



COURSE CODE: MAC 214

COURSE TITLE: EDITORIAL WRITING

NUMBER OF UNITS: 2 UNITS

COURSE DURATION: Two hours per week

COURSE LECTURER: DR. ATE ASAN ANDREW

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course, students are expected to:

1. Define the concept of Editorial and understand qualities of good editorial writers
2. Understand types and functions of editorials
3. Understand persuasive and propaganda techniques in editorial writing
4. Apply the concept of editorial on topical socio-political and economic happenings in Nigeria.
5. Write good editorials.

COURSE DETAILS

Week 1-2: Meaning of editorials, editorial writers

Week 3-4: Types of editorials, editorials, functions of editorials.

Week 5-6: Sourcing for editorial materials, editorial audience.

Week 7-8: Classification of editorials, determinants of editorial subjects.

Week 9-10: Compare and contrast columns from editorials, write editorials.

Week 11: write editorials and reflect on dos and don'ts of editorials

Week 12: Revision

RESOURCES

- Lecturer's office hours:
- Dr. Ate, Asan Andrew (as assigned).
- Course lecturer notes:
<http://www.edouniversity.edu.ng/oer/masscomp/mac214.pdf>
- Books: Editorial writing: An academic and professional Approach. First Edition by Ate Asan Andrew, Pamma Press, 2007. ISBN NO: 9782951711
- Editorial writing: Principles, skills and practice by Kusugh Ternenge, 2016, ISBN NO: 97886126222
- JLS 725: Editorial writing by Andrew Asan Ate, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
URL: www.nouonline.edu.ng

Project:

Class is to be divided into two groups. Each group shall serve as editorial board members and they will appoint their chairmen.

Group 1 will write an editorial on topical political event in the country, while group 2 will write an editorial on any probing economic issue in Nigeria

Assignments & Grading

For group assignments, team work is encouraged but each member must participate.

- Homeworks + Project: ~ 30% of final grade.
- **Exams:**
- Final, comprehensive (according to university schedule): ~ 70% of final grade

• NO LATE HOMEWORKS ACCEPTED

- Turn in what you have at the time it's due.
- All homeworks are due at the start of class.
- If you will be away, turn in the homework early.

PREAMBLE:

The opinion function of the mass media is appreciated under advanced reporting. Editorial writing is an aspect of advanced reporting which takes the mass media to the realm of an estate or court of public opinion. People, individuals and institutions often look unto editorials for answers on vexing issues of the society as they also provide direction to policy makers and formulators



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MEANING OF EDITORIAL

The term editorial is defined by different scholars and professionals from different perspectives. William Allen White once described editorial as “an expression of opinion based on factors which present truth in a new light; something that everyone knows which no ever thought of.”

Lion Hint in his book “the editorial” sees editorial as an expression of the editor. From historical angle, the term editorial used to mean an expression of the editor. Iyorkyaa (1996) defines editorial as “a journalistic essay which attempts to: a) Inform or explain b) Persuade or convince c) Stimulate insights in an entertaining or humorous manner. Okoro,N&Agho, B (2003) looked at editorial as a critical evaluation, interpretation and presentation of significant contemporary events in such a way as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader.

EDITORIAL WRITERS

In some newspaper establishments, editorial writing is mainly the task of the Editorial Page Editor who is assisted by other editorial writers within an organization. The Editorial page editor is usually an experienced fellow and an acknowledged person in the art and science of editorial writing. (Ate 2007).

In some newspaper organizations, editorial writers are usually drawn from different professional and intellectual background and are pooled together under the auspices of editorial board members. The editorial board chairman assigns topics to other editorialists and also edits their works.

QUALITIES OF AN EDITORIAL WRITER

Generally speaking, a good editorial writer must possess the following qualities:

- i. Intellectual curiosity
- ii. Analytical mind
- iii. Mastery of language
- iv. Care for details
- v. Good knowledge and professional skills of writing for the mass media
- vi. Rational reasoning

TYPES OF EDITORIALS

According to (Ate 2007, *p14*) there are three types of editorials. These are:

i. Interpretative editorials

These kinds of editorials are written primarily to explain issues at stake by placing facts and figures at the door post of readers for proper illumination of the day's intelligence. It could be positive, negative or neutral in approach.

ii. Controversial editorials

These editorials propagate a specific point of view and often attempts to convince the reader on the desirability of an issue while painting the opposing side in bad light. These editorials care either positive or negative.

iii. Explanatory editorials

These editorials only open up thought provoking issues of socio-political and economic interest for the attention of readers and allow them to judge. These editorials identify a problem and leave it to the reader to find solution to it.

