

## **Framing the Relationship between Government and NGOs in Selected Malaysian Chinese Daily Newspapers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The dynamics of relationship between government and non-governmental organizations has long been a subject of scrutiny for scholars. This relationship is deemed crucial as it can make or break the policy-making process, depending on whether these two institutions agree or disagree with each other. This study is an exhibition of the contention between these two institutions using framing theory. It is an empirical study of 2,374 articles on news coverage on the contemporary education issue of the language of teaching and learning Science and Mathematics subjects in Malaysia through two different periods. The six key players or news sources being examined in this study are the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the ruling Barisan Nasional, the Opposition, the Readers, and the Editors. These news sources, representing the Government's voice and the NGOs' voice, were found to be dominant in crafting the news frame in a way that reflects favourably on the sources' perceptions of the issue. It is clear from the findings in this study that the Government's and NGOs' frames were contending with one another to gain the support of the public regarding contemporary education issue.

**Keywords:** Government, NGOs, news source, news slant, source frame, educational issue

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### **Introduction**

In the process of nation building, changes to the country's policies by the government are inevitable in order to address the changing needs of society. It is, however, to be understood that policy making can be very complex as it is seen as a web of interrelated factors woven together and, as Barrett et al. (2011: 6) put it, "most policy problems are trans-disciplinary and an effective tool for policy informatics needs to be a multi-theory, multi-actor, multi-perspective system." A public policy, before its enforcement, will be scrutinized from multiple perspectives from different sources with different interests to find a meeting point that satisfies all parties concerned. This is especially true for a democratic country such as Malaysia.

Countries that practice democracy will find themselves surrounded by watchdogs in the society, i.e. the opposition, the public and NGOs when policies are implemented or changed. The participation of citizens is important as "citizens will help define community goals, develop agendas, develop strategic initiatives, participate in and review

implementation procedures, actively participate in the measurement of progress, and in assessing impacts of programs” (Gibson, Lacy & Dougherty, 2011: 2). The power of these watchdogs is not to be neglected as it can make or break the process of policy-making.

The NGOs referred to any non-governmental organization by the people whether locally, nationally or internationally. NGOs can be movements that fight for a certain cause or interest, with the ultimate aim of the betterment of community. The NGOs can have different orientation, for some aims for better service, some demand increased attention and support, some fight for marginalized groups and some seek to empower people.

NGOs, though given different names and definition in different countries, are crucial to a country’s development, for they are the voices of the people, whether in the interest of the majority or the causes of the minority. In the process of policy making, NGOs can either work hand in hand with the Government or they can express qualms about the policies made by the government.

Government and the NGOs attempt to garner support for their views through the media. In the theory of framing, government and the NGOs are known as sources of news. These sources of news will slant a news story to their “perception of reality” and hope that it will be accepted by the public. These perceptions are known as the source frames.

Having established the power of these sources of news, however, it is not to be forgotten that the media play a major role too, as the media also seek to slant news in a certain direction. The authors have, however, discovered a gap in research in framing, for there have not been enough studies that focus on the sources frame in the process of frame building. Therefore, in this study, while examining the struggle between the government and the NGOs, the authors also desire to add depth into the knowledge of framing by concentrating as well on sources of the frames themselves.

The focus of this research is on the print media. The rationale for choosing the print media are the fact that sources are most often quoted in the print media, and the print media reaches out to the mass audience. The print media also have limited space compared to the new media such as Internet and, thus, the prominence given to certain source frames can be exhibited more clearly.

This research studies the contention of Government and NGOS through the case study of an issue that is close to the hearts of Malaysians—the issue of the language used to teach and learn Mathematics and Science subjects in contemporary public education. The rationale of the changes of policy is that it is necessary in order to reform the public schools to address global demands as well as the shifting domestic paradigm in education (Dibbon & Pollock, 2007: 3). It is, however, to be noted that not all these changes are accepted by everyone.

This research focuses on the contention between the Malaysian government and NGOs through their frames when disseminating information on these issues to the public. The slants of the news frames advocated by news sources (the government and NGOs) published in the daily newspapers is studied to understand the frame built.

As for the specific objectives, the authors set to add to the framing knowledge in terms of news slant by looking at:

- (a) framing by media in determining the news slants contained in the respective of Chinese daily newspapers;
- (b) framing through the media in determining the news slant created by the perspective news sources; and
- (c) clustering the coalitions after determining the news slants in framing.

