenon. Cartoons are important for entertainment, they extend readership to illiterates and can appeal to both the sophisticated and mundane audience.
- Platforms. Platforms are usually published at the beginning of the editorial page often under the "flag" or "mast head." They usually enumerate a number of projects or principles for which the newspaper stands. Okoro and Agbo (2003).
- Slogan. A slogan is a profound and remarkable statement of policy with public significance which usually appears on editorial pages expressing the newspaper motto.

2. **Editorial Credibility:** Editorial credibility refers to the newspaper's ability to truthfully disseminate information to its readers. Editorial credibility has to do with how believable the readers, viewers or listeners are to the content of editorial message exposed to them.

A trust-worthy reporter and editor would enhance the editorial credibility of their newspapers. Editorial credibility guarantees a continued trust and patronage of a particular medium (Ate 2007:55).

3. **Editorial Appeal:** This has to do with how catchy and arresting an editorial piece is to the readers. The degree under which an editorial wins the affection of its audience

According to Ate (2007:55), editorial appeal is “a situation whereby the newspaper message elegantly penetrates the emotions and feelings of the reader thus having a place in his/her heart.” He argues that editorial appeal is possible where the reporter employs persuasive techniques in putting across his message.

4. **News Peg:** This is part of the story that contains the main ingredients or major gist of the news which justifies the editorial.
5. **Editorial Contact:** This has to do with discussing with an editor or writer for the story initiatives or editorial direction.
6. **Editorial Integrity:** Editorial integrity is the desire of the editor to maintain honesty and impartiality in the course of news gathering, processing and dissemination. This can be achieved in a publication if the editor has freedom to discharge his fundamental responsibility to his audience.
7. **Editorial Calendar:** The listing of specific times a publication will focus on special sections or special news reporting (Hoffman, 2007).

3.2 Editorial Board

In every serious-minded newspaper, a group of knowledgeable writers known as editorial board members are saddled with the responsibility of writing editorials.

Editorial board members usually meet, select and discuss some topical editorial issues. After a thorough and rigorous analysis and criticisms of the issues, a member of the board is assigned to write the editorial. If, for instance, one of the editorial board members is a lawyer and the issue to be discussed has legal implications, he may be assigned by the board to write the editorial. Depending on the circumstances, whoever can authoritatively handle the topic would be assigned by the board to do justice to it.

Ideal editorial board members are great thinkers. They are people who are intellectually driven and professionally sound. They must have a deeper understanding of the media environment and the general network

of social interaction in their society. Editorial board members must be versatile, proactive and rational in thoughts.

Capturing the characteristics of editorial board members, Duyile, (2005:63) observes:

- “...the editorial board of any newspaper must comprise men and women of intelligence, of sound educational background, of rich interactional ability who possess, in addition, rare conversational ability, and who possess quizzical and logical minds, and above all who are ready to use research methods to verify current issues and who are prepared to write simply and concisely their thoughts... to suit the newspaper’s editorial policy.”

The editorial board is usually presided over by a chairman who assigns topics to other members to write. The board jointly selects the most topical issue(s) of the day and assigns them the specific members to write on. Members then meet to appraise what has been written, and approve or reject for publication. The responsibility for checking factual and language errors is that of the Editor-in-Chief or Managing Editor (Folarin, 1998:35).

All the editorials written must be vetted by the editorial board chairman who is usually an experienced and hardworking fellow. Topics are chosen and written within the context of the philosophy and policy of the newspaper. The paper’s house style and corporate identity are also taken into cognizance by editorial writers in the course of writing.

Most editorial board members, especially external ones, are paid honoraria by the newspapers they serve. Such allowances are usually sitting allowances. A sound editorial team could guarantee the editorial integrity of a newspaper establishment.

In Nigeria, most especially in government newspapers, some editorial members are appointed not based on merit but on political considerations. This abysmal trend is having some negative effects on the editorial contents of their publications.

On a general note, editorial board members in Nigerian private newspapers like *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *THIS Day*, etc are doing a good job.

Taking a look at the functions of editorial board of a campus publication, Aneato and Onabajo (2007:18-19) identify the following:

1. Screening all news assignments and deciding which ones are to be covered. The board helps to provide background information on assignments to be covered and areas they should concentrate on. This is done through exhaustive deliberations by its members.
2. The board meets every day to assess performance of the editorial and reportorial staff on assignments and agreed targets. It praises performance and sanctions non-performance.
3. It helps suggest topics for discussion and discussants for such topics in current affairs programming.
4. Also, it suggests names of personalities that should be interviewed and helps draw questions or areas of focus for such interviews.
5. It has substantial inputs into news magazines and documentary productions.
6. It is solely in charge of news analyses and assigns one of its members to anchor any analysis after input from members. Sometimes, experts are contracted to anchor specialized areas that are outside the competence of the board. Such analyses must be approved by the board before they are transmitted.
7. It identifies commercial news and fixes appropriate coverage charges for such news items.
8. It helps in deploying staff from one news unit to another.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. List and briefly explain some key concepts in editorial writing.
2. Highlight the major features of editorial board members.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained some key concepts that guide editorial writing. We also discussed the editorial board and established the fact that every editorial board member must understand the key concepts that are crucial in the art and science of editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have outlined some key concepts in editorial writing in this unit. The unit specifically beamed a major searchlight on the editorial board from a holistic perspective.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the features and functions of editorial board members.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Aneato, S.G. and Onabajo, O.S. (2007). *Essentials of Campus Journalism*. Lagos: Jamiro Press Link.
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UNIT 5 TECHNIQUES IN EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Persuasion
 - 3.2 Laws of Persuasion
 - 3.3 Persuasive Techniques in Editorial Writing
 - 3.4 Relevance of propaganda to Editorial Writing
 - 3.5 Propaganda Techniques in Editorial Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings
- 1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Most editorials are aimed at winning the affection of the readers. For an editorial writer to convince his readers to accept his point of view, the editorial piece must contain reasonable molecules of persuasion. This unit is tailored towards appraising the concept of persuasion in respect

to editorial writing. We shall also examine propaganda techniques in editorial writing in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define persuasion
- identify some laws of persuasion
- discuss some persuasive techniques in editorial writing
- propaganda techniques in editorial writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion according to Weaver and Hybels (2001) is a process that occurs when the communicator (sender) influences the values, beliefs and attitudes or behaviours of another person (receiver).

Persuasion is a planned and deliberate effort by the communicator to get his point of view patronised or accepted by his target audience. It is a soul-searching exercise that tends to get other people to accept one's position on an issue or subject matter.

For an editorial to convert or convince the reader, Okoro and Agbo (2003:139) argued that such an editorial “must put across a well-reasoned argument and/or provide incontrovertible data.”

3.2 Laws of Persuasion

Persuasion rules the world. Because of this reason, every good editorial writer must understand the psychology of persuasion. He must understand the laws governing the concept of persuasion. Kelvin Hogan, an expert in psychology of persuasion at the University of St. Thomas Management Center in Minneapolis (1996:62), identifies nine laws of persuasion which can be useful to anybody involved in the persuasive enterprise. The mastery of these laws will sharpen the skills of editorial writer. These laws are:

1. **Law of Reciprocity** – When someone gives you something of perceived value, you immediately respond with the desire to give something back.

2. **Law of Contrast** – When two items are relatively different from each other, we will see them as more different if placed close together in time or space.
3. **Law of Friends** – When someone asks you to do something and you perceive that person to have your best interests in mind, and/or you would like him to have your best interests in mind, you are strongly motivated to fulfill the request.
4. **Law of Expectancy** – When someone whom you believe in or respect expects you to perform a task or produce a certain result, you will tend to fulfill his expectation whether positive or negative.
5. **Law of Association** – We tend to like products, services, or ideas that are endorsed by other people we like or respect.
6. **Law of Consistency** – When an individual announces in writing or verbally that he is taking a position on any issue or point of view, he will strongly tend to defend that belief regardless of its accuracy even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.
7. **Law of Scarcity** – When a person perceives that something he might want is limited in quantity, he believes that the value of what he might want is greater than if it were available in abundance.
8. **Law of Conformity** – Most people tend to agree to proposals, products, or services that will be perceived as acceptable by the majority of other people or a majority of an individual's peer group.
9. **Law of Power** – People have power over other people to the degree that they are perceived as having greater authority, strength, or expertise.

The laws of persuasion, according to Hogan (op. cit), can be used for good or bad. According to him, “an individual's ethics and values will determine how likely he will be to seek WIN/WIN results.”

3.3 Persuasive Techniques in Editorial Writing

For editorials to be arresting and catchy, certain literary techniques must be employed in their introduction, comment and conclusion. Some of

these techniques which Ate (2007) tagged “editorial essential balms” are as follows:

1. **Keep the Writing Simple but Mature and Corporate:** Don’t write to intimidate the reader with bombastic grammar. Write to communicate. An editorial should be simple and compact for easy understanding of the audience.
2. **Mind Your Language:** Language is the pillar of communication. Even though the editorial audiences are mostly sophisticated in terms of education, the editorial writer has to mind his/her language in order not to censor the barely literate out of communication. The language must be unambiguous, punchy, concise and meaningful.
3. **Create a Remarkable First Impression:** The introduction or opening paragraph of an editorial must not be dull. It should not be sleepy or lifeless. That would put the readers off. The first, second and third paragraphs of an editorial must be inviting so as to “transport” the audience to the body and conclusion of the opinion piece.
4. **Sustain the First Impression:** Having created a remarkable first impression in the opening paragraph of an editorial, the writer must sustain the piece with solid and concrete facts drawn from credible sources and authentic documents. An editorial would potently sustain the interest of the reader if it is rooted with uncontestable facts. The first impression therefore can be sustained with undiluted facts; the use of parallelism and proper enumerations.
5. **Say Exactly What You Mean:** Don’t beat about the bush or meander into the forests of ideas or semantics before delivering your message.
6. **Make Use of Repetition:** Salient points in the editorial must be re-echoed again and again to ensure that the reader is at home with the message. Caution: This persuasive technique if not well employed can be abused by inexperienced editorialists. The technique must therefore be used tactically and intelligently.
7. **Use a Lot of Literary Devices:** Literary devices polish the tone, style and approach of the editorial. Devices like metaphors; similes to mention only a few should be used judiciously in an editorial to achieve desired effects. The essence of using these devices, according to a mass communication scholar, Iyorkyaa, is to: “create a permanent mark on the mind of the readers or the audience so that they will have one thing to remember you for. If they fail to

remember you for the worth of facts, for the parallelism, for enumeration, they should at least remember you for the congruent style for which you have used or the approach.”

8. **A Strong Closing Appeal:** For the average editorial reader to be persuaded, the piece has to charge him/her up. The construction of strong, memorable appealing words towards the end of an editorial is a needed persuasive dose to call your audience into action. You must leave them with something to giggle about. It must be extremely arresting and highly captivating.

3.3 **Relevance of Propaganda to Editorial Writing**

Some people who consider propaganda as outright lies or a diabolical communication strategy will find it difficult to agree that propaganda could be used in responsible and serious minded journalistic write-up like editorial.

However, Ukonu (2005) who sees propaganda as the (rational) use of argument as well as (sound) emotional appeals to influence behaviour either for good or bad believes that propaganda could be useful in editorial writing if the writer may apply its techniques in persuasions. But in making use of propaganda ingredients in spicing up an editorial menu, Ukonu (op. cit) warns that the writer should be careful not to portray bias and empty argument by blindly misrepresenting issues. According to him, “when propaganda is obvious, the reader notices and starts either conscientious or unwitting self defense.”

The student should understand that white, positive or subtle propaganda could be rewarding in editorial writing, provided the propaganda techniques are intelligently and tactically handled.

3.5 **Propaganda Techniques in Editorial Writing**

There is no gainsaying the fact that propaganda techniques are useful raw materials in editorial writing.

Okoro and Agbo (2003) agree that effective editorial writing require a thorough knowledge and mastery of the techniques for propaganda.

The propaganda techniques, according to them would enable the editorial writer to “gain superior edge over competition and win support in the process of crusading (sic) a cause or executing a campaign.”

