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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PIONEER NEWS INDEX: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper reviews the historical development of Akwa Ibom State from its creation to 1994. It also analyses the Pioneer Newspaper Index. Results indicate that while areas like Letters, local government, sports, education and rural development have been government priority since the creation of the state, other areas like agriculture, roads, electricity and water supply, have been very high neglected. Implications of these for education and development are discussed.

Introduction

The number of newspapers in Nigeria has risen phenomenally from less than a dozen in 1880 to over forty today (Alegbeleye, 1984). In his survey, Alegbeleye attributed this increase in the number of newspapers partly to the burgeoning literacy rate and consequently to heightened important sources of local and international happenings. Many librarians and information professionals are anxious to assist users in their utilization of information.

Katz (1969) emphasizes that newspaper indexes are particularly important for historical research, and are often the only source of contemporary opinion in a subject area or about a personality. Frequently, they offer the historian a springboard for further research by identifying a personality, a place or event, or the trend of activities for educational research.

Ducasse (1958) gives the definition of education as "to lead out or bring out". It implies the transmission of knowledge, a process of initiation, reception of data to reduce uncertainty, a process of being informed. As a bridge to information, newspaper indexes are therefore tools of education which enable educationists to achieve practical results.

Since 1988, the Pioneer Newspaper has become a pathfinder and a veritable companion of the people and government of Akwa Ibom State in their struggle to build a young state, just six months older than the newspaper itself (Etim, 1995).

This paper reviews the historical development of Akwa Ibom State between 1988 and 1994. Specifically, the study will analyse the proportion of news entries per news heading in the years under review; show the picture of the cumulative entries of news items for the years and analyse the news contents of the top ten priority areas of the State since its creation.

Akwa Ibom State - A Developmental Perspective

The creation of Akwa Ibom State brought joy and hope for a better life for majority of Akwa Ibom State indigenes (Ekpo, 1995). More often in Nigeria, state creation connotes some expectation that the standard of living of a new state will improve. In addition, state creation is characterised by ethnic rivalry, nepotism, corruption and primitive capitalist accumulation by the ruling class (Ekpo, 1995). More importantly, he asserts that the masses of the people soon discover that their material condition relative to what it was before the creation of the new state had not changed much.

At the the time of creation, Akwa Ibom State was dubbed the land if promise. The new

state was touted by most people as the panacea for development (Okon, 1995). The promise inherent in this was that of rapid industrial and infrastructural development and enhanced standard of living. Seven years after, the scenerio is not very different.

In terms of manpower, there seems, to be more than enough with an inherited workshop (about 75 percent) from former Cross River State. This has made the state principally a civil service state with more than 70 percent of the entire revenue of the state used for recurrent expenditure. The consequences of this condition has made the state not poised to address the real challenges of growth.

Akwa Ibom State has been home to industries that were desert to serious private sector efforts. The only industries counted at state creation were Champion Breweries, Plasto Crown, Pamil Industries, Peacock Paints, Qua Steel Industries, Quality Ceramics, Sunshine Batteries and Asbestonit at Oron. By 1994 one half of the industries were not functioning (Okon, 1995). Seven years after state creation most rural areas remain without electricity, pipe-borne water, adequate health facilities, the equipped primary and secondary schools, co-ordinated agricultural extension services etc. (Ekpo, 1990). For urban and rural unemployment, the State's figures according to Ekpo, (1989) were quite high. He noted that in 1988 urban employment rate stood at 9 percent and rose to 11 percent in 1991. The rates of inflation for food and all other items, he maintained, showed that real wages in the State had declined tremendously. The rates of inflation for food and other items which were 39.6 percent and 37.6 percent in 1992 rose drastically to 146.3 percent and 118 percent in 1993.

Ekpo's review of the state's fiscal operations reveal that capital expenditure was quite low which demonstrated the absence of development projects in the State. On the other hand, recurrent expenditure accounted for about 70 per cent of total expenditure - most of which was for personal costs and administrative overheads.

