

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
(SDG) FOUR: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE FRONT-
PAGE NEWS STORIES IN THE DAILY GRAPHIC**



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**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOAL (SDG) FOUR: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
THE FRONT-PAGE NEWS STORIES IN THE DAILY GRAPHIC**

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**A dissertation in the Department of Development Communication, School of
Communication and Media Studies, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the
Master of Philosophy
(Development Communication)
in University of Education, Winneba**

NOVEMBER, 2022

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Timothy Tayabnyi Ngenber, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

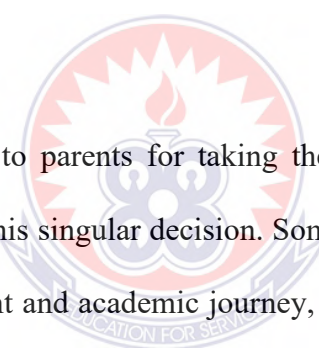
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The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst or starburst design in white and red. Below the sunburst is a stylized figure, possibly representing a person or a symbol of knowledge. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION' is written in a circular path around the top, and 'WONNEBA' is at the bottom. A banner at the bottom of the emblem contains the motto 'EDUCATION FOR SERVICE'.

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ABSTRACT

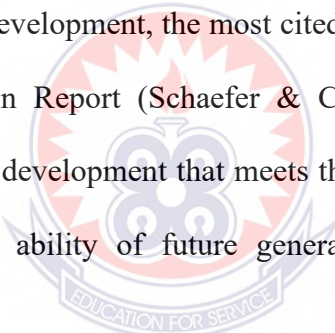
This study examined the newspaper coverage of sustainable development goal (SDG) four in the Daily Graphic from 2016 to 2020. The study investigated the attention the newspaper attaches to stories on SDG Four, determined how journalists framed the news stories on SDG Four, and investigated the factors within the organisation that influenced the publication of SDG Four stories on the front-page of the Daily Graphic. The agenda setting and framing theories underpinned the study. To achieve the objectives of the study, qualitative content analysis was used to gather data for the study. An interview was also used to gather additional data to validate findings from the content analysis. Thematic analysis was used in handling the data, especially in coming up with the themes and corresponding frames with regard to the focus of the study. The results showed that political issues rather than education continued to dominate the front page of the newspaper. However, the rate of attention given to politics reduced compared with previous studies. Education issues also ranked highly in terms of appearance on the front-page, use of enhancement features and headline type. The five dominant themes from the analysis are accountability, affordability, inclusiveness, innovation and sustainability. The study concluded that the Daily Graphic had a more positive angle to reporting SDG Four stories and recommends the setting up of a dedicated desk in the newsroom to facilitate SDG reporting. The study will create awareness on the relevance of the print media in setting a favourable agenda on the SDGs and help policy makers to revise their communication strategies for achieving the goal. It will also enrich literature on the SDGs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the study

Sustainable development has become the watchword in discourses on development, although different meanings and interpretations have been ascribed to it time (Isa, Sivapathy, & Kamarruddin, 2021). On the face of it, sustainable development means development that can be continued either indefinitely or for the given time period (Mario et al. 2021). It is also seen as the judicious use of resources by the current population in a manner that will not compromise quantity and quality of the resources for the future generation (Stoddart, 2011). Although there are many other definitions of the concept of sustainable development, the most cited definition is the one provided by the Brundtland Commission Report (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). The report defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland et al., 1987).



Two scholars, Cerin (2006) and Abubakar (2017), posit that sustainable development is a core concept in the global development space and policy agenda. The concept provides a viable mechanism for society to interact with the environment while avoiding the tendency to risk or damage the resources for the future. In effect, sustainable development is seen both as a development paradigm and a concept which demands improving the standard of living of people without tampering with the ecosystem or destroying the environment (Benaim, Collins, & Raftis, 2008; Browning & Rigolon, 2019). Mohieldin (2017) is of the view that sustainable development can be seen as the approach to development that involves the use of resources in a way that

allows the resources to continue to exist for other generations. In furtherance of this view, (Evers, Yule, Padfield, O'Reilly, & Varkkey, 2017) links sustainable development to the mobilisation principles for meeting human development goals and also to sustain the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. Furthermore, sustainable development is targeted at achieving social progress, environmental equilibrium and economic growth (Chang, Zhai, Fu, & Xiong, 2019; Gosling-Goldsmith, 2018). To achieve this, a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) was adopted by UN member states at the Seventh UN Sustainable Development Summit held in New York on September 25, 2015.

The SDGs are a set of seventeen (17) new global goals that were adopted by the 193-member states of the United Nations (UN) to be achieved within 15 years (2016-2030). The 2030 agenda dubbed “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” comprises seventeen (17) SDGs accompanied by one hundred and sixty-nine targets and two hundred and thirty (230) indicators (UN, 2015). According to the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) and the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) platform on SDGs in Ghana, the goals which came into effect on January 1, 2016, are universal call to action to end extreme poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Cerin (2016) explains that the SDGs operate on the principle of meeting the development needs or goals of humans in a manner that sustains the ability of the natural system to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services that will serve as the bedrock of on which the economy and society depend. The 17 SDGs primarily seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Eradicate poverty and hunger, guarantee a healthy life
- Universal access to services such as water, sanitation and sustainable energy

- Support the generation of development opportunities through inclusive education and decent work
- Foster innovation and resilient infrastructure, creating communities and cities to produce and consume sustainably
- Reduce inequality in the world, especially that concerning gender
- Care for the environmental integrity through combating climate change and protecting the oceans and land ecosystems
- Promote collaboration between different social agents to create an environment of peace and ensure responsible consumption and production (Hylton, 2019; Saner et al., 2019; UNDP, 2017).

The SDGs were ushered in after 15 years of roll out of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) between 2000 and 2015 during which period there was a historic mobilisation of resources to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide (Breuer, Janetschek, & Malerba, 2019). The MDGs were relatively effective, but some of the targets of the eight goals were not realised, accounting for the introduction of the SDGs to continue with the development agenda. Taylor (2016) explains that the new development trajectory is exemplified in UN's approval of the 2030 Agenda, also called the SDGs, with a call to action to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure the well-being of people. It is important to note that when it comes to the achievement of the call for action, education is considered as critical driving force.

SDG Four focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all within its ten interconnected targets.

There are 10 targets under SDG Four that envisage that by 2030, there should be:

1. Free primary and secondary education
2. Equal access to quality pre-primary education
3. Equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education
4. Increase in the number of people with relevant skills for financial success
5. Eliminate all discrimination in education
6. Improved universal literacy and numeracy
7. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship
8. Build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools
9. Expand higher education scholarships for developing countries
10. Increased in the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries

This goal (SDG 4) subsequently finds expression in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (2010-2020) which was reviewed in 2016 to reflect the SDG targets in Ghana (MoE, 2016).



According to UN (2015), countries need to prioritise SDG Four because it has direct impact on the attainment of other SDG targets, particularly health and well-being (SDG 3.7); gender equality (SDG 5.6); decent work and sustainable growth (SDG 8.6); responsible Consumption and production (SDG 12.8); and climate change mitigation (SDG 13.3). Chege et al. (2015) corroborate this assertion by indicating that education forms the foundation for global and national development as it acts both as a means and an end to development. In a similar vein, United Nations International Children's Energy Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2017) posit that education serves as a precursor for achieving all other global goals such as poverty alleviation, economic growth, improved health and human capital.

Education is one of the fundamental requirements for global and national development as it acts both as means and an end to development (Chege et al., 2015). According to the UNICEF and UNESCO (2017), education plays a pivotal role in the achievement of all other global goals from economic prosperity to improvement in human health. This important role that education plays in all facets of human existence necessitates the prioritization of the right to education as contained in many international treaties and conventions as well as national constitutions (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Treaties and conventions such as the Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948) and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1966) are meant to guarantee unhindered access to education to all persons as a matter of right (Anlimachie, 2015). At the national level, Ghana's 1992 Republican Constitution provides educational rights and freedoms to all citizens in a non-discriminatory manner. For instance, Article 25 and 38 of the 1992 Constitution as well as the Education Act, 2008 (Act 778) make respective provisions for the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities for all categories of citizens while stressing that basic education shall be made free, compulsory and available to all (Republic of Ghana, 2005).

From 1990 till date, a variety of education-related global goals have been set; with targets and indicators. One of such initiatives was the Education for All (EFA) goals which was mooted at Jomtien Conference in 1990 and later reaffirmed at the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 (Tagoe & Dake, 2011). These goals were later imbibed into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically, goal Two and Three respectively. Subsequently, the goals were incorporated into the sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were launched in 2015 as the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and

Transforming the World. The 2030 agenda also have education-related goal – SDG Four which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN General Assembly, 2015); also referred to as Education 2030 (UNESCO et al., 2015).

In the wake of the launch of the MDGs in 2000, the Government of Ghana instituted a number of policy frameworks aimed at achieving the targets in those goals, especially MDG 2 which was focused on achieving universal primary education by expanding access to children of primary school-age and closing gender gaps. Subsequently, the Education Sector Plan (ESP) initiated by the government, spanning 2010 to 2020, primarily focused on broad policy dimensions such as access to quality education, educational management, science and technology as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Rolling out these policies required well thought out programmes and strategies, a situation which necessitated introduction of the School Capitation Grant (SCG) initiative which saw the abolishing of school fees at the basic level of education, improving child-care services promoting gender equality at primary and Junior High Schools (JHSs), partnering non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and introduction of School Feeding Programme (SFP). Statistics from the Ministry of Education (MoE) shows that these strategies resulted in impressive outcomes in the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and the Net Admission Rate (NAR). For instance, MoE (2015) showed that GPI improved from 0.95 to 0.96 between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 academic years.

Fehling, Nelson, and Venkatapuram (2013) argue that the slow progress of the MDGs targets was attributable to lapses in policy design, content and

implementation. The UN Rio+20 conference was, therefore, dedicated to extending the achievements of the MDGs into the SDGs programme, spanning about fifteen years – 2016 to 2030 (Dahlmann, Stubbs, Griggs, & Morrell, 2019). This study underscores the need to examine media coverage of the SDG Four to determine progress being made towards its achievement in Ghana.

1.1 The Mass Media and the 1992 Constitution

The media as well as editors have been given enough protection under the 1992 Republican Constitution in the discharge of their duty. The Constitution grants autonomy to the media to effectively discharge of their constitutional mandate of serving the masses with news. As contained in Articles 162 and 163 of the 1992 Constitution, the *Daily Graphic* and other media outlets are to discharge their duties to the state under a sound environment. For instance, article 162 specifically guarantees freedom of expression and independence of the media and provided the corresponding responsibilities. article 162(1) categorically states that: “freedom and independence of the press is guaranteed” while Article 162(4) states that editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions shall not be subject control or interference for their editorial opinions and views or content of their publication (1992 Constitution of Ghana, p.112). Therefore, the Daily Graphic newspaper and its editors are beneficiaries of these constitutional provisions just like other media organizations. Additionally, Article 162(5) placed a huge responsibility on the Daily Graphic and other mass media to hold the government accountable to citizens of Ghana. However, Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution put a special responsibility on the state-owned media, which includes the Daily Graphic, to give satisfactory coverage to all aspects of the society in the allocation of space. What this means is

that state-owned media are mandated to give fair opportunities and facilities to all people to present divergent views on national issues. The state-owned media have also been entrusted with the responsibility to reflect the developmental needs of the country in the coverage of issues.

The media has been identified as an important aspect of every society as it helps to promote the sharing of information of key issues of the society so as to create awareness and knowledge acquisition by members of the society (Odoom et al., 2023).

1.2 Media Coverage of Issues and Front pages

Though the Ghanaian media, specifically the print media in the context of this study, have been mandated to give coverage to all issues of public concern, the print media has been accused of paying more attention to political stories at the expense of economic, social and other developmental issues that affect the masses. According to Sakyi (2010), newspapers give their front pages to political news, with Karikari, Osei-Frimpong, and Owusu-Frimpong (2017) adding that there is widening gap in the coverage of issues relating to plight and interest of the poor as well as the working class. Amihere (2010) also argues that the unfair representation of the various interest groups in terms of media reportage is dangerous for governance and sustainable development, especially when the media is seen as a significant source of information for policy makers to make and implement policies in Ghana.

The print media has been identified as potent force that sets the agenda for national discussion (Appiah-Effah et al., 2019), and also helps to create awareness on sustainability and mobilise stakeholders to achieve the SDGs (Janoušková, Hák, Nečas, & Moldan, 2019). Although every part of a newspaper contains newsworthy

information, McQuail (2010) argues that the most important location to find the representation of the society's topmost issues in the newspaper is its front page. The front page of a newspaper is the best bet for editors and news organisations because Singer (2021) posits that it highlights the day's most important stories.

According to Kikuke (2004), news values play an important role in what gets published on the front pages of newspapers yet editors as well as organisational policies and interest are crucial in the process of gate keeping. Hence, a number of factors determines stories that get published and also bring forth the frames for newspaper front pages. What makes the news, according to Journalistic Policy Guide, Standards and Practices (2008), involves a complex process of gathering, producing, publishing through a selection of particular stories over other stories for publication.

In line with the agenda setting theory, the quest to achieve the SDGs, including Goal Four, requires that the media, particularly newspapers, use their front pages to give more attention to SDG stories. This implies that the front page of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper, which is flagship or topmost newspaper in the print media industry in Ghana, with 1.5 million readers (GeoPoll, 2018), becomes critical for the dissemination of information to readers and related institutions. According to Amihere (2010), the *Daily Graphic* newspaper is seen as the most dependable print resource for information in Ghana, and has also become a generic symbol and standard for the print media industry in Ghana. The *Daily Graphic* is extensively used in communication research and as a tool for competitive newspaper review programmes on radio and television stations across the country (Nyarko, 2016). An analysis of the coverage of SDG Four stories on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*

is therefore, a fruitful venture since policy makers, development institutions, civil society organisations and other stakeholders depend on the media for relevant information during newspaper reviews (Baidoo, 2011), and this is the thrust of this study.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Members states of the UN have been encouraged to prioritise SDG) Four because it serves as the precursor for the attainment of other SDGs (UNESCO (2017; Taylor, 2016; UN 2015). UN (2015) has stressed that SDG Four has direct impact on the attainment of other targets such as health and well-being (SDG 3.7); gender equality (SDG 5.6); decent work and sustainable growth (SDG 8.6); responsible Consumption and production (SDG 12.8); and climate change mitigation (SDG 13.3). Additionally, Chege et al. (2015) asserts that SDG Four must be given special attention because education forms the foundation for global and national development as it acts both as a means and an end to development. Against this backdrop, Appiah-Effah et al. (2019) avers that the media is a potent force and must be leveraged to set the national agenda and discourse on SDGs.

However, educators, politicians and civil society organisations (CSOs) have fallen short of making the concept of sustainable development appealing so as to help achieve the SDGs (Janouskova et al., 2019). According to the authors, the main missing enabling factor is the absence of a good narrative that will help to make extremely complex sustainable development concepts comprehensible to all so as to engender public support. Their study, which examined the role of the print media as an important information channel and agenda-setter. They explored how the newspapers communicate selected key sustainability themes and how they make connections to the

overall concept of sustainable development. The study concluded that the media predominantly inform people and set agenda by communicating themes of current interest. However, they used the quantitative research design.

Relatedly, Akinyooye and Olayemi (2020) examine the influence of the mass media on the achievement of the SDGs in Nigeria and found that the media created awareness on development projects installed in communities to address SDG One – poverty reduction. They found that the awareness created by the media necessitated stakeholders in the community to support projects targeted at tackling SDG one. On that premise they concluded that awareness through the mass media will be a necessary condition to facilitate the attainment of the SDGs. The study recommended that more literacy programmes should be rolled out in the electronic media at regular intervals to disseminate relevant information to members of the public and also mobilise resources to help achieve the SDGs.

Within the Ghanaian context, a National Voluntary Review (NVR) of the SDGs in 2019 revealed that although the country has made considerable progress towards achieving the social SDGs, including education, the progress is not at a rate that will ensure the attainment of the goals. In terms of SDG Four, the NVR revealed that Ghana has provided access to primary and secondary education, but in term of quality, the country was lagging behind. In terms of literacy and numeracy, the report showed that only 22% of primary school pupils had little challenges with Mathematics and English.

The NVR report added that there was improvement in terms of access to technical and vocational education, as enrolment figures doubled between 2013 and 2018. The challenge, however, is that females are under-represented. Again, the report revealed that the completion rate of pupils fell as they moved up the academic ladder. For

instance, it indicated that the completion rate at basic school level was 75.9% and 44,5% at the senior high school. To help achieve the SDGs, the NVR identified the media as a key stakeholder in awareness creation, information dissemination and mobilisation of the public. The NVR puts the responsibility on the electronic media to use their talk-shows, panel discussions and other programmes to educate the public and rally other stakeholders to achieve the SDGs.

While Akinyooye and Olayemi (2020) and the NVR (2019) identified the media as a key stakeholder in mobilising other stakeholders to achieve the SDGs, both studies limited the responsibility of awareness creation to the electronic media at the expense of the print media (newspapers). This situation is problematic because the electronic media relies heavily on front-pages of newspapers for news and also feed on news stories from the newspapers to set up socio-political discourse (Nyarko, 2016).

Again, less is known about any study in Ghana that specifically analysed newspaper coverage of SDG Four from the qualitative research approach. This study therefore, adopts the qualitative approach to investigate the attention newspapers attach to news stories on SDG Four and to explore how those stories are framed in the Daily Graphic.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The study sets out a number of objectives to guide the researcher address the topic under review. The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the attention the newspaper attaches to stories on SDG Four.
2. To determine the frames journalists, use to tell the stories on SDG Four.
3. To investigate the news values that influence what gets published on the front

pages of the *Daily Graphic*.

1.5 Research Question

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the *Daily Graphic* newspaper give attention to news stories on SDG Four?
2. How are the news stories on SDG Four framed in the *Daily Graphic*?
3. What news values influence what the *Daily Graphic* publishes on the front page?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study highlights the attention the *Daily Graphic* gives to SDG Four stories as well as determining the frames used in dissemination information on such stories based on factors that influence selection and placement of front-page stories. The study is important because it will help to bring up how the *Daily Graphic* gives attention to various issues on its front pages, given that the front page is the most important part of the newspaper. Since the focus is on SDG Four, the research will reveal how the paper gives prominence to education issues as against other issues. The findings will go a long way to affirm or nullify views expressed by various scholars that the state-owned media in Ghana focuses more on political stories at the expense of bread and butter issues. Since the study period is over five years, the patterns of the stories will help to draw conclusions.