Let us take a look at some propaganda techniques as captured by Ate (2007:34-37):

- **Glittering Generalities:** This propaganda technique is usually used to make a broad report about an entire group.
- **Name Calling:** Name calling technique could be used either negatively or positively. According to Okoro and Agbo (2003), “a bad name is given to whatever the propagandist wants the public to reject or condemn without examining the evidence. For example, the opponents may be labeled detractors, labour union executives as destabilizers.” In a positive and softer perspective, names like honey, sweetie, darling, my dear to mention only a few carry strong torrents of love from the addresser to the addressee.
- **Card Stacking:** This device or technique is the act of presenting one side of the coin. The propagandist advertises or highlights some aspects in an issue he or she wants the public to know and covers up or down plays those he or she doesn’t want the public to know. Here, strong and concrete facts, vivid illustration and profound statements are used in achieving the device.
- **Band wagon:** This technique is anchored on the beliefs that if you can’t beat them, join them. It is the act of joining the Joneses, following the crowd, the reigning idea or thing.
- **Testimonial:** Having a celebrity or well-known person in society to endorse a product, idea or an issue. This is an appeal to authority of the personality involved in an issue. Editorial writers can make use of quotations from powerful and celebrated personalities at the national and international levels to put across their message with high fidelity and credibility.
- **Transfer Device:** Certain symbols communicate the prestige and authority of some things. The propagandist should identify and interpret those symbols. The propagandist here has to transfer the prestige in the symbol and bring it to bear on his or her message.
- **Plain Folk:** This strategy entails coming down the level of the people you want to win their affection and presenting yourself as one of them. You identify their aspirations and yearnings, weep and laugh with them where necessary.
- **Appeal to Popularity:** This entails judging a person, an idea or an issue based on successful past experience. “He has done it before; therefore, he will do it again. Let’s follow him.” Appeal to popularity can trigger the fire of a bandwagon effect as people are likely to join the winning man, party, idea, etc.

- **Appeal to Sympathy:** The use of words like marginalization, minorities, discrimination, etc is a deliberate strategy of invoking sympathy. A politician who makes a pledge before a women gathering to dismantle male chauvinism if voted into office is likely to win the sympathy of the women folks. The editorial writer can use this technique to launch his message into the heart of readers.
- **Appeal to Special Interest:** This is a kind of an appeal which goes to a special group of people who have a common interest which the editorial writer is trying to defend or protect.
- **Appeal to Change:** This works on the assumption that the present socio-political and economic order is tiresome and retrogressive. A change or outright re-engineering of the old order is therefore inevitable and must be preached with will vehemence.
- **Appeal to Status Quo:** This is the opposite of appeal to change. Here the editorial writer is satisfied with the socio- political and economic order in motion and votes for its continuity. It is an appeal to religiously keep and preserve the old order.
- **Appeal to Bread and Butter:** This has to do with addressing some basic economic problems like provision of jobs, reduction of prices of commodities like fuel, garri, etc. Appeal to bread and butter may also include provision of free health services, education and so on. When an editorial writer takes a position that is a line with the above, he or she is making use of bread and butter appeal.
- **The Attack Strategy:** This is predicated on the notion that attack is the best form of defense. Here, the propagandist and editorial writer attacks views or ideas that are not in consonance with his.
- **Appeal to Truth:** There are certain things, individuals and beliefs that the society holds as sacred. The propagandist and editorial writer should always uphold the sacred truth in the course of their dissemination of message as any form of violation of the truth will offend the feelings sensibilities of members of the public.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define persuasion
2. List and briefly explain the nine Laws of Persuasion.
3. Persuasion is crucial in editorial writing. Discuss.
4. Justify the relevance of propaganda in editorial writing.
5. List 15 propaganda techniques you know.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Every editorial that is worth its salt must be spiced up with persuasive elements if it must win the affection of the audience. It is therefore expedient for every editorial writer to understand the nitty-gritty of persuasion and exploit same for effective case making. The knowledge of propaganda techniques is also important to every editorial writer.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit dealt with the meaning and laws of persuasion. It also x-rayed some persuasive and propaganda techniques that are useful in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Persuasion and propaganda techniques are important ingredients in editorial writing. Discuss.

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MODULE 3

| | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Determinants of Editorial Subjects |
| Unit 2 | Classification of Editorials |
| Unit 3 | The Structure Of An Editorial |
| Unit 4 | Pitfalls in Editorial Writing |
| Unit 5 | Ethics of Editorial Writing |

UNIT 1 DETERMINANTS OF EDITORIAL SUBJECTS

CONTENTS

| | |
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| 2.0 | Objectives |
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| 3.2 | Determinants of Editorial Subjects |
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is quite known that editorial writing is a research oriented phenomenon. It is written about topical issues in the society. A writer is therefore required to choose what to write about. This calls for choosing or determining a subject for an editorial, since not every issue can be written about. This unit addresses the factors that are considered worthy as editorial topics or subjects.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- major guides for good editorial writing
- factors for choosing editorial subjects.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Guides for Good Editorial Writing

Editorial writing is tasking and needs proactive planning and creativity to accomplish its mission. The major ingredients for determining editorial subjects are the policy and philosophy of the newspaper organisation. Duyile (2005:64) however provides certain guides for good editorial writing. These are:

- 1) Get all your facts at your finger tips before making an outline of the editorial.
- 2) Be exhaustive in your fact finding for purposes of objectivity.
- 3) Let there be consistency in your paper's editorial opinions.
- 4) Be upright in your views and aggressive in your expression to drive your point home.
- 5) A good and respectable newspaper is not obscene-in its use of language in its editorials... Dignity in editorial is an indispensable factor in this respect. The more dignified the editorial, the more respect a newspaper receives from the society.

In what he considered as tips on editorial writing, Folarin (1998:36) x-rayed the following:

- Select a current topic and stick to it, albeit looking at it from all relevant angles.
- Find a sound premise for your position and let your reasoning based on that premise be equally sound.
- Make the editorial short and crisp. A long editorial is an aberration and must have a strong justification – such as a special occasion (a military coup, an independence anniversary, a signing of a bilateral treaty, etc)
- The language of editorials, more than that of any other item in the paper, is expected to be flawless, since the editorial is the “intellectual powerhouse of the newspaper.”

3.2 Determinants of Editorial Subjects

Many factors may be considered in determining a subject for editorials. However, some major ones as considered by Ate (2007:48-50) are as follows:

1. Ensure that the topic is relevant and timely
 2. The topic chosen might be local but the treatment should not be parochial
 3. Editorial topic should be drawn from socio-political and economic issues
 4. Topics could be borne out of the desire to amaze or amuse.
- **Ensure that the Topic is Relevant and Timely:** In order to achieve this, the editorialist must factor into consideration the way and manner people converse with one another. In every society, people converse basically in three ways – (a) people talk about people (b) people talk about things/events (c) people talk ideas.

Editorials that focus on people discussing people are likely going to be pedestrian in approach and may invoke the temptation of using foul or abusive language. Such editorials are hardly profound as they provide avenues for character assassination rather than opportunities for robust societal thinking.

Editorials that deal with people discussing things or events are a little bit advanced and more acceptable than the first – people talking about people. However, these editorials cannot stand erect in the market place of ideas because they lack the fundamental oxygen that shapes public opinion or enliven public discourse.

The best kinds of editorial are those whose platforms are erected on ideas. Ideas are vehicles that drive or move the society forward. Therefore, ideas oriented or anointed editorials are the most profound and celebrated ones.

- **Topic Might be Local but the Treatment should not be Parochial:** In writing an editorial master piece, a local, conservative and unusual topic could be raised but its treatment should be sound and logical. The writer should be able to bring out issues from the local event that are of national or international significance.

For instance, in 2005, there was an editorial in *The Guardian*, about the extinction of wild animals from the University of Ibadan (U.I.) zoo. Naturally, the topic was local but its treatment was superb.

The piece traced the history of the U.I. zoo as one of the first generation zoos in the country and remembered with pains how the zoo used to attract local and international tourists during its good days.

The editorial blamed the ugly development on the nation's leadership and society and wondered how a society that is unable to meet people's yearnings could be friendly to animals.

The editorial called for urgent steps from stakeholders to redress the injustice against the animal kingdom and warned that nature and posterity would judge our generation for its hostility against wild and special species of animals.

- **Editorial Topics should be Drawn from Socio-Political and Economic Issues:** The above would enable the editorialist to juxtapose thorough background of the event with clear illumination of the day's intelligence for the enrichment of public opinion, forecast the probable outcome of some issues and pass a moral judgment on same.
- **Topics Could be Borne out of the Desire to Amaze or Amuse:** There is no gainsaying the fact editorial writing is a serious-minded affair. However, it is not all the times that the writer would feed the audience with serious-minded stuff. There are some situations where an editorial topic could be given light treatment to entertain the audience while feeding them with concrete facts. This is done to ease their tension and dilute the stress that usually goes with analysis of burning issues.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. State the guides to good editorial writing.
2. Enumerate factors for determining editorial subjects

4.0 CONCLUSION

You have learnt in this unit, that good editorial subjects have certain characteristics. It is also mandatory for a good editorial writer to have them at his or her finger tips, so as to guide him or her in the course of editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit identifies guides for good editorial writing and discusses factors for determining editorial subjects.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

With detailed explanation, discuss factors that determine good editorial subjects.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 CLASSIFICATION OF EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Reasons for Classification of Editorials
 - 3.2 Classification of Editorials
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Classification is a process of putting something into the group or class, to which it belongs. Editorials, an advanced aspect of journalistic write-ups, also need to be classified. This unit is designed to address this concern.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- give reasons for classification of editorials
- appreciate proper classification of editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reasons for Classification

Classification of editorials is strictly based on certain reasons. Ate (2007:43) lists these reasons:

- It assists journalist and students of communication to appreciate and differentiate various forms and types of journalistic write-ups from editorials.
- It also equips journalism practitioners to show a clear difference and similarity between opinion writing and factual news reporting.
- It empowers communicators to locate the exact domain of editorial writing and establish its relationships with other write-ups.
- Classification of editorials could open a new door in communication research by researchers.

3.2 Classification of Editorials

Editorials are classified into three major ways. Some of which are:

Parts, Purpose and Types

Ate (2007:46-48) gives a profound explanation on the advantages and disadvantages of these classifications as follows:

- **Classification According to Parts**

Basically, a typical editorial has three parts. These are – (a) statement of the issue, subject or thesis (b) comment on the problem and (c) conclusion, which normally contains solutions to the problems identified in the editorial.

It is instructive to note that the arrangement of the parts of editorial is not a dogmatic affair. Some skillful editorial writers may turn the above formula upside down and begin the editorial piece with conclusion followed by comment and then statement of the issue or thesis.

Another logic is that other writers prefer to integrate statement of problem with comment in a single sentence or paragraph and then move to conclusion.

Yet other editorialists believe that an editorial has only two parts – statement of the problem and comment. Their arguments are predicated upon the notion that, like an artiste, the editorial writer need not provide solution to the problems identified. Such editorials are bound to be unpatronising, unattractive and unpersuasive because the central or cardinal instrument of persuasion is missing. The missing link which

can only be appreciated from the standpoint of solutions to the problem can affect in no small measure the body and soul of the entire editorial.

- **Classification According to Purpose**

For everything under the sun, there must be a purpose. The same thing is applicable to the concept of editorial writing. Editorials are usually packaged to meet multi-dimensional purposes.

While some editorials are designed to inform or explain an issue, others are crafted with the burning desire to persuade, amuse or amaze the audience.

Editorials whose mission or purpose is to persuade are supposed to be loaded with concrete facts so as to have desired effect.

- **Classification According to Types**

This form of classification is closely related to the second category of classification. Here, we have three major types – Interpretative Editorials, Controversial Editorials and Explanatory Editorials which perform their unique functions.

Aneato and Onabajo (2007:63) identify the following types of editorials:

1. Editorial of Interpretation
2. Editorial of Argument
3. Editorial of Criticism
4. Editorial of Commendation
5. Editorial of Entertainment

- **Editorial of Interpretation:** This type of editorial appraises an issue and then gives explanation or interpretation to it in an objective manner to inform the reader. The editorial presents facts and analyses them to give a meaningful perspective.
- **Editorial of Argument:** It is an editorial that is meant to argue an issue to draw out a point. It is usually on controversial topics. It is persuasive and convincing, and as such, the editorial writer must know how to present his or her facts and to substantiate his or her points.
- **Editorial of Criticism:** This is an editorial that aims to point out the ills or bad aspect of a situation. It can be used to curtail some unhealthy behaviour and decisions. This type of editorial is meant to bring about a change of heart, both from government and the public.

- **Editorial of Commendation:** This type of editorial gives commendation or praise to government officials, actions by government, achievements and successes of people.
- **Editorial of Entertainment:** This editorial injects comedy into the issue being discussed. It treats the subject in a light manner that interests the reader; it takes a human-interest angle.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Give reasons for classification of editorials in the mass media.
2. List and explain the various classification of editorial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit established the fact that, there are three solid ways of classifying editorials – Classification according to types, purpose and parts.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit outlines major reasons for classification of editorials. It also identifies three proper ways of classifying editorials.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Why are editorials classified in the mass media and how?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE STRUCTURE OF AN EDITORIAL

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Structure of an Editorial
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorial usually addresses issues of public significance. Such issues are also targeted at a large and heterogeneous audience. This unit looks at the structure of an editorial.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the structure of an editorial.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Structure of an editorial

A typical editorial has four parts. These are: Title, Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

1. **The Editorial Title:** This defines or introduces the editorial. It should be active, arresting and less wordy. Because titles serve as

windows to editorials, they should not be dull, ambiguous or misleading. Rather, they should be sharp, punchy and catchy.

For composing a good editorial title, Anim (1996:94) provided some useful hints.