Having briefly reviewed the development of Akwa Ibom State since creation, it becomes necessary to analyse the news entries of the Pioneer Newspaper index - a total for historical research on contemporary issues.

Research Methodology

A cumulative/retrospective index of the Pioneer Newspaper was prepared between January and June 1994. Two locations were used for the study - the libraries of the University of Uyo and the Pioneer Newspapers Ltd, Uyo. Back files presented in bound volumes were pursued. Standardized terminology lists of subject headings such as Sears List of Subject Headings, Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, and the British Times Index Subject List were used to create a list of subject/news-headings suitable for the index.

Index cards (3" x 5") were used to enter index entries to permit alphabetization word by word. There were no cross references or notes. Index entry was represented by title of news-entry, year, month, date and page e.g.

Better Life Programme/Women	Year	Month	Date	Page
Mrs Abbe commissions for cottage projects	1988	June	6	13

News titles under news/subject headings were therefore compiled for analysis. Simple percentages were used to show proportions of frequencies of news entries under headings while bar graphs were used to show the picture of total news coverage.

Results

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of news articles per news heading indexed each year. It also shows the total number of news articles for the seven years. Vertical columns of table 1 indicate the total number of news entries for the seven years. Table 1 has revealed that news headings with the highest number of news entries are Letters (11.95%), Local Government (10.03%), Sports (8.98%), Education (8.90%) and Rural Development (8.42%) while those with the least number of news entries were Prisons (0.04%), Water (0.37%), Electricity (1.36%) and Agriculture (1.36%). These findings corroborate with Ekpo, (1995) that the provision of social amenities in the State, basic needs are grossly inadequate. Table 1 shows a gradual rise of news entries from 1988 to a peak in 1991, then a gradual decline till 1994. This suggests a decrease in the tempo of government activity and community development. Across the years, news headings which have the highest proportions in the years under study are letters, local government, education and rural development in that order of descending news entry.

Figures 1 and 2 show the picture of the cumulative entries of news items for the seven years. They bring into focus pictorially the news headings most and least reported. They also reveal more the unevenness of the news reports. If news reports are indicative of areas of activity, then there is evidence that development is uneven in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2 shows the first ten news headings with the highest frequency of news items. it also shows their order of ranking, the years with highest entry and the administration in those years. An analyses of the news content of the top priority areas indicate that letters were characterised by peoples demands from government, criticism of government or commendation for government. They all were peoples' opinion on current issues.

