

**THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF *NATION* AND *STANDARD* NEWSPAPERS IN
CREATING AWARENESS ON FUNCTIONS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS
AMONG RESIDENTS OF EMBAKASI EAST SUB COUNTY, NAIROBI**

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Abstract

After the promulgation of the Constitution in 2010 and the inception of devolution in 2013, it was necessary for Kenyans to understand the functions of the devolved units. Media, through educational role is one of the institutions that is expected to make people aware about the functions of the county governments. This study, therefore, assessed the role the media play in educating its audience to create awareness about the functions of the Kenya's devolved governance. Specific objective of the study was to examine the extent to which *The Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers have educated Kenyans about the functions of county governments. The researcher used the *Framing* theory, developed by Bates (1974). *Framing* theory is the schemata of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or life experiences. The study covered five thematic areas representing the devolved functions, namely: health, water, education, transport and lands. The study used sequential mixed method design where qualitative and quantitative designs were combined in data collection. For quantitative data, questionnaires were administered to collect data, which was analysed and presented in forms of tables and texts. The researcher analysed the contents of *The Nation* and *The Standard* newspapers for qualitative data and analysis done; the results were presented in forms of tables and texts. The Systematic Random sampling procedure was used to reach respondents while purposive sampling procedure was used to pick the required 208 weekend newspapers of *The Nation* and *The Standard* for a period of 12 months for content analysis. The study was conducted in Embakasi East Sub County of Nairobi County that had a study population of 48, 983 households. The research used the Yamane's formula to determine sample size of 399 households. The study is significant as the results may be used to come up with policies and bills or supplement on the existing ones on matters devolution. It may also assist in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals' tenet of peace, justice and establishment of strong institutions.

Introduction

Devolution is a form of governance that for the second time has been included in the Kenya's Constitution that was promulgated in 2010. The struggle to have the current county governments in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 involved efforts from different stakeholders such as political class, civil rights organizations and the media. Kenyan media worked hand-in-hand with these groups to champion for justice and democracy, including decentralization for equal and equitable sharing of resources.

However, after attainment of devolution, many people still have not known the functions of the devolved units and therefore have not been able to distinguish the roles the county governments should perform, the ones left to the national government and those shared by the two levels of government (Olang', 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the role media, specifically print, plays in educating Kenyans about the functions of the county governments to enhance people's knowledge on the roles of devolved governments. Providing education to the people is one of the major roles of media that can narrow the knowledge gap about what functions are fully devolved, which ones have been left to the national governments and the roles the two levels of government are sharing.

Educating people about roles of county governments offer opportunity for the media audience to understand and know the structures of the devolved governments and so can hold the office holders liable in order to achieve good governance (Kimanthi, 2018). Many studies have been conducted on media and devolution. But few have been done to assess the educational role of media on functions of the county governments. Most of these studies especially on print media have majorly looked at the general media coverage of Kenya's devolution where they analyse the general stories on devolution (Iberi, 2014).

But in this study the researcher has looked at specific roles of print media (*Nation* and *Standard* weekend newspapers) in educating people about functions of Kenya's devolution in regards to five thematic areas, namely; Water, Health, Transport, Education and Lands. Even though county governments have many functions as stated above, this study has narrowed down to only five thematic areas since they are the key in the devolved units, according to National Gender and Equality Committee (2013).

Theoretical Framework

The study has used *Framing* theory whose concept was first developed by an anthropologist, Gregory Bates in his 1972 book, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*. The concept was later expounded on by Goffman in 1974. Goffman defined Framing as ‘a schemata of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or life experiences’ (Goffman in Cissel, 2012).

However, another scholar, Robert Efmán, modernized this definition that ‘to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a perceived reality and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation’ (Efmán in Cissel, 2012).

It is where the media tries to draw the attention of the people to some topics; the way media and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and issues that they cover in their daily duties, and also the way audiences interpret what they are provided with by the media. This theory further states that information in newspapers is given meaning depending on the themes and news angle taken and its effects are due to how a given piece of information is being framed in public discourse.

