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# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN IBIBIOLAND: THE ERA OF SAMPSON UDO ETUK

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## ABSTRACT

*The Ibibio people beginning from the pre-colonial period fully appreciated the crucial role of education in the development of the society and therefore accorded education its due priority. With the advent of Western education, the system was propagated through various agencies such as the Christian missionaries, the government as well as non-governmental agencies particularly the Ibibio Union. The Ibibio Union influenced the establishment of a Teacher's Training College in Uyo, an institution that has metamorphosed into the University of Uyo. Initiated as the first community based tertiary educational programme in the country, – the Ibibio Union scholarship in 1938, built the Ibibio State College in Ikot Ekpene in 1946. This institution was described by some scholars as the first educational institution established by an ethnic union in Nigeria. The Union also organized the overseas educational training for some selected Ibibio women. Undoubtedly, the path-breaking initiatives became possible because of the visionary leadership of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk. Although the Mboho Mkpawawa Ibibio has instituted the annual Obong Sampson Udo Etuk's memorial lecture with the objective of immortalizing the impeachable leadership qualities of this statesman, only the 1938 scholarship initiative has been highlighted as his achievement while in office. This paper therefore, attempts a re-assessment of other contributions of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk to the educational development of Nigeria. It is done with the intention of challenging the present and future generations to rise to the challenge of nation building by rendering selfless services to the nation as well as filling the existing historical gap.*

**Keywords:** Sampson Udo Etuk, Ibibioland, Resource Management, Educational Development, National Transformation



# INTRODUCTION

**T**he Ibibio live in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State (before September 1987, was part of Cross River State) with more than two million people according to the 1963 census, (Offiong 1991:1). They constitute the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria. Noah (19080:1), writing about the Ibibio poses several conceptual problems. One of the problems has been the identity of the Ibibio. In recent times, the term "Ibibio" has exhibited a chameleon-like character; changing its meaning like fashion. In the works of the earlier writers, published in a period referred to by professor Afigbo as the "age of innocence", when political consciousness and political expediency played little or no part in inter-group relations of Nigerian peoples, all the dialectal groups in the present Akwa Ibom and part of Cross River States passed for Ibibio. But no sooner has sub-national consciousness and the divide - and -rule tactics of some of the ruling majority ethnic groups been brought to bear on the Ibibio people than the Ibibio cultural area began to exhibit fissiparous and centrifugal tendencies. The result has been the refusal by some sub-groups to accept Ibibio origin or identity, (Abia, 2004:591)

As a result of this situation, a scholar working on the Ibibio in 2014 has two conceptions to choose from. He could take as Ibibio, as all those people who accept, as at 2014, that they are Ibibio' or could take the historic conception of the Ibibio as accepted unquestionably by the various Ibibio groups up to the early 1960's and documented by European and African scholars who did their work during the "age of innocence". This paper is based on the latter historic conception as better portraying the common cultural, territorial and other links that have bound, and would continue to bind, the groups, without denying the distinctive identity of each of the groups.

The geo-political entity known as Akwa Ibom State was in the colonial period referred to as the Six Ibibio Districts made up of, Uyo, Itu, Opobo (Ikot Abasi), Eket, Abak and Ikot Ekpene (Umana, 2004:14) The Ibibio Union (later re-named the Ibibio State Union) formed in 1928 as a truly pan-Akwa Ibom organization, was facilitated by elites from all the sections of these Districts. The Union also opened its membership to all the indigenes of these Districts. The age of the Ibibio State Union was an age when the best in Akwa Ibom people – in their spirit, industry and enterprise, unity, single purposiveness and cooperation; creativity in arts, the sciences and ideas; organization, patriotism and selflessness – surged to the surface and expressed



themselves in feats and achievements unheard of before among comparable Nigerians and indeed Africa (Abasiattai, 2012:8)

The man who coordinated the visionary initiatives that left indelible footprints in the sands of time was Obong Sampson Udo Etuk. Indeed, the social history of Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general cannot be justifiably documented if his pioneering efforts are not given the due prominence. It should be observed that some of the programmes enumerated in this work were undertaken after the expiration of the tenure of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk, as the founding President of the Ibibio Union, but certainly they were derived from the road map he designed.