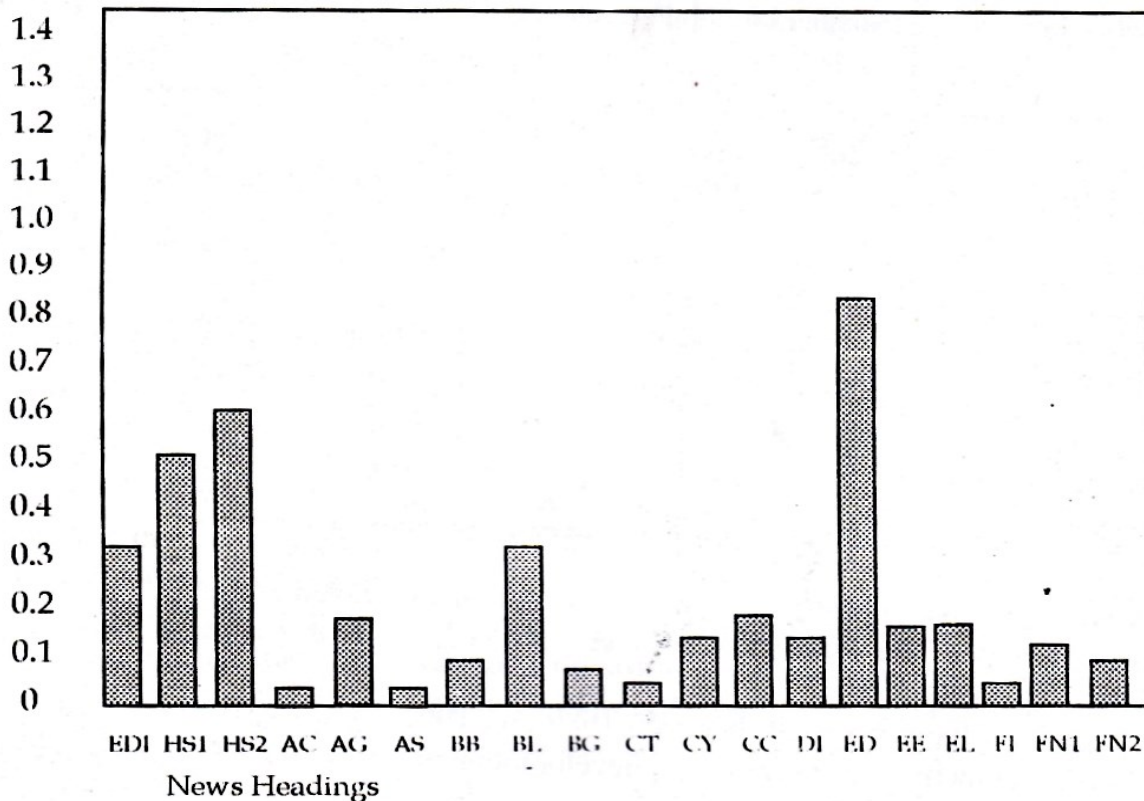
Local Government entries were characterised by launching of projects, scholarship awards by local government councils, tours, revenue generation and the commissioning of projects. Entries were high between 1989 and 1992 but dropped between 1993 and 1994.

Sports news consisted of reports of championship, building of stadia, donations towards sports and rewards to athletes. Reports were high between 1989 and 1991, virtually nothing in 1992 but went up again in 1993 to drop in 1994. The 1993 rise could be attributed to the 1992 World Cup soccer in Japan.

TABLE 1: A TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF NEWS ARTICLES PER NEWS HEADING

S/N	KEYS	NEWS HEADING	'88	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	TOT	PERCENTAGE
1	EDI	Editorials	39	52	51	51	43	51	25	312	3.09%
2	HS1	Head Stories (Front)	74	94	45	103	101	74	41	532	5.26%
3	HS2	Head Stories (Back)	69	106	106	104	98	78	33	594	5.87%
4	AC	Accidents	6	3	7	10	2	3	2	137	0.33%
5	AG	Agriculture	38	24	20	29	*	15	11	38	1.36%
6	AS	Assets	1	*	*	*	*	14	23	96	0.38%
7	BB	Banks/Banking	6	11	19	26	*	26	8	359	0.95%
8	BL	Better Life/Women	30	73	73	65	73	26	19	55	3.50%
9	BG	Budget	*	6	4	20	*	18	7	28	0.54%
10	CT	Chieftaincy/Traditional Rulers	7	*	*	*	*	21	*	113	0.28%
11	CY	Children/Young People	11	33	31	15	*	17	6	220	1.11%
12	CC	Church/Christianity	25	49	53	28	25	23	17	11	2.18%