- Some of the best titles are questions. e.g
 - Can NEPA improve?
- The who, what, why and how are useful in editorial heads. E.g
 - Who shot Ibru?
 - What a country!
 - Who runs the economy: Central Bank or IMF?
 - How to stop the touts?
- Sometimes looking at common sayings, short quotes and adages may lead to a good title.

For example, “Arise O Compatriots” from the National Anthem can form the title of an editorial calling for national solidarity.

- “Who can bell the cat”? This adage can be the title of an attack editorial on vacillation.
- Since all human beings respond to rhythm, devices of alliteration and rhyme can be effective in titles. E.g
 - The hoodlums of October 25
 - Sapped by SAP
- Simple statements summing up the editorial thrust are good as titles. E.g
 - Put up or shut up
 - Leave Nigeria alone
- Word play can produce titles, especially for lighthearted and praise editorials... e.g
 - Milking the Government...

2. The Lead or “Intro”: Next to the title is the lead which is simply the first paragraph of the leader or editorial. Like the editorial

title, the lead or introduction must be captivating and juicy in order to compel the reader to read the entire editorial. A good leader must be able to sustain the interest earlier aroused by a tantalizing title.

Depending on the creative prowess and experience of the editorial writer, any kind of lead, be it question lead, contrast lead, freak lead, direct address lead, etc would perform the magic, if is well crafted.

On a general note, the introduction according to Anim (1996:95) contains:

- (1) the news peg
- (2) the focus of the editorial
- (3) explores the tone presaged in the title

Sample of an editorial intro in an editorial titled “Nigerian Universities and world ranking”

The latest worldwide universities’ ranking shows that Nigerian universities have dropped out of reckoning because of the poor quality and scope of research conducted by indigenous academics. No Nigerian university featured on the world best 500 universities list. Indeed from the African continent, only University of Cape Town, South Africa made the list. More embarrassing was the fact that even among contending universities in Africa, the best Nigerian university was ranked number 44, trading behind some universities in Kenya, South Africa and Ghana. (Source: *The Guardian*, May 25, 2007, page 14)

3. The Body: This contains the meat and substance of the editorial. It is the place where the props and cons of an issue are analyzed; conflicts of different colours are raised and resolved in the body of an editorial. The body of the editorial provides a platform for editorial reaction. Editorial reaction concerns itself with the stand or position of a newspaper on an issue.

A good editorial body must be coherent and logical in presentation and analyses of data. There must be page unity and harmony of words and ideas in the body of the editorial.

In a persuasive editorial, Anim (1996:99) observes that this section contains “the argument – evidence of fairness, credibility, appeal to emotions, if need be, and knowledgeability, comparisms, contrasts, statistics are contained in this section”.

Sample of the body of editorial from an editorial – “Nigerian Universities and world ranking” earlier cited.

The Nigerian academic is not lucky. He is entitled to attend international conferences about once in two years. If he must attend other conferences, he is required to look for funding from other sources. Reputable journals which were published in the universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka and Ife in the past have all disappeared due to poor funding. For example, the University of Ibadan used to be a reference point to international scholars of African history and culture. Those were the halcyon days of professors Kenneth Dike, Festus Ade Ajayi and Tekena Tamuno, etc. Indeed, Nigerian universities hosted academics and students from all regions of the world. These days, only refugees come to Nigerian universities to study.

While others universities are expanding their library facilities, some federal universities have closed down departmental libraries. Ironically, most of our libraries are stocked with old volumes, with cramped-up spaces for the teeming population of students. Yale University has over one hundred libraries. Harvard makes about \$25bn from endowments alone. With these funds, scholars have no problem whatsoever embarking on research and publishing their findings. The Nigerian government ought to take education more seriously, (Source: The Guardian, May 25, 2007).

4. Conclusion: Conclusion is the last part of an editorial. Usually, conclusion may be a re-affirmation of earlier position or idea advocated by the editorial writer in the body of the editorial. It may serve as an amplifier of a strong and potent view earlier put across in the course of writing.

In handling the conclusion of an editorial, dangling modifiers and redundant words must be avoided. The conclusion of an editorial in the views of Okoro and Agbo (2003:137) could be done in any of the following ways:

- Straight-away summary
- Quotable ending
- Appeal for action.

A good conclusion of an editorial should leave a food for thought for the audience. It must reverberate something spectacular in the editorial.

Examining the functions and characteristics of an editorial which harmonise the above segments or structure of an editorial, Folarin (1998: 35-36) states:

- An editorial, more than any other item in a publication, performs the correlation, opinion, editorial interpretation or even ‘propaganda’

function in a newspaper. It helps the paper's readers to put specific issues or occurrences in perspective.

- It selects a specific topic and sticks to it throughout, examining the topic from various angles.
- It is usually linked to a news peg, and has an introductory statement linking the news event or issue and the editorial.
- The specific style of each editorial will vary slightly according to the type – whether it be persuasion, advocacy, clarification, information/illumination, tribute/commendation, special occasion or entertainment. But each editorial should have a thesis, a development of the thesis, and a conclusion.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the various segments of an editorial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit discussed in details the structure of an editorial.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, a cursory look at the structure of an editorial, beginning from the title, the body and the conclusion was done.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A good editorial writer must appreciate the importance of all segments of an editorial. Discuss.

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UNIT 4 PITFALLS IN EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Importance of Focus in Editorial Writing
 - 3.2 Pitfalls in Editorial Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Anything in life that is worth doing is worth doing well. For that to be achieved there must be rules guiding human actions. In editorial writing, there are dos and don'ts that guide the craft. Editorials have certain booby traps which must be out-rightly avoided. This unit discusses the importance of focus in editorial writing as well as pitfalls in the art of writing an opinion piece.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the importance of focus in editorial writing
- identify the pitfalls in editorial writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Importance of Focus in Editorial Writing

As focus is very important in features writing, so it is to editorial. The writer like a builder must be able to align bricks (words and ideas) in a straight line. There must be a plumb-line serving as a compass to the editorial writer.

The plumb-line will prevent the writer from venturing into irrelevancies concerning the topic under probe; it will debar the writer from meandering into the forest of ideas.

As it is in features writing, focus is important in editorial writing because it will assist the writer in choosing a topic that is narrow enough to handle. Focus will assist the editorialist in defining the boundary of what is useful to the target audience and what is not.

Focus is achievable through discipline on the side of the writer and through environmental scanning. Focus can assist the writer in defining the dimension of the discourse. This plumb-line will enable the builder (editorial writer) to construct a formidable structure (editorial) starting from the introduction, the body and conclusion, treating issues of utmost concern, discarding irrelevances in all ramifications.

3.2 Pitfalls in Editorial Writing

In writing an editorial, the avoidance of pitfalls is the beginning of wisdom. It is therefore expedient for editorial writers to know the guide posts underlying editorial writing.

Ate (2007:51-52) identified things that must be avoided while writing an editorial. These are:

A. Avoid Afghanistanism: The concept of Afghanistanism presupposes a situation where the editorial writer focuses on issues in far-away places that had little or no relevance to the people he/she is writing for. Such a practice is unacceptable.

There must be geographical or psychological proximity between the audience and the topic.

B. Avoid Being Seduced by Public Relations Men: The job of public relations (PR) men is to ensure that their organizations are always captured in good light by media practitioners. To achieve this, they often embark on overt and covert lobbying procedures to ensure that press men including editorial writers are always on their side. One of these measures includes offering gratification to journalists to

guarantee favourable mention of their establishments in the media. The editorial writer as an activist and social crusader must avoid the temptation of dancing to the rhythm or tune of PR men by refusing to be censored by any posture of inducement.

C. Avoid the Temptation of Falling Flat in the Name of Being

Timely: Just like news is timely, editorial writers are also fond of presenting their facts and arguments in a timely manner. However, most editorialists in their quest of being pace setters or emergency experts fall into this temptation. They rush to write editorials on emerging news issues without carefully examining their pros and cons. This could be dangerous and counterproductive as such a practice might prevent the editorial writer from digging deep into the heart of an issue.

D. Avoid Making Predictions about Issue Pending in a Law Court:

The judge will not take it kindly with any interference in his or her area of jurisdiction. The editorial writer must know that passing a judgment on issues that are pending in the court is an art of sub judice, an offence against the court. Since, nobody is above the law; the editorial writer should steer clear of such an act.

In a similar development, Okoro and Agbo (2003:130) advised that editorial writers should avoid “trial by newspapers.” In other words, editorials should not rush to convict a person in the news.

Again, they warned that editorialists should always handle rumour, race (and tribe) and religion with at most caution. This is because, according to them, “these are emotion-laden and when it comes to issues of emotion, many people become reason-blind. Remember that appeal to prejudices can be monumentally destructive.”

In addition to the above, it is crucial for editorial writers to discard unnecessary exaggerations, out-right or pathological lies in the course of writing an editorial piece. It is important for an editorial writer to avoid an unusual sensational act of analysis that would put the society in jeopardy.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Briefly discuss the importance of focus in editorial writing.
2. Identify the pitfalls in editorial writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Knowing the general hints on editorial writing is certainly good; appreciating the inevitability and desirability of focus in editorial writing is a worthwhile venture but the job of an editorial writer will only be complete if he knows the pitfalls guiding the concept of editorial writing. It is therefore established that the don'ts in an editorial are equally important as the dos.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit acknowledges the importance of focus in editorial writing and discusses some major pitfalls in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the dos and don'ts in editorial writing.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 ETHICS OF EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition and History of Ethics
 - 3.2 Ethics of Editorial Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Virtually every profession under the sun is guided by certain codes of conduct. Journalism as a profession is also governed by certain norms, creeds or canons. In this unit, we shall be examining the meaning of ethics, its origin, and the codes of conduct guiding editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define ethics and trace their origin
- outline ethics of editorial writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition and History of Ethics

Ethics according to Hartzell (2006:138) are “a system of behaviour, expectations and morals comprising standards of conduct for a population or profession”.

Ethics are the general science of right and wrong. Ethics are codes of conduct which defines standards of behaviour and morality for members of a given profession. A veteran journalist, Duyile (2005:80) describes media ethics as the “Moses of journalism” and insists that the journalist who wants to remain in the profession for life or the journalist-in-training who is just entering the profession for life time career, will do himself or herself a lot of good if they avail themselves with the ethics of this noble profession. He argues that conscience is the great judge on matters of ethics.

Ethics are desirable and inevitable for a number of reasons. According to Daramola (1999:198), ethics can infuse “a dose of morality into the crude performance of a particular profession to which they refer. They enhance competence in the exercise of the profession. They constitute a means of control and discipline among the members of the profession. Invariably, professional ethics regulate the relationship between professionals and their particular publics”.

Historically, the word ethics originated from the Greek words *ethikos* (moral) and *ethos* (character) which refers to the values or rules of conduct held by a group of individuals. Daramola (1999:198).

Credit must be given to Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who popularized the concept of ethics in his book, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS. Before that book, different philosophers formulated some ethical values or systems but Aristotle’s book actually opened the floodgate for recognition of ethics across different disciplines.

In order to safeguard the freedom of the press, on account of its abuse, Daramola (1999:199) observed that ethical norms began to be codified in the early 1920s. According to him “it is estimated that, at least, 60 countries in the world have such codes, although the codes vary in their form and scope”.

Today, many organizations, professions, and associations have formulated different codes of conduct to ensure inner discipline and guaranteed healthy practice among their members.

3.2 Ethics of Editorial Writing

In editorial writing, certain things are expected of editors, writers and other media practitioners to adhere to in order to maintain high journalistic standards.

Ethics are necessary to ensure sanity and inculcate discipline within a profession. Ethics define what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within a professional setting.

In the Nigerian media setting, the Nigerian Press Council which regulates the activities of three professional bodies – the Nigerian Guilds of Editors (NGE), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), and Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigerian (NPAN), is the general overseer of ethical issues in the journalism profession.

All journalists in Nigeria, irrespective of their medium of communication are expected to adhere strictly to ethics of journalism. Editors, reporters, editorial writers, features writers, and other media professionals are expected to work within the confines of ethical boundary of their noble profession.

Let us take a look at the Code of Conduct (ethics) of the Nigeria Union of Journalists as chronicled by Daramola (1999:200-203).

Code of Journalism Practice

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has the following as its Code of Conduct (ethics):

1. **Editorial Independence:** Decisions concerning the content of the news should be the responsibility of professional journalists.
2. **Accuracy and Fairness:**
 - The public has a right to know that factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and basis of earning public trust and confidence.
 - A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made.
 - In the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate fact from conjecture and comment.
3. **Privacy:** As a general rule, journalists should respect the privacy of individuals and their families, unless it affects public interest.
 - Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it infringes on public trust.
 - Publishing of such information about an individual, as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at:
 - a. Exposing crime or serious misdemeanor,

- b. Exposing anti-social conduct
- c. Protecting public health, morality and safety
- d. Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

4. Privilege/Nondisclosure

- Journalists should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
- A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as off-the-record or as background information.