FUNCTIONS OF EDITORIALS

Editorials in modern newspapers and magazines perform numerous functions. According to (Ate 2007 pp21-28) editorials intelligently and eloquently:

- Criticize or attack socio-political, economic and moral dilemmas of the society
- Eliminate the day's intelligence. That is throwing on issues of the day
- Bring to fore debatable issues and provide an intellectual compass for society to discuss and resolve burning issues
- Defend the underdogs in the society. Editorials sometimes perform the job of human right activists.
- Endorse or support issues of public significance.
- Influence policy formulation or decision making on certain issues.
- Appeal or persuade.
- They attack exploitative and autocratic government policies

Capturing the characteristics of editorial in harmony with the aforementioned functions, Idemili in Uwake (2005) observes that:

- The editorial helps the reader to bring order out of chaos in news
- The editorial can fight battles for the newspaper reader
- The editorial makes it possible for the editor to express his views
- The editorial serves as a source of personality to the newspaper
- On the editorial page, freedom of style and deep back grounding is permitted.

TECHNIQUES IN EDITORIAL WRITING

A. Persuasive Techniques in Editorial Writing

According to Weaver R. and Hybels, S. (2001), persuasion is a process that occurs when the communicator influences the values, beliefs, attitudes or behaviours of another person. Some of the literary techniques employed in editorials include:

1. Keep the writing simple but mature and corporate.
2. Mind your language: The language must be unambiguous, punchy, concise and meaningful.
3. Create a remarkable first impression
4. Say exactly what you mean
5. Make use of repetition
6. Use a lot of literary device
7. A strong closing appeal.

B. Propaganda Techniques in Editorial Writing.

Okoro, N & Agbo, B (2003) argued that effective editorial writing requires a thorough knowledge and mastery of the techniques for propaganda.

Ukonu, M (2005) defines propaganda as the rational use of argument as well as emotional appeals to influence behaviours or thoughts either for good or for bad.

Some of the propaganda techniques include:

1. Glittering generalities.
2. Name calling.
3. Cards tacking.
4. Bandwagon.
5. Testimonial.
6. Transfer device.
7. Appeal to popularity.
8. Appeal to sympathy.
9. Appeal to change.
10. Appeal to special interest.
11. Appeal to truth.
12. The attack strategy.

SOURCING FOR THE EDITORIAL MATERIALS

Editorial materials can be sourced primarily from topical events that are reported from the mass media. The reported events must be explosive and of public interest.

In writing an editorial, the writer can do justice to the topic by discussing with experts especially if the issue under consideration is a technical one.

In this jet age, internet is a good facility for editorial writers to source for materials. Editorials can browse through the internet and download useful materials to “cook” an editorial menu of high public taste.

Editorial is a serious-minded issue, it should not be written based on hearsay or scoops from mere throwaway dialogues from members of the society. A good editorial is no doubt the product of good research.

Journals, books, government gazettes, biographies/assembly proceedings, constitutions and authoritative sources can be useful in editorial writing.

EDITORIAL AUDIENCE

From a broad perspective, newspapers and magazines have three categories of audience.

These are:

- The sophisticated audience.
- The less sophisticated audience.
- Specialized audience.

Editorial audience can be looked upon from three perspectives, we have the following editorial audience:

- The very skeptical audience.
- The very selective audience.
- The obscure or obstinate audience.

CLASSIFICATION OF EDITORIALS

Classification of editorials: the debate

It is important to note that editorials need to be classified for three major reasons:

1. The classification will assist journalism and mass communication students to appreciate and distinguish various forms and types of journalistic write-ups from editorial.
2. The development will equip media practitioners to establish a clear cut distinction and relationship between opinion writing and factual news reporting.
3. The classification will empower mass communicators to locate the exact domain of editorial writing and establish its relationship with other write-ups.

