

# **Politics and Sensational newspaper Headlines: Debate around Jubilee government's Laptops and the Teacher's Strike?**

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## **Authors**

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# Introduction

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- ❑ In the Kenyan media, there is a thin line between political players and media.
  - ❑ Media has become extremely involved in politics and politicians have used media for their own interests
  - ❑ When jubilee government formed government after the hotly contested March 4th general elections; it was to be followed by myriad challenges
  - ❑ Among these, the most shaking was the teacher's strike which extended for 24 days.
  - ❑ The strike brought to exhaustive discussion the popular laptop project, which was a mega promise by the jubilee government during the elections campaigns
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# Introduction

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- ❑ Cord leaders called order and wanted the money set for laptops to be channeled to paying teachers.
  - ❑ The question was why specifically aim at a project which Kenyans were so eager to see implemented?
  - ❑ Why not just tell the government to carry out both projects?
  - ❑ Were teachers pay increment specifically replaced with laptops?
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# Introduction

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- ❑ It was the media, which made the debate more dramatic in its headlines.
  - ❑ Did the media headlines have any influence on the prolonged strike and whether sensationalizing the debate was worth in the first place.
  - ❑ Was it really the issue of misplaced priorities or a political dissent which media did not understand?
  - ❑ Did the media set the agenda of a dichotomy of priorities and presented them as binary oppositions?
  - ❑ Was it logical to argue that jubilee could only pay teachers by dropping the laptop project?
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# Objectives

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- ❑ Find out the media headlines that sensationalized the teachers strike vs. laptop project
  - ❑ Identify the value of such sensational headlines in Kenyan context
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# Methodology

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- ❑ Descriptive design
  - ❑ Purposive sampling
  - ❑ Qualitative data analysis
  - ❑ Textual analysis of headlines between 25th May; one month before the strike and July 18<sup>th</sup>; the day the strike was called off
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# Theory: Agenda setting

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- ❑ The media sets the public agenda by telling you what to think about, although not exactly what to think:
  - ❑ McCombs, (2003) "In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality.
  - ❑ "Readers learn not only about a given issue but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.
  - ❑ "In reflecting what politicians and opinion shapers are saying... the mass media may well determine the important issues – that is, the media may set the "agenda" of the day""
  - ❑ This role is purely intended or unintended
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# Findings and Results

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- ❑ Between May 25th - July 25th One month before the strike
  - ❑ Most newspaper headlines and opinion page headlines carried the words 'laptop' and 'priority'
  
  - ❑ EXAMPLES
  - ❑ 15/4/2013: [THE WAG: Laptops in Class One a bad idea](#)
  - ❑ 26/4/2013: [The choice is between laptops and more teachers for schools](#)
  - ❑ 2/6/2013: [Laptops a waste of taxpayers' money, say MPs](#)
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# Findings and Results

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- Between June 25th and July 18th: most newspaper headlines combined the words “Priority”, “teachers strike” and “laptop project” or “laptop”
  - Most headlines in both nation and standard newspapers were on teachers strike
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# Findings and Results

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## The standard

- ❑ June 19, 2013: Knut targets Sh54b laptop cash for pay
- ❑ June 17, 2013: Teachers threaten to sabotage laptop project

## Daily Nation

- ❑ 5/7/2013: Opinion [Pay teachers well, but do not snatch laptops from the little school children](#)
  - ❑ 30/6/2013: [Raila: Pay teachers with laptop cash](#)
  - ❑ 17/6/2013: [LAIKIPIA - Teachers target laptop project over pay](#)
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# Discussion/argumentation using theory

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- Agenda Setting Theory, 2012: Agenda setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media
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# Applied Assumptions of AST

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- ❑ AST (2012): The press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it;
- ❑ Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.
- ❑ The time frame for this is the most critical aspects of the agenda setting role in mass communications.

# Applied Assumptions of AST

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- ❑ **Iyengar & Kinder (1987):** AS occurs through a cognitive process known as “accessibility,” which implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media covers an issue, the more that issue becomes accessible in the audience’s memory
  - ❑ Basically, when surveyed about what they feel are the most important problems the country faces, respondents reply with issues that the media focuses on the most.
  - ❑ For example, during Kenyans strike a survey by Ipsos Synovate showed that most Kenyans thought laptop project was not a priority over teachers pay
  - ❑ The agenda setting theory suggests that this is the result of repeated coverage of the issue by the media
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# Conclusion

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- ❑ Media headlines repeatedly dichotomized and sensationalized the priority between laptops and teachers pay
- ❑ The theory of agenda setting apporitions responsibility on media because what media emphasises becomes the accepted logic by the society members and they act on it
- ❑ In this case, Kenyans and teachers were convinced that there was enough money that could be shifted to their side and they kept insisting
- ❑ It is possible that Media was responsible for the prolonged strike although this has to be empirically tested

# Recommendations

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- ❑ An empirical study on the effects of media headlines on the strike should be carried out to check the validity of this argument
  - ❑ The media should be very careful on their choice of subjects because some could have implicit effects with far reaching consequences on segments of the society
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End

Thank you

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