5. Decency

- A journalist should dress and comport him or herself in a manner that conforms to public taste.
- A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.
- A journalist should not present lurid details, either in word or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes.
- In cases involving personal grief or shock. Enquiries should be carried out and approaches to the public right to know, the press should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

6. Discrimination

- A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

7. Reward and Gratification

- A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
- To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

8. Violence

- A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robbery, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.

9. Children and Minors

- A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witness or defendants.

10. Access to Information

- A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only if public interest is at stake.
- A journalist should, therefore, avoid paying for information, except public interest so dictates.

11. National Interest

- A journalist should use his position to enhance national unity, public good and national interest.

12. Social Responsibility

- A journalist should promote human rights, democracy, peace and international understanding.

13. Plagiarism

- A journalist should not copy wholesale, or in part, other people's work without attribution.

14. Copyright

- Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded by national and international laws conventions.

In order to have a deeper and regional perspective of ethics of editorial writing, it expedient for us to take a look at the Editorial Code of Ethics of the West African Journalists Association (W.A.J.A) as chronicled by Uwakwe (2005: 188-191).

The WAJA Charter

- **Preamble:** The West African Journalists' Association (WAJA), considering the need to safeguard a worthy professional code of practice in the region in accordance with the respect, which professionals hold for the material and moral interest and for a professional code of ethics, makes the following charter.

WAJA invites all national organisations, information and communication professionals, members of the association to strive at scrupulously observing the code of conduct, a reference point for the affirmation of obligations and rights of social communications in West Africa.

Considering that respect for press freedom and the rights to information and public publication form the basis for full exercise of the journalism profession both for the journalist and the social communication technician, WAJA enumerates the following as rights and obligations of social communicators.

Title I

Rights of the Journalists, Members of the WAJA

- **Article I:** The journalist in the exercise of his profession and duty has right to free access to sources of information. No act or measure should prevent the full exercise of this right.
- **Article II:** The journalist has the right to refuse to reveal his sources of information and to publish only those (sic) information which are (sic) verified and whose origins are (sic) known. On no account would a journalist become an object of threat and sanctions in exercise of this principle.
- **Article III:** The right of the journalist and social communication technician to participate in all formulations of decisions concerning the enterprise must be safeguarded.
- **Article IV:** The journalist and the social communication technician have the right in West Africa to physical and material security, to legal protection and the safeguard of their dignity.
- **Article V:** The West African states have a major obligation of guaranteeing the freedom of the press and of information without which the practice of the profession will lose its esteem.

Title II

Duties of the Journalist

- **Article VI:** In his task as a communicator, the journalist is held in respect of truth, the affirmation of the ideals of communication and the unity among the peoples of West Africa. His social responsibility must lead him in the exercise of his profession to disseminate to the public true information, avoid all distortions and all manipulations of messages.
- **Article VII:** The journalist in his news gathering beat must not resort to the use of illicit means to obtain information. He must not suppress essential information nor would he misrepresent or falsify texts or documents.
- **Article VIII:** The respect for the private life of any person, the human dignity in conformity with national and international rules on matters of rights concerning the protection of individuals by avoiding defamation, calumny, slander and malicious insinuations must form an integral part of the journalist's professional norm.
- **Article IX:** A journalist member of the WAJA must ensure that information serves the purpose of bringing about peace, community ideals, cooperation, unity and African solidarity.
- **Article X:** In all circumstances, the journalist must show proof of integrity by avoiding all forms of illicit remuneration, directly or indirectly. He also has the duty of refusing to aid and abet the promotion of interests that are contrary to the general well being. He must realize that the respect for intellectual property notably avoidance of plagiarism and divulging of professional secrets form an integral part of his obligations.

On a general note, ethics of editorial writing revolve round integrity, honesty and decency, to mention only a few attributes expected of a journalist in the course of discharging his/her fundamental responsibilities. Journalists are not expected to be induced in the course of their writing. They are not supposed to disclose their sources of information to anybody but to uphold all the tenets of their profession any time, anywhere.

For editorials to achieve their desired mission and purposes, they should be written according to ethical considerations.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define Ethics and briefly trace its origin.

2. Outline the Nigeria Union of Journalists' (NUJ's) Code of Conduct.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been established in this unit that ethics have become very crucial in all professions and disciplines. This unit underscores the importance of the ethics to editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit appraises the concept of ethics from the perspective of meaning and history. It specifically outlines some ethics in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Enumerate some crucial ethics of editorial writing.

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MODULE 4

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | The Editorial Page |
| Unit 2 | Editing the Editorial |
| Unit 3 | The Differences between Print and Broadcast Media Editorials |
| Unit 4 | Editorial Writing and the Economy |
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UNIT 1 THE EDITORIAL PAGE

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| | |
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| 1.0 | INTRODUCTION |

The editorial page of a newspaper carries the corporate elegance of the paper. It is a reservoir of knowledge for readers as diverse audiences often drink from the editorial fountain of knowledge on socio-political and economic issues. The editorial page mirrors the paper because it reflects the corporate logo and identity of the newspaper. It satisfies the yearnings of the audience in the market place of ideas.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- outline the importance of the editorial paper
- discuss the components of the editorial page.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Importance of the Editorial Page

The editorial page is very important because it gives the paper editorial integrity and credibility. It paves way for corporate journalism and contributes in no small measure to formation of public opinion. But the question now is, what is the editorial page?

The editorial page, according to Ukonu (2005:17), “appears on a special page – the editorial page. The latter carries the newspaper’s name, logo or totem and slogan and mission statement.” He stresses that whatever is stated on that page belongs to the newspaper as a corporate entity.

No reporter takes credit for editorials in terms of byline. Historically, the editorial was viewed as an article written by the editor. Even today editorials are written by different writers, they still assume to be the creation of the editor.

Different newspapers assign a special page for editorials. However, there are some times when topical issues of public significance compel the editorial to occupy the front page of a paper for the sake of prominence. Ukonu (2005:17) justifies this standpoint and the procedure:

- When an editorial issue is so important that it merits a front-page placement, usual practice is to box it and clearly label it ‘Editorial’. Most editorials – whether front page or editorial page, are boxed, set in bigger body size, wider column width, and separated by black lines (or a pica of white space in ruled publications) instead of white space or gutters.

The importance of an editorial page can be appreciated better from the functions it performs. Idemili, a print media expert, (1996: 93-94) comprehensively captures the functions of the editorial page:

1. For the reader, the editorial can help bring order out of chaos of news. It provides pattern of meaning in the confusion and complexity of events. In finding a pattern of meaning for readers, the editor should underline news he regards as significant. The very selection of editorial topics serves as a useful guide to the reader as to what in the recent news is actually the most significant.

2. On the editorial page, special reporters or columnists have a place for explaining behind-the-scene events. They are permitted freedom of style and expression which provides more background information than could an objectively written news story. These special commentators can indicate their views as well as the facts on which these views are based.
3. The editorial can fight battles for the newspaper reader, defining his liberties, and protecting him from government. If the editor does not say the streets are dirty or the politics in the city are dirty who else will? The forthright editor will find that when he uses his power wisely, he will gain more friends than enemies, even among people who cannot entirely agree with him.
4. The editorial plays an agenda-setting role; newspaper editorial page should serve the public by exposing for public debate and opinion, the good and bad ideas that are in current circulation.
5. The editorial page should give readers the opportunity to air their views by providing space for letters to the editor. For in letter to the editor, the readers express their personal opinions about anything and everything providing their statements are in good taste and signed. This public forum furnishes the readers a safety valve for the release of their emotional and intellectual promptings. Is also keeps the editor in touch with the readers by bringing to his notice those policies in which the readers are most articulate.
6. To the editor, the editorial page has a role to fulfill. It makes it possible for him to express his own views. When the editor and the reporters write the news, they are supposed to do so without injecting their opinions. The editorial page is the place where the editors take sides and express opinion which they do not do in the news column. The editor being the official representative of his paper is in effect expressing the newspaper's opinion according to laid-down policy.
7. The editorial page is a source of personality to the newspaper. It is its conscience, courage and convictions. A newspaper without editorial page can be compared to a man without a backbone. A newspaper without an editorial page has no conscience of its own, has no courage and conviction of its own. It cannot take any controversial issue.

Some newspapers have their front page editorials captured under the nomenclature of Front Page Comments. The editorial page is crucial

because it serves as the voice of the media establishment on a particular issue in the society. It is equally important because it provides readership service to the editorial audience.

The editorial page in some cases serves as a masterstroke for policy makers as some editorials provide a roadmap for policy formulation and execution. The editorial page just like any other page in the newspaper expresses the house style of a particular medium in terms of page design and layout.

The editorial page contains letters to the editor which serve as a feedback mechanism for the newspaper. Letters to the editor are potent barometers for measuring public opinion.

The editorial page can provoke further probe or investigation of an issue by reporters. The editorial page is also a resourceful research forum for professional and academic researchers as it provides deeper insights into issues

3.2 Components of Editorial Page

The editorial page is packaged with some aesthetic and attention-arresting devices in order to win the affection of readers. Ukonu (2005:19-20) outlines some components of the editorial page. These are:

- Editorial cartoons
- Pictures (photographs). In Nigeria, however, many editorials do not have pictures
- Letters to the editor
- Wider columns, white space (letting in air) can equally be used to direct readers' to the editorial page
- Typographical device can also be used to catch attention. Through the use of different typefaces.

Editorial Cartoons

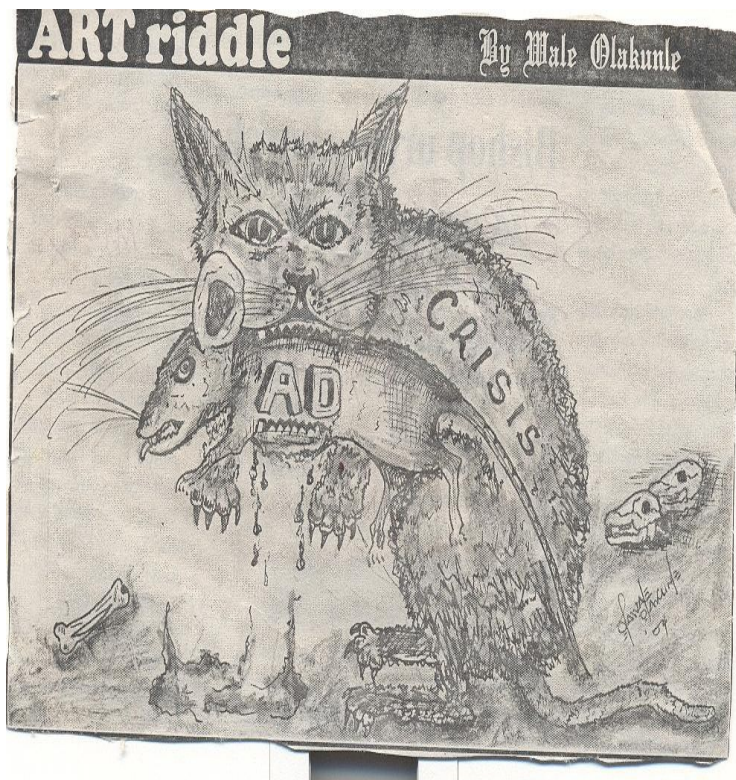
These are caricatures that are drawn by graphic artists to enliven the editorial page. Editorial cartoons perform the journalistic role of informing, educating and entertaining the readers.

Ukonu (2005:29) captures the essence of editorial cartoons:

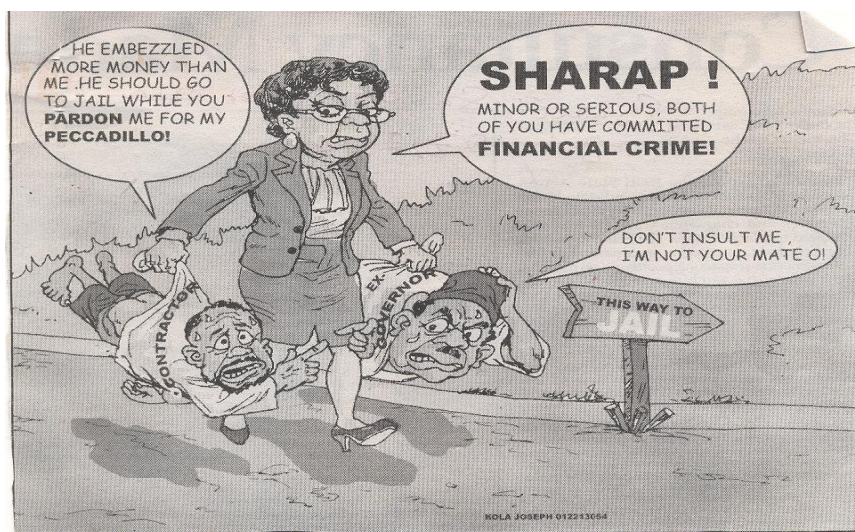
- Cartoons are line drawings used to inform and entertain. Cartoons amuse, yet they are veritable means of exposing social ills. This is why cartoons are referred to as satire in drawing... Cartoons educate, irritate, tickle or tease. They inform, reform and transform. Cartoons

are, therefore, comic, satirical accounts in drawing. They may tell their stories in a single panel format, in which the story is told in a single picture in a box. There are also the multiple panel cartoons wherein the account is given in more than one box or in a sequence of boxes.