The study will also create awareness on the relevance of the print media in the conversation surrounding the SDGs and help policy makers to revise their

communication strategies and leverage on the potential of newspapers to facilitate the achievement of SDG Four by 2030. The study on front-page stories on SDG Four in the *Daily Graphic* is significant because according to Kim and Chung, (2017), front-pages contribute significantly in shaping opinion and offering divergent representation on issues. They add that many people read the front-page without going into the newspaper to read other stories. What this mean is that if stories on SDG Four are not given the needed attention on the front pages of newspapers, it could affect awareness creation on the SDGs. This study will therefore, give a fair idea of the attention SDG Four stories are given on front pages of newspapers. Since not much qualitative research work has been done in Ghana on the framing of news stories on the SDGs, the study will contribute to existing literature in that field of research.

The *Daily Graphic* is the daily newspaper with the widest coverage of news with reporters and correspondents across the country (Journalistic Policy, Standards and Practices, 2008). Given that the newspaper is popular and has the greater volumes for political, economic, social and other news, in addition to advertisements, the study is significant because it will help to conclude on what constitute news by the *Daily Graphic* and how those values reflect in the attention given to SDG Four stories.

Finally, since Article 163 of the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana mandates state-owned media organisations to reflect divergent views, the study will help to bring out how issues of SDG Four, which affects all classes of people, are given prominence.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study looks into stories that made it to the front pages of the Daily Graphic (a newspaper under state-owned print media organisation – Graphic Communications Group Limited, in Ghana); how attention is given to SDG Four stories; the themes that are generated from the stories on SDG Four; and the news values that guide the editors of the Daily Graphic in the selection of the front-page stories. The study covers the period January, 2016 to December, 2020. This five-year duration for the study is to ensure representativeness as data is gathered through systematic and in-depth process. The five-year period for the study helps to get focus of the stories and the pattern of news on SDG Four. Since the SDGs came into effect in 2016, the period of the study helps to draw patterns and also ensure currency in terms of the data because 2020 gives current themes that are generated by the newspaper. The interviews with the *Daily Graphic* editor, news editors and a reporter, was conducted to serve as a guide for the interpretation of data on news value decisions.

1.8 Organisation of the study

The study is organised into five chapters. The first chapter which is the introduction to the study, discusses the following: background to the study, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study. Chapter two is dedicated to the review of literature on sustainable development, SDGs, the concept of front pages of newspapers and news value. It also covers the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter three, deals with the methodology and covers the study area, research paradigm, research design, target population, sampling technique, sources of data, data collection procedure and data analysis technique. Chapter four was devoted to data analysis,

interpretation, presentation, and discussions of findings while chapter five concentrates on the summary and conclusions of the findings of the study, recommendations and the limitations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITRATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section of the research is a discussion of the empirical studies and theoretical framework that guides the study. The chapter reviews studies related to the study and the theoretical underpinnings. It reviews what other writers have said or written in relation to key aspects of this study. The section also looks at the views that many authorities and writers have expressed in relation to the concepts of development, sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable development goals as well as the important role the media (newspapers) play in awareness creation and mobilization of stakeholders to achieve SDGs, particularly Goal Four.

2.1 The Concept of Development

The concept of 'Development' has been defined, interpreted and theorised by many scholars. Peet (1999), cited in Du Pisani (2006), defines development as an evolutionary process in which human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change and striving purposefully and creatively to attain new goals. Reyes and Useche (2019) see development as a social condition within a nation, in which the needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems. From the perspectives of Mpundu and Bopape (2022), development is a multi-dimensional process which involves major changes in social structures, attitudes and institutions as well as economic growth, reduction of

inequality and eradication of poverty.

Within the context of this study, the above definitions sit well with the focus of the study. This is especially so when development as a concept involves a process, often as a result of education, that brings about growth, improvement or positive change in the life of a people, be it economically or socially. At the national level, development entails the improvement in the country's ability to manage the economic and social conditions by utilising the natural and human resources in a manner that ensures that ensures improvement in the life of its citizens.

Many scholars have also advanced theories such as the Modernisation, Dependency, World Systems and Globalisation in the quest to explain the concept of development. According to Tipps (1976), the modernisation theory of development differentiates between two main classes of society in the world, which is the traditional and modern societies. He puts forward the argument that traditional societies are caught up in the web of norms, beliefs and values which are counterproductive for development. In that regard, the researcher argues further that traditional societies need to emulate the culture of modern societies which are synonymous with capital accumulation and industrialization, if they are to progress. The theory, according to Huntington (1976), focuses on improving the standard of living of traditional societies by the introduction of modern technology to improve economic growth.

In contrast with the Modernisation Theory, the Dependency Theory, which thrives on the Marxist ideology, rejects the underpinnings of the Modernisation Theory and argues that industrialisation in developed countries rather aggravated the state of under-development

in poor countries through exploitation by developed countries (Bodenheimer, 1970; Webster-Stratton, 1984) The Dependency Theory also failed to clarify the dependency of least developed countries on metropolis regarding how developed countries have access to economic surplus of poor countries.

For its part, the World Systems Theory asserts that specialisation in international trade and transfer of resources from the periphery or less developed countries to the core or developed countries hinders development in the under-developed countries by making them to continuously rely on the developed countries (Petras, 1981). The World Systems Theory operates on the notion that the world economy is an international hierarchy of unequal relations (Reyes & Useche, 2019), adding that the unequal relations in the exchange between the global North and South (First and Third world countries) is the origin of surplus in the world. This is in sharp contrast with the Classical Marxist Theory which argues that surplus results from capital-labour relations that exist in production (Bodenheimer, 1970; Reyes, 2001). Just like the other development theories, the World System Theory has received criticism for focusing more on the world market at the expense of relations production (Huntington & Apter, 2019).

According to Portes and Jensen (1992), the Globalisation Theory has its origin from the global mechanisms of deeper integration of economic transactions among countries. The theory also sees cultural links among nations as a key element for development interpretation (Ding et al., 2020). Reyes (2001) adds that one key factor is the adaptability of technology to connect people across the world. In the view of Waks (2006) open, clear and easy communication among nations have facilitated cultural homogenization and created a common global society.

Parianadze (2009) opines that globalization has political, economic, technological and socio-cultural factors and orientations, arguing that although development theories have their down sides, they paved the way for contemporary development concepts, especially, sustainability and sustainable development.

2.1.2 Sustainable development

About two decades back, sustainability was seen literally as the capacity to maintain some entity, outcome or process over time (Barbier & Burgess, 2020). In modern literature in development, academics, researchers and development practitioners connotatively view the concept as encompassing the act of improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development (Tiarve & Zemite, 2016; Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2018). Ben-Eli (2015) defined sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. In furtherance of that viewpoint, Thomas (2015) expressed the view that sustainability as a concept, brings to the fore human activities and their ability to satisfy human needs and wants without depleting productive resources at their disposal.

In another vein Janoušková et al. (2019) posit that one of the herculean tasks confronting humanity today is the quest to transform global society, environment and economy to a sustainable one since that is to be done considering the planet's carrying capacity. DESA-UN (2018) argues that the overall objective of the concept of sustainability is to ensure appropriate alignment and equilibrium among society, economy and the environment in

matters relating to the regenerative capacity of the planet's ecosystem that supports life. Gosling-Goldsmith (2018) also observed a meaningful definition of sustainability must focus on the dynamic alignment and equilibrium between the society, economy and the environment.

From the Ghanaian, and for that matter, the African context, on the other hand, Mensah and Enu-Kwesi (2018) opined that any attempt to define sustainability need to stress on cross-generational equity. In view of this, sustainability can be defined to mean the efficient and equitable distribution of resources in a manner that ensures that the resources have the capacity to satisfy the needs of current and future generations.

Sustainable development has attracted attention and remains an intrusive development paradigm for a long time (Isa et al., 2021). Although it has been quite pervasive, there are still concerns about the concept as people continue to pose questions about its meaning or definition and what it comprises or implies for development theory and practice, without answers (Shahzalal & Hassan, 2019). According to Mensah and Enu-Kwesi (2018), sustainable development risks becoming a cliché or fashionable and rhetoric phrase to which many people pay homage, yet no one has a precise definition for it. There is the need to clearly define the concept of sustainable development and explain its key dimensions so as to move beyond the sustainability rhetoric and have a more meaningful agenda for the concept (Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2018).

It is undisputable that there are volumes of literature on sustainable development, but issues regarding the definition, history, pillars, principles and implications of the concept for human development remain uncertain to many people. Hence, it is imperative to

clarify the nagging issues about sustainable development since decision-makers need better data and information on the nexus between the principles and pillars of sustainable development. They also need better understanding of those linkages and their implication for concrete action in the interest of human development (Abubakar, 2017; Hylton, 2019).

Sustainable development, a concept that has become the watchword in development discourses, has been associated with different definitions, meanings and interpretations. By way of structure, sustainable development as a concept is phrase consisting of two words sustainable and development. Sustainable development, just as the two words making up the concept, is difficult to define, which is why it has been variously defined by researchers, academics and practitioners.

In the view of Abubakar (2017), sustainable development is an integral part of global development policy and provides a mechanism for the interaction between societies and the environment without the tendency to damage the resources for the future. By its nature, sustainable development is a development paradigm that demands improving the standards of living without negatively impacting the earth's ecosystems or causing damage such as deforestation, water and air pollution to the environment, resulting in climate change and extinction of species (Browning & Rigolon, 2019).

ElMassah and Mohieldin (2020) also observe that when viewed as an approach, sustainable development is an approach to development which makes use of resources in a way that allows the resources to continue to exist for other generations to use. Relatedly, Evers (2017) likens the concept of sustainable development to the organising

principle for achieving the development goals of humans simultaneously with sustaining the capacity of natural ecosystems to provide the resources and services on which the economy and society depend. From that perspective, sustainable development is targeted at achieving social progress and environmental equilibrium as well as economic growth (Gossling-Goldsmiths, 2018; Chang et al., 2019)

Hak et al. (2019) argue that since population increases all the time but the natural resources available to satisfy human needs and wants do not, the concept of sustainable development continues to gain relevance. They stress that sustainable development as a concept, helps to strike a balance between the growing population and sustainable utilisation of limited natural resources. Hak et al. (2016) emphasised that it was in recognition of that phenomenon that global concerns have been to make judicious use of available natural resources in a manner that makes it possible to satisfy the needs of the present and future generations. What this implies is that sustainable is an effort that strives to strike a good balance between economic growth, integrity of the environment and social well-being. In effect, this gives credence to the argument by Stoddart (2011) that the concept of sustainable development is intergenerational equity which recognises both short-term and long-term implications of sustainability and sustainable development. In the view of Jha (2020) sustainable development is capable of being achieved by integrating economic, environmental and social concerns in the decision-making process.

Abubakar (2017) posit that sustainable development is a core concept in the global development space and policy agenda. The concept provides a viable mechanism for society to interact with the environment while avoiding the tendency to risk or damage the resources for the future. In effect, sustainable development is seen both as a

development paradigm and a concept which demands improving the standard of living of people without tampering with the ecosystem or destroying the environment (Dhahri, Slimani, & Omri, 2021; Browning & Rigolon, 2019). In agreement, Mohieldin (2017) is of the view that sustainable development can be seen as an approach to development that involves the use of resources in a way that allows the resources to continue to exist for other generations. In furtherance of this view, Miloslavich et al. (2019) link sustainable development to the mobilisation principles for meeting human development goals and also sustain the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend.

Within the African context, sustainable development is one that aligns with the African Union Agenda 2063, which envisions an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena (Africa Union [AU], 2013). ‘Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want’, is the blueprint and masterplan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It encapsulates the African concept of sustainable development through judicious utilisation of human and natural resources and serves as the framework that delivers the goal of inclusive and sustainable development, promotion of unity, peace, self-determination and collective prosperity (AU, 2013). Following the transition from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to SDGs in 2016, the AU Agenda 2063 was made to be in sync with the global goals. Hence the principles of Africa’s development is focused on key areas such as incomes, jobs and decent work, poverty, inequality, hunger, social security and protection, inclusion for persons with disabilities, liveable habitats and quality services as well as education and science, technology and innovation (STI) driven skills revolution,

health and nutrition, water security, climate resilience and natural disasters preparedness (AU, 2017).

From the Ghanaian perspective, sustainable development is seen as a total improvement in the lives of people, be it economically, socially, and environmentally, without compromising the quality of future resources. It is an improvement in the life of citizens that ensures that they have basic necessities of life and well-equipped to participate in the processes of nation-building (National Development Planning Commission [NDPC], 2018). Ghana, one of the 193 nations to have adopted the 17 SDGs, and through the support of the UN, has been making efforts to align her development priorities in line with the SDGs (NDPC, 2018, 2018; IN, 2018). In collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector, Ghana continues to put in place measures to address the SDGs, including integrating the goals into the national development agenda, which is reflected the country's Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (UN Communication Group and CSO Platform on SDGs, 2017).

2.1.3 Pillars of sustainable development

Sustainable development is a progressive development paradigm that lays emphasis on a positive transformation pathway that hinges on social, economic and environmental factors, and, according to Taylor, (2018), economic growth, environmental protection and social equality are the three main issues underpinning sustainable development. He adds that sustainable development thrives on three main conceptual pillars which are economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Economic sustainability has been described as a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs or consumption levels (Lobo, Pietriga, & Appert, 2015). Economists have the traditional assumption that the supply of natural resources was unlimited and put emphasis on the capacity of the market to efficiently allocate resources (Du & Kang, 2016). According to Cooper and Vargas (2004), economists also believed that economic growth would be accompanied by technological advancement to restore natural resources destroyed in the production process. As Du and Kang (2016) put it, economic system continues to grow in scale thereby outstretching the natural resource base, and this gives rise to rethinking of the traditional economic theories. Alanne and Cao (2017) aver that although there are three main activities are carried out in an economy, which are production, distribution and consumption, the accounting framework used to guide and evaluate the economy when it comes to these activities are distortive, and does not favour the society and the environment. Retchless and Brewer (2016) have expressed the view that the main concern appears to be on economic growth, but important components especially the impact of depletion and pollution, are ignored while increasing demand for goods and services continues to drive markets and infringe destructive effects of the environment. Zhai and Chang (2019) conclude that economic sustainability requires that decisions are made in the most equitable and fiscally sound way possible while considering the other aspects of sustainability.

The concept of social sustainability thrives on the principle that people matter since development is about people (Benaim et al., 2008). Littig and GrieBler (2005) also said social sustainability connotes a system of social organisation that alleviates poverty.

However, Farazmand (2016) expresses the view that social sustainability fundamentally relates to the linkage between social conditions such as poverty and environmental destruction. In line with this, the theory of social sustainability argues that the alleviation of poverty should not involve unnecessary environmental destruction or economic instability. (Scopelliti et al. (2018) add that social sustainability should be targeted at alleviating poverty with the existing environmental and economic resource base of the society.

Saith (2006) opines that at the social level, sustainability involves promoting the development of people, communities and cultures to facilitate the attainment of meaningful life, relying proper healthcare, education, gender equality peace and stability worldwide. Kolk (2016) posits that social sustainability aims at providing enabling conditions for everyone to have the capacity to realise their needs and not about ensuring that everyone's needs are met. Pierobon (2019) also opined that for individuals, organisations or community to make progress towards social sustainability, anything that impedes the capacity to do so should be considered a barrier and be addressed. Also, understanding the nature of social dynamics and how the structures emerge from a systems perspective is of great importance to social sustainability (Lv. 2018). Again, Guo (2017), said social sustainability entails many other issues such as human rights, gender equity and equality, public participation and rule of law, all of which promote peace and social stability for sustainability development.

According to Brodhag and Talière (2006) the concept of environmental sustainability is about the natural environment and how it remains productive and resilient to support human life. He stressed that environmental sustainability relates to the integrity of the

ecosystem and carrying capacity of natural environment. In the view of Evers (2017), environmental sustainability thrives on the assumption that natural resources should not be harvested faster than they can be regenerated while waste must also not be emitted faster than they can be assimilated by the environment because the earth's ecosystem has limits within which equilibrium is maintained. There are concerns that the quest for growth puts great demand on the earth's ecosystem and places strain on these limits because technological advancement may not be able to support the desired growth (Gilding et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the effects of climate change including, warming of the atmosphere and oceans, diminishing ice levels, rising sea level, increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases, gives ample evidence on the need for environmental sustainability (Du & Kang, 2016).

Kumar (2021) avows that there is already evidence that climate change is affecting biodiversity while higher temperatures tend to affect the timing of reproduction in animals and plant species as well as migration patterns of animals and distribution of species and population sizes. In the view of Campagnolo et al. (2018), it is advisable that for the sake of sustainability, all societies must endeavour to adjust to the emerging realities regarding the management of ecosystems and natural limits to growth.

2.1.4 History of Sustainable development

Historically, sustainable development was seen as a concept driven from Economics as a discipline (Pigou, 1921). The justification for this view, which is centered on discussions along the lines of whether the capacity of the Earth's limited natural resources will be sufficient to support the increasingly sprawling human population, gained currency with the Malthusian population theory in the early 1800s (Dixon & Fallon, 1989; Coomer,

1979). As early as 1789, Thomas Malthus, an English economist and demographer, put forward the view that human populations grow in a geometric progression while subsistence could grow only in arithmetic progression (Rostow Walter, 1978). For this reason, they posit that population growth had the potential to subsume the capacity of natural resources to support the needs of the ever-increasing population.

In view of this situation, Eblen and Eblen (1994) opine that measures needed to be taken to check the rapid rate of population growth to prevent the depletion of natural resources. Time has proven that the non-renewability of some natural resources threatened production and long-term economic growth (Paxton, 1993). This reality, according to Kates et al. (2001) reignited consciousness about the potential of the occurrence of the Malthus' view and also raised many questions about whether the development trajectory was sustainable. In a similar vein, Donella Meadows (1972) examined whether the paradigm of global economic development was sustainable using data on population growth, industrial production and pollution ((Basiago, 1998; Rostow, 1978). He concluded that "since the world is physically finite, massive growth of these key variables would in the long run, get to the elastic limit (Meadow, 1972).