### **Life History and Historical Reconstruction**

The goal of life history is to portray the whole essence of a person. According to Geiger, "life histories represent history as a relationship between the present and the past, and constitute narratives of events and conditions connected to each other over time". Hence, life histories try to bring the protagonist and the background in intimate connections that each complements one another and in the process produce not only knowledge about individual life but also knowledge about the society in which they lived (Ikpe, 2005:77)

This study concerns the biography of one of the founding fathers of modern Nigeria and the leadership role he rendered in his life time. As a biography, it traces his birth, education and working life from 1903 to 1954 when he died. Though his life has been portrayed as one full of valuable experiences, it is completely impossible to portray its full essence.

### **The Development of Western Education in Ibibioland**

The story of the development of Western education in Akwa Ibom State, and in Nigeria as a whole is the story of European adventurism and of commercial, religious and political involvements of Europeans with the Akwa Ibom and other Nigerians (Esen, 1994:147). The largest share of credit for the laying of Western education belongs to the missionary bodies. Other voluntary agencies (individual or collective), commercial and industrial organizations, and the Government, including Native Administrations played their parts. But the missionaries were for a long time the pace-makers. Education is one of the costliest of social services, and it was the missionaries who bore the brunt of the costs from their meager resources during the early days (Nduka, 1964:21) Mission education aimed primarily to supply evangelistic personnel like deacons, pastors, catechists, interpreters, preachers and teachers trained in basic literacy, numeracy, and particularly the Bible, and committed to expansion of the missionary enterprise.

In the Cross River Region, Western education was planted in 1846 when the Presbyterian (or United Free Church of Scotland) missionaries arrived in Calabar from

Maica, West Indies, and in the same year, established a school at Duke Town and Creek Town. By 1870, other schools were established at Ikot Offiong and Ikoneto in Cross River, using white West Indian and Efik teachers (Abasiattai, 1987:234)

For various reasons, however, Western education made slow progress initially in the Region (as in most parts of tropical Africa). Up to the late 1870, it was confined mostly to Old Calabar and devoted primarily to the "Four R's" (Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). At that time, the Efik acted as middlemen between the European traders on the coast and the Ibibio producers in the interior, and would not allow the two groups to meet each other. Apart from trade, the Efik also controlled Western education and prohibited its spread into Ibibioland. They did this for about 60 years (1846-1906) (Udo, 1983:35)

Although Uruan clan borders western Efikland, the Church of Scotland Mission was not allowed to open their schools and Churches there until after the opening up of Ibibio country in 1902 by the British government. It was during the scramble for the mission sphere of influence (1904-1952) that the United Free Church of Scotland was permitted by the Efik to penetrate the Ibibio country in competition with the Primitive Methodist and the Qua Iboe Missions and later the Catholics, the African Churches and the Lutherans. Thus, in 1906, the United Free Church of Scotland opened their very first station at Adiadia in Ibibioland (Udo, 1983:36)

Curiously, United Free Church of Scotland was permitted by the Efik to operate along the Calabar and Cross Rivers, in Igboland. Thus, in 1888, Unwana, 165 kilometres north of Calabar, was occupied by that mission. By 1890, the missionaries had explored the river up to a point 380 kilometres north of Calabar. Before the scramble set in, they had reached Uburu, about 40 kilometers west of the Cross River (Udo, 1983:36)

However, despite this vicissitude which afflicted the entire Ibibioland and paralyzed its early connectivity with Western influence, the fortunes of the people changed for the better with the advent of the Qua Iboe missionaries in 1887 (Apan, 2014:204) Shortly after settling down, Rev. Samuel Bill, the founder of the Qua Iboe Mission organized Bible classes for some boys in his house which became the first school in the area. A separate Church was later built which served on weekdays as a school for up to 30 pupils. Other schools (primary) were subsequently established by the Mission at Okat, Etinan and Eket along the Qua Iboe River; and in-land at Ikot Ubo, Uyo and so on (Ette, 1991:487)