Therefore, this theory is relevant to this study in that the two newspapers frame their news stories in a way that contents talk about functions of county governments under the five sectors of lands, water, education, health and transport discussed in this research.

Literature Review

This study is within the broader scholarly research on media content and effects as it seeks to establish the role media plays on the functions of county governments. The literature review discusses media's educational role on functions of the governments.

Role of media in educating citizens on functions of government

Media is very instrumental in educating its audience on matters that happen in the society. As an educator, in some cases, Ochilo & Wanyande (2011) argue, media has made constructive suggestions on how to improve democracy.

This, the media, especially newspapers, have dedicated columns to educate the public on matters democracy and development. Feature stories and opinion pieces are the major articles in the newspapers that educate readers on different issues. This is because a feature story, for example, is a 'longer piece of writing than a news story...' and therefore 'will often cover an issue in greater depth than news story would do; or it might look at the ongoing story from a different angle' (BBC, 2018).

In devolution in Kenya, media is expected to dedicate the editorial opinions and features, among others in educating its audience on the functions of county governments so that the misunderstanding does not exist. In order for good governance to prevail, citizens need to gain proper knowledge on the roles a government plays to them.

This can only be achieved faster and better through the media than personal contact (Preeti, 2014). According to Dewey (In Preeti, 2014), media is one of such potent force in the social environment that help offer education. In many countries all-over the world, media has been used severally to aid in educating the audience on matters governance, politics and issues affecting the society.

For example, print media has been instrumental in educating people about different roles of government structures, as was witnessed in India. After the India's Independence, a Five Year Plan was developed by the government. Media was utilized to educate the people about the plans and the roles the government would play in building the nation. It was the print media (the newspapers) which, by framing stories, gave great importance to development themes and on various government development programmes and how the people could make use of those programmes (Patil, 2011).

In South Africa, media played a big role in educating black South Africans about good governance and was also used to challenge or perpetuate a discriminatory regime through ideological structures (Smith, 2005).

The media in Kenya have contributed to the opening up of the political space and political transition alongside other non-state actors within the civil society by educating the people. Immediately after Independence, media in Kenya played a huge role in educating the public about democratic movements that were to bring the multiparty democracy. It is through the media that political activists fought hard to ensure devolution was achieved through referendum to enhance democracy, service delivery and resource sharing in Kenya (Ochilo & Wanyande, 2011).

Therefore, it is still important for relevant authorities to offer civic education through the media to the people so that they understand what this new kind of governance entails, including the functions of the county governments.

Lack of media education on functions of county governments leads to lack of knowledge on the tenets of devolution in Kenya. This makes it difficult for the people to know policy reforms and implementations on matters devolution; meaning the citizens will now know what functions are devolved, which ones are left to the national government and ones shared by the two levels of government (Patil, 2011).

A country that denies media opportunity to educate its people is likely to fail in promoting democracy, justice and in provision of services to the people (Cissel, 2012). Many scholars have argued that Kenyans have not been adequately educated about the distinct functions of the county governments (Olang', 2014).

This is risky to the development of country since the citizenry cannot hold the leadership accountable for any wrong doing by the government in place. When people don't have knowledge about the roles of county governments; what these governments should play in service delivery, it becomes difficult for them to hold the leadership responsible for poor service delivery, corruption, among other injustices (Olang', 2014).

Therefore, this study sought to find out how media has educated people about the functions of the county governments so that its results are used to promote more understanding about the functions of the county governments and also used to strengthen governance in the county governments.

Research Methodology

The study reviewed the media coverage of the functions of county governments by *The Standard* and *The Nation* newspapers weekend editions. This study used sequential mixed method research design. In the sequential mixed methods design that this study used, the data were first collected using quantitative method where questionnaires were administered to 399 respondents of Embakasi East Sub County in Nairobi City County that has the highest literacy level in Kenya (Geopoll Blog Survey, 2015). This was followed by qualitative method where content analysis of the 208 weekend newspapers of *The Standard* and *The Nation* was done on Water, Health, Transport, Education and Lands. In this study, the researcher started with quantitative before going to qualitative.