### **Literature on framing**

Framing theory has come a long way since the day of Erving Goffman (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Endres, 2004; Scheff, 2005; Simon & Xenos, 2000). Shah et al (2004) summarize framing as “as a means to describe the influence of the press on an individual’s information processing and social judgments”. In other words, the process of framing’s ultimate aim is to change public opinion or to slant it toward a certain perception regarding certain issues.

In the field of journalism, Tuchman (1978) studied the factors affecting the construction of news with an emphasis on the workplace cultures influence in reporting an issue. Researchers from a range of communication fields recognize that journalists select information and organize it rather than repeating it (Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This process of selection will ultimately lead to news frames.

News frames refer to “interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context” (Norris, Kern & Just, 2003). Gitlin (1980, p. 6) defines the function of this news frame as “making the world beyond direct experience look natural.” Frames, the various aspects of the messages brought by various types of media, serve to trigger the audience schemata into understanding the surroundings that could be beyond their physical touch.

De Vreese (2005) specified the process constructing news frames in the media as building “structural qualities of news frames”. He went on to explain the internal and external factors in determining the news frames. One of the external factors is a continuous communication between the journalists and the sources. This will result in the frames that are manifested in the text.

There are, however, certain parts of the studies of framing that have been neglected. As Carragee & Roefs (2004) suggested, the studies of framing should not be reduced to mere media effects, but include the larger context of politics and social power. While the media play a major role, the sources role in the information chain is also important and the very first level of framing happens between the sources and the journalists.

Druckman & Parkin (2005) studied on the impact of the editorial source to the results of elections. They discovered that news slanted in a certain ways by the editorial itself will affect the voter's decision. This shows the importance of understanding the news slant by the sources can actually impact the public opinion on certain matters in the society especially politics decision.

In this research, the authors are coming back to the roots of framing, the very beginning of the process of communication, which is the dissemination of information from the sources to the journalists. While studies had been done to study editorial slant, this research seeks to complement the research in framing by looking at the different news sources, and also at the different approaches that are being used. This will help reveal the contention between the Government and NGOs more clearly Knowledge of this is of utmost importance for the improvement of public sector cooperation between the government and NGOs.

## **Background**

As Malaysia seeks to become a more developed country, and as the pace of globalization quickens, there is a need for the government to reassess the teaching of two very important subjects for the country's development, that is Science and Mathematics subjects. In May 2002, a resolution was passed by the government for the teaching of Science and Mathematics subjects exclusively in English, and this policy was to be implemented from 2003 onwards. This ruling was met with mixed reactions from the public and sparked debates. The Chinese community, especially the NGOs, was very vocal in its defence of the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in its mother tongue.

The government relented and decided that the Chinese schools should have Science and Mathematics subjects taught both in English and Chinese languages. (This eventually led to the 2-4-3 formula in 2003 and 4-2-2 formula in 2006.) Many Chinese NGOs, the most prominent one is Dong Jiao Zhong, debated this formula and voiced their disagreement.

This issue was followed closely by the media, especially the Chinese media. The Chinese media reported the whole chronology, the progress and the statements from the sources regarding the issue. Since education policy will eventually affect the profits of Chinese media in Malaysia, it is safe to say that most Chinese newspapers defended and framed the news in such a way to bring back the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics subjects in their mother tongue.

Now the question here is, from whom did the Chinese media get their opinions? Who was behind the information that was given out? This is what the authors are looking at. It is to be noted that, in a previous study of the same issue, Chang & Musa (2008) explained that Chinese newspapers gave prominence to the Chinese NGOs compared to their other newspapers. The sources are known as the frame sponsors (Gamson, 1992) who slant the news to their preferred interest in order to persuade the public to agree with their opinions albeit using different approaches that will be described later on in this article.

The authors identified two major announcements which denote the turning point of this education issue by the reigning Prime Ministers of the day. The first announcement was made by Mahathir Mohamad to change the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science subjects to English on 10 May 2002. The second announcement was made by Abdullah Badawi to retain both English and mother-tongue languages as media for examination in UPSR on 27 October 2006. Many sources were trying to push their frames in order to influence the public opinion through the mass media. It is these sources that are the subject of interest in this research to better understand the process of frame-building by the sources.