13	DI	Drugs - Abuse/Industry	4	*	*	*	*	4	3	813	0.10%
14	ED	Education	111	142	177	180	133	35	35	146	8.03%
15	EE	Election/Electoral System	8	19	37	34	7	37	4	149	1.45%
16	EL	Electricity	9	25	54	35	13	10	3	37	1.47%
17	FI	Fire - Disaster	2	3	6	12	8	3	3	96	0.37%
18	FNI	Foreign News (Africa)	25	14	27	10	*	10	10	69	0.95%
19	FN2	Foreign News (Outside Africa)	18	13	7	15	*	16	*	12	0.96%
20	FF	Fuel/Fuel Crisis	2	5	*	*	*	2	3	620	0.12%
21	GV	Government/Civil Service	61	96	123	127	93	50	70	320	6.12%
22	HS	Health Services/Drugs	35	62	73	48	49	30	23	376	3.16%
23	IN	Industries	18	59	90	115	48	28	18	5	3.70%
24	INS	Insurance	2	*	*	*	*	1	2	27	0.05%
25	JJ	Judges/Judiciary	*	16	*	*	*	199	11	1,209	0.27%
26	LT	Letters	113	184	216	227	196	83	74	1,015	11.95%
27	LG	Local Government	81	206	186	238	196	16	25	105	10.03%
28	MM	Mass Media	15	20	26	31	*	8	12	78	1.04%
29	MT	Mass Transit	3	8	11	30	*	12	15	60	0.78%
30	OP	Oil/Petroleum	5	21	22	25	*	7	3	83	0.50%
31	PO	Police	14	50	109	129	171	37	50	560	0.82%
32	PL	Politics/Politicians	*	21	*	31	6	31	2	61	5.54%
33	PP	Population	2	*	*	*	*	1	1	4	0.61%
34	PR	Prisons/Prisoners	7	19	17	22	*	5	3	73	0.04%
35	RH	Roads/Highways	75	148	162	130	120	38	50	729	0.73%
36	RD	Rural Development	73	148	166	217	48	173	85	910	7.21%
37	SP	Sports	*	8	20	7	*	3	*	38	8.98%
38	WT	Water	988	1738	1948	2167	1430	1155	697	10123	0.37%
		* = no article								100.00%	