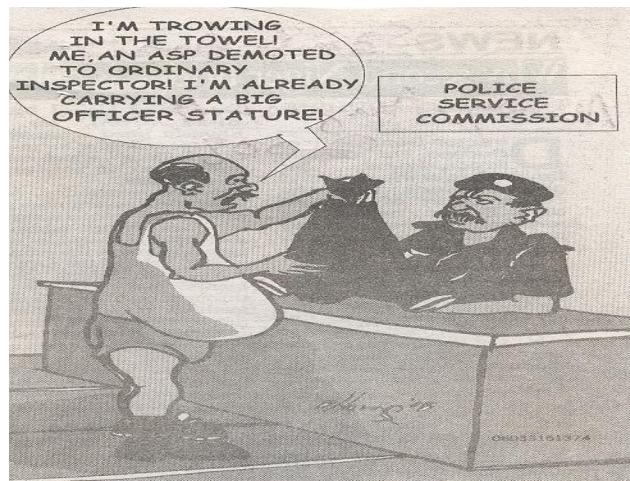
He therefore sees editorial cartoons as “comic strips on political, economic and cultural ills with a ravishing admixture of caricatures, humour and satire.” Let us now take a look at some few editorial cartoons in some Nigerian newspapers.



Source: The Hope, 2004



Source: *Sunday Independent*, 2008



Source: *Daily Sun*, 2008



Source: *The Guardian*, 2007

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor ensure a feedback system in the newspaper. They are barometers to measuring public opinion and significant components of the editorial page. Letters to the editor, according to Idemili (1996:94), "attract greater attention because of the inherent desire in humans to read other people's mail."

Let's us take a look at some topical letters to the editor from some Nigerian newspapers.

Darkness pervades Bayelsa

I call on the appropriate authorities to restore electricity supply to Bayelsa State, which has been without power for a long time now.

The state government spends much money to purchase gas turbine, but

residents of the state are yet to see any impact of it in the area of power supply.

We appeal to the state government to rescue the situation.

Bimbo Aderibigbe,
bimboraymond@yahoo.com

Source: The punch August 22, 2008

Institute, academic studies were com-

On Benin-Ore road

WHERE are the tears of the Minister of Transport? Where are her lamentations? Where are her words to Nigerians? These and more are the questions Nigerians and indeed millions of people who use the road ask daily. Every year the government budgets billions of naira for the repair of Nigerian roads including the Benin-Ore road but there is nothing to show for it. And so, when Mrs. Diezani Allison-Madueke assumed office as the Minister of Transport, she visited the road to see the decay for herself. She came, she saw but she did no conquer. She wept on the state of the road; she cried because of the amount past ministers claimed to have spent on the road. She lamented on the lives the road claims daily and the economic wastages. She flew back to Abuja.

Unfortunately, we are almost at the middle of the rainy season. And

from her distant Abuja, she has made no comments on the road since then.

The entire road has collapsed; the entire road is a haven for robbers. It is a death trap. The Benin-Ore road is one of the busiest roads in Nigeria, connecting almost eleven states. It is therefore painful and sad to note that the road as busy and important as it is, has been grossly neglected and abandoned by the Federal government and even ignored by the eleven states' governments. The road should have effective road maintenance camps with relevant equipment and personnel.

I am therefore calling on the Federal and eleven states' governments to come to the rescue of the people and fix the road as soon as possible before the next festive season. A stitch in time saves nine.

Okefor Julius
Lagos.

Source: Daily Sun Sept 4, 2008

Letters

SIR: My faith in the Nigerian Police sank to an all time low on Sunday, July 15, 2007 after witnessing the total disregard for human life displayed by men of the organisation along the Abuja-Okene road.

At about 11.30 a.m on that fateful day, a ghastly accident occurred at a bad spot between Ibaka Oka and Ohia Okia in the Akoko Southwest area of Kogi State. A truck descending a hill apparently lost its break and rammed into a car heading for Abuja from Okene.

The car had seven passengers. The commercial vehicle I was travelling in got to the scene of the accident minutes after the incident. We were seven passengers in the car, including the driver. We prevailed on the driver to stop for us to offer assistance to the accident victims. All of us six men and a woman raced to the crushed car to offer whatever assistance to the dying occupants. We pulled those we could out of the wreckage. Three of them were already dead. The rest were in critical conditions. We ran helter-skelter to find means to convey them to hospital. Many of them were bleeding profusely. It was a horrific site.

Just then a convoy of policemen was driving by. We ran to them; waved to them to stop and assist. They looked at us disdainfully and increased their speed. By then more travellers had arrived at the scene. We pleaded with the

The IG must hear this

police to render assistance in conveying their dying compatriots to the nearest hospital or to use their walkie-talkies to call the nearest police station. They never headed our plea. Cell phone reception was quite poor when we tried to call 199 and other relevant agencies.

The attitude of the policemen worried many of us as we continued our sad trip to Lagos. We felt that the policemen ought to have stopped to at least show compassion and care at the scene of the incident. They have every reason to do so.

Rather they only showed disdain as if the victims of the accident were animals. Moreso, an Assistant Commissioner of Police was in the convoy, made up of a police pick-up van with registration number NPF 7331B, a Peugeot Expert vehicle with registration number NPF 1718 B and

vehicle with registration number FG 18-001 B.

My prayer is that the new Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Mike Okiro, will read this piece and investigate. Policemen should show example in service to their countrymen and humanity in general. Any of the victims of the accident could have been a relation of the policemen, who treated them so badly.

The IG should immediately embark on enlightenment campaign in police formations across the country to teach his men basic lessons in public service.

My heart goes to the families of those victims and to that hapless child in the ill-fated car, who was staring at his dead mother in utter disbelief and confusion.
Uzo Nwoha,
Lagos.

Weakness of the military

SIR: The inability of the Nigerian military services to contain the nefarious activities of militants in the Niger Delta has exposed the dismal inefficiency of the armed forces. It is indeed shameful that bands of reckless and uncoordinated youths can hold the country to ransom, threaten the national economy and endanger our ter-

ritorial security indefinitely.

Nigerians are apprehensive about the combat readiness of the army and the navy. They wonder whether or not the armed forces can really cope with external aggression of a guerrilla nature in the wake of their current ineptitude.
Victor Ifedi,
Lagos.

Source: The Guardian, July 23, 2007.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Discuss the importance of editorial page
2. Outline the components of the editorial page.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, I have established the fact that the editorial page performs some vital functions and that for these functions to be effectively performed, certain attention arresting devices have to be used in the editorial page. This is done in order to draw the attention of editorial audience.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discusses the importance of the editorial page. It also x-rays some components of the corporate opinion page.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the relevance of the editorial page and outline some attention catching devices of the page.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 EDITING THE EDITORIAL

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Meaning of Editing
 - 3.2 Need for Editing
 - 3.3 Hints on Editing the Editorial Page
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editing is a child of necessity for every journalistic write-up. News, features, editorials, etc often go through editing to make them more understandable and readable. As a corporate expression or voice of a media establishment, an editorial cannot afford to be riddled with grammatical, factual or typographical errors. Hence, the need for editing the editorial piece.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- know the meaning of editing
- appreciate the need for editing
- outline the hints on editing the editorial page.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Editing

In a layman's language, to edit a copy simply means to correct errors, particularly grammatical mistakes, so as to make the material or copy understandable and acceptable to the generality of the reading public. (Ogunsiji, 1989).

Editing is the elimination of unwanted materials from a copy to make the copy more readable and understandable to the readers. Crowell cited in Ukonu (2007:137) asserts that "editors look over reporters' work to be sure that it is written so that the people can understand it, that it is in

good taste; that it leaves no question unanswered and that it is not libelous.”

Akinfeleye (1983:69) contends that in the editing process, spelling mistakes, poor sentence construction, bad syntaxes and non-sequential paragraphs are re-arranged to make the entire copy more readable and understood. A more comprehensive form of editing, he argues, involves editing for:

- Accuracy
- Coherence
- Conciseness, and
- Simplicity

Let us briefly examine what he coined the A-C-C-C-S of news editing:

- A:** **Accuracy** in copy editing means the quality or the state of the editor being precise or exact in terms of name calling and/or data presentation in the news.
- C:** **Coherence** in copy editing simply means the conditions or the state of putting the logically integrated, consistent, sequential for better comprehension by the potential readers, viewers and/or listeners.
- C:** **Clarity** in copy editing relates to the state of the copy being free from all ambiguities, either in terms of choice of words, sentence construction, paragraphing and others.
- C:** **Conciseness** – There is no room for verbosity and/or circumlocution, in copy editing. By conciseness in copy editing, we mean the state or condition of putting your copy brief and straight to the point.
- S:** **Simplicity** in copy editing refers to state of your copy being free from grammatical intricacy, complexity, embellishments, and unnecessary elegance. Your copy must be plainly written and presented in a way to be plainly understood.

Copy editing according to Akpan (2006:48), can be variously described. To him, “it can be called copy editing, news editing and copy reading.” A copy writer, he insists, must be versed in what is written about; an expert in language use and flexible and tolerant person capable of appreciating values in work of others.

Akpan (2006:48-49) identifies three major functions of the copy desk.

These are:

- Creative function
- Managerial function, and
- Policing function

The removal of unwanted materials from an editorial or opinion piece with a view to making it clear and understandable to readers is known as editing the editorial. In some newspapers, the features editor serves as the editorial page editor while in others, the chairman of the editorial board takes responsibility for the editing task.

3.2 Need for Editing

Editing is done for number of reasons. Looking at the rationale for editing from the perspective of a copy editor's job, Akpan (2006:50) enumerates the following things which he said the copy editor should bear in mind as he works on a story. These are:

- He must eliminate errors of spelling, grammar, and sentence structures.
- He must be conscious of taste, style, fact and organization.
- He must guard against unwarranted reportorial bias, verbosity, repetition, incongruity, wearisome details, overlooked facts, zealous statements, and advertising in disguise...

Capturing the desirability and inevitability of editing, Ogunsiiji (1989:77) observes that editing requires the editor or sub-editor to eliminate all defamatory statements which can lead to the paper being sued for libel. Editing, according to him, is also done to ensure brevity, clarity and readability of copy.

Editing is also done in his views, to ensure that the stories conform to the paper's style guide.

In editing, it is important to know not only when a change in copy should be made but also why that change should be made (Baskette et al 1982:5). Good editing, according to Baskette et al (1982:5), depends on the exercise of good judgment. For that reason, they argued that editing is an art, not a science. They describe the copy editor as "a diamond cutter who refines and polishes, removes the flaws and shapes the stone into a gem." For the editor's job they submit:

- The editor searches for flaws, and inaccuracies, and prunes the useless, the unnecessary qualifiers and the redundancies. The editor adds movement to the story by substituting active verbs for passive

ones, specific for generalities. The editor keeps sentences short so that readers can grasp one idea at a time and still not suffer writing that reads like a first-grade text.

Editing is also needed to establish facts in a story. For example, it is an established fact that the president of Nigeria is Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua. It will amount to a factual error if one refers to the country's president as Alhaji Shehu Yar'Adua. This is because Umaru, not Shehu, is the president of Nigeria.

Finkel of the Dallas Times Herald outlines the duties of an editor at a workshop on editing skills. His views are cited by Baskette et al (1982:6-7) below:

- The editor is the conscience of the writer and the newspaper. He should approach every story with a challenge to see if it meets the newspaper's standards. It is his duty to help every story he edits.
- The editor should, when time allows, read a story from top to bottom before making changes. It is important to understand all what the writer is trying to say.
- Having read the story through, the editor can remove words, correct grammar, smooth sentence flow and do other things that make the story more pleasing to the reader.
- The editor must make sure that questions are answered. If he has questions, then the reader will. The editor can attempt to find answers and work them into the story.
- There is more to editing than making a story read smoothly. The editor must satisfy himself that the story is fair, that both sides of an issue are presented; that, if a person accuses another in a quote, the accused gets a chance to reply; that the topics mentioned in the abstracts are brought to specific; and that there are no unanswered questions.
- The editor need not be a great writer to work efficiently. But he should be able to recognize good writing when he sees it. He should know when an adjective is performing an important job and when it is clutter.
- A good editor has love for the language. He is tuned to subtle rhythms or the awesome power of combinations of words. He should edit by sound, listen for good writing.