### **Methodology**

It is to be acknowledged that newspapers in Malaysia are very much ethnically based, especially when it comes to newspapers which are published in languages other than English. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the authors decided to focus only on the Chinese newspapers. The five Chinese newspapers taken for this research are *China Press*, *Guang Ming Daily*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, *Oriental Daily News*, and *Sin Chew Daily*.

The first study period was from 11 May 2002, the day the first announcement was made for English to be used as medium of instruction, to 31 May 2002. The second study period also covers 21 days from the day after the official announcement of the examination format for 2008 UPSR, i.e. from October 28 to November 17 2007.

The method used for this content analysis is straightforward. Three coders were trained to read and review all the elements in their respective categories. A coding book was given to the coders as a guide to align their understanding to the matter at hand, and they were also provided with possible keywords used by the news sources for easy identification. The coding book also provided the coders with the codes needed to group the individual or group sources. The categorization of the news sources are done as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Categorization of News Sources

News source	Representation in Organization
Government	Policymaker and executor: politicians holding the governmental positions and civil servants (e.g. Prime Minister, ministers, directors general, etc.)
BN	Policy-support groups: politicians from ruling political parties (e.g. UMNO, MCA, MIC, etc.) that are not holding governmental positions or are not speaking on behalf of government.
NGOs	Non-governmental organization (NGOs) and education NGOs (e.g. Dong Jiao Zong, etc.).
Opposition	Opposing political parties (e.g. DAP, PAS, PKR, etc.)
Editorial	Editorial write-ups and spot news
Reader	Letters to editors and comments and views from readers

The rationale of the selection of the news sources is basically to choose those who play key and influential roles regarding the contemporary education issue. Government officials and those from the ruling coalition (Barisan Nasional) are the ones who make and implement the education policies. The NGOs and the Opposition are interested parties, which are the watchdogs, scrutinizing and commenting on the government's policy. Of course, the mass audience is also another group of people who have strong interest in this matter as it affects them directly. The news slant is harder to identify as the lines are sometimes thin between one slant and the other, and some slants can become too subtle to be easily recognizable. So, the coders are trained to be more sensitive to the tones and words used by news sources. The scheme for the coding of news slant in this study was modified from the study done by Idid (1994) during the 1990 Malaysian General Election to detect news that was either favourable or unfavourable to any political parties. These codes and the description and example of keywords can be found in Table 2.

To ensure the reliability of data collected using the construct in Table 2, the coders were briefed thoroughly and were given mock training to ensure their understanding. The authors do not deny the risk of subjectivity, but it was reduced through the training. The coders were also told not to interpret the underlying or latent meaning behind the texts in newspapers. Prior to data collection process, a trial run of degree of correspondence among coders yielded the agreement of more than .7 for Holsti's (1969) index.

Table 2: Description of News Slants

News Slants	Description	Example of keywords
Attacked	The source said something bad or criticized others – aggressive actions, forceful attempts, or being offensive in one’s verbal behavior	Accused, blamed, charged, criticize, scolded, reproach, reprimanded, etc.
Self acclaimed (cum Defended)	The source said something good about itself in order to protect from being harmed – praised enthusiastically and publicly and/or resistance to other’s attack	Praised, applauded, defended, assured, protected, guaranteed, promised, honored, secured, cheered, etc.
Appealed	The source made heartfelt request – verbal expression with emotional touch with the anticipation of sympathetic response.	Appealed, pleaded, begged, prayed, wished, hoped, humbly asked for, heartfelt request, etc.
Persuaded	The source put forward reasoning argument – sound reasons are provided to influence or convince others to follow suit.	Persuaded, convinced, won over, influenced, affected, manipulated, stimulated, inspired, enthused, etc.
None of the above	The news does not belong to any of the four categories above	Not Applicable

### **Research outcomes**

Two thousand three hundred and seventy-four paragraphs were collected for further analysis in this study. The cross-tabulation of daily newspapers and news sources was carried out and the attributions of the news paragraph are described in Table 3. The sequence of arrangement is based on the total amount of respective sector of news sources. Table 4 shows the news slants for the whole sample for both of the study durations.