For professional and academic purposes, editorial can be classified in three major ways:

1. Classification according to parts.

2. Classification according to purpose.
3. Classification according to types.

Classification According to Parts

Basically a typical editorial has 3 parts. These are:

- a. Statement of the issue, subject or thesis.
- b. Comment on the problem
- c. Conclusion which normally contains solutions to the problems identified in the editorial.

However, the arrangement of the parts of editorial is not a dogmatic affair. Other editorialists believe that editorial have only two parts – statement of the problem and comment.

Classification According to Purpose

Editorials are usually packaged to meet multidimensional purposes. While some are designed to inform or explain an issue, others are crafted to persuade, amuse or amaze the audience.

Classification According To Types

This form of classification is closely related to the second, there are 3 major types and they are – Interpretative editorials; Controversial editorials and Explanatory editorials.

DETERMINANTS OF EDITORIAL SUBJECTS

In writing an editorial, the writer must be guided by the following factors:

1. Ensure that the topic is relevant and timely.
2. The chosen topic might be local but the treatment should not be parochial.
3. Editorial topics should be drawn from socio-political and economic issues.
4. Topics should be borne out of the desire to amaze or amuse.

THINGS TO AVOID DURING EDITORIAL WRITING

In writing a professionally acceptable editorial, the following things must be avoided:

1. Avoid Afganistanism.
2. Avoid being seduced by public relations men.
3. Avoid the temptation of falling flat in the name of being timely.
4. Avoid making predictions about issues pending in a law court.

KEY CONCEPTS IN EDITORIAL WRITING

There are many concepts that are useful in the analysis of editorial. Some of these are:

A. **Policies and Orientations:** A policy is a definite course of action selected from among alternatives to guide and determine present and future actions.

Editorial policies and orientations refer to the beliefs of a media organization which it would like to manifest in terms news coverage.

According tom Okoro, N and Agbo, B (2003), an editorial policy refers to the overall attitude, position or outlook which governs a publication.

Newspapers policies and orientation may be influenced by the following factors; the reader's interest; the sociopolitical and economic environment in which the media establishment is operating; and competition in the industry. The editorial policy could be determined by:

- News stories the paper carries
- The paper's slogan
- Platform code in which the paper enumerates the number of projects or principles for which it stands (Okoro, N and Agbo, B. 2003)

A newspaper can express its editorial policy through the following means:

- First editorial or leading article, news story published by a newspaper.
- Editorial cartoons.
- Platforms.

- Slogan.
- B. **Editorial Credibility:** This refers to the paper’s ability to truthfully disseminate information to its readers. Editorial credibility guarantees continued trust and patronage of a particular medium.
- C. **Editorial Appeal:** It refers to the power of an editorial piece to win the attention of its readers.
- D. **Editorial Translational Device:** Translational devices are words used to achieve unity through different themes and paragraphs in a news story or editorial.

Types of Translational Devices: There are different types of translational devices, some of them are:

- i. Translational device of time.
- ii. Translational device of contrast.
- iii. Translational device of place.
- iv. Translational device of action.

EFFECTIVE COLUMN WRITING

Columns and Columnists:

Columns and editorials have some striking resemblance. However, 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”.

Columns open communication vistas which gives room for personal journalisms. This aspect of journalism expresses itself in the author’s byline and style. According to Agba, (2003), the “columnist” has a good deal of freedom to express personal views in a regular commentary on local, national and international affairs.

Qualities of a good columnist:

Every columnist must possess certain, these are:

1. Individuality.
2. Ability to discern or demystify complex issue.
3. Creativity and originality.
4. High imaginative and analytical powers.

Types of columns:

Basically there are 3 major categories of columns;

- Opinion columns.
- Columns with gossip posture or aroma.
- Humour type.

Onabajo (2000) identifies 5 major forms of columns among others that have been in existence. These are:

- Public Affairs column.
- Essay and Humour column.
- Entertainment column.
- Advice and Forum column.
- Anecdote, Paragraph and Gossip column.