The researcher used the purposive sampling method for newspaper sampling to select 208 weekend newspapers of *The Standard* and *The Nation*. The two papers were used instead of all papers in Kenya because they are the ones with the highest number of readers (Geopoll Blog Survey, 2015). The weekend editions have been used in this study because they have more detailed contents including columns and features that provide a wider range for content analysis (BBC, 2014). The newspapers were published in 104 days between April 2013 and April 2014; this was the first year of devolution in Kenya and people expected more information and education from the media about the new kind of governance.

The contents of the 208 papers were looked at where feature stories, supplements and opinion pieces were categorized as more educative, and the news stories (hard news) left as more informational articles (BBC, 2018). Systematic random sampling was used to pick the 399 households for this study which was arrived at after using Yamane's formula (1967). This was a representative sample that gave this research validity for the general target population. The researcher employed a random route walk where he used a road junction as the starting point in a given administrative location.

The sample size for this study was 399 households and 208 weekend *Standard* and *Nation* newspapers selected in a period of 12 months from March 6, 2013 to April 30, 2014, giving a total of 103 days. However, the research was done per ward and therefore, household population for the five wards were considered and calculated as indicated in the **table** below:

Table 1: The Sample Size

Category of Respondents	Ward	Ward Household Population (WP)	Sample Size Household Population (n)
Literate Adults (Aged 18 years and above)	Upper Savanna	11, 342	92
Literate Adults (Aged 18 years and above)	Lower Savanna	11, 342	92
Literate Adults (Aged 18 years and above)	Embakasi Airport	9, 720	79
Literate Adults (Aged 18 years and above)	Utawala	9,720	79
Literate Adults (Aged 18 years and above)	Mihango	6, 856	57

TOTALS: Household population in all wards=48, 983; Sample size in all wards=399

Findings and Discussions

Reliance on Newspaper for Educational Purpose on County Government Roles

The study established the level of reliance on newspaper for educational purposes by the residents of Embakasi East Sub County.

Table 2: Reliance on newspaper for educational purpose

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	247	69.77
No	88	24.86
Don't Know	19	5.37
Total	354	100

Most (69.77%) of the respondents rely on newspaper for educational purpose on the functions of county governments. However, 24.86% do not rely on newspaper for educational purpose while 5.37% do not know.

Preference of Newspaper for Educational Purpose on county governance on themes; Land, Water, Education, Health and Roads

Table 3: Preference of Newspaper for educational purposes (Source: Field Survey, 2019)

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
The Standard on Sunday (n=247)	37	24.8
The Nation on Saturday (n=247)	16	16.6
The Sunday Nation (n=247)	24	19.8
The Standard on Saturday (n=247)	49	38.8

As shown in table above, most (38.8%) of the respondents who rely on newspaper for educational purpose preferred *The Standard on Saturday*; followed by *The Standard on Sunday* (24.8%). Others are: *The Nation on Saturday* at 16.6% and *The Sunday Nation* at 19.8%.

Newspapers contents on educational role of media on functions of county governments

The study looked at the contents of the 208 weekend newspapers; 104 copies of *Saturday* and *Sunday Nation*, and 104 copies of *Saturday* and *Sunday Standard* for a period of 12 months, from April, 2013 to April, 2014.