### **Framing by media**

To ascertain the significant association of news slants with both of the independent variables of daily newspapers and news sources, Chi-Square tests with the effect size of Cramer’s *V* were conducted. Effect sizes were applied to compare the strength of influence on news slants between daily newspapers and news sources. The traditional cut-offs for effect sizes for Cramer’s *V* is .10 as small, .30 as medium and .50 as large.



Table 3: Cross-tabulation of Daily Newspapers and News Sources

News Source	Sin Chew Daily	Nanyang Siang Pau	China Press	Oriental Daily News	Guang Ming Daily	Whole sample
Government	259 (30.2%)	201 (36.6%)	149 (35.7%)	66 (19.8%)	95 (44.0%)	770 (32.4%)
NGOs	211 (24.6%)	107 (19.5%)	97 (23.3%)	118 (35.4%)	33 (15.3%)	566 (23.8%)
Editorial	132 (15.4%)	143 (26.0%)	37 (8.9%)	32 (9.6%)	37 (17.1%)	381 (16.0%)
BN	101 (11.8%)	63 (11.5%)	75 (18.0%)	63 (18.9%)	44 (20.4%)	346 (14.6%)
Reader	141 (16.4%)	18 (3.3%)	41 (9.8%)	54 (16.2%)	0 (0.0%)	254 (10.7%)
Opposition	15 (1.7%)	17 (3.1%)	18 (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (3.2%)	57 (2.4%)
Total	859 (100%)	549 (100%)	417 (100%)	333 (100%)	216 (100%)	2374 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within whole sample and dailies

Table 4: Frequencies of News Slants by Study Period

News Slant	2002	2007	Whole sample
Self acclaimed	317 (26.0%)	423 (36.6%)	740 (31.2%)
Persuaded	260 (21.3%)	285 (24.7%)	545 (23.0%)
Attacked	287 (23.6%)	201 (17.4%)	488 (20.6%)
Appealed	139 (11.4%)	148 (12.8%)	287 (12.1%)
None of the above	215 (17.7%)	99 (8.6%)	314 (13.2%)
Total	1218 (100%)	1156 (100%)	2374 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within whole sample and study periods.

Table 5 shows a large variation of direction as demonstrated by the four newspapers, except for *Oriental Daily News*, in 2002. *Sin Chew Daily* put Attacked direction first with 26.5%, followed by Persuaded (26.1%) and Self-Acclaimed (24.0%).

In terms of percentage, *Nanyang Siang Pau* used the Attacked news slants more than *Sin Chew Daily* as this slant made up 27.3% of its total. However, the Attacked direction ranked second after the category of which none of the predetermined slants were used

(31.7%). *China Press* displayed more Self-Acclaimed (31.7%) and Persuaded (31.2%). *Guang Ming Daily* also has the Self-Acclaimed (48.0%) and Persuaded (22.8%) direction as the highest. The effect size, however, was small, in which  $X^2(12, N= 1218) = 161.766$ ,  $p = .000$ ; with Cramer's  $V = .210$ . A significant association between news slants and daily newspapers in 2002 was hypothesized. Although the above Chi-Square test has ascertained the significant association between news slants and daily newspapers, the effect size of the relationship was considered only at a low level.

In 2007, all daily newspapers, except for *Oriental Daily News*, were using similar directions or slants with Self-Acclaimed being the top followed by Persuaded. The percentage for Self-Acclaimed direction were 52.7% for *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 47.2% for *Guang Ming Daily*, 39.4% for *Sin Chew Daily*, and 33.0% for *China Press*; while the percentages for the Persuaded direction were 35.5% for *Sin Chew Daily*, 30.3% for *Guang Ming Daily*, 20.2% for *China Press* and 18.8% for *Nanyang Siang Pau*. *Oriental Daily News* however, put Attacked slants first (33.0%) followed by Self-acclaimed (24.3%) and Persuaded (18.6%). This scenario has seen smaller effect size of association with the Cramer's  $V = .184$  from the test statistics of  $X^2(16, N= 1156) = 156.292$ ,  $p = .000$ , but it is still significantly established.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of Dailies and News Slants (2002)