A good editor is supposed to possess some basic qualities if the purpose of editing is to be achieved. Ate (2003:5) outlines some of these qualities:

- He must have nose for news
- He must be sociable and creative
- He must be versatile in history, psychology and philosophy
- He must be proactive and a trend tracker
- He must have the mastery of the language in which editing is done
- He must be patient and ready to thoroughly read other people's works
- He must be research-oriented
- He must be adventurous
- He must have a thorough understanding of the laws of the land, political and economic undercurrents
- He must have a mastery of editing symbols.

3.3 Hints on Editing the Editorial Page

The editorial page editor must understand the paper's philosophy and policy and perform his task within their purview.

Editing of the editorial page should be carried out in consonance with the newspaper's house style. Errors of fact, syntax, libel and logic should be well taken care of while editing the editorial.

The editorial page editor should always carry out his task with regard to deadline and must ensure that editing is done with a view to having an edge over competition in the industry.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define the term editing
2. Why do we need editing in editorial writing?
3. Outline the general hints on editing the editorial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Editing is very crucial for successful journalistic endeavour. It is equally important in an editorial piece.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, I demystify the concept of editing, outline the need for editing and capture some important hints on editing the editorial page.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What is editing? Why is editing important in an editorial?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRINT AND BROADCAST MEDIA EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Value of Editorials
 - 3.2 Differences between Print and Broadcast Editorials
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials generally, whether print or broadcast, perform different functions. They inform, educate and entertain the audience. Some editorials support policies, others attack, while others amuse or amaze the readers or listeners. Some editorials perform the role of illuminating the day's intelligence and others defend the underdogs, depending on their mission. This unit basically examines the difference between print and broadcast media editorials.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- to know the value of editorials
- to understand the differences between print and broadcast media editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Value of Editorials

The value of editorials can be appreciated from the standpoint of the roles they play in the society. It could be supportive role, defensive role, or attacking an idea, issue or policy. Some editorials demystify complex issues and dissect them to the understanding of the audience.

Writing on the value of editorials, Wilson (2000:73) averred that the editorial "gives the media organization an opportunity to present its policies and beliefs without colouring the regular news stories with biased statements." He asserts:

- Media organization can use the medium of editorials to campaign for or against a cause. They do this by using every opportunity to present a point. By so doing, they serve as gatekeepers and agenda setters. They decide what information to transmit, the direction, how much emphasis to give to the issue under discussion.

He reasoned that the relevance of an issue depends on how it is handed by the mass media. Amplifying the agenda setting function of the media, the mass communication expert (op. cit.) observes that “if the news media discuss an issue, then it is important; if they are silent about it, then the issue is not important.”

This therefore means that the depth and dimension of the reported event determines the dimension and value of an editorial.

3.2 Differences between Print and Broadcast Editorials

The question at stake is, can broadcast media editorialize? That question can be answered ‘yes’ in the Nigerian situation. However, in the American context, broadcast editorials were outlawed by the American Communications Commission on the ground that broadcasters cannot be advocates. (Wilson, 2000). Citing Walter Emery in his book, *Broadcasting and Government: Responsibilities and Regulations*, Wilson (2000:73) justifies the above premise:

- ...it is clear that responsibility for the conduct of a broadcast station must rest initially with the broadcaster. It is equally clear that with the limitations in frequencies inherent in the nature of radio, the public interest can never be served by a decision of any broadcast facility to the support of the partisan ends. Radio (including television) can serve as an instrument of democracy only when devoted to the communication of information and the exchange of ideas fairly and objectively presented...

Emery in his documented postulations cited in (Wilson, 2000:74) insisted that “freedom of speech on the radio must be broad enough to provide full and equal opportunity for presentation to the public of all sides of public issues.” As one licensed to operate in public domain, he argued that the licence has “assumed the obligation of presenting all sides of important public questions, fairly, objectively, without bias. The public interest – not the private - is paramount.” (Wilson, 2000:74).

Since an editorial is the corporate voice or expression of a media organization on a given issue of public interest, it will amount to betrayal of public interest from the American perspective, if broadcast stations resort to presenting private organization’s views at the expense

of public interest which they are supposed to constitutionally protect and uphold. But back home in Nigeria, the issue under probe is a different ball game. Wilson (2000:74) observes that "...broadcasters in Nigeria are in the habit of editorializing under different labels all in the name of news." If that is the case, how can we distinguish print media editorials from those of broadcast media?

Onabajo (2000: 20-21) tackles the subject matter by outlining some key points in writing editorials for both print and broadcast media.

For the print media, he stated that the editorial writer must recognize the following things:

- That there is a formula for editorial writing
- Critical comments must be supported by facts
- Editorials provide reading exercise
- An editorial writer must remember that 'criticism' is not only about casting aspersions.
- Editorial writing is about unified essays

For broadcast media editorials he asserts:

- The broadcast editorial writer addresses the ear and, must avoid confusing the listener or viewer, with many complex words... Also, broadcast editorials must be simpler and more straightforward than editorials written for the print.

Onabajo (2000: 202) in distinguishing broadcast editorials from print media added that "many broadcast editorials are more tentative, than the newspaper editorial."

It is equally important to stress that broadcast editorials are guided by time while print media editorials are guided by space. In writing for broadcast media, Okunna et al (2002: 235) argue that "a writer can utilize the strengths and characteristics of the broadcast media to achieve his/her objective." The same thing can be applied to editorial writing for the air where transience, timeliness and brevity are guiding post.

The above scenario is opposed to writing for the print media which characteristically celebrates permanence, literate technology and high mental demand as merits. Knowing the difference between print and broadcast media in terms of technology, style and general operations can put the student in a better perspective to fully appreciate the differences between print and broadcast media editorials. Ume-Uwagbo cited in Okunna et al (2002:236-237) captures the major differences between print and broadcast journalism:

- When we write for the print media, we are writing information that will be taken in through the eye. On the other hand, information written for the broadcast is taken in essentially through the ear.
- Newspaper readers never hear what we are trying to say – they only see our work. Broadcast listeners, on the other hand, do exactly the opposite of that.
- Broadcast leads are shorter, often mentioning only one or two of that 5 Ws (who, what, where, when and why), and sometimes the ‘how’ of the story.
- In broadcasting, the equivalent of length, (spatial) of a story is time, and the broadcast medium does not have much time.
- Newspapers are full of facts, details and numbers. Since the ear is a less patient organ than the eye, so to say, it gets easily upset when you drone on and on with a story, or when you hurl fistful of details at it.
- The broadcast writer must write the news of the world in fewer words than would normally be carried on a single page of many newspapers.
- A newspaper reader can scan an article over and over, for as many times as he wishes, but on television and radio, he will hear it only once.
- A newspaper reader has to be functionally literate, whereas a broadcast listener does not necessarily have to be.

Another area of differentiate print editorials from broadcast commentaries is through the use of attention-catching devices. Print media often use devices like bigger typefaces or fonts, pictures, cartoons, and letters to the editor among others to win the attention of readers. However, the broadcast media, because of their ephemeral nature, often use devices like repetition, tonation, to mention only a few, to draw home the message to the audience.

Print media editorials are more detailed, permanent and robust in the use of language and style. This is opposed to broadcast media editorials which are usually brief, straightforward and simpler. In Nigeria, broadcast media editorials are critical against government policies. They are more of public relations stuff packaged to publicise government policies, whether sound or unsound.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Briefly discuss the value of an editorial.
2. Differentiate between print media editorials and broadcast media editorials.

4.0 CONCLUSION

I have established the value of editorials and identified some differences or parting ways of print and broadcast media editorials.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, I highlighted the value of editorials, and showcased the major differences between print media editorials and broadcast editorials.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Appraise the value of an editorial and discuss the differences between the print media and broadcast media editorials.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 EDITORIAL WRITING AND THE ECONOMY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Impact of Editorial on the Economy
 - 3.2 Samples of Editorials on Economic Issues
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mass media have the mandate of setting agenda on socio-political and economic issues in the society. Through news, features, pictures, editorials, etc, the mass media influence public thinking on different issues at local, national and international levels. This unit appraises the role of editorials in the economic sector.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the impact of editorials in the economic sector
- analyse economic oriented editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Impact of Editorials on Economy

Editorials all over the world contribute in building sustainable economies for different countries. They do this by advising government, institutions, individuals and other stakeholders in the economy on how to solve complexing economic puzzles. They set agenda for policy makers in the area of economy. Editorials also influence the course of economy of nations by throwing more light on issues that bother on the survival of people.

Economic issues are sometimes interwoven with political and social issues. For instance, free education programme in a society may be a political issue but it has an economic dimension. If people in a given society are to enjoy free education, it therefore means that they will have more money in their pocket to spend for other things. Again, by beaming their searchlight on issues like the negative bearish trend in the stock markets, hikes in the price of fuel, lending rates by banks, rising cost of food at the national and international levels among other things,

editorial writers take time to research and provide a way out of the hopeless economic situation for the betterment of the society.

Financial institutions, students and members of the academia often gain much from the economic analyses in some editorials. Such analyses provide an intellectual compass for researchers to find answers on probing economic questions in a society.

Economic- conscious readers, receive warnings from some editorials against taking poor economic decisions. For instance, by advocating for high pay package for all categories of workers in the society without recourse to certain economic fundamentals, the request may be a curse rather than a blessing to the economy of a nation when implemented. Editorials educate both the government and the governed on the economic implications of a certain fiscal policies. Editorials make case for proper budgeting, spending culture, allocation of resources and planning in different spheres of life. They warn the government on the side effects of taking certain loans, executing certain projects, among other things. Editorials also guide readers to take wise economic decisions like saving, investment, etc. Since economy is the life wire of every nation, the impact of editorials in the sector cannot be underestimated. Daramola (2003:32) states that without the media, society's economic life is bound to suffer.

3.2 Selected Editorials on Economic Issues

Having discussed the impact of editorials on the economy, I would like us to take a look at some selected editorials on economic issues.

Sample I

Call for an Oil Minister

- In the wake of the apparently unending fuel scarcity across the country, members of the House of Representatives invited the Group Managing Director of NNPC, Mr. Jackson Gaius-Obaseki, to appear before the House to explain why the NNPC seemed incapable of ensuring regular fuel supply in the country. The Representatives have every reason to be concerned. Again, and again, the country faces the ordeal of fuel scarcity. Economic activities are disrupted. Life is made unbearable for motorists and ordinary citizens as the cost of living rises. Government appears totally helpless. In the event, the Representatives seized the opportunity of Gaius-Obaseki's presence to express their dissatisfaction with the performance of NNPC. They noted that the corporation is "a haven of corruption."

- But they fell short of imposing sanctions on the management of the NNPC as they concluded that the nature of the problem called for more radical solutions well beyond the capacity of the NNPC. In their thinking, the principal reason why the petroleum sector is so disorganized and problematic is because the Federal Government has refused to appoint a Minister of Petroleum resources to take charge of that critical sector. At the moment, that portfolio is held by the President. He is assisted by a Special Adviser, Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman. We think the Representatives are right.
- The country needs an executive authority for petroleum that can be held accountable if things go wrong. Well-defined structures ought to be put in place to oversee all aspects of petroleum production – refining and distribution – to replace the somewhat arbitrary arrangement that currently exists. The president of Nigeria at the helm of an evolving democracy is not in the best position to additionally take the role of Minister of Petroleum for which there is a statutory provision. Also, it is remarkable that of all the OPEC members, Nigeria, the sixth largest in the group, is the only one without a substantive oil minister. By calling for an effective and responsible authority to oversee the nation’s petroleum industry, the legislators have made the incontrovertible point that the current arrangement is unsatisfactory. Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman, who is the Adviser on Petroleum, is also the Secretary General of OPEC, a busy job that keeps him away from Nigeria most of the time. In the nature of things, he cannot split his abilities in such a manner as to provide qualitative service in both positions as either calls for the full exertions of an officer. Doubling as Secretary General of one of the world’s most active organizations whilst at the same time acting as a quasi minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is not the best way to optimize ability. Nor is the President’s position in this matter acceptable. Last Monday, he had declared during a televised media chat that he would not appoint an oil minister. “We are in a presidential system. I am the executive of all ministries. That is what executive president means. I appoint minister where I think a minister is necessary,” the President said. We think he is wrong.
- In as far as oil remains by far our most important natural resource, it seems improper that we should merely assign an adviser to it. In fact, by its pre-eminent position in the economy of Nigeria, it deserves to be headed by a minister of prime quality and experience indeed, a senior member of cabinet. As it is, surprisingly, there is no minister of petroleum in the one resource that is vital for the survival of the nation.

- As far back as August last year, this paper had in an editorial called for the appointment of an oil minister. The legislators have come to the same conclusion. More than at any other time in the past, there is need to take a fresh look at the structure and organization of NNPC, the serviceability or otherwise of our refineries, and the petroleum distribution network. Nigeria's continued importation of refined petroleum products is scandalous. We need an oil minister with a precise brief to bring Nigeria at par with other members of OPEC in terms of petroleum efficiency.

Source: *The Guardian*, March 1, 2001.