By 1898, the seed of the gospel had been providentially planted in Etinan, Imanhom clan by Rev. John Kirk, an Irish missionary. Rev. John Kirk was also the man who established the first school in Etinan, and whom the young Sampson Udo Etuk lived with and was properly groomed. The school was a night school and it started with about 30 regular pupils, who were grown up people. In 1915, Etinan Institute which Sampson Udo Etuk later attended was established (Ekere, 1991:487)

### **Birth and Early Education**

Sampson Udo Etuk was the sixth son of his father Udo Etuk Udo and the second son of his mother Iba Udo Etuk Isemin both of Etinan Town. His parents helped to found the Qua Iboe Church in Etinan in 1898. Sampson Udo Etuk, building his life on solid Christian foundation, pursued his educational career relentlessly. He started school in 1910 at Etinan Town School from where he passed into Etinan Institute from 1919 to 1922. Because he had chosen teaching as a career, he then went to Bonny Normal College (in today's Rivers State) between 1923 to 1924. Here he obtained the 3rd Class Elementary Teachers Certificate and was later appointed a Third Class Teacher in 1925 (Etuk, 1991:1)

Still setting his sights very high, Sampson Udo Etuk, in 1926, sat and passed the Second Class Teacher's Certificate Examination and got enrolled in a Correspondence Course with Wolsey College, London in preparation for the London Matriculation and Degree Examination. His dedicated and passionate pursuit of self education led to his attaining first place among all Nigerians, in the impressive Teacher's Second Class "A" Examination in 1928. He passed with five Credits. In 1929, he received the First Class Teacher's Certificate (Etuk, 1999:1)

Still continuing his meteoritic rise in his chosen field of education, he was in 1932 granted the Senior Teacher's Certificate by the Education Department of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria. The colonial process though thorough, was tedious for Nigerians and only the best made it to the top of their fields. Sampson Udo Etuk was one of the very few. He was later promoted to the post of a Travelling Teacher.

### **The Formation of the Ibibio Union**

By the second decade of the 20th century, all slaves in Old Calabar were freed. The economic landscape witnessed a transition to commodity trade. The Efik, who as mentioned earlier were deriving their means of sustenance as the middlemen in the trade were put in dire need of extra hands to work for them in the farms.<sup>19</sup> From this period up to the 1930's, the Ibibio affected by the ever-increasing pressure of population increase, swarmed in thousands to places like Akpabuyo, Creek Town, Ikoneto, Okoyong and Ikang, border with what is now the Republic of Cameroon clearing primeval forests and cultivating numerous crops. They gradually turned what had been one vast jungle into what later came to be known as *inwang Efik*, that is Efik farms (Esen, 1992:183)

The Efik were the landlords of the Ibibio immigrants in a system of land tenure and utilization that, for its repressiveness, is reminiscent of feudal Europe. Some of the Ibibio served on the fleets of fishing canoes under Efik captains. The system deliberately kept the Ibibio immigrants poor and made them to be dependent on the land and therefore on the arrogant landlords. For the most parts, they remained more



or less permanent squatters on the land, eking out a precarious existence off the land that their toil was developing into the region's breadbasket. Although disunited, relatively uneducated and economically weak, the Ibibio saw this degrading situation as a challenge to their collective ego. The reaction of the Ibibio people culminated in the formation of the Ibibio Union in 1928 (Udoma, 1987:30).