Daily Newspaper	Self-acclaimed	Persuaded	Attacked	Appealed	None of the above	Total
Sin Chew Daily	127 (24.0%)	138 (26.1%)	140 (26.5%)	57 (10.8%)	67 (12.7%)	529 (100.0%)
Nanyang Siang Pau	66 (18.2%)	31 (8.5%)	99 (27.3%)	52 (14.3%)	115 (31.7%)	363 (100.0%)
China Press	63 (31.7%)	62 (31.2%)	26 (13.1%)	25 (12.6%)	23 (11.6%)	199 (100.0%)
Guang Ming Daily	61 (48.0%)	29 (22.8%)	22 (17.3%)	5 (3.9%)	10 (7.9%)	127 (100.0%)
Overall	317 (26.0%)	260 (21.3%)	287 (23.6%)	139 (11.4%)	215 (17.7%)	1218 (100.0%)

The statistical tests conducted in Table 6 (above) proved that the newspapers changed their news direction throughout the periods except for *Oriental Daily News* (as it was only examined in 2007). The other four newspapers have taken the Attacked and Persuaded directions in 2007, while *Oriental Daily News* was even more aggressive than the rest by putting the Attacked approach first when it came to this educational issue. It is worth noting that *China Press*'s coverage was relatively more balanced and consistent over the periods, using Attacked direction (17.9% for 2007, and 13.1% in 2002) and Appealed direction (16.1% in 2007, and 12.6% in 2002).

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of Dailies and News Slant (2007)

Daily Newspaper	Self-acclaimed	Persuaded	Attacked	Appealed	None of the above	Total
Sin Chew Daily	130 (39.4%)	117 (35.5%)	28 (8.5%)	24 (7.3%)	31 (9.4%)	330 (100.0%)
Nanyang Siang Pau	98 (52.7%)	35 (18.8%)	20 (10.8%)	24 (12.9%)	9 (4.8%)	186 (100.0%)
China Press	72 (33.0%)	44 (20.2%)	39 (17.9%)	35 (16.1%)	28 (12.8%)	218 (100.0%)
Oriental Daily News	81 (24.3%)	62 (18.6%)	110 (33.0%)	51 (15.3%)	29 (8.7%)	333 (100.0%)
Guang Ming Daily	42 (47.2%)	27 (30.3%)	4 (4.5%)	14 (15.7%)	2 (2.2%)	89 (100.0%)
Overall	423 (36.6%)	285 (24.7%)	201 (17.4%)	148 (12.8%)	99 (8.6%)	1156 (100.0%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within daily newspapers.

### Contention between the Government and NGOs

Table 7 exhibits the analysis for the 2002 period. The Government stressed on Self-acclaimed direction (60.3%) while the Opposition took on the Attacked direction with 57.8%. There was another 24.4% of news with unidentified direction being the second ranking placed by Opposition.

Meanwhile, both BN and NGOs emphasized Persuaded direction with 51.8% and 37.0% of their total coverage of news. While Self-acclaimed news ranked number two for BN with 21.4%, NGOs took Attacked news as the second important with 25.9%. On the contrary, BN placed Attacked (19.6%) as third while NGOs went for Self-acclaimed (18.5%). Reader also followed Opposition that accepted the Attacked direction as its way of disseminating information with 47.5% of news being offensive in 2002, followed by Appealed direction (25.3%). Editorial placed none of the predetermined directions as number one with 34.2%, followed by Attacked direction (30.6%) and Persuaded direction (23.5%).

From the Chi-Square test, the effect size for the association between news slants and news sources was higher if compared with the other variables of daily newspapers in the same study period. The effect size for the test was medium with the Cramer's  $V = .355$  and the test statistics were  $X^2(20, N = 1218) = 615.698, p = .000$ . This is definitely greater than the relationship with daily newspapers for news slants in the same study period.