This notwithstanding, researchers have argued that the concept of sustainable development was first given international recognition at the UN Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 (Dernbach, 2003; Paxton, 1993). Consequently, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which was held in 1987 and chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, reignited the call for sustainable development. This led to the development of the Brundtland Report dubbed "Our Common Future" in 1987 (Goodland & Daly, 1996). Two key issues stood out in the

WECD Report – the concept of essential needs of the world’s poor; and the idea of limitations occasioned by the state of technology and social organisation on the ability of the environment to meet present and future needs (Kates et al., 2001).

According to Jain and Islam (2015), the Brundtland Report fueled the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), dubbed the Rio Earth Summit, in 1992 which recommendation set the tone for the debate at the UNCED. Worster (1993) adds that the UNCED had many core outcomes for sustainable development discussed in the conference outcome document, Agenda 2021. The document spelt out the fact that sustainable development must be prioritized on the agenda of the international community while national strategies should be designed and developed to tackle economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development (Allen, Metternicht, & Wiedmann, 2018). The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), also referred to as Rio+ was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, to review the progress in the implementation of the outcomes from Rio Earth Summit.

Consequently, WSSD led to the development of a plan for the implementation of actions contained in Agenda 2021, which came to be known as the Johannesburg Plan (Mitcham, 1995). The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also called Rio+ 20, was held in 2012 – 20 years after the first Rio Earth summit and Allen et al (2018) aver that discourse at Rio +20 centered largely on two themes – green economy and institutional frameworks, all within the context of sustainable development. The conference document dubbed ‘The Future We Want,’ reaffirmed the commitment to sustainable development to the extent that the phrase ‘sustainable development’ appeared 238 times in the 49-page document (UNSD, 2018). The idea of developing new SDGs

was one of the outcomes of Rio +20 and meant to start in 2015 (Weitz, Carlsen, Nilsson, & Skånberg, 2018). It was in 2012 that the UN Secretary-General, Ban Kin-Moon, identified sustainable development as one of the five priorities in the UN for action. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) proposed a document containing 17 goals to be presented to the General Assembly's approval in September, 2015. This document set a solid ground for new SDGs and the global development agenda from 2015 to 2030 (UN, 2017). Another milestone that prepared a solid foundation for the SDGs is the creation of the SDG Fund in 2014. The SDG Fund is an international multi-donor and multi-agency development mechanism by the UN to support sustainable development activities.

2.2 Commencement of the SDGs

The concept of sustainable development has been relevant for a long time, but it can be argued that the relevance gathers steam with each passing day because the population keeps skyrocketing as against the limited natural resources for meeting human needs (Hak et al. 2019). It is in line with this situation that there have been global concerns for the judicious use of the available resources (Hak et al., 2016). One of such latter-day concerns culminated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and subsequently, the SDGs. The MDGs ushered in a historic mobilisation of resources to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide (Breuer, Janetschek & Malerba, 2019). After 15 years of roll out (2000-2015), the MDGs were relatively effective, but some of the targets of the eight goals were not realised. The 2015 Ghana MDG Report, which is the final of biennial MDG report series, examined progress made by Ghana in attaining the goals and indicated that out of 21 targets and 60 indicators adopted globally

for monitoring the MDGs, Ghana adopted 17 targets and 36 indicators (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). According UNDP (2015), targets such as extreme poverty (MDG 1A), halving the proportion of people without safe drinking water (MDG 7B), universal primary education (MDG 2A) and gender parity in primary school (MDG 3) were attained. The UNDP added that substantial progress was made in reducing HIV prevalence (MDG 6C), access to ICT (MDG 8F) and reducing the proportion of people suffering from hunger. However, only slow progress was made on full and productive employment (MDG 1B), equal share of women in non-agriculture wages and women's involvement in governance (MDG 3), reducing under-5 and child mortality (MDG 4), reducing maternal mortality (MDG 5), reversing environmental resource loss and improving sanitation (MDG 7). Therefore, the SDGs were introduced to continue with the development agenda.

Taylor (2016) explains that the new development trajectory is exemplified in UN's approval of the 2030 Agenda, also called the SDGs, with a call to action to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure the well-being of people. According to the United Nation Communication Group (UNCG) and the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Platform on SDGs in Ghana (2017), the SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The two bodies added that the SDGs were adopted by 193 countries and came into effect in January, 2016, with the aim to foster economic growth, ensure social inclusion and protect the environment. The UNCG-CSO (2017) posits that the SDGs facilitate partnership among governments, private sector, research, academic and CSOs, with support of the UN. According to Breuer et al. (2019), this partnership is meant to ensure that the right

choices are made to improve life in a sustainable way, for future generations. The Agenda 2030 has five overarching themes which are people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, and cuts across 17 SDGs (Hylton, 2019; Guo, 2017; Zhai & Chang, 2019). They are meant to tackle the root causes of development challenges ranging from poverty, covering areas such as hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, economic growth to peace and justice.

Tosun and Leininger (2017) aver that the development objectives and targets of SDGs are intertwined, interdependent and complementary. In agreement, Le Blanc (2015) notes that the complementarities of the SDG targets mean that efforts to address one goal could have trickling down effects on achieving other goals. This assertion is further corroborated by the UN's (2015) call on countries to prioritise SDG Four because it has direct impact on the attainment of other SDG targets, particularly health and well-being (SDG 3.7); gender equality (SDG 5.6); decent work and sustainable growth (SDG 8.6); responsible Consumption and production (SDG 12.8); and climate change mitigation (SDG 13.3).

In the view of Fasoli (2018), the SDGs are not silos that stand alone, but that they are interconnected and achieving one of the goals facilitate the achievement of another. Therefore, Kumar et al (2014) posit that the SDGs should be seen as bedfellows. Taylor (2016) opines that to take advantage of the interdependence of the SDG targets, countries across the world must review the targets to identify the goals that can serve as catalysts and those that have cross-cutting impact, while also aiming to implement the entire agenda. Spahn (2018) observes that one of the major hindrances to the SDGs is how to ensure responsibility and accountability for the progress towards attaining the SDGs.

This view has attracted the attention of researchers and academics such as Mohieldin (2017); Taylor (2016) and Yin (2016) who all opined that ensuring responsibility and accountability in the process of attaining the SDGs calls for appropriate indicators and ways of monitoring and evaluating progress of the goals, particularly at the national level (Kanie & Biermann, 2017). In line with this, Allen et al. (2018) and Breuer et al. (2019) said it would be critical to measure both inputs and outputs so as to help check whether the various countries are investing well to address the development issues and also track outcomes to see if they are actually achieving the set goals and targets.

2.2.1 Principles of sustainable development

A number of scholars have argued that achieving sustainable development, to a large extent, depends on three principles namely the economy, environment and society (Ji, 2018; Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2018). From the economic perspective, Pietriga and Appert (2015) indicate that sustainable development is a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs or consumption levels. In terms of the social principles of development, Farazmand (2016) notes that it fundamentally deals with the linkage between social conditions such as poverty and environmental destruction. The environmental principles of sustainable development also hinge on the view by Evers (2017) that natural resources should not be harvested faster than they can be regenerated while waste must also not be emitted faster than they can be assimilated by the environment because the earth's ecosystem has limits within which equilibrium is maintained. For Wang et al. (2016), prudent human resource management is a key principle for achieving sustainable development because it is people who must ensure that the principles are put to action. (Tennant & Collister, 2017) are of the view

that it is people who have the responsibility to conserve the environment and also make sure that there is peace. Therefore, they argue that the role of human resource in achieving sustainable development is critical and so, it is important to develop human knowledge and skills in such a way that will put people in a better position to take care of the environment, economy and the society. They make a strong case that the way forward for equipping people with the needed knowledge and skills is to prioritise education and training and proper healthcare services because a sound mind lives in a healthy body. Additionally, they observe that proper education influences the society positively towards environmental conservation.

Guo (2017) also makes the point that the process of sustainable development needs to be participatory since sustainable development cannot happen from one-sided perspective. He argues that development can be sustainable only if there is participation by all who matter, and that will ensure collective responsibility. However, there is increasing concern that the level of awareness about the goals is generally low as many citizens across many countries lack adequate knowledge about the core issues of the goals (Bebbington & Unerman, 2020). According to Omisore et al. (2017), low level of awareness on the SDGs presents a significant threat to the realisation of the SDGs. Borg and Curtis (2021) also believes that effective communication is at the heart of the success or failure of the SDGs. The SDG Accountability Handbook (2019) also makes the point that effective communication strategies and techniques is required to raise awareness about the SDGs, including the production of educational resources such as reports and infographics.

This study which looks at the attention the *Daily Graphic* gives to SDG 4 stories, is key as it helps to determine the prominence given to education, which is a driver of many of the SDGs. It will also help policy makers to revise communication strategies to create more awareness on the global goals.

2.2.2 Sustainable development and the media

Ghana's print media has arguably played a pivotal role in the country's socio-economic development, particularly the nurturing democracy in Ghana. In the view of Hayford (2014), the print media have remained as vital tool for information and communication in Ghanaian societies as it continues to generate content for the electronic media to feed on. In his exploratory work, *Newspaper Review Shows in the Broadcast Media Space*, Nyarko (2016) affirms that the electronic media in Ghana depends to a large extent on the print media for news bulletin and their talk shows or discussion segments. He made the point that the media landscape in Ghana is awash with socio-political discussions that are mostly centered on content of newspaper front pages in particular. O'Donnell (2013) also indicate in his work *Visual Persuasion via the media*, that many people across the world, especially in the United States of America (U.S) and Africa, rely on newspaper front pages as a main source of information for their daily lives. Also, Gogovi (2017) who conducted a content analysis of the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Guide* newspapers to ascertain how Ghanaian print media covered the 2016 election, posits that what constitute the front page of the newspapers are political, social, business, cultural corruption and crime related issues. He adds that the extent to which those issues are published on the front-page influence how people think about the issues. In relation to this study, the above understanding about the front-pages of newspapers is relevant because the nature

of attention the Daily Graphic gives to the SDG 4 stories on its front-page gives an indication on how the paper uses its front-page to set the agenda for national discourse on sustainable development using education as the driver.

2.3 Concept of Front-page and its importance

Newspaper vendors display the first pages of newspapers on their newsstands to attract the attention of buyers. In Ghana, it is common to see members of the public make a stop at newsstands to catch glimpse of the front-page of newspapers. According to Mcquail (2010), the attention readers of newspapers give to the front-page, to a large extent, serve as an influencing factor for editors at the editorial conference to spend more time and seriousness in determining specific news stories that should be published, especially on the front-page. Reisner (1992) observes that the story selection process is so critical to editors that they take a number of issues into consideration to place stories on the front-page. He adds that front-pages serve a motivation factor for media houses maintain a greater share of the newspaper industry and increase sales to meet the dynamic face of the media landscape. In the view of Utt & Pasternack, (2003), newspapers present a selection of events of the day to members of the public, with the front-page providing an opportunity for people to locate the most critical events. To them, the front-page features the most important and compelling stories which are well-targeted at enticing patrons, including impulsive buyers.

Shoemaker and Reese (2013) posit that beside the stories, there are a number of elements in the design of front-pages, and these include headlines and enhancement features such as photos as well as graphics, which are highlighted in stories. They argue further that

what a newspaper believes to be the most important stories of the day is likely to be reflected in the decisions made in terms of design of the front-page. According to Kim and Chung (2017), the stories that are highlighted on the front-page of a newspaper like the New York Times are considered the most significant. In order to ascertain how attention is given to SDG Four stories (education) in Ghana, it is important to examine how print media, and for the purpose of this study, the Daily Graphic, present narratives about education stories on the front-page.

Media scholars are of the view that newspapers present codes - linguistics, graphic and typographical - that help to provide information concerning the world to readers (Carter, 2000). Newspapers also play a vital role in a democratic society by sharing collective experiences, shared symbolic anchors and representations of people to the public (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). As posited by Reisner (2002), the front-page of a newspaper is an important aspect of the publication because it brings out the most important issues of the day. The front-page of the newspaper is also seen as the best way to get attention of readers, set readers' agenda and inform members of the public (Pasternack & Utt, 1986).

According to Kim and Chung (2017), front-pages contributes significantly in shaping opinion and offering divergent representation on issues. McQuail (2010) also suggests that a number of people read the front-page stories without necessarily reading the rest of the stories on the other pages. What this suggests is that a story may be overlooked or denied prominence and attention especially, if the story is buried in the rest of the pages of the paper. Kim and Chung (2017) further stated that the front-page of a newspaper forms part of the core values of the journalists working with a newspaper. They add that

certain factors within the organisation may influence the content of news that is published by the newspaper. Citing Shoemaker and Reese (2013), Kim and Chung (2017) explain that different authorities have given an explanation to the construction of news, or the inside and outside forces that may influence news selection. Lowrey (1999) posits that news organisations and the procedures tied to organizational life point to the publication of news based on cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

Kim and Chung (2017) further argue that the procedure for selecting what constitutes news- especially the front-page of the newspaper- is an important issue to assess. From the perspectives of Gans (2004) and Schudson (2012), news is a product by news organisations and it follows rigorous routines for efficiency, suppression of personal values by journalists while embracing professional values in line with organisational routines which will determine news content based on the routines on how to portray the world to the public and the impact of external forces.

2.4 News values and influence of organisations on media content

Of the several events that occur in the day, only a few of these events which are considered as having news values become news stories (Gogovi, 2017). According to Spencer-Thomas (2005), news values are rules that guide media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television in determining the degree of importance or attention to give a story and form the fundamentals to understanding the choices editors grapple with when deciding the newsworthiness of a story. Media researchers have stated that certain factors influence the conventional news reporting style as journalists tend to rely on these news values to decide on what news is or the issues they should report on.

Serwornoo (2019) suggests that journalists are guided by some fundamental mechanistic rules that evade objective selection of the event of the day. He adds that beyond the mechanistic rules of journalism, ownership, society and cultural setting also influence the selection of news stories by the media. The theoretical distinct nature of news and news worthiness are made clear by Shoemaker and Reese (2014) as they reject the claim that news articles make it out to publication based on certain news factors.

Serwornoo (2019; 2021) argues that journalists are involved in special translation of event into stories as the translation hardly accommodates the pre-event circumstances which significantly determine why events are occurring and with which severity. Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified nine factors namely; time span, intensity/ threshold, clarity, proximity, consonance, continuity and unexpectedness as factors that influence the flow of news with reference to structure and socio-cultural values of the society or gatekeepers. However, Reese et al. (2016) state that the different level of influence should be looked at when assessing the motivation behind journalists' selection of news by coming up with the hierarchy of influences. In the views expressed by Yao and Serwornoo (2019), the decision of journalists in ascertaining the newsworthiness of an event takes a number of factors into account based on decisions over specific qualities of an event.

Serwoonoo (2021) further argues that news values involve the selection of specific qualities of events regarding newsworthiness of the event. Again, he contends that the concept of news value is influenced by the organisational and professional procedures as found within the practice of journalism. Spencer-Thomas (2005) also posits that news values are guidelines that enable the media including newspapers, television and radio to

define the kind of premium or attention to be placed on publication of a news item and an insight into the selections the editorial team are confronted with when deciding whether a story is newsworthy or otherwise.

Kisuke (2004) adds that news value plays a key role in the selection of stories because not all stories can get space in the newspaper and that the concept of news value is important because it helps to determine which information would fit the available space of a newspaper. Consequently, Harcup and O'Neill (2016) put out a list of news values after examining international news to ascertain the factors that are common for which reason they are placed top of the news agenda across the world. According to the authors, the extent to which events become newsworthy is defined by properties such as frequency, intensity increase, meaningfulness, cultural proximity, unexpectedness, composition, reference to elite nations and something negative.

Harcup and O'Neil (2016) further explain that news values appear as saleable aspects which satisfy an extensive target audience and superiority aspects that focus on essential features of a news article's standing. Popular newspapers, according to Strömbäck and Hopmann (2012), are strongly market driven and aim to reach out to a large audience as possible and might focus on profitable news standards. Reese and Shoemaker (2016) in looking at the hierarchical level of influence posit that journalists at the individual level are guided by their professional values and individual traits in making decisions as regards to news values, professional roles and demographic. These characteristics, they indicate, affect the way journalists report issues. The idea of news values is of importance to the study as it facilitates understanding of indicators that may have contributed to the

selection of SDG Four stories by the editors of the Daily Graphic to the paper's front-pages.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Severin and Tankard (2001) define a theory as a set of systematic generalizations which are based on empirical observation. Theories are important as they guide research studies and help in the planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions (Trifiletti, Gielen, Sleet & Hopkins, 1995). Additionally, theories help explain what a researcher plans to do and what can actually be achieved. In relation to this study, the core objective or purpose is to determine the attention given to SDG Four stories on the front pages of the Daily Graphic; unpack how those stories are framed and ascertain the news values that guide the editors in the selection of stories to the front pages. The agenda setting and the framing theories that are underpinning this study allow the researcher to assess the attention given to SDG Four stories on the front page, the frames that the pattern of stories used produce and the focus of those frames (whether they are positive or negative).

2.6 Agenda Setting in the Media

The agenda setting theory deals with the idea that the news media have the power to set a nation's agenda by getting the public to focus on some few selected key issues to the neglect of others. This stems from the fact that the public believes that they can rely on the news media for accurate information about public affairs so they tend to attach some level of importance to an issue or topic based on the level of emphasis placed on it by the news media (McCombs, 2014). According to him, agenda setting also occurs with public

issues as some parts of the issues are emphasised in the news and that influences how people think and talk about them. He makes the point that because other aspects of the issues are less salient, they do not get the public thinking along those lines. The basic idea is that a lot of issues compete for the attention/limited space in the public sphere each day, but the issues the news media pick and highlight gets attention from the mass audiences.

According to McCombs (2015), agenda setting is basically about the transmission of salience and not the determination of opinions about a particular issue. It is for this reason that in setting the agenda, the news media influences the prominence of small number of issues that eventually capture public attention. Oyero (2010), citing Severin and Tankard (1997), makes a case that in agenda setting, the media content has the capability or potential to influence the perception of audience on important issues and those that are not. Folarin (2005), cited in Oye (2010), explains that the elements that the media use in agenda setting include the frequency of the reportage, prominence given to the reporting, and the degree of conflict generated in the reports.

In relation to this study, the agenda setting theory comes in handy because it guides the researcher address the research question on the attention the Daily Graphic gives to SDG Four stories on its front page. The theory guides the researcher in determining the frequency of the front-page stories, the enhancements and the nature of headlines that accompany the front-page stories.