Table 5: Educational articles per theme in the Standard weekend papers

Themes	Total Frequency 200 articles	Standard Saturday	on Sunday Standard
Lands	40 articles (20%)	10 articles (25%)	30 articles (75%)
Transport	34 articles (17%)	14 articles (41.1%)	20 articles (58.8%)
Education	43 articles (21.5%)	20 articles (46.5%)	23 articles (53.5%)
Health	45 articles (22.5%)	35 articles (77.8%)	10 articles (22.2%)
Water	38 articles (19%)	18 articles (47.4%)	20 articles (52.6%)
TOTAL ARTICLES	200 articles (100%)	97 articles (48.5%)	103 articles (51.5%)

From the above table; for *The Standard* newspapers, there were 200 articles; with Lands 40 articles (20%), Transport 34 (17%), Education 43 (21.5%), Health 45 (22.5%) and Water 38 (19%). *The Standard on Sunday* recorded more articles at 103 (51.5%); than *Standard on Saturday* at 97 articles (48.5%).

Table 6: Educational articles per theme in the Nation weekend papers

Themes	Total Frequency (211 articles)	Saturday Nation	Sunday Nation
Lands	42 articles (19.9%)	20 articles (47.6%)	22 articles (52.4%)
Transport	38 articles (18.0%)	19 articles (50%)	19 articles (50%)
Education	45 articles (21.3%)	27 articles (60%)	18 articles (40%)
Health	47 articles (22.3%)	27 articles (57%)	20 articles (42.55%)
Water	39 articles (18.5%)	19 articles (48.4%)	20 articles (51.28%)
TOTAL STORIES	211 (100%)	112 articles (53.1%)	99 articles (46.9%)

From the above table, Transport had the least number of articles at 38 (18.0 %), followed by Water at 39 (18.5%), Lands 42 (19.9%), Education 45 (21.3%) and Health 47 (22.3%). Again it is clear that *Saturday Nation* carried more stories on the five thematic areas at 112 articles (53.1%) while *Sunday Nation* had 99 articles (46.9%).

Discussions and Analysis

It is clear from the study that majority of the newspaper readers (69.77%) rely on the weekend papers for education on the functions of the county governments while 24.86% do not. Most preferred paper for this purpose in regards to all the five themes of Water, Health, Lands, Transport and Education is *Standard on Saturday* (38.8%), followed by *Standard on Sunday* (24.8%), then *Sunday Nation* (19.8%) and finally *Nation on Saturday* at 16.6%. In the newspapers' content, where the 208 weekend papers were studied and 411 articles looked at, Lands had 25% in *Saturday Standard*, 75% for *Sunday Standard*, while *Saturday Nation* recorded 19.9% and *Sunday Nation* had 52.4%. Therefore, *Sunday Standard* had the highest number of articles about Lands that were educative and touched on the county governments while *Saturday Nation* had the least number of such articles.

Some of the articles analysed discussed matters land policies, issues of title deeds, land management, among others. From the stories, the reader would make meaning about what role the county governments are expected to play on matters Lands and which ones have been left to the national government.

On matters Transport, *Standard on Saturday* recorded 41.2%, *Sunday Standard* (58.8%), *Saturday Nation* 50% and *Sunday Nation* posted 50% in the content. The papers discussed the role the county governments should play in improving transport system in the counties and roads that should be developed by the national government.

In an opinion piece published on Sunday, August 11, 2013 “*Governors Dilemma Over Roles Transfer*” the paper argues that Kshs27 billion had been surrendered to the counties for the construction of roads. Again, the same piece asserts that there are functions that were undertaken by the Rural Electrification Authority that can be comfortably handled by county governments should be immediately transferred.

On content analysis for Education, 60% articles of *Saturday Nation* were on education while 40% were in the *Sunday Nation*. *Standard on Saturday* recorded 46.5% while *Sunday Standard* posted 53.5%. For example in a feature article: *Government Launches Sh6 Billion Uwezo Fund for Youth and Women*, published in *The Sunday Standard* on September 8, 2013 the paper outlines the national government’s agenda in expanding education and its fruits by empowering girl child in order to give them an opportunity to contribute in nation building.