Table 7: Cross-Tabulation of Sources and News Slants (2002)

News Source	Self-acclaimed	Persuaded	Attacked	Appealed	None of the above	Total
Government	246 (60.3%)	42 (10.3%)	19 (4.7%)	46 (11.3%)	55 (13.5%)	408 (100.0%)
NGOs	50 (18.5%)	100 (37.0%)	70 (25.9%)	22 (8.1%)	28 (10.4%)	270 (100.0%)
Editorial	7 (2.5%)	66 (23.5%)	86 (30.6%)	26 (9.3%)	96 (34.2%)	281 (100.0%)
BN	12 (21.4%)	29 (51.8%)	11 (19.6%)	1 (1.8%)	3 (5.4%)	56 (100.0%)
Reader	2 (1.3%)	19 (12.0%)	75 (47.5%)	40 (25.3%)	22 (13.9%)	158 (100.0%)
Opposition	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.9%)	26 (57.8%)	4 (8.9%)	11 (24.4%)	45 (100.0%)
Overall	317 (26.0%)	260 (21.3%)	287 (23.6%)	139 (11.4%)	215 (17.7%)	1218 (100.0%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within news sources

The trend of news slant by the news sources remained stable in 2007, as seen in Table 8. Government stayed put, emphasizing the Self-acclaimed direction with 65.7% while Opposition, Editorial and Reader categories had gone for the Attacked direction with 100.0%, 38.0% and 32.3% respectively.

Readers went for the Appealed direction with 29.2%, Editorial took the Persuaded direction (29.0%) followed by no direction (24.0%). NGOs have remained in the Persuaded direction (35.5%) while BN has changed its direction with emphasis on Self-acclaimed (40.3%). BN still take the Persuaded direction although it decreases to 36.2%. The second and third placing for NGOs in 2007 were Attacked Direction (21.6%) and Appealed direction (21.3%).

The test in the 2007 study period had still acquired a medium size effect in which  $X^2$  (20, N = 1156) = 466.290,  $p = .000$ ; with Cramer's  $V = .318$ . This proves significant association between news slants and news sources at a medium size effect. The slants by the news sources remained pretty constant and this led to coalition of these news sources.

Table 8: Cross-Tabulation of Sources and News Slants (2007)

News Source	Self-acclaimed	Persuaded	Attacked	Appealed	None of the above	Total
Government	238 (65.7%)	36 (9.9%)	36 (9.9%)	19 (5.2%)	33 (9.1%)	362 (100.0%)
NGOs	48 (16.2%)	105 (35.5%)	64 (21.6%)	22 (8.1%)	28 (10.4%)	296 (100.0%)
Editorial	9 (9.0%)	29 (29.0%)	38 (38.0%)	0 (0.0%)	24 (24.0%)	100 (100.0%)
BN	117 (40.3%)	105 (36.2%)	20 (6.9%)	38 (13.1%)	10 (3.4%)	290 (100.0%)
Reader	11 (11.5%)	10 (10.4%)	31 (32.3%)	40 (25.3%)	22 (13.9%)	158 (100.0%)
Opposition	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (100.0%)
Overall	423 (36.6%)	285 (24.7%)	201 (17.4%)	139 (11.4%)	215 (17.7%)	1218 (100.0%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within news sources

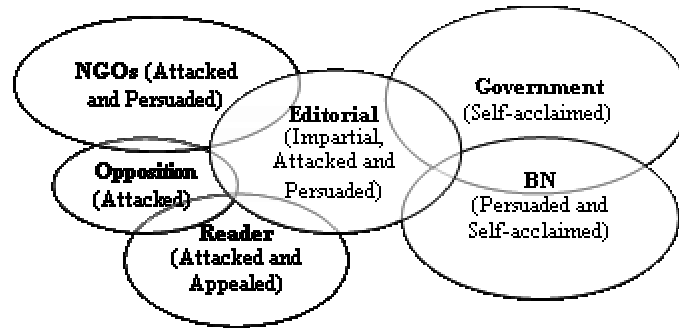
### **Coalition due to the slanting of news**

The Chi-Square tests conducted in 2002 and 2007 study periods to ascertain association between news slant and news sources, show that news sources mostly remained constant in their direction throughout the different periods. BN changed emphasis from Persuaded to Self-Acclaimed direction, and Editorial changed from unidentified direction to Attacked direction, but it does not affect the effect size.

The Government has consistently used Self-acclaimed direction, NGOs with Persuaded and Attacked direction, Reader with Attacked and Appealed direction, BN with Persuaded and Self Acclaimed and, lastly, the Opposition went all-out for the Attacked direction.

From this, it can be seen that there is a coalition of news sources in their direction, as illustrated in Figure 1. However, Editorial source cannot be put together with any coalition as Editorial has a mixture of objectivity and subjectivity. Generally, the Editorial category is relatively objective in its reporting as can be seen by the “No Direction” slant on this issue. However, there are also Editorial groups that supported the Government, while some voiced dissatisfaction. Some are of the same mind with the activists. Therefore, Editorial is a mixture of two coalitions and is the platform where the different slants meet for the voices to be heard.