2.6.1 Limitation of Agenda Setting in the Media

According to Helfer and Aelst (2020), all population categories are not always equally susceptible to media cues and that the agenda setting function of the media is dependent on certain factors, which are the caliber of consumers of media messages and the congruence in coverage of the different media. They note that in the case of public agenda setting for instance, the general audience determines whether media coverage affects the public's priorities or not. Additionally, the effects of political agenda setting of the media are also limited during campaign periods because electoral context radically changes the behavior of players, media and politicians (Helfer & Aelst, 2020). They make the point that the composition of the complex and multi-layered political agenda changes dramatically with central actors such as government and parliament and their agenda make room for political parties with their symbolic agenda. During election campaigns and the periods leading to elections, the mainstream media is joined by other contingent news sources such as political party periodicals, news releases and stage events to disseminate information in a manner that defeats the effects of agenda setting function of the mainstream media. The implication of the above discussions to this study is that since there are two election years within the period of this study, the findings of the research may not be a true reflection of the issue being investigated, which in this case, is the coverage of SDG 4 stories on the front-page of the Daily Graphic. It could be the case that the SDG 4 stories that are published on front-page are politically motivated.

2.7 Framing Theory

The framing theory has roots traceable to psychology and sociology (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2020). Laying these sociological foundations for framing in previous research

on the subject, researchers argued that individuals lacked the skills required to properly classify information and interpret the world around them in a meaningful way (Goffman, 1974). According to Tewksbury and Scheufele (2020), framing thrives on the assumption that how an issue is characterised in news reports has the potential to influence how it is understood by audiences or members of the public. The framing theory has evolved since the 1960s, allowing for further study into the effect of different types of media on a wide range of audiences. Ardèvol-abreu et al. (2020) aver that in terms of sharing information and conveying ideas, whether visually or through text, communication professionals, especially journalists, have to tell a story within constraints such as time, while also making it interesting and accessible to wide audience. According to him, journalists do this by structuring the information and creating a framework that makes it possible for the audience to understand and digest the message. Ardèvol-abreu et al. (2020) add that the intention of framing is to set up information to be interpreted in particular ways; however, individual interpretation is also affected by certain cultural and societal norms. In the view of Powell, Boomgaarden, Swert, and De (2019), framing is an influential way of forming and shaping public opinion and since its evolution, it has been widely used in communication research of media content as well as studies of the relationship between the media and public opinion

Giving a historical antecedent of the framing theory, Cissel (2012) indicate that Goffman (1974) was the first to give attention to the theory as a form of communication. Framing was first advanced by Goffman (1974) under the title *Frame Analysis* with the explanation that people interpret what goes on around them and the world through their primary framework. Botan and Hazelton (2006) affirm that Goffman is the founder of the

Frame Analysis which has the underlying assumption that individuals are capable users of these frameworks on a day to day basis; whether they are aware of them or not. Framing may thus, be seen as a “schemata of interpretation” that enables people to “locate, perceive, identify and label” occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1974 cited in Cissel, 2008). Entman (1993, p.51) later revised this definition to capture framing specifically as “a way of communicating text or messages which is purposeful and meant to promote certain facets of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a manner as to endorse a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and or a treatment recommendation.” This definition of Entman (1993) has been affirmed by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) who see the definition as more detailed in terms of explanation of how the media provide audiences with schemas for interpreting events.

In addition, Entman (1993) observes that news organisations frame reality by making judgments on inclusion, exclusion, illumination and suppression of issues. What this explanation of framing theory suggests is that the social construction of reality is predictably subjective. Consequently, Kuypers (2006) expresses the view that those who frame facts or events think that other people will perceive those facts or events in their intended ways. Gross (2006) argues that by highlighting certain aspects of an event or policy, frames guide audience member’s thoughts about the events or issue in predictable ways which engender predictable conclusion. In relation to the current study, framing theory helps to ascertain how SDG 4 stories have been presented by the print media (Daily Graphic) so as to guide audience’s thoughts about education within the context of the SDGs.

Severin and Tankard (2001) assert that framing allows for variety of positions and does not give the whole picture of an event or issue. They hypothesise three main theoretical constructs of framing research - media package, multidimensionality and the list of frames. Severin and Tankard (2001) posit that framing of news stories are suggested by particular device such as headlines and kickers, subheads, photo captions, leads, pull quotes, selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, graphs and logos. In line with this view, the use of news stories as the unit of analysis for this study will help to identify the themes in the stories and also gauge the tone of the stories.

Nelson et al. (1997) opine that “frames act like plots or storylines, lending coherence to otherwise discrete pieces of information” (p. 568). Therefore, framing helps journalists to organise stories for the public to understand events and issues. It can also have powerful influences on audiences as it affects their recognition and understanding of social problems and political issues (Entman, 1993).

From the Communication perspective, framing theory means communication with emphasis on certain parts of issues and intentionally playing down others. According to Entman (1993), this is a very relevant quality of communication because issues are usually complex and complicated, and requires a great deal of processing of information from variety of perspectives. He makes the case that frames provide a simplified code for understanding of a situation through focusing on features seen as important by the particular individual involved or sender of the message. Frames, he noted, help in understanding the difficult task of processing complex and cumbersome information about our social world much simpler by focusing attention only on certain features that may be more important (Entman, 1993). Relating this to the current study, this theory

helps in analysing the volumes of data with a focus on major themes so as to understand the issues related to coverage of SDG 4 stories on the front-page.

2.7.1 How media frames process works

According to Scheufele (1999), framing is a construct that occur both at the macro and micro level. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) add that framing refers to the modes of presentation that journalist and other communicators use to present information in a manner that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience. As Entman (1993, p,52) put it, the framing process involves “the selection of some aspects of a perceive reality to make them more salient in a communication text in a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation of the item described.” In effect, the frames typically diagnose, evaluate and prescribe a point explored. In the view of Chong and Druckman (2007), framing can work on three levels making new beliefs available about an issue, making certain available beliefs accessible or making beliefs applicable or strong in people’s evaluations. This emanates from the fact that the mind and communication work such that individuals draw their opinions from set of available beliefs stored in memory. The underlying principle here is that at any given point, only a set of beliefs become assessable for the formation of opinions; and out of the accessible beliefs, only some are strong enough to be relevant or applicable to the subject under review. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) posit that audience may have to pay substantial attention to the messages for framing effect to occur. Hence, the content and implications of an issue frame are likely to be most apparent to an audience member who pays attention to a news story.

Framing and news coverage can be investigated from two different perspectives as identified by Schenk and Ahmed (2011), and these are deductive qualitative and inductive qualitative framing. In the view of de Vreese (2005), the inductive approach is one of the approaches in identifying frames in news as that approach does not lend itself to analysing news stories with prior defined news frames in mind. From the inductive approach, the researcher's mission is to identify frames or ideas that exist in the news story or the unit of analysis without prior identification of what themes to analyze. Conversely, the deductive approach entails prior identification of themes or frames to look out for, and these frames may be obtained from literature or matched against what already exists in literature. In this study, the inductive perspective was adopted for investigating the frames in the news stories because there were no pre-existing themes or frames in literature. The inductive approach was therefore adopted to help discover frames and themes in the news stories.

2.7.2 Identifying frames in news

One of the most comprehensive approaches to framing is the one given by Tankard (2001) in which he listed framing mechanisms for identifying and measuring news frames. These mechanisms include headlines, lead, subheads, photographs, photo captions, source selection, quotes, statistics and charts, concluding statements, quote selection, pull quotes, logos and paragraphs. In identifying the frames for this study, inspiration was drawn from Shoemaker (2014), who suggests four criteria that news frames must meet. He puts forward the view that a news frame must have identifiable, conceptual and linguistic characteristics; it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice; it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames; and a

frame must have representational validity and not a fragment of the researcher's imagination. Entman (1993) further suggests that frames in the news can be examined and identified by "the presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images and sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgment" (p.52).

2.7.3 Effects of Media Framing

Druckman (2001) put forth that the effect of media framing is evident when journalists or communicators, in the course of describing an issue or event in the media, put emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations and cause audiences to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinion. What this mean is that the frames given an issue in the media tend to be accepted by audience as the meaning of the message communicated.

Framing is almost unavoidable phenomenon because each time a message is crafted, it comes to play. Journalists and media professionals are often faced with the choice of how to frame their messages. However, the degree of attention and consciousness attached to framing varies with individual journalists. According to Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2011) by stimulating certain ideologies, feelings and values than others, the news has the potential to encourage particular trains of thoughts about certain phenomena and lead audience members to arrive at predictable conclusions. Hence, framing works as a consequence communicators' action; but, how individuals interpret information differ depending on how the information is contextualized or framed. In the view of Scheufele and Inyengar (2010), the effects of framing are particularly not so pronounced for ambiguous stimuli, implying that pieces of information that are open to multiple

interpretations rarely produce the needed framing effect. Thus, effective framing needs to be clear and free of ambiguity.

2.7.4 Limitation of Framing Theory

One of the limitations of the framing theory, as identified by Druckman (2001), is perceived source credibility. He argues that perceived source credibility seems a major credibility prerequisite for successful framing because framing effects occur not because journalists want to manipulate audiences, but because media audience depend on credible news persons and journalists for guidance in understanding news events. In doing this, they choose which frames to follow in a systematic and sensible way. Framing effects may be the evidence of media audiences' quest for guidance from credible news sources or media outlets rather than being a sign of promotion of manipulation. In relation to this study, perceived source credibility as a precondition for successful framing may not be a major issue since the Daily Graphic is regarded as a credible print news outlet which is often cited for official purposes and relied on by policy makers and development agents for decision making (Amihere, 2010).

2.7.5 Interconnection between Agenda Setting and Framing

Although Agenda Setting and Framing are two separate theories, McCombs and Ghanem (2001) connected the two theories by suggesting that news carries information on an issue, leading to the setting of agenda; and at the same time, news emphasizes or conceals some attributes of the issues, which is how framing of issues takes place (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Being a media effects tool, framing has a very close relation with the agenda setting function of the media. For instance, it is argued that the process of agenda setting occurs in two stages – the first is agenda setting and the second is framing stage.

The principle underlying the interconnectedness of the two theories is that apart from providing information for the people, the media also tries to motivate the people to consider some events as the most important issues for the day, while at times, intentionally keep other issues out of the public attention. The media does this by highlighting certain issues that are relevant to their purpose.

According to McCombs (1993), framing is related to the second level of agenda setting and that news framing refers to the way in which news media organizes and presents news to convey a specific story line. The media frame news by making aspects of the event or issue more salient than others, thereby directing the audience to consider certain facts and ignore others. Frames manifest in news narratives by the use of specific words and phrases that reinforce certain ideas while neglecting other ideas. McCombs et al. (1997) as cited in Scheufele (1999, p.103), noted that “framing is an extension of agenda setting” and that framing is tied very closely to the agenda setting theory in many ways. They observed that both theories focus on how the media attracts public attention specific topics and subsequently set the agenda.

Relative to this study, the framing theory would come in handy as the researcher delves deeper into the news stories on SDG Four to unearth themes and also gauge the tone of the stories. While the agenda setting story would help to establish the attention the *Daily Graphic* gives to SDG Four stories through frequency, enhancement and headline types, the framing theory will be applied as the researcher goes beyond the figures look more at how journalists use words or language to convey information regarding the SDGs. The application of the framing theory would further manifest in as the researcher tries to

ascertain whether the tone of the SDG Four stories was positive or negative, and this would be useful for policy formulation and decision making.

2.8 Chapter summary

The chapter focused on the review of relevant literature on the study and then, proceeded to deal with the theoretical framework. The agenda setting and framing theories were used for this study. The studies reviewed to provide a solid ground for the study and to give significance and relevance to the research questions that have been outlined to be answered.

The literature provided ample evidence that sustainability communication is an integral part of efforts to achieve sustainable development goals, and for the purpose of this study, Goal Four. The literature gave ample evidence that newspaper front pages serve as an important tool that is used to facilitate discussions on development goals, as highlighted by Nyarko (2016). It also became evident in the literature review that every media organisation has a set of values that determines news value, and for the purpose of this study, those news values by the *Daily Graphic* guide the decision to place SDG Four stories on the front page.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter primarily deals with the research methodology that was used to carry out the study. The chapter also discusses key components such as the research approach, research design as well as the sample size and sampling technique. Additionally, it highlights and discusses data collection instruments, data collection processes and data analysis methods applied in analysing the collected data.

3.1 Research Approach

To carry out this study, a qualitative research approach was used. Qualitative research is one of the three types of approaches to research, which are quantitative, qualitative and mixed method (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is interpretative and concerns itself with investigating the situated form, content and lived experiences of social actors using words, without subjecting them to mathematical or formal transformation (Lindlof & Taylor, 20011). According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research provides methods for understanding the meanings that are assigned to social practices within a historical context. In qualitative research, the researcher's goal is to uncover the facts, without interfering with or manipulating the natural setting of the phenomenon of interest (Patton & Cochran, 2007). This study looked at the content of front-page news stories on SDG Four in the Daily Graphic devoid of mathematical transformation. As Creswell (2013) explains, qualitative research approach makes use of text and image data; follows unique steps in analysing the data; and draws on diverse designs. This definition fits well into the

objective of this study since the research aims at analysing the content of newspaper to find out the attention given to news stories on SDG Four at the front pages of the Daily Graphic and to determine how those stories are framed over a period of time so as to get trends and patterns.

3.2 Research Design

A research design, also called research strategy, is a plan to answer a set of questions (McCombs, 2019). It is the framework that includes the methods and procedures to collect, analyse and interpret data. It also describes how a researcher investigates the problem of the study. Creswell (2018) adds that research design influences the type of data to be gathered and its results.

Qualitative content analysis is the research design used for this study. Qualitative content analysis is used for this study because the design focuses on “the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). According to Creswell (2017), it serves as a logical link between the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the research questions. By way of emphasis, the selection of a research design mostly depends on the nature of the research problem, the researcher’s personal experiences, and the type of audience for the study (Creswell, 2017). The aim of this study is to examine the attention given to and to interpret the content of SDG Four news stories on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic*, hence, the use of qualitative content analysis is deemed appropriate.

Many researchers have used content analysis to study various phenomena, including media content, over the past decades (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). According to Kosegren (1981), as cited in Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1277), content analysis designs express “analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) add that there are three approaches to content analysis design, and these are conventional, directed and summative content analysis. According to the authors, the conventional content analysis design is used in a study that is focused on describing a phenomenon. In this kind of design, the researcher “allows the categories and the names for categories to flow out of the data than use preconceived categories” (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1279). What this means is that the design prioritizes the latent analysis of the content. In terms of directed content analysis design, the authors explain that the processes are structured, and therefore, the codes and content categories are pre-determined based on existing theory or previous research. Here, the researcher takes into consideration the frequency of usage of a key word in the content; and this suggests a manifest content analysis. According to the authors, the summative content analysis design on the other hand, is a hybridisation of conventional and directed designs because it encompasses both words counts, which is the manifest content, and process of interpretation (latent content analysis).

I was inspired to adopt the qualitative content analysis design because of the view shared by Givens (2008) that content analysis is an intellectual process that helps in categorising qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities or conceptual categories so as to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables and themes. Qualitative

researchers using content analysis recognise that text is open to an individual explanation, reflects multiple meanings and is content-dependent (Given & Olson, 2003).

More to the point, content analysis is frequently used in the media to analyse units of news articles such as headlines, leads and paragraphs in the context of the framing theory (Krippendorff (2004). I also chose content analysis as the research design because it is a method that helps to analyse content in an orderly manner, and also a tool for observing and analysing texts in depth instead of resorting to interview or the use of questionnaire as a survey research (Tankard (2001).

3.3 Sampling Technique

Sampling is the process of selecting sub-groups for a study (Kusi, 2012). According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), the sampling techniques of qualitative researchers are guided by the fundamental principle of obtaining rich, in-depth information. Palys (2008) also posits that the sampling technique of a study can be determined by the research's objectives; for that matter, in the qualitative research approach, the object or subject chosen for the study as well as where and when it is studied are determined by certain criteria that are outlined by the study's purpose. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) add that qualitative researchers cannot capture every event as they occur, for which reason there is deliberate selection of data sites for a specific study. Again, they posit that selecting the right sampling strategy affords researchers the opportunity to make systematic contact with communicative phenomena without wasting much time. Based on the above, this study adopted the purposive sampling strategy since, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2012), qualitative researchers often adopt the purposive sampling strategy for their

studies because it involves the choice of subjects who possess the information the researcher needs.

This study therefore, used the purposive sampling strategy to select the *Daily Graphic* because it has the widest readership in Ghana (Amihere, 2010; Geopoll, 2018). Also, the *Daily Graphic* is the first state-owned newspaper with a constitutional obligation to reflect the conscience of the nation and project the national development agenda. Since education is crucial to promoting national development, it was important to examine how the Daily Graphic is helping to promote education through its front-page stories. Besides, Daily Graphic is the paper that is mostly cited for official purposes (Amihere, 2010) even though the other newspapers cover SDG 4 stories and also have editorial team.

Purposive sampling was also used in selecting the four respondents of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper for the analysis. The editor of the *Daily Graphic*, the news editor and the education desk editor were purposively selected for the interviews because of the unique roles they play in story selection. In the set-up of the Daily Graphic, the editor and news editor are different in terms of their roles and responsibilities. While the news editor works directly with journalists in the newsroom by assigning them to cover stories, the editor is the overall head of the newspaper. The editor chairs editorial meetings and publishes the paper. The editor was selected because he is the final authority in determining what gets published on a given day. Apart from his experience in news value, the news editor was selected because he assigns reporters to cover events based on their newsworthiness. Also, it is the news editor who begins the story selection process by sieving the numerous stories reporters send to the news desk from the field to determine which stories should be presented at the daily editorial conference meetings.

The education desk editor was also selected because he has considerable knowledge on covering education stories. More to the point, he contributes story ideas on the education sector to ensure that journalists who work on education stories submit good stories that can make the front-page.

The period of study was selected with the objective of ensuring balance and representativeness of the data. The focus was to ensure that all the years selected for the study (2016 – 2020) had equal representation such that patterns in terms of publication over the five-year period can be established. To do this, the composite two weeks sampling strategy was used. This technique requires the selection of twelve editions of the newspaper to represent a year of publication for analysis (Stempel, 1989) as cited in Lacy and Fico (1998). Every year had samples selected to form part of the sample. This sampling technique helps in making logical conclusions about the trends and patterns of stories over a long and reasonable period as well as the frames generated by the consistent publication of certain story types. The five-year period (2016-2020) also helps to bring forth the editorial decisions taken by the editors in selecting news for a given day of the five-year period of study. The five-year study started from 2016 because the SDGs began in that same year.