Although Uwezo Fund is a national government’s initiative, the government partnered with the county governments through the wards administrators to identify the needy pupils who would benefit from the sponsorship (page 16). This is one of the educative articles that as it outlines role of the national government on Uwezo Fund initiative, it also educates the readers that indeed not every element of education is devolved, and it also educates that even though education is not fully devolved, both national and county governments are allowed to work together to promote education.

Health remains a delicate sector that every person is keen on. For this reason, the media entities have dedicated weeklies such as Health & Lifestyle and Life & Style by *The Standard* and *The Nation* respectively; a move aimed at keeping the public aware and educated on various health issues as well as staying at par with the latest developments in medicine.

In content analysis of the 208 weekend newspapers, *Saturday Standard* recorded 77.8% of the articles, 22.2% for the *Sunday Standard*, 57.45% for *Saturday Nation* while *Sunday Nation* posted 42.55% on matters health. The articles that were studied had contents about the roles the national and county governments play in promoting health, roles in policy implementation and health facilities' managements.

For example, in a feature story, *Public-Private Partnerships Good for Devolved Healthcare*, published in the newspaper of April 13th, 2014, county governments have been urged to embrace public-partnerships in the devolution of healthcare services, according to Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS) Managing Director, Paschal Manyuru.

According to this study, Kenya's print media offers educative articles on matters water as a devolved function of the county governments. Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development and improved health. In response to questionnaires, respondents agreed that weekend newspapers in Kenya play a role in educating them about water as a devolved function of county governments.

This mirrors what is in the content analysis of the 208 weekend papers that give 48.72% for *Saturday Nation*, 51.28% for *Sunday Nation*. *Standard on Saturday* posted 47.4% and 52.6% for the *Sunday Standard*.

Here many articles were concerned about the roles the county and national governments were supposed to be doing on extreme cases such as drought and floods. They talked about what role the counties should play in providing water to the drought-stricken areas to avoid cattle and human deaths. Some stories discussed what the national government should do in curbing floods in some counties across the country. This means that when it comes to disaster as a result of water, both governments are expected to work together.

From the above findings, the tenets of *Framing* theory are answered in this educational role of the media. The newspapers studied have framed their stories in a way that as audience are informed about events of devolution, they get educated on what is devolved fully to the counties, the elements that have remained with the national government and how the two levels of government can work together for the benefit of the citizens. The opinions, commentaries and features done are framed to discuss the five themes and therefore provide necessary education on the same.

The findings also answer the research objective of the educational role of media on the functions of the county governments as the articles make people aware on the roles the county governments play in the devolved sectors under the study, what elements are left to the national government and where the two levels of government share the responsibilities.

Conclusions

The main objective was to assess the extent to which *The Standard* and *The Nation* newspapers have educated Kenyans about the functions of county governments. In response, newspapers have constantly published educative columns, features and opinion pieces on the functions of county government to continually enlighten the public on the functions as well as expectations. Therefore, newspaper has significantly contributed to education of the public on the functions of county governments. Weekend newspapers that were looked at revealed that there was educational role which in turn provided knowledge to the people about functions of the county governments in regards to five major themes of Lands, Transport, water, education and Health, though Daily papers were most preferred.

Recommendations

In order to enhance the use of newspaper in devolved governance, the study has a number of recommendations:

- On education of public on the functions of county government, the study recommends that all the weekend newspapers to slot more sections that will essentially highlight the functions of all the arms of government. In cases where such columns and sections already exist, it is essentially important to do evaluation aimed at establishing the key priority areas concerning county governance. Knowledge gap analysis will also help the newspapers generate educative features that are tailored on the existing knowledge gaps.
- Lastly, in order to strengthen the content and frequency of reporting on county governance, the study recommends to the newspaper printers to start up or expand the interactive engagements with the public; either online or physically. This will help in coming up with innovative ideas on how to increase reliance newspapers for education on the roles and functions of county government. Moreover, it will also help the media companies reach the illiterate with education in a simple manner.

Suggestions for further Research

The study recommends a study to establish the knowledge, attitude and perception of the public towards digital newspaper in education on functions of county governments.

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