MAC322 - EDITORIAL WRITING SUMMARY

Q. What is an 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. However, an editorial is influenced by the newspaper policy and philosophy, ownership structure as well as political environment in which it operates.

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.

Q. Briefly trace the history of editorial and the changes in its trends from individual to corporate expression.

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.

Q. Explain the characteristics of Editorials

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.

Q. Explain the features of an editorial and it relationship with its nature.

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.

Q. Discuss the qualities of a good editorial.

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

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

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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.
- Find a sound premise for your position and let your reasoning on that premise be equally sound
- Make the editorial short and crisp.

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- 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".

Q. Define 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.

Q. Outline the 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 noconfidence 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.

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.

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Q. Identify at least six factors that can be used in the 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.

Q. Discuss the opinion function 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.

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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.

Q. Discuss the functions of editorials in the mass media.

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.

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

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- 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

Q. Discuss the relationship between editorials and factual news reporting

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.

Q. Appreciate the relationship between editorials 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, eyewitnesses, 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:

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(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.

Q. State the relationship between editorials and columns

An editorial is a journalistic article or essay which critically and rationally informs, educates and entertains its target audience on sociopolitical 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 writeup. 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.

Q. List and explain the different types of editorial you know

There are three basic types of editorials. These are:

i. Interpretative Editorials

ii. Controversial Editorials

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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.

• 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.

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,

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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.

• 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

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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.

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.

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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.

Q. State the importance of research in editorial writing

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.

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• 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.

Q. Discuss the sources of 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.

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• Specialized Sources: E.g Embassies, Nigerian Office of Statistics, INEC, Population Bureau, etc.

Q. As an editorial writer, list the sources you can use in obtaining your data.

1. Internet
2. Public and Printed Records
3. Social Functions
4. Law Enforcement Officers
5. Experts
6. Libraries
7. Specialized Sources
8. Files

Q. Highlight the procedures for 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.

Q. Outline the stages in writing a good editorial?

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

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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 loose 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.

Q. Discuss major audience of editorials.

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.

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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.

Q. Explain the term Editorial and discuss the functions of good 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.

Q. John Kuhe is an aspiring editorial writer. Educate him on the qualities of a good editorial writer.

Qualities of Good Editorial Writer

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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 Englishspeaking 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.

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.

Q. List and briefly explain some 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

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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?"

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.

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).

Q. Discuss the features and functions of editorial board members.

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

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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
- Rational in thoughts

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.

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

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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.

Q. Define 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.

Q. List and briefly explain the nine laws of persuasion

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.

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Q. Discuss some persuasive techniques in editorial writing

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 reechoed 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

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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.

Q. Justify the relevance of propaganda in editorial writing.

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.

Q. List 15 propaganda techniques you know.

1. Glittering Generalities
2. Name Calling
3. Card Stacking
4. Band wagon
5. Testimonial
6. Transfer Device
7. Plain Folk
8. Appeal to Popularity
9. Appeal to Sympathy
10. Appeal to Special Interest
11. Appeal to Change
12. Appeal to Status Quo
13. Appeal to Bread and Butter
14. The Attack Strategy
15. Appeal to Truth

Q. State the guides to good editorial writing.

Guides for Good Editorial Writing

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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.

Q. Enumerate factors for determining editorial subjects

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.

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

• **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

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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.

Q. Give reasons for classification of editorials in the mass media

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.

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• 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.

Q. List and explain the various classification of editorial.

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 formular 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.

• 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:

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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.

Q. List the various segments of an editorial.

A typical editorial has four parts. These are:

1. The Editorial Title

2. The Lead or "Intro"

3. Body

4. Conclusion

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

Q. Briefly discuss the importance of focus in editorial writing.

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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.

Q. Identify the pitfalls in 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.

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.

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Q. Define Ethics and briefly trace its origin.

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-intraining 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".

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

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 reframe 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.

4. Privilege/Nondisclosure

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• 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.

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• A journalist should, therefore, avoid paying for information, except public interest so dictates.

Q. Outline the importance of the editorial paper

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.

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.

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

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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.

Q. Discuss the components of the editorial page

The editorial page is packaged with some aesthetic and attentionarresting 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.

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.

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."

Q. Define the term editing

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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

• Simplicity

Q. Why do we need editing in editorial writing?

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…

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

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• 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.

Q. Outline the general hints on editing the editorial.

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.

Q. Briefly discuss the value of an editorial.

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.

Q. Differentiate between print media editorials and broadcast media editorials.

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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.

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

Q. Discuss the impact of editorials on the 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

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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.

Q. Briefly discuss the importance of editorials to politics

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

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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 exchangetransactions 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.

Q. Explain the impact of editorials on governance.

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.

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