3.4 Sample Size

The population for this study was all the front-page stories that were published within the period of study (1st January, 2016 and 31st December, 2020). A sample was drawn from this population for the study. Creswell (2011) posits that the type of design employed in a study determines the sample size. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research uses

a small sample size since its aim is to get rich and detailed description or explanation on an issue being investigated. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also said the sample size for a study is determined by the scope of the study, the complexity of the research question and the availability of needed resources and data. Using Stemple (1989)'s composite two-weeks technique, 240 front page stories from 60 editions of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper were drawn to constitute the sample size for the study. Based on the months in the year, the 12 editions from the composite week for 2016 were selected from 4th January to 22nd December while those of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 were selected from 3rd January to 31st December; 2nd January to 30th December; 4th January to 31st December; and 4th January to 23rd December respectively. The sample size for the interview was three participants, constituting the editor, news editor and education desk editor at the Daily Graphic.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

According to Polonsky and Waller (2011), qualitative data collection methods are exploratory in nature and mostly meant to gain insight and understanding on underlying reasons and motivation. Again, they aver that popular qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus groups, observation and action research. They add that in qualitative studies, grounded theory and document analysis can be used as data collection methods. The data collection methods used for this study are document analysis (newspaper) and interviews.

3.5.1 Document Analysis

To Bowen (2009, p. 27), document analysis “is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material... in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” on an issue under investigation. It is asserted that “document analysis yields data...that are organised into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis” (Labuschagne as cited by Bowen, 2009, p.28). To Bowen (2009), documents can take various forms like advertisements, attendance registers, manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; letters and memoranda; maps and charts and newspaper. In accordance with the above assertions, the newspapers within the period of study are considered as documents and analysed to derive data which are categorized into themes. Frey (2018) avers that document analysis requires repeated review, examination, and interpretation of data in order to understand and get empirical knowledge of the concept being studied. This method helped in the gathering of relevant data that could help in analysing the phenomenon under study.

3.5.2 Interviews

Interview was another method through which the researcher collected data to validate data from the document analysis. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p.139), interviews “provide detailed background about the reasons respondents give specific answers.” This stems from the fact that interviews allow a researcher to gather “elaborate data concerning respondents’ opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences and feelings” on an issue being investigated (p.139). Relative to the current work, the respondents were the editor of the *Daily Graphic*, the news editor and the education desk

editor. Their roles and duties in the newsroom afford them with enough experience and expertise, therefore, can offer key explanations that put the data from the document analysis of the news stories in the proper perspective in terms of interpretation and analysis.

As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2014), the interview could be face-to-face, telephone or by any virtual means. The authors however, settle that face-to-face interview is the best way of interviews because it offers the interviewer the chance to make further observations which could go a long way to support the interpretation of data or in asking follow-up questions. For his part, Novick (2008) describes face-to-face contact between the researcher and respondents as the ideal way to collect interview data. This research adopted face-to-face interview approach to elicit responses from the respondents in their natural setting. Additionally, the researcher was guided by the fact that technology could fail him in the form of poor voice quality, poor internet, and cause him the opportunity of the much-needed interview.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) observe that interviews produce the best results and responses when the questions are well structured with the aid of an interview guide to keep the interview in focus. In that regard, the researcher, in his quest to know the news values that informs the selection of stories to the front page of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper among others, prepared an interview guide concerning the research topic and the research questions to guide the interviews. Data generated from the interviews helped to validate the data generated from the front-page news stories of the newspaper and this helped in making a comprehensive analysis of the content data. The interview guide is attached as Appendix C.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

This section deals with the process used to collect data for the work. The main data collection process was document analysis. Interview was used to probe further for data to validate the data collected from the newspapers. Description of the details at every step taken under each data collection methods are enumerated below:

3.6.1 Document Analysis

An introductory letter from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies about the researcher and his study was used to gain entry to the head office of Graphic Communications Group Limited in Accra. Upon gaining entry and access to their library, the researcher manually searched for the news stories for this study from the Graphic Communications Group Limited Library. The search for the stories was quite less cumbersome because the company packaged all editions of the Daily Graphic newspaper according to years and months. It was relatively easy to locate the shelves containing the newspapers for the five years used for this study (2016 to 2020). Hard copies of the newspaper editions within the period of study and the selected composite weeks for each year were then drawn from the universe for the data collection.

Afterwards, two first degree holders with background in communication (Journalism option) were trained to help in coding the data. In line with the assertion by Kim et al. (2019), a coding scheme was developed and discussed with the two coders to guide the coding exercise. According to the authors, the use of a code book or coding scheme allows for a more refined, focused and efficient analysis of the raw data. With the help of two coders, the researcher engaged the text independently through multiple readings of

the sampled news stories for general understanding of the content. This was followed by a close and detailed reading of the text by the researcher and the two coders to identify the discursive strategies underlying the text (Betrand & Hughes, 2005). At this stage, the coders fished out the recurring issues and or topics in the text. Codes were then derived from the stories in the newspapers by assigning names and labels to them. While this process progressed, the coders collected data by taking down notes through engagement of the text.

Next, the coders put their notes side by side to compare the codes derived from the text. This process was necessary for the coders to come to terms on the common categorisation of the codes generated from the independent engagement of the stories. After this comparison exercise, the codes were put into themes or categories and subsequently, quantified using tables.

With the aid of the coding protocol and procedure, the related codes were then submerged to get fewer but distinct themes that are reflective of the issues unearthed from the text. The coders generated the following themes from the data: accessibility, accountability, affordability, inclusiveness, quality, sustainability and innovation. The themes are operationally defined as follows:

Accountability: The accountability theme reflects issues such as the management of school funds and resources, the supervision regime, discipline mechanism, discharge of responsibilities by the various stakeholders among others.

Affordability: This theme encompasses issues relating to accessibility to educational opportunities, social interventions in education sector, funds, fees payment, levies and student loan schemes and scholarship schemes.

Inclusiveness: This theme reflects issues about equal access to educational opportunities, special education, girl-child education, gender equality and equity in education sector.

Sustainability: Issues captured under this theme include investment in educational infrastructure, implementation of specific policies in education, investment in teacher education.

Innovation: The innovation theme enveloped issues relating to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education (STEME), coaching and mentorship programmes as well as research.

Codes were also generated on the tone of stories to determine the direction of the news. Based on the framing of the stories, the researcher classified the news stories that were analyzed in this study into positive news, negative news and neutral news, depending on the tone of the stories. These three classifications were operationally defined as follows:

Positive News: relates to news stories on SDG Four dominated with issues that reflect how education promotes socio-economic development, peaceful co-existence, cohesion, cooperation, unity.

Negative news: captures stories of conflicts, disputes and violence among stakeholders in education; bribery, corruption, financial malfeasance and misuse of resources;

infrastructure and logistical challenges in schools; poor academic performance and indiscipline on the part of students and teachers.

Neutral stories: relate to stories that do not fit into any of the two categories or are fairly balanced.

3.6.2 Interview setting and procedure

Regarding the interview, an introductory letter was sent to the Editor of the *Daily Graphic* through the Corporate Communications Department of the GCGL, spelling out the purpose of the study, the issue being investigated and why it is important to interview the Editor, the News Editor and the Education page editor of the paper. Having received a favourable feedback from the editor within one week, a face-to-face interview was arranged for June 28, 2021 at 2 O'clock pm. Armed with the interview guide containing open-ended questions on the topic (attached as Appendix C), a voice recorder, a mobile phone, note pad a pen, the Editor was interviewed in his office at the GCGL on the scheduled date and time. The interview guide was used during the interview to ensure that the interview is conducted within the scope of the issue being investigated. Also, follow-up questions were used to elicit clarification and for further information as the interview progressed. With the voice recorder and mobile phone recorder as a back-up, the interview was recorded for 46-minute, 14 seconds.

The Interviews with the news editor and the education page editor were done on June 30 at 11 O'clock am and 12:30 pm respectively in visitors' waiting room at the Daily Graphic newsroom. The same process used for the interview with the Daily Graphic Editor was used for these two interviews. The interview guide was once again used to

guide the interview process while voice recorder, mobile phone, note pad and pen were used for the conduct of the interviews. The interview with the news editor lasted 22 minutes, 18 seconds while that of the education page editor was conducted in 19 minutes, 56 seconds.

Having successfully conducted the interviews, the recorded voices were copied and saved them on the researcher's laptop and also sent to sound cloud to be sure that the data gathered is safe. Next, the three set of recorded interviews were transcribed and cleaned for analysis. The cleaned interview data was then subjected to member checking. Thus, the transcribed interviews were sent to the respective respondents to go through and confirm their responses. After getting approval from the respondents, the data was then used for the analysis. Three additional themes came out of the interview data and these are:

National development agenda

External/client relationship

Quality of reporter

3.7 Data Analysis

The data gathered for this study was thematically analysed. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering insights into patterns of meaning across a data set. In line with this assertion, the data analysis was done in order to draw patterns and themes from the collected data. As indicated by Braun and Clarke (2014), the data collected were analysed with the aim

to identify and report the trends and patterns that run through the data. The inductive type of thematic analysis, where the researcher does not try to fit the data into any form of pre-existing coding frame, was used for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The thematic analysis of the data helped the researcher to classify the data generated from the news stories under relevant themes for easy interpretation of the various aspects of the research topic and answer the research questions. Through thematic analysis, the data collected for this study were analysed and categorised into themes.

The essence of this categorisation was to find out the important themes or categories within a body of content and be able to comprehensively describe the social reality created by those themes or categories. The data obtained from this study were coded into news frames or themes and their sub-categories analysed manually. The study applied tables and charts to present data on the attention given to SDG Four news stories on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*. Though the study is a qualitative approach, tables are used to “not only increase transparency about data collection, analysis and findings, but also... organize and analyse data effectively” (Cloutier et al., 2021, p.113). Thus, the tables and charts were used to enhance data interpretation, and are more of qualitative value.

3.8 Trustworthiness/credibility

The credibility of a research is dependent on its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba). Anney (2014) avers that qualitative researchers should use the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability (external validity), dependability (internal validity) and confirmability as stated by Lincoln and Guba (2000). In line with Marrow (2005), the

research was founded on trustworthiness criteria accorded to reflexivity, data adequacy and interpretation adequacy in order to validate and make the study trustworthy.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) aver that one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in a research is to ensure credibility. Creswell and Poth (2016) put forward eight validation strategies for testing the validity of a qualitative study. These are triangulation, using member-checking to determine participant accuracy, using rich and thick descriptions, presenting negative case analysis, spending extended time on the research field, using peer debriefing, using external auditors, and bias bracketing. They add that qualitative researchers should use at least two of these strategies in their research. In the case of this research, the researcher applied four of these strategies in order to enhance the objectivity of the analysis and the interpretation of the data. I bracketed my biases by distancing myself from previously held assumptions. I also based my interpretations solely on immediate insights into the phenomena themselves as recommended by Bertelsen (2005). In answering research questions, I used thick-rich descriptions to describe the themes that emerged from the data. I also used supporting quotes from interviewees as well as excerpts from news stories in my analysis of the data to increase the credibility of the findings. I also used triangulation by relying on the interview data to validate the data from document analysis.

3.9 Ethical issues

Ethical considerations occur for all researchers, especially in qualitative study. Virtues such honesty, openness, and candid revelations of a study's strength and weaknesses or limitations are common indicators of the integrity of the scholarship. According to Halai

(2006), good research is a moral and ethical task for which reason the researcher should be concerned with ensuring that the interests of a study's participants are not compromised in any way. As a result, a research is expected to demonstrate objectivity and sensitivity in the selection and analysis of data (Bowe, 2009). This study was conducted in a fair and objective manner, without any attempt to manipulate the data gathered.

The study mainly involved the engagement with volumes of news stories, which eliminates ethical issues relating to human participants. Also, the data collected for this study were manually collected from hard copies of the newspaper, and for this reason, there was no breach of privacy. Hence, the findings truly represent the newspaper.

In the case of interviews, the researcher used appropriate procedure to arrange face-to-face interviews with respondents within their natural setting and sought for their consent before the interviews. Prior to the collection of data from the Daily Graphic for this study, the researcher contacted the management of the media organisation through the Corporate Affairs department of the GCGI and made the purpose of the study known. The Editor of the newspaper was duly informed about the study and he even granted an interview to the researcher on the phenomenon being studied. The editor's interview, as well as the interviews granted by the news editor and the Education page editor was used to support the findings in the study. This made it possible for the researcher to gather original and undiluted data for objective analysis.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter dealt with the methodology deployed by the researcher to investigate the coverage of SDG Four news stories on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* newspaper. The approach to the study was qualitative and the research design was content analysis. In line with the research approach and design, document analysis was employed as a data collection method. Interviews were also used to gather data to validate data from the document analysis. In a nutshell, the chapter focused on the research approach, research design, sampling technique and size, data collection method, data collection process, method of data analysis and ethical issues.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which focused on the coverage of SDG Four news stories on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* between 2016 and 2020. The chapter puts out and discusses findings on the attention the *Daily Graphic* gives to SDG Four stories, how those stories are framed and the news value that guide the choice of stories to the front page of the paper.

The following research questions guided the analysis:

1. How does the *Daily Graphic* newspaper give attention to news stories on SDG Four?
2. How are the news stories on SDG Four framed by journalists in the *Daily Graphic*?
3. What news values influence the SDG Four stories the *Daily Graphic* publishes on the front page?

4.1 How does the *Daily Graphic* newspaper give attention to news stories on SDG Four?

To analyse the attention *Daily Graphic* gave to news stories on SDG Four, the researcher was guided by the agenda setting story (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) which operates on the basic idea that of the many issues that compete for limited space each day, and it is the issues the news media picks and highlight that get attention from mass audiences. McCombs (1997)'s position that agenda setting is basically about the transmission of

saliency and that the news media influences prominence of small number of issues that eventually capture attention also guided analyses of this question.

The analyses of the question focused on frequency of stories on SDG Four stories on the front page of *Daily Graphic* compared with other stories, stories with enhancement features, categorization of stories by the nature of headlines, categorisation of the SDG Four stories according to the SDG Four targets. The devotion of front pages of newspapers to political stories has been a matter of grave concern to many media consumers and experts (Baidoo, 2011), so the results from this research question helped to determine if the trend is still the same or there are changes in terms of bridging the gap. The findings on how the *Daily Graphic* gives attention to SDG Four stories on its front pages are shown below:

4.1.1 Attention through frequency of stories

One of the ways of determining the attention newspapers give to issues is the frequency of those issues on the front-page of the paper. Synonymous with the principles of the agenda setting theory, the more an issue appears on the front-page of a newspaper, the more attention people will give to that issue. In view of this, the researcher analysed the front-page stories of the *Daily Graphic* to have a fair idea about all the issues that appeared on the front-page in order to establish the kind of attention given to the SDG Four stories. Table 4.1 shows the findings:

Table 4:1 Frequency of stories on the front-page of the Daily Graphic

ISSUES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Politics	86	35.8%
Economic	20	8.3%
Education	58	24.2%
Health	15	6.3%
Environment	38	15.8%
Social	23	9.6%
TOTAL	240	100%

Analysis of the issues covered in the stories on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic* within the period under study showed that politics accounted for 86 out of the 240 stories, representing 35.8 percent, while education ranked second with 58 stories, representing 24.2 per cent. Additionally, 38 stories on the environment, representing 15.8 percent of the stories, appeared on the front page. Social stories came next with 23 stories which constitute 9.6 per cent of the total stories while 15 of the stories, representing 6.3 per cent are on health. From the data, it is clear that of the issues covered on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic*, politics ranked the highest, followed by education, environment, economic, social and health in declining order.

The findings showed a disproportionate representation of the issues covered on the front page of the national daily (*Daily Graphic*). The findings showed that political issues constituted a chunk of the front-page stories, indicating that newspapers give more attention to political stories. The more attention that political stories attracted on the front

page of the Daily Graphic could partly be attributed to the fact that two of the five years within the study period were election years. For instance, of the 86 political stories that appeared on the front page of the paper, 52 of them were in 2016 and 2020 when elections were held in Ghana.

This assertion was confirmed by the interview data. The editor of the newspaper confirmed that because of the political season, most of the newsworthy stories were on political issues. He noted that:

We were in political seasons – 2016 and 2020. It was a very dicey election in the 2016 election year. A president had died and this was the time the government had to present themselves in order to be selected, so the stake was high. There was also an opposition with the candidate that had ran for two terms and that was the third term; and there was a make or break for that candidate, so in the lead-up to the election, a lot of stories came up. The environment was very heated and charged; at the same time, the civil society, state institutions with mandate to ensure peace and cohesion, were also doing their work and campaigning for peace. The Daily Graphic is the leading newspaper people looked up to during these two elections, so it is not surprising that political issues dominated our front-page (interview with the Editor).

Although the greatest attention was given to political stories, the analysis also showed that education stories were given considerable attention on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic*. The fact that 58 stories (24.2%) of the front-page stories were on education means that education was the next priority area for the paper. For instance, in the August 7, 2020 edition of Daily Graphic, the paper carried a story with the Front A headline “*Outcry over WASSCE misconduct: GES denounces students offensive conduct – culprits to be deboardenised.*” However, the considerable attention to educational stories was equally linked to the political season. Analysis of data again revealed that the two

election years (2016 and 2020) within the period of this study accounted significantly for the attention given to education stories. This is supported by the fact that out of the 58 front page stories on education, 39 of them were in 2016 and 2020 (election years). Particularly, 2016 had 23 front page stories on education and 2020 had 16. In the June 27, 2019 edition, the Daily Graphic carried a front-page story with the headline “Majority, minority clash over funding free SHS from oil money.” The opening three sentences of the story reads:

“The minority in Parliament have accused the government of using oil revenue to fund free senior high school (SHS) education, instead of investing the money in infrastructure projects. It said funding education with revenue from the crude oil, which was a finite resource, would deny future generations the opportunity of enjoying from the revenue accrued from the country’s oil production. But the majority refuted that claim and indicated that investing in education or free SHS was the best decision taken by the government, since it was benefitting students, irrespective of their religious, ethnic or regional background.”

The interview data further affirmed that political and education stories made it to the front-pages of the *Daily Graphic* than other issues, particularly in the election years because of the vibrant political activism, influence of politicians and the pressure exerted by government officials and the main opposition candidate who all pushed through the free secondary school conversation. Education was a key policy on which the political parties campaigned for power. While the ruling party was campaigning on a progressively free senior high school policy, the main opposition party emphasised an immediate implementation of the policy. Therefore, issues about education were always in the news media.