Figure 1: Coalition of News Sources due to the Slanting of News Directions



## Discussion

This research started out to ascertain the nature of the contention between Government and the NGOs through the eyes of framing theory. This is important in order to add on to the depth of the framing knowledge, and also to understand the process of frame building. This research showed the media and the sources pushing their preferred perceptions in order to be manifested in the text of the print media.

The media's effect, while significant, has proven to be smaller than the source's effect when it comes to frame-building. Thus, the authors are of the opinion that the source frame has bigger impact on slanting the news than the media frame. The sources will craft the news in the way they want it to be, and journalists, while having their own power to slant a news, will also depend on many other factors to frame the story such as organization policy and newsworthiness. The research has also proven that the sources frames are more constant throughout the two periods that was studied compared to the media. It shows that sources are more determined in slanting the news to their interests and benefits.

The Government and the Barisan Nasional had the same approach toward the education issue whereby as policymakers, they used the Self-acclaimed direction in order to justify the policy, and in order to defend themselves from the attacks of other parties who were questioning the policy. The Government needed to use this approach in order to convince the public that it is a good policy, and to gain support from the people. However, it is to be noted that not all Barisan Nasional grassroots supporters agree with the policy. It is rather the top ranking politicians, especially those who are holding positions in the government, which come together as one voice to support the Government policy.

The NGOs and the Reader, on the other hand, use the Appealed and the Attack direction alternately. The media gave much prominence to the sources from the NGOs, especially Chinese NGOs such as Dong Jiao Zong. The NGOs uses the Appealed direction in order to appeal to the Government to change its mind and at the same time appealing to the

public in order to obtain the support for the change of the policy. The NGOs slant towards Attacked direction in order to “right the wrongs” done, and to pinpoint the weaknesses of the policy. The NGOs has the interests of the Chinese community in the forefront of their information.

The Reader seemingly joined with the NGOs to urge the return of the mother-tongue language for the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics subjects in school. However, the Reader used more of sentimental and personal values support its view, whereas the NGOs used more argumentative points to attack the Government. The Opposition went all-out against the education policy. The Opposition is the watchdog for the Government and its task is to dissect the policies being made. Therefore, it is unavoidable that it will use this approach.

The Editorial remained moderate most of the time, with some that being more vocal in opposition to or support for the policy. The Editorial seems to give more balanced view as it is seen to be the platform for discussion and the meeting point between the policymakers and the public. However, the authors also argue that the Editorial was very much bound by their organization interests and ideology as they write.

From this research, therefore, the contention between the Government and the NGOs is clear, as this case study showed the conflict between the Government and the NGOs. The Government seeks to defend the established policy while the NGOs fought for the interest of the Chinese community. For this case study, the Government and the NGOs collided in their opinions and, through the media, they used different appeals in order to convince the public regarding the contemporary education issue. The Government and the NGOs used different approaches and different frames in order to highlight their opinion to the press.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, the disagreement between the Government and the NGOs was obvious in this case study, using the theory of framing. The Government and the NGOs came from two different contradicting opinions, using different frames and seeking to highlight their views.

Policymakers must understand the full effect of framing in order to grasp how the news slant actually plays a major role in the policy-making process. The policymakers should be more sensitive to the voices of the people through the media and in turn, also use the media to advocate understanding about policies. Educationist activists group, various NGOs and even the common people are the ones that the government must not ignore, for they can be very influential in shaping public opinions. The media can break or make the policies as demonstrated in this research. The policymakers, in fact, must get the NGOs to agree with them in order to win support for their policies, because if “recommendation

letters from prestigious actors (ministries, scientific panels etc.) were available through applications for grassroots actors, then their (referring to the Government) valuable initiatives would have better chances to get through” (Antal, 2010: 2).

This research reaffirms that framing does take place by the media. However, what this research has also found is that the source frame had been neglected in previous studies of framing and, with this gap in mind, the authors sought to close that gap by providing some light into this area. The source frame had been found to be of greater impact compared to the media frame. It should take precedence over the act of framing by the media.

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