Sample II

The Unemployment Explosion

- The recently released result of a survey by the Federal Ministry of Education which showed that 71 per cent of students who graduated from Nigeria's higher institutions in the last six years have yet to find jobs is worrisome. Equally disturbing is the revelation from a joint survey conducted by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) that 30 per cent of those in employment are incompetent.
- The Education Ministry in an exercise entitled: "Tracking assets for progress," designed to trace the whereabouts of products of the nation's universities, polytechnics and colleges of education and their contributions to national economy and development discovered that up to 71 per cent of the graduates covered by the exercise are without gainful employments. Similarly, ITF and NECA in a joint survey on skills and competencies of Nigerian graduates, found that 30 per cent of graduates who have employments, fall below the expectations of their employers. The reports, as gloomy as they appear, are only sad reminders of the depressing state of the nation's economy and the parlous condition of the education sector.
- Despite the economic reforms initiated by the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian economy has failed to respond positively to engender remarkable growth. Policy somersaults, harsh operating environment and insecurity have combine to render the reform programme largely ineffectual. The results of the surveys should not surprise anybody. They should only serve to warn Nigerians that the pervading insecurity and hopelessness in the country are not about to improve yet. They might

indeed get worse because the unemployed graduates represent a ready source of recruits for mischief makers.

- Unemployment is a time-bomb in any society if left unchecked for too long. Without doubt, Nigeria is already experiencing some of the side effects of rampant unemployment through brain drain and pervasive insecurity of lives and properties. And the government appears not to be unconcerned. The unemployment situation will not suddenly improve on its own without concerted efforts on the part of government. By politicizing the issue of unemployment, the little contribution that the so-called poverty alleviation programmes of government could have achieved became eroded. None of the programmes instituted by government to alleviate the situation has recorded any major gains.
- The unemployment situation will remain the same as the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) remains ineffectual. The inefficiency of the sick company as had a debilitating impact on the fortunes of the real sector of the economy. Alternatives to PHCH are costly. Funds which manufacturers should have used as working capital or to increase capacity utilization end up on alternative sources of energy. In such circumstances, graduates will have no outlets for gainful employment. Interestingly, the other major outlet of employment in any economy, which is the government, is shrinking in Nigeria. Also, the one vibrant textile industry which was the single biggest employer of labour in the country besides agriculture is gasping for breath. Most of the companies in the sector have closed shops while the few that are still in operation depend more on trading than manufacturing to survive. It requires no soothsayer or survey to prove that as long as the hopeless economic situation remains, Nigerian graduates will find it difficult to get employment.
- Even the hope of a boom in the economy following the conclusion of the consolidation exercise in the banking sector as not been realized. Manufacturers still complain that financial institutions are averse to extending long-term loans to them for expansion. The case of small-scale entrepreneurs is even worse as they are force to depend mainly on ploughed back profit and savings to finance their operations. It is hopeless for an unemployed with business ideas to secure loans from banks. Hopefully, the newly established micro finance banks will fill this gap.

- Nigerian tertiary institutions roll out graduates in their thousands annually and to think that the majority of them remain unemployed while a number of those in employment are without ‘real’ competencies is disturbing. It is indeed disheartening to discover that the thousands of applications received by the prospective employers in response to vacancy announcements emanate mainly from youth whom may have nothing meaningful to offer. It is a sorry tale that today’s graduates who spend an average of four to five years in school are, by Nigerian employers’ standards, incompetent. This is even putting it mildly because most of them are just a little better than the secondary school leaving certificate holder. As the result of post-JAMB examinations have shown, the process of selecting candidates for admission into the nation’s universities is remarkably faulty. Cheating has become a way of life in the process and the nation is suffering the consequence as the ITF/NECA survey revealed.
- The issue of incompetence must be tackled headlong. The additional cost of re-training the incompetent graduates is one that most companies are not willing to absorb. Skills acquisition must be given priority in tertiary institutions if this ugly situation is to end. It is sad that a study conducted by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) showed that vocational and technical education has completely disappeared from polytechnics and mono-technics. This disappearance of these fields in the higher institutions is accountable for this rather unacceptable high unemployment figure. One of the reasons behind the establishment of these institutions was to create and develop youths who can be self-employed after school.
- There is need for the government to create the enabling environment that will enable the real sector to operate at full capacity. This, of course, requires that government hasten its plans to transform the PHCN and also encourage bankers to increase loans to cottage industries. The recent decision by government to organize a “job fair” where the unemployed will be brought into contact with seekers of labour from the private sector is commendable. Its success is however doubtful because the jobs are simply not there.

Source: *Financial Standard*, February 9, 2002.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the impact of editorials on the economy.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit established the fact that editorial writing is very important to the economy sector of any society, as it illuminates the day's intelligence on economic issues for the government and the governed.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit featured the impact of editorials on the economy and captured some written editorials on economic issues.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write a seven-paragraphed editorial on any topical economic issue in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Financial Standard (2007). "The Unemployment Explosion" Editorial, February 9, 2007.

UNIT 5 EDITORIAL WRITING, POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Relevance of Editorials to Politics
 - 3.2 Relevance of Editorials to Governance
 - 3.3 Some Selected Editorials of Politics and Governance
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials play very crucial role to virtually all sectors of the economy. In the economic arena, editorials are a blessing to humanity. The same thing is applicable to politics and governance where editorials lead both the government and governed in taking sensitive decisions on the machinery for expression of the will of the state. This unit examines the relevance of editorials in politics and governance.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand politics
- understand governance
- appreciate the impact of editorials on politics and governance.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Relevance of Editorials to Politics

The term politics is defined as “ideas and activities that are concerned with the gaining and using of power in a country.” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*). These ideas and activities could include political parties, electioneering campaigns, voting, and impeachment of candidate.

Politics, according to Nnoli (1986:7), “is about power, influence, interests and values. Politics refers to all activities which are directly or indirectly associated with the seizure of state power, the consolidation of state power, and the use of the state power.”

Editorials can educate the people about the operations of political parties in terms of their policies, political might or strength among other things. Editorials are also relevant in politics because they can beam their searchlight on political candidates. Oriavwoke (2003:2) sees a political candidate as a person or individual seeking for political office. According to him, a political candidate is “seen as a product of political party primaries chosen as the brand of choice from stream of aspirants with the aim of seeking elective political office...”

Once the person seeking for political office gets the nomination, he becomes a property of the political party. There has to be effective communication of ideas, services or products in all exchange

transactions and so it is with the political marketing scenario (Oriavwoke, 2003).

Editorials are supposed to comment on local, national and international elections with a view to illuminating the day's intelligence on political undercurrents. Through editorials, the level of political awareness can be increased in the society. Politicians and political parties can benefit from the agenda setting function in the area of editorials and that would engender responsible participation in the political affairs of a nation.

Through editorials, the political underdogs who are unjustifiably descended upon by the overlords in the society can be defended, among other roles.

3.2 Relevance of Editorials to Governance

Basically, it is the responsibility of government to provide basic amenities to members of the society. Government has the mandate of maintaining law and order as well as providing security of members of the society, among other functions (Ate, 2008:89).

McQuail (2005:234) contends that governance refers not “only to formal and binding rules, but also to numerous informed mechanism, internal and external to the media by which they are ‘steered’ towards multiple (and often inconsistent) objectives.”

McQuail identifies the purpose of media governance:

- The protection of the essential interest of the state and of public order, including the prevention of public harm;
- The safeguarding of individual rights and interests;
- Meeting the needs of media industry for a stable and supportive operating environment;
- Promotion of freedom and other communication and cultural variables;
- Encouraging of technological innovation and economic enterprise;
- Setting technical and infrastructural stand order;
- Meeting international obligations, including observance of human rights;
- Encouraging accountability.

Looking at the mass media and governance from a holistic perspective, Ate (2007:2) observes that “the media connects the government to the governed, electorate to the candidates in a democratic setting.”

It is an established fact that through editorials, sanity can be restored in governance. Editorials have the powers to chart a new course for governance, restructure existing political and integrate a new political in the society. Editorials can vote against sinister political status quos in governance. For instance, during the “Third Term Agenda” of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigerian newspapers through editorials and journalistic features condemned the evil and influence the National Assembly and Nigerians to attacking it with all vehemence. The agenda became a failed project, courtesy of the mass media.

Many editorials in Nigerian newspapers dwell much on governance. They support policies where necessary and attack same when they are not profound.

Through editorials, people can know the direction of governance whether it is successful or not.

Editorial on governance take into cognizance the fundamental human rights of citizens ensure that such rights are constitutionally protected by leaders. Such editorials often promote the concepts of the rule of law, responsible leadership, and corporate governance.

They tend to answer probing and perplexing questions bordering on governance in the society.

3.3 Some Selected Editorials on Politics and Governance

Sample I (Politics)

Proposed Reforms and Delayed Council Elections

- Last week, the technical committee on local government reforms submitted its report to President Olusegun Obasanjo. The committee, first headed by the Etsu-Nupe, Dr. Umar Sanda Ndayako, now deceased, but later led by Mallam Liman Ciroma, was inaugurated four months ago. Principal among its recommendations are a call for the retention of the existing system of local government, pegging the number of councils at 774, being the figure indicated in the 1999 Constitution, and thus giving a short shrift to councils created by states since the constitution came into effect. The committee also wants the abolition of the state joint local government accounts.

Noting that local councils had become avenues for institutionalized graft, the 13-man committee suggested the convocation of a summit of stakeholders comprising the council, state and federal governments to work out ways of institutionalizing service as the *raison d'être* for government.

- From its inception, the technical committee was greeted by controversy. There were fears that the ruling People Democratic Party was aiming to wholly seize that tier of government in its alleged quest for a one-party state. There is little to suggest that the controversy that always trailed the committee is about to be buried. At least, some of its recommendations will spark new debates. Yet, other than the bird's eye view of the report, which was disclosed at the presentation ceremony, not much else is known. Nigerians need to see the full report. Essentially, whatever is contained therein should be seen as forming only a part of a holistic effort at reviewing the constitution. The piecemeal approach will not suffice. But while the next steps are awaited, local councils must be run by elected representatives.
- Except in so far as it is a reflection of the pervading lawlessness in the country, there is no reason whatsoever why the country should not, at present, be operating democratically elected local governments councils. Of the 774 local councils recognized in the Constitution, and others that have been created since 1999, none is being governed by elected representatives. This is an appalling failing of state governments. For the past 20 months, governors have found one excuse or the other to hold off the conduct of council elections, even after aspirants and candidates have expended huge sums in the run-up to the polls that never held. It all began with the passage of the Electoral Act 2001 which purported to elongate the tenure of elected councilors and chairmen from three to four years. In March 2002, the Supreme Court struck down the provision as unconstitutional.
- As the tenure of the councilors expired in May/June last year, caretaker committees as approved by laws passed by the various state House of Assembly took charge. But confusion lingered as to when the council polls would hold. Constitutionally, the elections could not, and cannot, hold unless the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) provided the voters' register to the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs). Some litigants sued to restrain INEC from forwarding the 1998 voters register as doing so would disenfranchised many Nigerians who had since come to voting age. So, INEC had to be waited on to update its register, an exercise conducted in September/October last year. The council

elections were tentatively scheduled for last December. Then, for some consideration, the so-called stakeholders agreed to conduct the polls after the general elections that took place in April and May this year.

- In June, President Olusegun Obasanjo announced the formation of a technical committee to formulate reform proposals for the third tier of government. In the circumstance of the evolution of the technical committee, state governors found it convenient to once again postpone local council elections. Their excuse was that it would be preferable to have elected councils operate on the basis of the proposed reforms. Meanwhile, hand-picked local government caretaker committees are being engaged and disengaged whimsically by the state governors who have found an unconstitutional avenue for dispensing political patronage. Recently, the Lagos State government upped the ante by appointing a chairman, vice-chairman and three supervisory councilors for each of its original 20 local governments and the 37 others it contends it followed constitutional provision in creating.
- The statement issued by the government announcing the appointments purported to rely, in part, on Section 7 of the 1999 constitution. Yet, Section 7(1) provides unambiguously: “The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall, subject to section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils.” The recent appointment of chairmen, vice-chairmen and supervisory councilors is quite plainly unconstitutional. There is absolutely no reason why the state government could not have conducted council elections. By not doing so, it is perpetrating an illegality which must not go unchallenged should the state government not retrace its steps.
- Indeed, that should be the path for all other state governments to tread. There is no reason for them to await the reforms envisaged from the work of the Ciroma technical committee. During his recent television interview, President Obasanjo disclaimed any responsibility for the non-conduct of council elections. According to him, the proposed reforms should not thwart the efforts of state governments to hold council elections. The state governors and their electoral commissions have no excuse not to give effect to the constitutional provision in section 7(1).