Interview data revealed that 2016 had the highest number of education stories on the front page because the central message for the 2016 elections was free senior high education.

The Editor stated for instance that:

...the Daily Graphic is a state-owned newspaper and our mandate requires that we help to shape national discourse towards development. Education was the biggest ticket issue for the 2016 elections and there was the discourse about the free education concept and progressively free senior high school education. We had to amplify these views for electorates to make informed decisions (interview with the Editor).

The findings from the content analysis that has been corroborated by interview data partly affirms the works done by Baidoo (2011) and Gogovi (2017) which suggest that state-owned print media in Ghana dedicate their front pages to reportage of political issues to satisfy the political class. These two studies suggest that the Ghanaian state-owned media consider the political class as more important to serve than giving their front pages to economic, social and other national development issue/challenges facing the masses. However, the discovery, as the current data have shown, is that the *Daily Graphic* is gradually moving away from devoting a chunk of its front page to political issues. The 35.8 per cent political stories had on the front page in the current study is an improvement over the earlier works by Baidoo (2011) and Gogovi (2017) on news determinants on the front pages of Ghanaian print media - using the *Daily Graphic*. In those studies, 40.69 per cent of the 204 stories sampled by Baidoo (2011) as well as 40.9 per cent of 245 stories sampled by Gogovi (2017) were allocated to political stories. The decline in the percentage of front-page stories dedicated to politics in the *Daily Graphic* as seen in the current study shows that the paper is gradually challenging the long-held narrative that Ghanaian state-owned media are predominantly used as a conveyor belt for

political propaganda, as espoused by Hayford (2014). However, the current situation is still worrying because although political stories on the front-page have dropped compared with existing literature, political issues were still covered more. This gives a signal that the political agenda still persists. Politics was the most repeatedly covered issue; and even though the percentage dropped a bit, they are still given favourable coverage on the front-page.

Aside from political stories, it was realised from the data that SDG Four (education) was the next highest percentage in terms of representation on the front page of the paper, accounting for 24.2 per cent of the total 240 stories. In terms of frequency of stories, education stories enjoyed the same level of attention on the front page as that of economic, health and social issues put together. Thus, those issues collectively accounted for 24.2 per cent of the stories on the front page. The fact that in this study, education and the other issues (environment, social, economic, health) cumulatively accounted for 64.2 per cent of the 240 stories on the front page of the paper is a further testament that the *Daily Graphic* is turning more of its attention towards issues relating to the SDGs, which are key to human survival.

Evidence from the document analysis and the interview data points to the fact that although political stories still lead in terms of the appearance on the front page, the *Daily Graphic* is gradually shifting more towards education and other issues that impact more on the lives of people. For instance, the fact that 24.2% of front page of the paper was dedicated to education shows that more attention is being turned towards SDG Four and other development goals.

The agenda setting theory came into play in the analysis of the above findings. The findings buttressed the principle of the agenda setting theory that indicates that of all the media (print) gives prominence to issues by putting them on the front-page. The assumption of that theory was evident in this study and helped to establish the fact that the Daily Graphic published more stories containing political issues on its front-page. Once the focus of my study is on the coverage of education (SDG4), the agenda setting theory came in handy since it helped to determine how education issues performed on the front-page.

4.1.2 Attention through enhancement

Enhancements are used as focal points to attract a reader's attention and usually, it is the first object of a focal point, for newspaper readers (Ali & Mahmood, 2013). Apart from putting stories on the front page of the newspaper, one of the ways by which print media organisations give prominence to stories is by adding enhancement features such as photos and infographics to stories that appear on the front-page of the newspaper. Therefore, enhancements that accompanied the stories were also examined to establish prominence given to SDG4. The findings have been presented in the table below:

Table 4.1.2: Attention to the stories through enhancement

ISSUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Politics	60	25%
Economic	12	5%
Education	42	17.5%
Health	10	4.2%
Environment	24	10%
Social	14	5.8%
No enhancement	78	32.5%
TOTAL	240	100%

An analysis of the data for this study showed that out of the 240 front-page stories in the *Daily Graphic* that were analysed, 162 of them, representing 67.5%, had accompanying enhancement features, particularly, photos and infographics whereas 78 front page stories, representing 32.5 %, were without enhancement. Out of the 162 enhancement features that accompanied the front page stories, 60 of them, representing 25% accompanied political stories while education stories came second with 42 enhancements, constituting 17.5%. Environment stories followed with 24 enhancements (10%); social stories, had 14 (5.8%); economic stories had 12 (5 %) and health stories, with 10 (4.2%).

As was the case with the frequency of the various issues that appeared on the front page, political stories had the highest number of front-page stories with photographs (25%) as shown in table 2. This finding affirms that more focus was placed on political stories as

compared with the other issues. The findings give a fair idea that the *Daily Graphic* tried to use photographs to attract and grab the attention of readers to political stories. This development fits well into the work by Dogra (2014) which highlights the importance of photographs in news reporting by noting that words by themselves remain at the level of generalisation and are given specific authenticity by the irrefutability of the photograph. He adds that together, texts and pictures become very powerful and answer many open questions. In line with the view of Dogra (2014), the data established that SDG 4 stories (education) were also given fairly good representation in terms of enhancement with photos. The fact that education stories constituted 42 out of the 162 enhancement features, representing 17.5%, mean that SDG 4 has been given good attention in terms of enhancement features.

The interview with the news editor of the *Daily Graphic* clarified that the editorial team had no deliberate policy or agenda to accompany political stories with enhancement features. Rather, he explained that photos and other enhancement features are made to accompany stories based on their relevance, suitability and availability of space.

The front-page has limited space. Sometimes, we have two strips of adverts; other times we have one strip; so, if we have two strips of adverts, we can only carry one big picture because there wouldn't be space. Usually, we select three stories for the front-page and if there is space, then we can add one to make it four stories. There is no space so we can't carry more than one big picture due to space constraints. We look at the stories we select for the front and then look at the pictures we have. If we have a picture that will command so much readership, we will splash it over the rest (interview the editor).

Relating these findings on enhancement to the agenda setting theory, the view expressed by McCombs (2014) that some parts of the issues are emphasised in the news influences

how people think and talk about them comes into play. Since enhancement features such as photographs and infographics are usually the first object of a focal point for newspaper readers (Ali & Mahmood, 2013), they attract attention of readers in line with the agenda setting theory. With the data showing that 17.5% of the SDG 4 stories on the front-page of the Daily Graphic have enhancement features, second only to politics issues with 25%, it means that considerable level of importance was attached to education stories. What it also means is that when more SDG 4 stories are placed on the front-page and given enhancement features, it can help to shape public discourse on SDG 4 and by extension, the other global goals.

4.1.3 Attention through nature of the headline

Another indicator of attention considered in this study is the headlines of the news stories. The Daily Graphic publishes four stories on its front-page in all the 60 editions used for this study. By its design, the paper has four kinds of headline stories on the front-page which are Front A, Front B, Front C and teaser. Front A is the lead story in every edition of the paper that comes with the largest font-size, making it visible than any other headline on the front-page. This story mostly comes with a picture. Front B and Front C are the two next important stories that are placed on the front-page of the newspaper. Front B is usually in bold, white colour while Front C is in deep black colour. The teaser is any other story that is highlighted on the front-page in smaller fonts size compared with Front B and C.

Within the context of this study, the kind of headline on the front-page of the Daily Graphic tells the importance the paper attaches to the story. Interview with the editor of the Daily Graphic established that the Front A headline is used for a story that is most

important to the paper while the teaser is the least important front-page story (interview data). Based on this, it was important to look at how the various issues performed in terms of the type of headline on the front-page to help determine which of the stories was given more attention. Since the study was focused on SDG 4, it was important to analyse the stories on the front-page to establish the attention given to the education issues. The findings have been shown in the table 4.3.

Table 4.1.3: Attention through headlines of stories

Headline / Type/ Issue	Front A	Front B	Front C	Teaser	TOTAL
Politics	20 (8.3%)	21 (8.8%)	20 (8.3%)	25 (10.4%)	86 (35.8%)
Economics	6 (2.5%)	3 (1.25%)	7 (2.9 %)	4 (1.6%)	20 (8.3%)
Education	16 (6.6%)	20 (8.3%)	14 (5.8 %)	8 (3.3%)	58 (24%)
Health	4 (1.7%)	2 (1%)	4 (1.7%)	5 (2.1%)	15 (6.3%)
Environment	8 (3.3%)	10 (4.2)	10 (4.2%)	10(4.2%)	38 (15.8)
Social	6 (2.5%)	4 (1.7%)	5 (2.1%)	8 (3.3)	23 (9.6%)
TOTAL EDITIONS	60 (25%)	60 (25%)	60 (25%)	60 (25%)	240 (100%)

An analysis of the front-page stories showed that out of the 240 total headline stories that were selected for the study, 86 of the headlines (35.8%) were on politics and 58 (24%) were on education while the environment followed with a total of 38 (15.8%) headlines. Social issues had 23 (9.6%) headlines, economics issues had 20 (8.3%) headlines, with health issues also having 15 (6.3%) headlines. A further look at the data showed that

Front A, Front B, Front C and teasers were the types of headlines used by the newspaper and each type of headline appeared 60 times. This was expected because the Daily Graphic mostly carries four stories on its front-page in every edition and the composite week technique led to the selection of 12 editions per year. Hence, the total of each type of headline for the period of study being 60.

Data in table 4.3 indicate that 20 (8.3%) Front A headlines, 21 (8.8%) Front B headlines, 20 (8.3 %) Front C headlines and 25 (10.4%) teasers were dedicated to politics. This was followed by education stories with 16 (6.6%) Front A headlines, 20 (8.3%) Front B headlines, 14 (5.8%) Front C headlines and eight (3.3%) teasers. Stories on the environment followed with eight (3.3%) Front A headlines, while Front B, Front C and teasers had 10 (4.2%) each. For economic stories, there were six (2.5) Front A headlines, three (1.25%) Front B headlines, seven (2.9%) Front C headlines and four (1.6%) teasers. The data also showed that social stories had six (2.5%) Front A headlines, four (1.7%) Front B headlines, five (2.1%) Front C headlines and eight (3.3%) teasers while health stories had four (1.7%) Front A headlines, two (0.8%) Front B headlines, four (1.7%) Front C headlines and five (2.1%) teasers.

A critical look at the findings show that political stories dominated in all the types of headlines. For instance, the fact that education had 24% of the Front A headlines as against politics which has 35.8% means that more priority is still being given to political issues than education. Font A headline is used for stories with highest prominence so dedicating more Font A headlines to politics indicate that the newspaper made political more prominent to readers. Dor (2003) posits that headlines are designed to optimize the relevance of stories to readers. The headline type and size are linked to the optimization

of headlines because they are indications of prominence place on any given story. Therefore, the dominance of political stories regarding Front A, B, C and teaser headlines than education stories support the assertion that the newspaper gave more prominence to politics than education. However, it is important to note that the newspaper attempted to give some form of dominance to education stories as well because it was the next category of stories that dominated in the frequency of Front A, B, C and teaser headlines. It further shows that although education made quite a good showing in terms of issues that gained public attention in line with the agenda setting theory, politics continues to dominate the chunk of attention.

4.1.4 Attention to the SDG4 stories in terms of the targets

There are 10 targets under SDG4 with specific objectives to be achieved by 2030. These targets relate to educational issues such as access to quality basic and secondary education, access early childhood development and quality pre-tertiary education, access to affordable technical and vocational education and training (TVET), increased supply of quality teachers as well as education for sustainable development and global citizens. The assessment of how the various targets were represented on the front-page helped to disaggregate the data on the coverage of SDG4 stories to have a fair idea of the attention given to each of the 10 targets. The findings have been presented in the table below:

Table 1.1.4: Ranking of SDG4 targets in terms of the number of stories

SDG 4 TARGET (T)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
T1	22	37.9%
T2	6	10.3%
T3	5	8.6%
T4	4	6.9%
T5	3	5.2%
T6	2	3.5%
T7	4	6.9%
T8	3	5.2%
T9	4	6.9%
T10	5	8.6%
TOTAL	58	100%

From the table above, it is clear that out of the 58 front-page stories on SDG 4 that were published in the *Daily Graphic*, SDG 4.1 (T1) which has to do with equal access to free primary and secondary education, was dominant with 22 stories, representing 37.9 per cent of the total number of SDG4 stories. SDG 4.2 (T2) which concerns access to early childhood development and quality pre-tertiary education, was the next target that received more attention on the front-page as it accounted for six of the 58 SDG4 stories, representing 10.3% of the stories. Targets 4.3 (T3) and 4.10 (T10), which relate to equal access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education and increased supply of

qualified teachers in developing countries respectively, followed with five stories each, representing 8.6% of the SDG 4 stories respectively. The data also showed that SDG targets 4.4 (T4) increase the number of people with relevant skills for work; 4.7 (T7) – education for sustainable development and global citizen; and 4.9 (T9) – expand higher education scholarship for developing countries; had four stories each, with each of them representing 6.9% of the total stories on SDG4 that were published on the front-page. Also, the data showed that SDG 4.5 (T5), which deals with eliminating gender disparity in education and ensuring equal access to vocational training for all persons, including persons with disability (PWDs); and 4.8 (T8) – which seeks to build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools, with three stories each.

The dominance of T1 could be linked to the introduction of the free senior high school (FSHS) education policy by the government. This is because out of the 22 stories, 18 of them were on FSHS. Further analysis of the T1 stories revealed that the 18 stories that directly related to FSHS policy had political angles as the newsmakers were mainly government officials. Since the FSHS policy was a major campaign promise by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) during the 2016 elections, which was subsequently implemented in 2017, it is likely that the link between the policy and politics is what accounted for the more attention T1 got in the *Daily Graphic*. This finding is in sync with the assertion on the interplay between SDG and policy agenda (Abubakar, 2017). The interview with the news editor of the *Daily Graphic* confirmed that claim. The excerpt below from the interview justified the claim:

The good ranking of SDG 4.1, as shown in your study, could be because of the peculiar situation of the free SHS education policy. You know, since the policy was introduced

some four years ago, it has been entangled with so many challenges, and issues have come out over how it has been managed by this administration, so it could be because of that; and like I said earlier on, education is important and everybody is interested in it (interview with news editor).

Again, a further analysis of the data revealed that the T3 was relatively high because of the government's deliberate policy to invest in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) infrastructure. The data showed that out of the five stories on TVET, three of them were directly linked to government's investment in infrastructure in the National Vocational Training Institutes (NVTIs), technical universities, technical schools and establishment of skills training centres. Regarding T10, the data brought out the fact that more attention was given to the teacher licensing regime as three out of the five stories on the quality of teachers were dedicated to teacher licensing and related matters.

The above findings show that the newspapers made SDG4.1 (T1), SDG 4.3 (T3) and SDG 4.10 (T10) more prominent than the other SDG 4 targets. This was because they were repeatedly covered and given more salience (McCombs, 2015; 1997) than the other targets. This means that through their coverage of the SDG Four stories on the front pages, the newspaper did set favourable agenda for targets 1,3 and 10 than the remaining targets. This implies that the newspaper caused its readership not only to think about these targets but also attach more importance to them based on the emphasis it placed on these targets through its coverage (McCombs, 2014).

4.2 How are the news stories on SDG Four framed by journalists in the *Daily Graphic*?

To answer this research question, the study considered the framing theory propounded by Goffman (1974), and which operates on the assumption that the way and manner an issue is characterised in news report can influence how the issue is understood by audience. The study was guided by Gamson (1985) who made the point that framing entails laying emphasis on certain features of the news at the expense of other aspects. Again, the study took cognisance of the point made by Gans (1979) that the use of framing by journalist must not be misconstrued to mean that they try to spin a story or deceive their audience, but rather, it is a necessary tool used to breakdown complex issues. The approaches to framing given by Tankard (2001), in which he listed framing mechanisms for identifying and measuring news frames, was also considered. In determining the dominant frames in the front-page news stories on SDG 4, the study also considered Cappella and Jamieson's (1997) four criteria that news frames must meet. These four suggestions are that news frame must have identifiable, conceptual and linguistic characteristics; it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice; it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames; and a frame must have representational validity and not a fragment of the researcher's imagination.

The themes that emerged after analysing 58 news stories on SDG 4 were accountability, affordability, inclusiveness, sustainability, innovation and multiple themes. Details of the findings are presented in table.

Table 4.2.1: Themes Used in the Coverage of SDG4 stories

THEME	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Accountability	10	17.2%
Affordability	12	20.7%
Sustainability	15	25.9%
Inclusiveness	9	15.5%
Innovation	7	12.1%
Multiple Frames	5	8.6%
TOTAL	58	100%

Table 4.2.1 ranked the six themes that were identified during the analysis of the front-page news stories on SDG 4 in the *Daily Graphic*. From the analysis, it is clear that the sustainability theme was the dominant theme. Out of the 58 stories that were analysed, 15 of them carried the sustainability theme, representing 25.9% of the SDG4 stories. This was followed by the affordability and accountability themes which had 12 and 10 stories, representing 20.7% and 17.2% respectively. Also, the inclusiveness and innovation themes had nine and seven stories, representing 15.5% and 12.1% respectively. Finally, five stories had more than one of the identified themes hence they were categorized under multiple theme. This constituted 8.6% of the SDG4 stories.

Sustainability

Sustainability was the most dominant theme from the SDG4 stories. The sustainability theme looked at issues such as investment in educational infrastructure, implementation of specific policies in education, investment in teacher education. The analysis of this

theme was in line with SDG4.10 which deals with increased supply of qualified teachers in developing countries as well as 4.7 – education for sustainable development and global citizen. The FSHS policy featured again in the analysis of this theme as various stakeholders raised concerns about the sustainability of the policy.

There were concerns about sustainable funding for the policy beyond political regimes. From the political perspective, stories on FSHS that were reviewed in this study saw the major opposition political party in the country – National Democratic Congress (NDC) describing the policy as poorly thought-through, improperly implemented and, therefore, unsustainable. This is supported by the excerpt below:

The Minority in Parliament yesterday accused the government of using oil revenue to fund free senior high school (SHS) education, instead of investing the money in infrastructure projects. Leading the debate for the Minority side in Parliament, the NDC Member of Parliament (MP) for Yapei Kusawgu and former Deputy Minister of Power, Mr. John Abdulai Jinapor, said using oil revenue to fund free SHS was unsustainable. Talking about petroleum resource, which is finite, today we are spending all the money to pay for free SHS. When we do not have the resource, how do we fund it? When the resource begins to dwindle, how do we sustain it? (Daily Graphic, June 27, 2019, pg. 16).