Figure 1: A Bar Graph of Cumulative entries of News for the year January, 1988 - June, 1994

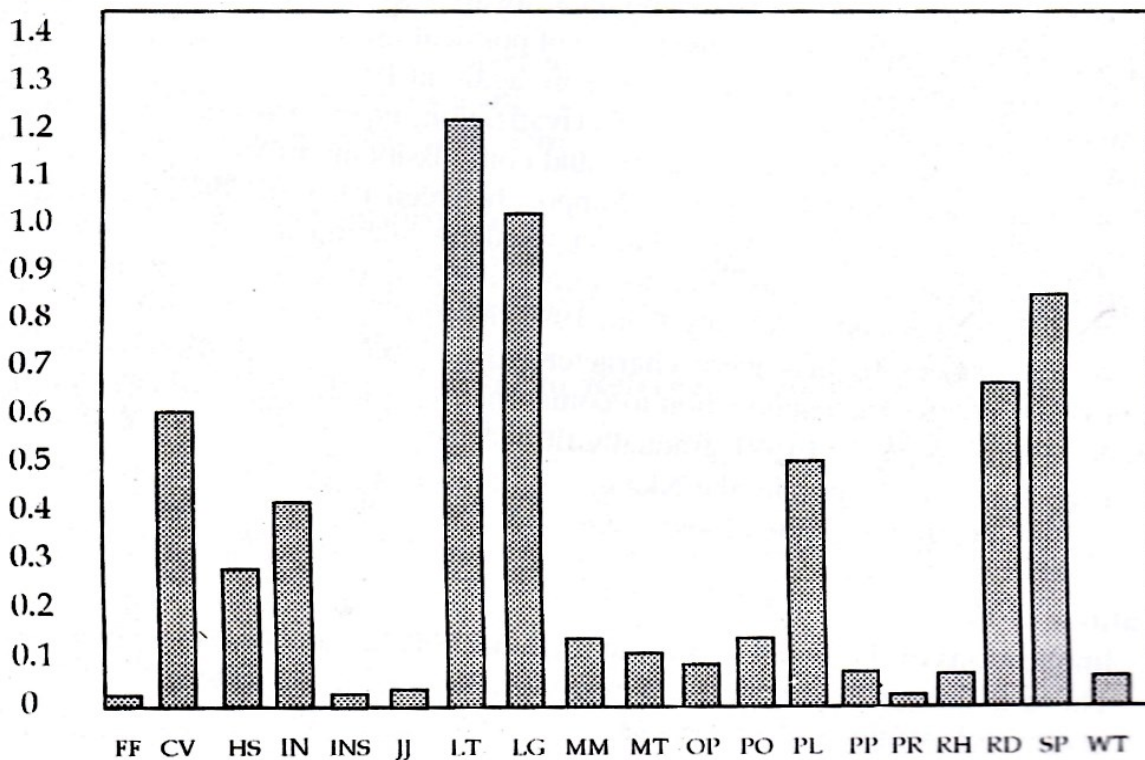


(a)

** The Keys to the News Headings are in Table 1

News Articles per Heading
(IN THOUSANDS)

Fig. 2: A Bar Graph of Cumulative entries of News items for the Years January, 1988 - June, 1994.



(b)

** The Keys to the News Headings are in Table 1

News Headings

Table 2: Table Showing the first ten news headings with the Highest Frequency of News Items

News Heading	Number of News items	Percentage Proportion	Year with Highest Number	Administration
Letters	1,209	11.95 %	1991	Nkanga
Local Government	1,015	10.03 %	1991	Nkanga
Sports	910	8.98 %	1990	Abbe
Education	813	8.03 %	1991	Nkanga
Rural Development	729	7.21 %	1990	Abbe
Government/Civil Service	620	6.12 %	1991	Nkanga
Politics/Politicians				
Industries	560	5.54 %	1991	Nkanga
Women/Better-life Programme	376	3.70 %	1991	Nkanga
	359	3.50 %	1989	Abbe
Health Services	320	3.16 %	1990	Abbe

Education news reported government contributions to education and the standard of education in the State. The University of Uyo received a lot of coverage. The peak of educational reports was in 1991.

Rural development was high between 1989 and 1992 but dropped between 1993 and 1994. Reports of launching of community development projects, formation of community associations characterised the reports.

Government/Civil Service reports included activities of the State Governor/Administrator, Commissioners and Directors-General, as well as salaries and conditions of service of civil servants and the annual celebration of the anniversary of state creation.

Political news were articles on political awareness and enlightenment, launching of political parties, registration of parties and profile of political aspirants. There was a gradual rise between 1989 and 1992, a drop in 1993 and rose again in 1994.

Industrial reports featured a call for privatization, types of industries, and products.

Women, reports were the launching and commissioning of women projects under the Betterlife programme and then the Family Support between 1993 to 1994.

Health Services reports were characterised by immunization reports, inspection of hospital projects and government donation to community hospitals. News reports generally rose from 1988 to 1990, dropped gradually from 1991 till 1994.

Health services reports were characterised by immunization reports, inspection of hospital projects and government donation to community hospitals. News reports generally rose from 1988 - 1990, dropped in 1991 gradually till 1994.

It can thus be deduced that the Nkanga administration (1990 - 1992) has been the most active, since the creation of Akwa Ibom State.

Implications of Findings

Implications of the findings relevant to educational practice in various ways are:

1. There is uneven development therefore as the state grows, there is need for periodic review of strategies and evaluating development objectives for a more even development.

2. Government's definition of rural development does not include qualitative education, good health, water (pipe-borne), electricity, food security and shelter. The present administration should pay more attention to these areas.
3. There is a general drop of the tempo of activities between 1993 and 1994. Probable reasons could be the economy and the unstable polity.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that the Pioneer Newspaper is a tool of educational research. It has succeeded in bringing out and transmitting information/knowledge. Ducasse (1958) on contemporary issues about Akwa Ibom State. The analysed index has exposed areas of interest and priorities of the State Government since its creation. Area with least attention have been exposed with a view to government correcting the imbalance. For further research, it might be interesting to analyse the number of writers per news heading and also determine if there is a relationship between rural development reports and local government reports.

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