- As matters stand now, there is foretelling when those reforms will take legal effect, if ever they will. From some of the published accounts so far, the technical committee has voted for the retention of the present local government structure, except that it wants that tier to operate a parliamentary system. Advocating a parliamentary system in one tier when the state and federal governments operate a presidential system is likely to spark disagreeable debate as indications show already. Accounting for other inputs and perhaps constitutional amendments, the time would drag on into later next year, even beyond. If council elections are not conducted now, there is no stopping potential litigants from also claiming that they would be disenfranchised without a revised voter's register, which could again cause a postponement of the polls. The rigmarole must cease. Let the state electoral commissions get on with the conduct of the council elections. Reforms can follow later.

Source: *The Guardian*, November 19, 2003

Sample II (Politics)

Abacha as the Parties' Candidate

- The five political parties have concluded their respective emergency conventions with each of them emerging from its meeting with a single critical resolution: the adoption of Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha, as its candidate in the presidential election scheduled for August 1. The circumstances of the identical resolution are so well known that they betray a travesty of the independence of the parties and are a subversion of the parties and of the spirit of competition, which is a major driving force in a democracy.
- The parties did not summon the conventions on their own volition. They were obeying orders from the Federal Authorities, which also set a deadline for the emergency meetings. As part of the subterfuge, it was unclear, at least presumably, why the parties which ought to be more focused on the National Assembly elections which took place on April 25 should be bothered about a national convention. It was nevertheless discernible that the sole purpose of the convention was to pass the aforesaid resolution.
- How did the parties go about this? To create a semblance of legality, they proceeded by amending their respective Constitutions, i.e. allowing a party member to nominate any person, whether or not he is member of the party, whether or not he is a serving military officer. The United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) set the ball on its curious course at its convention on April 16 in Kaduna. Then

there was a predictable domino effect: the CNC, NCPN and DPN each amended its Constitution and proclaimed Gen. Abacha as its candidate. The only semblance of competition was in the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM) whose convention at Maiduguri tossed up Alhaji Mohammed Dikko Yusufu, Mr. Tunji Braithwaite and Mr. Josiah Uchenna Obiechina, all of whom were present. Obiechina was disqualified; and just before the primaries, Braithwaite, protesting what he thought was the circus show that were the primaries, withdrew, in order, he said, not to invest the charade with a toga of legitimacy. In the end, Gen. Abacha, in absentia, as in all the other conventions, out-voted M.D Yusufu.

- The parties' choice presents the nation with an awkward and unprecedented situation. All known electoral guidelines and constitutional provisions require any public servant interested in political office to resign his appointment and then head for the political field. But the political parties in their rash enthusiasm to adopt Gen. Abacha have been unmindful of these provisions. Instead, they are pleading the national interest and beseeching the Head of State to endorse their total disregard for legality and finesse. It would be a great tragedy if Gen. Abacha did their bidding. It is beside the point that while the political choreography lasts, Gen. Abacha has kept mute. Yet, it can be inferred that the Head of State, by his agonizingly prolonged silence, has spoken. A nation cannot be run efficiently on a game of dicey suspense.
- The way and manner the parties have gone about recruiting Gen. Abacha is objectionable. It is lacking in common sense and decency. It is an affront to all known rules of equity. Just a few weeks ago, the UNCP, for example, sidelined some well-meaning aspirants whose credentials are excellent any day for the National Assembly. Such aspirants, the UNCP claimed, had not been in the party for up to 12 months and had also not made "substantial contributions" to the growth of the party. And yet, the same party has turned 360 degrees to alter its constitution and has adopted a non-party member to represent it in an election. What do these party leaders take Nigerians for? That we can be so gravely insulted and kicked?
- We all know that the Armed Forces have also been politicized. They have ceased being apolitical since they tasted the forbidden political fruit in 1966. But the parties' choice appears to be a formalization of that politicization whose ripple effects are many and decidedly unsettling. By asking Gen. Abacha to contest, whether or not in uniform, the parties are also luring, even inciting, other uniformed members of the Armed Forces to freely declare their interest to run for other available offices in the remainder of the transition period.

That is a recipe for fractionalizing the Armed Forces whose members are yearning for a full return to their purely professional duties. Or, are the political parties suggesting that Gen. Abacha can set a precedent and then outlaw same? We believe, and strongly too, that the major disqualifications as far as self-succession is concerned is that a serving military officer cannot belong to a political party. Thus, the purported adoption of Gen. Abacha by the parties is a nullity. To fall for the parties' bait, therefore, is to remove the last vestige of credibility for a transition programme loaded already with wearying doubts. There is also the issue of honour and propriety, which we argued in previous editorials on this subject. Honour and propriety are issues, which are not negotiable especially when they concern the highest office, the symbol of our values and aspirations as a people.

- The leaders of the political parties must be rebuked for their insensitivity and crass opportunism. Yes, it is true that nations have sometimes been at a crossroads and have called upon one of their distinguished citizens to lead them aright. But that was often the result of undisguised patriotic and nationalistic fervours that only an infinitesimal minority would raise voices of dissent. This is not the case in Nigeria. Even when critical, powerful voices faded in retreat to self-preserve, and thereby gave way to the reign of political contractors, the various opposition groups were and are steadfast in their opposition to any consensus arrangement. There was, in particular, a willing and courageous challenge offered by M.D Yusufu, a former Inspector-General of Police and Mr. Braithwaite, a lawyer. By killing off these contending interests, the parties buried the plural essence and choice inherent in a democratic election. The political party leaders have opted to make Nigeria an object of derision, much to the bewilderment of the international community which is eager to see Nigeria restored to democratic and accountable governance. We urge Gen. Abacha to spurn the parties' invitation and to restore thereby the dignity of this great nation.

Source: *The Guardian*, May 5, 1998.

Sample I (Governance)

Retirement Benefits for Former Leaders

- Three days to his exit from power, General Abdulsalami Abubakar endorsed the supplement to Official Extra-Ordinary Gazette 33 which announced a new welfare package for all former heads of state. Each of them will now earn N350, 000 a month. He will also be provided with three vehicles, which will be replaced every four

years. Similarly, previous vice-presidents or chiefs of general staff will get N250, 000 each per month. The gazette also makes provision for the families of deceased heads of state and vice-presidents, who are to receive a yearly stipend of N1 million and N750, 000 respectively. All former leaders are also entitled to free medical care, paid vacation and free office accommodation with telephone services.

- Ordinarily, the Federal Government should be commended for establishing an open and verifiable process for meeting the retirement needs of this category of senior citizens. In stable countries where the business of government is transacted in a transparent manner, such terms of compensation are always an integral part of conditions of service. In such countries, heads of state retire and enjoy their full pay for life. They also retain their diplomatic passports and are entitled to cars and some personal staff. These prerequisites are usually not much different from the general welfare package for public servants who are entitled to gratuity and pension. With this kind of assurance of security after retirement, public servants, including heads of state, are insured against uncertainties that tend to encourage corrupt enrichment.
- But the compensation package should be assessed in the context of prevailing circumstances. Quite understandably, the matter has generated public interest. What, for example, is the compelling reason for this enhanced pension for heads of state and their deputies? In the Nigerian environment, the real value for the pension does not amount to much. But there should be a rational way of linking what is approved to the general structure of wages in the public service.
- The other important issue concerns the criteria for choosing beneficiaries. Without prejudice to their individual integrity, we don't think it is right to group military heads of state alongside democratically elected ones. Those who staged coups to overthrow governments should not enjoy this recognition. This is one symbolic way of expressing public disapproval for their action. In any case, the military heads of state are retired generals and they earn their salary for life. To include them in this new welfare scheme will amount to double compensation.
- Ambiguity surrounds the amount allocated to the family of a deceased head of state. Is there a time limit to the payment or is it to be in perpetuity? The gazette appears to be silent on this. It is not clear, too, who will collect the money directly from source. Is it the spouse(s), the children, the next of kin or the first son, or daughter?

Any arrangement that leaves room for jostling may lead to frustration and unnecessary litigation. Many courts of the land are inundated with such cases of inheritance. A more appropriate arrangement will be to institute a trust fund for the education of the children up to the first degree level. The trust should also contribute to the welfare of a spouse until death or re-marriage.

- Criticisms of the measure on grounds of its monetary value are somewhat exaggerated. Nigerians should have no difficulty rewarding a good leader. Some have argued that the former leaders do not need the facility because they were already wealthy by the time they left office. This is an unhelpful generalization. All over the world, past office holders at such national level are well cared for. Our leaders deserve no less attention. This is the thinking behind the policy. We welcome it, provided it applies to only democratically elected leaders.

Source: *The Guardian*, June 25, 1999.

Sample II (Governance)

A Crowded Cabinet

- With the swearing in of his Cabinet last week, President Olusegun Obasanjo can now begin the work of providing the kind of effective and purposeful administration he promised on the day of his inauguration. In the four months since he was elected, the President has left no one in doubt about what he intends to do to meet the challenges of good governance. The direction of institutional changes his administration hopes to pursue has been evident in the appointments he made to various strategic positions. The purges of the military and police gave early indications of this. The establishment of several probe and investigation panels also showed the determination of the government to restore confidence and promote the tradition of transparency and accountability. In view of these initial measures, the public expected that the composition of the Federal cabinet would reflect the ideals and goals set out by the administration.
- The first thing that attracts curiosity is the size of the Cabinet. There are so far 49 ministers for 33 ministries. Three more names have been forwarded to the Senate for approval. There are also 12 special advisers and senior special assistants. Three new ministries of environment, commerce in Africa and culture and tourism have been created. Within the presidency, there are at least five ministries. The constitutional requirement is that at least one minister should come from each of the 36 states of the country. That number is, in itself, a

big burden for a country with a severely distressed economy. Now we are going to have about 50 ministers. The government does not need that number of people to accomplish what it has to do.

- The government has justified the size and inclusiveness of the Cabinet on the ground of geo-political balancing. There is also the consideration given to special interest groups which are not adequately covered under the geo-political arrangement. This explains the appointment of notable politicians such as Alhaji Mahmud Waziri as special adviser. Alhaji Waziri was, until his appointment, the national chairman of the All Peoples Party whose candidate challenged Obasanjo at the presidential contest in February. Another striking feature of the cabinet is the appointment of Chief Ige of the Alliance for Democracy as Minister of Mines and Power. In making these trans-party choices, the Peoples Democratic Party has shown that it is prepared to strive for consensus and collaboration in the running of the affairs of the country. The appointments have implications for intra-party discipline as well as the future of opposition in the emerging democratic setting.
- Another notable issue is the way the President has brought on board people he thinks he can trust to deliver on the promise of rendering good service. Of particular interest in this regard is the defence portfolio given to Gen. Theophilus Danjuma who was part of the 1977-79 troika with Obasanjo and the late Musa Yar'Adua. The President has said that Nigeria needs truly professional armed forces. Danjuma's presence in that sensitive ministry can help in this task. The Police Affairs Ministry is given a good account of himself as Gen. David Jemibewon. He, too, gave a good account of himself as the military governor of Oyo State when Obasanjo was military head of state. The reorganization of the police is an area in which Jemibewon is expected to demonstrate his avowed commitment to decency and human rights.
- The factor of trust also explains the assignments of the Internal Affairs portfolio to Mr. Sunday Afolabi. He has a difficult job to do. The prisons and other establishments under this ministry have always been used by oppressive governments to dehumanize Nigerians and to frustrate people and organizations that challenge the conservative hold of some interest groups. Mallam Adamu Ciroma will need to fall back on his experience to tackle the crisis of confidence engendered by the handling of the country's finances in the past. He was governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria nearly 25 years ago. His reputation as a leading political figure will be helped by how much accountability and trust he can bring to the Ministry of Finance. Like Ciroma, Chief Ige has good credentials to be President

of Nigeria. A problematic area like power and steel offers a good opportunity for him to assist the country to overcome the twin crises of irregular electricity supply and a bungled steel development programme.

- By appointing a non-professional into the information ministry, President Obasanjo may have confirmed that he harbours some mistrust for the members of the Fourth Estate. His special assistant on media and publicity is a medical doctor. Considering the frontline battle the mass media waged in support of the democratic process, their representation in the new administration ought to be more substantial than it has been so far. Furthermore, a busy government such as we are expecting needs someone who can achieve rapport with the media. A computer tycoon may not be the right choice for that work.
- The crowded nature of the cabinet will make it difficult for the government to work at the pace required to produce good results.
- The inclusion of many political tendencies is also likely to blur focus. These are matters the members of the cabinet should have in mind as they assume office. The Nigerian people have been cheated so often that they are not prepared now to tolerate inertia and incompetence. Each member of the cabinet is the President's agent. He should, therefore, not hesitate to remove any one whose work falls below expectation.

Source: *The Guardian*, July 5, 1999

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Briefly discuss the importance of editorials to politics
2. Explain the impact of editorials on governance.
3. Read and summarize one editorial on politics and one on governance.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been established in this unit that editorials are very useful in politics and governance. They serve as compass responsible leadership and influence both the government and the governed in policy initiation and execution.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit tackles the importance of editorials in politics and governance. It gives practical examples of some editorials on politics and governance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Summarize one editorial on politics and one on governance and explain the relevance of editorials to politics and governance.

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