The government, however, provided justification that the policy was sustainable by stating that oil revenue will remain the source of funding for the initiative. Again, the government responded to the concern about how universities will contain the large number of students who graduate from the FSHS policy by extending the retirement period for lecturers at the universities. The *Daily Graphic* captured this in the following excerpt:

The government has announced new rules to guide post-retirement contracts for academic staff of public universities in the country. Under the rules, even though the mandatory retirement age for academic staff of public universities shall continue to be 60 years, professional grade staff (Associate professors and Professors) shall be eligible for post-retirement contracts until the age of 70, in line with the constitutional provisions. In an interview with the Daily Graphic, the Minister of Education, Dr Mathew Opoku Prempeh, explained that the new rule had become necessary as part of measures to bolster and maintain a critical mass of key academic staff to support the anticipated significant increase in tertiary enrollment as a consequence of the free SHS programme (Daily Graphic, June 8, 2020, pg. 3).

Another sustainability issue that emerged from a close look at the SDG Four stories was the future of the teacher licensure examination that has been introduced by the government, through the Ministry of Education, requiring all trained teachers from Colleges of Education and universities to write a professional examination for a license before they are recruited to teach. An in-depth look at how the stories were reported by journalists painted the picture that the policy may not be sustainable. Here again, the NDC gave indication that the licensure examination policy will be cancelled if the party win elections and forms a government.

Another area where the sustainability theme also manifested was the fate of the teacher and nursing trainees' allowance. The allowances that were paid to trainee teachers and nurses by the government as a motivation to get more people venture into the teaching and nursing fields was cancelled in 2015. However, in the run-up to the 2016 elections, it became a political campaign message, with the New Patriotic Party (NPP) promising to restore the allowance when the party wins political power. After winning power, the allowances were restored as promised. An analysis of the SDG Four stories show that the

continuity of the allowance hangs in the balance, as the NDC again said the allowances would be terminated if they regain political power. In effect, politicisation of the nursing and teacher training allowances puts its sustainability in doubt.

Affordability

The next dominant theme was affordability and it took care of issues relating to accessibility to educational opportunities, social interventions in education sector, funds, fees payment, levies and student loan schemes and scholarship schemes.

The free senior high school (FSHS) education policy that was introduced by the government in 2017 was the fulcrum around which the affordability theme revolved. A critical analysis of the FSHS stories that were published on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* mainly portrayed the policy as a game changer to second cycle education. The FSHS policy was framed as that policy that came as a saviour of parents who were no longer required to pay fees for their wards to attend SHS. This was exemplified in

President Akufo-Addo describing the policy as “the means to creating a society of opportunities and empowerment for every citizen” (*Daily Graphic*, September 12, 2017, pg. 3). The high cost of secondary education in Ghana was also framed as an obstacle that will be removed by the free SHS policy. The *Daily Graphic* captured President Akufo Addo make that point in the extract below:

The cost of providing free SHS education will be cheaper than the cost of the alternative of an uneducated and unskilled workforce that has the capacity to retard our development. From this day on, we lift the financial burden off our parents, and the heart-rending anxiety that accompanies the beginning of every school term. We have a

sacred duty to our children and the generations beyond in ensuring that irrespective of their circumstances, their right to education is preserved. That is why government has decided to absorb all senior high school fees that have been agreed between the GES Council and the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (Daily Graphic, September 12, 2017, pg. 3).

The FSHS was also framed as the master stroke of an intervention that will help to address other SDGs, particularly health, poverty eradication, decent work. SDG 4.3 which relate to equal access to affordable technical, vocational and technical education and training (TVET) was largely highlighted on the front-page. The stories that journalists reported on painted a good picture about the government policy to make TVET free. The analysis also portrayed the school feeding programme (SFP) as an intervention that has helped to make basic education affordable at the basic level. Although basic education is free in Ghana, the analysis showed that the cost parents bear on feeding children had been removed, making basic education are accessible.

Accountability

The accountability theme reflects issues such the management of school funds and resources, the supervision regime in schools, discipline mechanisms, discharge of responsibilities by the various stakeholders, assessment regime in schools among others.

An in-depth analysis of the SDG Four stories on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* revealed issues related to accountability were at the center of public discourse in the education sector. At the core of the accountability theme were a mixed bag of the good, the bad and ugly relationship between education sector stakeholders. The stories portrayed a generally frosty relationship between the teacher unions and managers of

schools on one hand and policy makers and implementers in the education sector on the other hand. This was exemplified by reports on strike actions and protests by teacher unions such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) over unpaid salary arrears, delayed promotions and conditions of service. From the framing of the stories, the picture one gets is that teachers feel unfairly treated, leading to mistrust between teacher unions and the Ministry of Education (MoE). The journalists reported the stories in a way that courts public sympathy while calling out policy makers and employers to fulfil their responsibility to teachers. On the other hand, the stories bring to the fore a trend whereby policy makers and implementers including the MoE, Ghana Education Service (GES) sought to discredit strike actions and protests by teacher unions. The journalists used words such as illegal, undeserved, irresponsible to describe how policy makers and implementers view strike actions and protests by teacher unions.

Another aspect of accountability that came up in the in-depth analysis of the SDG Four stories was what the journalists described as unearned salaries. This came in the form of ghost names, describing a situation where some people were reported to be drawing salaries without working for it. The analysis also brought up accountability issues in terms of prompt release of information and regular updates on key milestones in the educational sector. For instance, the analysis of the stories revealed that there was prompt update by policy makers and implementers to other stakeholders on processes to reopen schools that were shut down in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. This observation is supported by the excerpt below: *Senior High Schools (SHSs) will reopen to final year students on July 22 for them to undergo six weeks of academic work up to July 31, this*

year. This is to enable them to prepare to write their final examination between August 3 and September 4, this year, the Minister of Education, Dr Mathew Opoku Prempeh, has announced. In the case of Junior High Schools (JHSs), he said final year students were going to be in school for academic work for 11 weeks, from June 29 to September 11, this year and write their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) between September 14 and 18, this year (Daily Graphic, June 3, 2020, pg. 3).

The analysis of the stories, as framed by the journalists, also revealed some level of transparency and balance in the report on examinations that were conducted within the period of the study (2016 – 2020). Apart from the fact that modalities for the conduct of BECE and WASSCE were clearly communicated to stakeholders, irregularities and examination malpractices were reported in the paper, giving a voice to all actors. Conflict situations that came up during the conduct of examinations were covered from the perspective of the key stakeholders. The extract below supports this observation: *Extremely reprehensible and appalling – this is the verdict on the violent activities by some school candidates in the ongoing WASSCE. Leading the condemnation are the Ghana Education Service (GES), the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), with the GES hinting of some tough actions against the perpetrators of the acts. The management of the GES said any student found to have misconducted themselves in any of the undisciplined acts shall be deboardenised and be made to commute from home to write their examination under parental control. It further directed that any destruction of school property will be surcharged against the culprit established to be involved (Daily Graphic, August 7, 2020, pg. 3).*

One aspect of the accountability theme that also came up quite strongly in the stories had to do with the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in schools in 2020. The analysis revealed that government was quite responsive in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector. There was disinfection of educational installations (*Daily Graphic*, August 22, 2020) and provision of personal protection equipment (PPEs) to students and other members of the school community (*Daily Graphic*, August 27, 2020).

Inclusiveness

The inclusiveness theme reflects issues about equality in access to educational opportunities, special education, girl-child education, gender equality and equity in education sector. This theme hinged on the requirement of SDG4.5 and SDG 4.8 which focus on ensuring access to inclusive access to education facilities and building and upgrading inclusive and safe schools. An analysis of the stories showed that the introduction of the FSHS policy had created equal opportunities for both male and female students to access SHS education without financial constraint.

At the tertiary level, however, the framing of the stories showed that private universities have been discriminated against in terms of government policies on tertiary education. The situation whereby students in private universities pay tuition fees while the government absorbs that fee for their colleagues in public universities was described as unfair treatment. Again, the situation whereby public universities that serve as mentors for some private universities compete with them for students was framed as unhealthy competition. This assertion is supported by the extract below: *“The President of the Christian Service University College (CSUC), Prof. Samuel K. Afranie, has appealed to the government to extend its social intervention policies for students in public universities cover their counterparts in private tertiary institutions to enable them compete favourably in the job market. He said currently, students in private tertiary institutions*

were disadvantaged because not all of them benefited from the government scholarships and other largesse, saying they might even be excluded from the yet-to-be implemented new student loan scheme” (Daily Graphic, December 16, 2020).

Stories on COVID-19 pandemic in the education sector appeared to have promoted inclusiveness. Support from the government in terms of disinfecting of school premises and supply of PPEs was inclusive as it did not exclude private schools. Another area that portrayed the inclusiveness theme is the school feeding programme, government intervention policy that ensures that all children in selected public basic schools, especially those in deprived communities, are served one hot meal every school day. The policy was introduced in 2005 with the objective of increasing enrolment, improve attendance, retain pupils in school and improve their academic performance. An analysis of the stories on school feeding programme that were published on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* within the period of the study revealed that the intervention was also a promoter of inclusive education. The intervention was framed as a tool for bridging the gap in education. The excerpt below from the Minister of Gender and social Protection summed up this claim:

If everyone is enjoying free SHS, it is equally fair for everyone to enjoy school feeding because it is a sure way to protecting the vulnerable in our society. The programme has improved enrolment from 2.67 million pupils in 2016/17 academic year to 2.93 million pupils, and this shows that hunger and poverty are actually major reasons why children could not go to school in some parts of the country. We will have to expand the programme to make it more inclusive and benefit all basic school pupils (Daily Graphic, January 17, 2020).

The policy of inclusive education that allows both able-bodied children and those with disabilities and learning difficulties to learn together in the same classroom was described

as progressive an inclusive society. The status quo of putting children with special needs or disabilities in segregated or special schools was considered as discriminatory.

Innovation

The innovation theme enveloped issues relating to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education (STEME), coaching and mentorship programmes as well as research. An analysis of how the SDG Four stories were framed brought to the fore the innovation theme. Journalists framed TVET, ICT and STEM education as game changer, progressive, relevant to modern development needs and viable means of employment creation. The *Daily Graphic* also largely endorsed the government's investment in TVET, ICT and STEM education, describing such an initiative as proactive move that will help to produce skilled labour for national development.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all schools at the tertiary level deployed innovative strategies and technologies to facilitate teaching and learning. The *Daily Graphic* portrayed the deployment of online platforms by the universities for teaching and learning in response to the COVID-19 scourge as innovative, revolutionary, and working smart. Online platforms were further portrayed as the new normal, with policy makers in the education sector resorting to it to transact their business. A case in point was the use of online means by the Ghana education Service for recruiting teachers: *Online portals for the recruitment of 6.500 university graduate teachers and nonteaching staff will go live on Monday, November 2, 2020, the Minister of Education, Dr Mathew Opoku Prempeh, has said. Dr Prempeh announced this when he took his turn last*

Thursday to make a presentation in the on-going nation building updates being organised by the Ministry of Information o innovations government agencies and sectors were adopting to do business in the wake of COVID-19 (Daily Graphic, October 31, 2020).

The analysis of education stories on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* also showed that policy makers tried to demystify STEM as a difficult field of study. The stories revealed conscious efforts being made by the government, through the Ministry of Education, to popularise STEM highlighting the benefits that come with it. The extract below from the Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education, Professor Kwesi Yankah, throws more light on the perception that STEM is difficult: *“It is regrettable to observe that many people still view science and mathematics as extremely difficult and abstract disciplines, having little bearings on their daily lives” (Daily Graphic, August 7, 2020).*

The framing theory avers that how the media frame issues help to shape and define opinions readers have about such issues because it provides the schemata of interpretation of issue. This means that the use of sustainability, affordability and accountability frame in the presentation of SDG4 stories influenced readership to understand the stories within these frames (Goffman as cited in Cissel, 2008). According to Tewksbury and Scheufele (2020), framing thrives on the assumption that how an issue is characterised in news reports has the potential to influence how it is understood by audiences or members of the public. Therefore, the framing of FSHS education policy as a saviour of parents who will no longer pay school fees influenced the readership of the newspaper and shaped their opinion to see the policy as a game changer in second cycle education (Powell et al, 2019).

4.2.1 The tone of SDG 4 stories covered by the Daily Graphic

As part of the analysis of the themes from the front-page stories on SDG 4 in the *Daily Graphic*, the research established the tone of the 58 stories as being positive, negative or neutral. The analysis of the tone helped to determine the direction of the paper's front page, which, according to Reisner (1992), is the most important page of the publication used to set the agenda for public discourse on topical issues. Aside from this, the analysis of the tone of the stories helped to ascertain the frame that the front-page of the newspaper portrayed. This was done in a bid to determine whether the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* is tilted or skewed in a manner that paints a very good picture about the country's education. It also helped to find out if the editors used their gatekeeping role to allow only positive stories about education on the paper's front-page or they gave equal chance to all stories to take their rightful place. By so doing, the research brought to the fore, the Daily Graphic's editorial policies. The table 4.2.2 shows the tone of the SDG 4 stories that were analysis.

Table 4.2.2: Tone of SDG4 stories published in the Daily Graphic.

TONE	FREQ.	PERCENTAGE
Positive	34	58.6%
Negative	19	32.8%
Neutral	5	8.6%
TOTAL	58	100%

The table 4.2.2 shows that out of the 58 front-page stories on SDG 4 that were analysed, 34 of them, representing 58.6%, had a positive tone while 19 stories, representing 32.8%, had a negative tone. Also, five out of the 58 stories (8.6%) had neutral tone, meaning their tone was fairly balanced and could not be classified as positive or negative. What the figures revealed is that the reporters of the *Daily Graphic* had adopted a more positive angle to reporting stories on SDG 4. Similarly, the analysis of the stories indicates that the editors of the paper had a positive outlook in keeping the gate to ensure that a positive image in painted about SDG 4 stories.

The positive tone of the SDG 4 stories manifested in the use of phrases and sentences such as: *“Dr Prempeh said the government will provide free reusable masks for all final year students and staff of schools which were expected to reopen this month (Daily Graphic, June 3, 2020, p.1); “The Minister of State in charge of Tertiary Education, Professor Kwesi Yankah, has launched the 2020 Ghana Teacher Prize (GTP), with a call on stakeholders to renew their commitment to the educational sector” (Daily Graphic, August 28, 2020, p.13).*

SDG 4 stories with negative tone were also seen in sentences such as: *“The Minority in Parliament yesterday accused the government of using oil money to fund free SHS education instead of investing the money in infrastructure projects” (Daily Graphic; June 12, 2020, p.16); “The management of the Ghana Education Service (GES) says it has learnt with shock the declaration of a strike by the teacher unions under the service over the alleged delays in the payment of salary arrears” (Daily Graphic, December 7, 2019, p.20); “Extremely reprehensible and appalling – this is the verdict widely passed on the*

violent activities by some school candidates in the ongoing West African Senior School Certificate Examination” (Daily Graphic, August 7, 2020, p.1).

Although a greater percentage of the stories on SDG 4 had a positive tone (58.6%), the paper gave fair representation to the stories that had a negative tone (32.8%). This suggests that irrespective of the nature of tone SDG 4 stories had, the *Daily Graphic* published them on the front-page based on their news value, human interest, currency and other considerations that constitute editorial benchmarks as given by O’Neil (2011). In the interview with the news editor and the editor of the Daily Graphic on these findings from the front-pages of the paper, the editor explained that in the performance of their editorial role, the editorial team was guided by the fact that they owed Ghanaians a duty to present realistic information on SDGs irrespective of whether the stories had a positive or negative tone. That, he noted, would help members of the public to appreciate the discourse on SDG 4 and make informed decisions.

Reflecting the state or national interest is something the Daily Graphic has done over the decades. We have done it so well so that you don’t even deliberately remind yourself of this or that; it comes to you naturally, and it is now part of our DNA. For us, we will not be diabolical; we will not be mischievous, we will not be sensational; and we will look at things from very objective point of view and call the issue the way they are (interview with the editor).

4.3 What news values influences the publication of SDG Four stories on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic*?

In posing this research question, the researcher was guided by the fact that the *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned newspaper and has the constitutional obligation to reflect the interest of the divergent views regarding what gets published. In effect, the question sought to find out how the *Daily Graphic* lives up to Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution which mandates state-owned media to afford a fair opportunity and facilities for presenting divergent opinions and dissenting views. This question is also being answered within the context that newspapers and news values are almost inseparable, and since all stories cannot be put on the front-page of a newspaper, news values are critical as they help to determine the selection of stories to the front-page (Kisuke, 2004). Again, in dealing with the question, the analysis was hinged on the view expressed by Harcup and O'Neill (2016) that there are two dimensions of news values – commercial appeal to a target audience and those which reflect the features of a good story, including objectivity, balance, fairness, proximity and prominence. According to Harcup and O'Neill (2016), commercial appeal considers the nature of the story, the news actors and setting that helps to improve revenues of the newspaper. Based on this view, this aspect of the study analysed how these two dimensions of news values played out in front-page stories of the *Daily Graphic*. The analysis of the stories used for this study brought up revealing perspectives on the news values that determines what gets published on front-page of the newspaper when compared with the position of Harcup and O'Neill (2016).

Analysis of the 240 stories on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic* within the period under study, as depicted in Table 4.1.1, showed that 86 stories, representing 35.8 percent

of the 240 stories were on politics while education ranked second with 58 stories, representing 24.2 percent. Additionally, 38 stories on the environment, representing 15.8 percent of the stories appeared on the front page. Social stories came next with 23 stories which constitute 9.6 percent of the total stories while 15 of the stories, representing 6.3 percent are on health. From the analysis, it is clear that the issues covered on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic* included politics, education, environment, economic, social and health. Based on these findings, the study revealed that the newspaper gave ultimate attention to political stories on its front-page. Again, it was discovered that education stories, which ranked second on the front-page of the paper, were mostly driven by politics as many of those stories occurred in election years (2016 and 2020) when educational reform policies dominated the political or public discourse.

The interview with the editors of the *Daily Graphic* validated the view expressed by Harcup and O'Neill (2016) that commercial appeal and news value features influence what gets published on the front-page of a newspaper. The editor explained that aside the traditional journalistic principles of newsworthiness, economic motive or commercial considerations also played key roles in determining what got published on the front-page. This, he said was particularly so because the newspaper does not enjoy government subvention and therefore, strive to put out content that will make the needed sales to be able to meet production costs and pay its workers.

The view expressed by Harcup and O'Neill (2016) that newspapers consider commercial motive in the choice of news stories that appeal to large audiences came up in the analysis of interview data. The interview with the Editor, news editor and the Chief subeditor of the *Daily Graphic* confirmed that apart from the traditional news values, the

editorial team also considered news stories that had commercial value so as to increase the sales of the paper. It became clear from the data analysis and the interview with the editor that although the paper strives to satisfy the provisions of Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution, commercial interest remained a key determinant of what got published on the front page within the period of the study.

4.2.2 Other considerations for front-page stories

Apart from the known traditional news values and commercial interests that have always been key considerations in terms of what gets published on the front-pages of newspapers, the study revealed other interesting factors that influenced how stories made it to the Daily Graphic's front-page between 2016 and 2020. Interviews with the editor, Chief Sub-editor and the news editor revealed that national interest, relationship with clients and quality of reporters played a critical role in determining stories that got published on the front-page.

Analysis of the interview data brought to the fore how national development agenda influenced the selection of stories to the front-page of the Daily Graphic. The editor of the paper explained in the interview with him that aside the traditional news values and the commercial interest, the paper placed some premium on the national development agenda in determining which stories to place on the front-page. He justified the decision to make the national development agenda a key requirement for stories that get published on the front-page on the constitutional obligation on the paper to project national interest in its publications.

The Daily Graphic, as a state-owned newspaper, has a constitutional mandate to reflect the development agenda of the country in its publications. More to the point, because we are a state newspaper, we are enjoined by the constitution to project development issues in the state interest - not necessarily government interest but state interest. You know, there is a very thin line between them so that's how come sometimes it tends to appear as though government is being placed there. but it is state interest that we act. Anytime we are selecting stories, we ask if the story will bring negative consequences to the country." We have used our front-page to predominantly set the national agenda. We look at the national agenda all the time; we look at national development all the time. If it is bad and we have to set the agenda to deal with it, we do that; if it is a good initiative and we have to support it, we do that" (interview with editor).

Related to the issue of national interest is the *Daily Graphic*'s commitment to reflect the conscience of the nation. The interview data showed that the state-owned newspaper made conscious effort to use its front-page to be the voice of conscience for the country by giving some attention to stories that have social impact, especially on the marginalised groups. The interview with the Editor and the other editorial team members of the *Daily Graphic* brought up the fact that the paper projected the country's moral and national values. The extract below supports this point:

The Daily Graphic carried many stories on our front-page that were not too palatable for the government, but reflected the nation's conscience. When we do such stories and put them on the front-page, people in authority are usually not happy about it, but we tell them that for your own good, it is feedback for you; so work on it. We have done stories that have moved people from their seat to another seat. This is a state paper but we managed to talk about the motorway many times that it is not good. We wrote so many times about our school infrastructure; we have spoken about them and so many things. We have done stories from assemblies and political wrangling and the school feeding programme. We put the spotlight there and we did stories till such issues were addressed (Interview with news editor).

The interview data revealed that relational issues or relationship that exists in the newsroom and with external stakeholders influenced what got published on the front-page. An analysis of the data showed that actors within the confines of the *Daily Graphic* newsroom who had some level of control over aspects of news stories, use subtle means to influence the selection of stories to the front-page. For instance, the interview with the Chief sub-editor, who is in charge of selection of front-page stories during editorial conference, revealed that some senior staff in the newsroom try to lobby for particular stories to be put on the front-page.

Sometimes, we see sub-editors coming to lobby me to select stories they have interest in. They do come to me before conference to try to convince me to select their stories. If there is merit in any story and team member comes to me and says I have interest in this story and I think there is merit in the story, why not; I will select it. The bottom line is that you cannot compel me to choose such stories. I will look at the merit of the story and decide whether it deserves to be placed on the front-page (interview with chief sub-editor).

Again, the interview data brought to the fore the influence internal stakeholders, particularly advertisers, have on front-page stories. The data revealed that sometimes, the editorial team have a soft spot for stories that emanate from clients of the GCGL because of the standing relationship between them. This point is buttressed by the extract below from the Chief Sub-editor of the Daily Graphic: *We have partners; we have people who advertise very big in the paper, so once in a while you want to give them some milage. They may have done something big; it does not mean that anything money we put it on the front. If the thing is big enough, and by virtue of the fact that they are partners, we will like to give them some visibility on the front (interview chief sub-editor).*

Another factor that popped up from the interview data regarding the choice of stories for the frontpage of the paper is the quality of reporters. From the interview data, it emerged

that the ability of journalists to produce compelling stories on particular issues or fields influenced how often stories from those areas got selected to the front-page. From the interviews, it came to light that the quality of journalists who reported on their area of specialisation such as education, health, politics, environment, business and social issues, influenced selection of stories to the front-page. The news editor, who is in charge of assigning journalists to cover events and collating of stories for selection at editorial conference, explained that the more competently journalists are able to put together compelling stories from their fields of specialisation, the more likely more stories from that area will find space on the front-page. The news editor summed up the important role quality reporters play in selection of stories to the front-page as follows:

Reporters contribute to the story selection process by giving us all the compelling stories to help the news editor to go and present to the conference of editors chaired by the editor of the paper or his designates. If you have reporters that are always thinking out of the box and giving you information, you are as good as anything. If you do not have quality reporters, then you have to be leading the process yourself all the time. You have to scan the environment, tell this person or this person to do this and that story because there are some people that cannot on their own go and look for stories. You will always have to spoon-feed some of them before they go for story ideas (interview with news editor).

4.3 Chapter Summary

The chapter looked at the attention given to news stories on SDG Four in terms of the type of headline, use of enhancement features and the frequency of the stories. It also examined how the news stories on SDG Four were framed, the themes that emerged from the data, the tone of the stories – whether stories are positive, negative or neutral in their tone. Also, the chapter looked at the news values that served as a guide to the editorial

team in the selection of stories to the front-page of the Daily Graphic. In addition, the chapter explored whether the newspaper fulfilled its constitutional mandate of serving the national interest by ensuring that stories reflect the country's development agenda.

The findings show that although political stories continue to dominate the front-page of the newspaper, the gap is gradually being narrowed, with education stories also ranking quite high. Analysis of the data showed that 86 of the 240 stories, representing 35.8 percent were political while education ranked second with 58 stories, representing 24.2 percent. Additionally, there were 38 environmental stories, representing 15.8 percent of the stories, with social and health issues having 23 (9.6 %) and 15 (6.3 %) respectively.

Out of the 240 front page stories that were analysed, 162 of them, representing 67.5%, had accompanying enhancement features such as photos and infographics. Of the 162 stories with enhancement features, 60, representing 37.03% were political stories while education stories came second with 42 stories, constituting 25.9%. Environment stories followed with 24 stories (14.8%); social stories, with 8.3%; economic stories, with 7.4% and health stories, with 6.2%.

Out of the 58 SDG 4 stories that were content analysed, the sustainability theme accounted for 15 of the stories, representing 25.9% of the total stories. This was followed by the affordability and accountability themes which had 12 and 10 SDG 4 stories each, representing 20.7% and 17.2% respectively. The inclusiveness and innovation themes came fourth and fifth, representing nine and seven stories, representing 15.5% and 12.1% respectively.

A combination of the newspaper data and interviews revealed that editors of the Daily Graphic have fairly lived up to the constitutional mandate of reflecting national interest in the news they put out for the public. It was also clear that commercial interest was a major consideration in terms of what got published on the front-page of the paper.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research, conclusions and gives insightful directions for future research. Additionally, the chapter outlines recommendations for improving future research on how newspapers cover SDG Four stories in Ghana.

5.1 Summary

This research was undertaken to examine the coverage of SDG Four stories on the front pages of the Daily Graphic by delving into the attention the paper gives to stories on SDG Four, how the stories are framed by journalists and the news values that influence what gets published on the front pages. The following research questions guided the study to ensure that the objectives of the study are realised:

1. How does the *Daily Graphic* newspaper give attention to news stories on SDG Four?
2. How are the news stories on SDG Four framed by journalists in the *Daily Graphic*?
3. What news values influence what the *Daily Graphic* publishes on the front page?

Literature that is relevant to the study was analysed under the following headlines: the concept of development; sustainability; sustainable development; sustainable development: the journey; the sustainable development goals; the principles of sustainable development; sustainable development and the media; relevance of front page; news value; influence of organisations on media content; and mass media, news coverage and patterns. The analysis of relevant literature exposed the researcher to the

gap in the literature and acquainted the researcher with works that have already been done in this area of study. In effect, this made it possible for the researcher to ensure that the literature reviewed for the study aligned with the crux of the study.

The researcher employed the qualitative approach for the study (Creswell 2013; Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). The study also used the content analysis design (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). This research approach and design helped the researcher to study how education stories (SDG Four) performed on the front page of the Daily Graphic to determine how the paper attaches importance to education stories. The researcher used the purposive sampling to select the newspaper, the period of the study as well as the interviewees while the composite two weeks sampling strategy (Stempel, 1989) was used to sample the front-page news stories within the period of the study (January 2016 and December, 2020). Document analysis and interviews were used to collect data for the study. Interviews with the news editor, sub-desk editor and the Editor of the Daily Graphic were conducted to enable the researcher probe the further and seek explanations to data trends to either affirm or refute the findings from the qualitative content analysis. The data for the study was analysed thematically (Bowen, 2009).

5.2 Summary of main findings

After analysing the data within the period of the study, it came to light that political stories occupied the most space on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic*. The data revealed that although political stories were the highest ranked on the front-page of the paper, education stories also performed pretty well by placing second. Out of 240 stories that were analysed for the study, political stories were 86, representing 35.8% of the total stories. Education ranked second with 58 stories, representing 24% while environment,

social and health stories came third, fourth and fifth with 38 (15.8%), 23 stories (9.6%) and 15 (6.3%) respectively.

The data suggests that the editors of the *Daily Graphic* found political stories as the most compelling stories for the front-page over the period of the study. What the data also revealed was that aside politics, the editors of the paper prioritised education stories (SDG Four) as it accounted for 24% of the stories within the period of the study. The interview data also indicated that although the front-page of the newspaper was dominated by political stories, the *Daily Graphic* had made great efforts to shove off the political tag on state-owned media and was gradually shifting more towards education and other core development issues. The interview data painted a clearer picture that when political stories on the front-page within the period of the study were juxtaposed with the other issues put together, it would be realised that the latter overshadowed the former. The fact that the other issues collectively accounted for 64.2% of the front-page stories gave credence to this interview data.

Aside from the appearance of stories on the front-page of the newspaper, the data revealed that out of the 240 front page stories, 162 of them had accompanying enhancement features such as photos and infographics. Out of the 162 front page stories with enhancement features, 60 were political while education came second with 42 of the total enhancements. Environment stories followed with 24 enhancements; social stories, with 14 enhancements; economic stories, with 12 and health stories, with 10 enhancements. Interview data clarified that there was no deliberate attempt to add more enhancement features to political and education stories, but that the features were added purely based on availability of space and relevant pictures.

In terms of the tone of the stories, the 58 SDG Four stories that appeared on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* within the period of the study revealed that majority of the stories painted a positive picture about education. This is evident in the fact that out of the 58 front-page stories on SDG 4 that were analysed, 34 of them had a positive tone as against 19 stories and five that had negative and neutral tones respectively. It is instructive, however, that the paper gave room for 34 of SDG 4 stories that have a negative tone to make it to the front-page, giving an indication that although the *Daily Graphic* had a more positive angle to reporting stories on SDG 4, the paper gave fair representation the stories that had a negative tone.

This suggests that irrespective of being a state-owned newspaper, the editors of the *Daily Graphic* published SDG 4 stories on the front-page based on their news value, human interest, currency and other considerations that constitute editorial benchmarks (O'Neil, 2011). The data also showed that in the exercise of the gatekeeping role, the editors were right in their decision to allow both positive and negative stories on SDG 4 stories to have space on the front-page. With the *Daily Graphic* being the most relied on paper for policy making (Amihere, 2010; Asamoah, 2014), the expectation had been that the paper would overwhelmingly paint a rosy picture about SDG 4 stories, especially when the government had implemented the free SHS policy. Having 58 of the SDG 4 stories on the front-page of the paper within the period of this study, and not painting an entirely rosy picture means that the paper is fairly balanced.

Another discovery that is worth noting from the data is the fact that SDG target 4.1, which deals with equal access to free primary and secondary education, was given the most attention in the paper. The data showed that out of the 58 front-page stories on SDG

Four that were analysed in the *Daily Graphic*, SDG 4.1 (T1) was dominant with 22 stories. The good showing by SDG 4.1 could largely be linked to the introduction of the free senior high school (FSHS) education policy by the government. This is because 18 out of the 22 stories on TI were on FSHS. Further analysis of the SDG 4.1 stories revealed that the 18 stories that directly related FSHS policy had political angles as the newsmakers were mainly government officials.

SDG 4.2, which concerns access to early childhood development and quality pre-tertiary education, was the next target that received more attention on the front-page as it accounted for 6 stories. Targets 4.3 and 4.10, which relate to equal access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education and increased supply of qualified teachers in developing countries respectively, followed with 5 stories each. The data also showed that SDG targets 4.4 – increase the number of people with relevant skills for work; 4.7 – education for sustainable development and global citizen; and 4.9 – expand higher education scholarship for developing countries; had 4 stories each. Also, the data showed that SDG 4.5, which deals with eliminating gender disparity in education and ensuring equal access to vocational training for all persons, including persons with disability (PWDs); and 4.8 – which seeks to build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools, were given the least attention with 3 stories each, with T6 also having just 2 stories.

After analysing the SDG 4 stories that were appeared on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* from 2016 to 2020, the six themes that came out of the data were accountability, affordability, inclusiveness, innovation, sustainability and multiple theme. The analysis revealed that the sustainability theme was the dominant theme. Out of the 58 stories that were content analysed, the sustainability theme accounted for 15 stories. This was

followed by the affordability and accountability themes which had 12 and 10 stories respectively. The inclusiveness and innovation themes also came fourth and fifth with 9 and 7 stories respectively.

From the interviews with the editor, chief-sub editor and the news editor it came to light that aside from the traditional news values, commercial motive was a key consideration in what got published on the front-page because the *Daily Graphic* did not enjoy government subvention. In particular, the editor indicated that all things being equal, the editorial team would go for a story that would appeal to the public and drive sales.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions have been drawn.

In the first place, the data has established that politics and education were the two leading issues that attracted more attention on the front-page of the *Daily Graphic* between 2016 and 2020. Thus, findings show that the two issues cumulatively occupied almost 60% of the newspaper's front-page stories during the period of the study. Again, out of the 162 front page stories with enhancement features, 102 of them accompanied political and educational stories. In terms of the tone of the SDG 4 stories, the stories largely had a positive tone, but stories with negative tone were also allowed on the front-page of the paper. Also, there were indication that although the *Daily Graphic* had a more positive angle to reporting stories on SDG 4, the paper gave fair representation to the stories that had a negative tone by allowing 19 of such stories to the front-page. The editors of the *Daily Graphic* published SDG 4 stories on the front-page based on their news value,

human interest, currency and other considerations that constitute editorial benchmarks (O'Neil, 2011).

In terms of attention given to the 10 SDG target, SDG 4.1, which deals with equal access to free primary and secondary education, was given the most attention in the *Daily Graphic*. Finally, in terms of news value that determined what got published on the front-page of the Daily Graphic, the data showed that apart from the traditional news values, commercial motive played a key role in the selection of the stories.

It came to light that apart from the traditional news values, the editors of the Daily Graphic considered other factors such as national development agenda, quality of reporters and relationship with clients in determining the publication of SDG Four stories on the front-page.

The findings from this study has established the fact that although SDG Four although SDG Four was given considerable attention by the Daily Graphic (24.2%), politics continues to dominate the front-page. The Daily Graphic set a favourable agenda for the free SHS policy, which is the first target under SDG 4 as compared with other SDG Four targets. This is a pointer to policy makers that if the print media is prioritised, it will facilitate the setting of the national agenda for the achievement of the SDGs.

This study has also added to knowledge in terms of literature on SDG Four because it has brought up the fact other considerations that influence the publication of stories on the front-page aside the traditional news values. This discovery will be useful for further research in this area.

The use of the agenda setting and framing theories helped to adequately answer the research questions. This will serve as a guide to other researchers exploring similar phenomenon to adopt the same theories.

5.4 Limitation of the study

The study was limited to the front-page stories in the *Daily Graphic*; hence, the conclusions arrived at are within that context. The conclusions can be generalised so far as the limitations are accounted for.

5.5 Recommendations

In the interview with the Editor of the *Daily Graphic*, he pointed out that the commercial motive that played a role in the selection of stories to the front page of the paper was because the need to make sales and remain in business. While some people have recommended that the government should resume the provision of subvention to state news organisations to help address their financial burden, this research recommends that the state should create a conducive environment for state-owned media to stand on their feet and be profitable. The state should offer tax rebates and subsidies on electricity to reduce the cost of production for the state media. This recommendation is justifiable because the *Daily Graphic* has been able to pay its staff despite the financial challenges. This helped the journalist to maintain some level its neutrality in terms of news reporting. This recommendation will further help to protect the editors from the “he who pays the piper calls the tune” mentality.

It came up in the interview with the Editor that due to limited resources, the *Daily Graphic* was not able to report more on SDG Four and other SDGs as anticipated. It is

recommended that dedicated funds should be made available for media houses and journalists who have demonstrated the ability to do SDG stories to access to facilitate their work. In this regard, a fund known as SDG Fund for Media Reporting should be established to provide the needed resources to journalists to access to facilitate their work. Also, the research recommends that Graphic Communications Group Limited should prioritise SDG reporting by setting up a special desk for such stories. Again, some journalists should be given special training on SDG reporting to help set the agenda for discussing and mobilising stakeholders to achieve SDG 4 in particular.

5.6 Suggestion for Future Research

Future researchers could add another state-owned newspaper to be able to compare how the two newspapers cover SDG 4 stories on the front-page within the same time frame. When this is done, it will help the researcher to have a holistic assessment of state-owned print media organisations cover SDG 4 stories. Again, future researchers can consider adding a private newspaper to get diverse perspectives that come to play in terms of SDG 4 stories on the front-page.

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