The precarious background of the Ibibio explains why Mr. E. N. Amaku could easily engage in smear campaign against them in 1927. According to available sources, the Amaku's saga occurred, following the decision of the colonial administration to introduce the teaching of literature in the vernacular in schools in Calabar Province. As a result of this development, teachers were encouraged to send materials for adoption. Mr. Amaku, in an attempt to write what he called, "the history of the Efik people", negatively portrayed the Ibibio in the write up. The content of the booklet was, on submission to the authorities of the Mission, leaked to some prominent Ibibio persons who resided then in Calabar (Udoma, 1987:30)

The incident generated the interest that got the Ibibio people together to institute a court action against Mr. Amaku. However, upon the intervention of the Mission and some colonial government officials, the matter was settled out of court, after Mr. Amaku had tendered a written apology to the Ibibio people and offered an undertaking that the seditious materials would be expurgated from his submission. The consequence of the episode was the formation of the Ibibio Mainlander's Association in Calabar.

Obong Nyong Essien, then a prominent colonial public servant, served as the foundation President of the Association. The Ibibio Welfare Union which later merged to form the Ibibio Union, was headed by Chief James Udo Eka. The body originated at Ikot Ekpene. It was made up mostly of teachers and other categories of government workers. On Saturday, the 28th day of April, 1928, the Calabar and the Uyo groups merged to become the Ibibio Union. It is also necessary to state that the following persons were elected as the foundation officers to pilot the affairs of the Ibibio Union, Chief Sampson Udo Etuk, General President, Chief Robert Umoinyang, Vice-President, Mr. Usen Udo Usen, General-Secretary, and Chief Thomas Udondok, Treasurer (Udoma, 1987:45)

The Ibibio Union under Chief Sampson Udo Etuk recorded monumental achievements which the passage of time cannot obliterate. An examination of some of the achievements of the Union in the field of education is necessary.

#### **Educational Programmes Undertaken by the Ibibio Union**

A key objective of the Ibibio Union was the advancement of education and enlightenment considered as a prerequisite for any aspect of individual or communal development. To advance education and enlightenment, the Union vigorously promoted the establishment of schools and the award of scholarships. For instance, it

was mainly at the prompting of the Ibibio Union that the colonial government established the Teacher's Training College at Uyo in the 1930's. Though the Ibibio Union had actually desired a Grammar or Technical School, after the establishment of the College it was jointly funded by the government on the one hand and the Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Abak Native Administrations on the other hand (Noah, 1980:54). The institution has today metamorphosed into the University of Uyo.

### **The Ibibio Union Scholarship Scheme of 1938**

In 1936, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk inaugurated the first major Communal Educational Scheme in Nigeria, the Ibibio Union Scholarship Fund. He went into the nooks and crannies of the six Ibibio Districts to raise money for this landmark scheme (Ekpeyong, 2003:16). According to Monday Noah, beginning with a paltry sum of £20 in the bank, the amount increased to £200 within a year and an Ibibio student, Mr. E. A. Okon of Ibiono, at the Government College, Umuahia, who could not maintain himself was assisted through this fund. This action then served to sell the programme to the majority of the Ibibio people who had all along been either opposed to it or remained skeptical. By 1938, contributions to the scholarship programme had exceeded £1,200, hence, the Union's decision of that year to sponsor six Ibibio students in universities overseas (Noah, 1980:59)

The phenomenal scholarship award had beneficiary from each of the Six Ibibio Districts were follows:

Bassey Udo Attah - Uyo, Agriculture, United States of America  
 Obot E. Antia-Obong - Itu, Medicine, Scotland  
 Ibanga Udo Akpabio - Ikot Ekpene, Education, United States of America  
 Egbert Udo Udoma - Ikot Abasi (Opobo) Law, England  
 Lawson James Nsima- Eket, Education, United States of America  
 Asuquo Udo Idiong - Abak, Medicine, Canada

In Eket District, Oron people, who then belonged to Eket District, opposed the candidature of Mr. James Lawson Nsima, but without providing an alternative candidate, but insisting that any candidate chosen should come from Oron group. The Oron group led by Mr. Isong, the Native Administration Treasurer then, appealed to the Central Union. The Union demonstrated a non-interference posture on the choice of the selected candidate by the respective districts. As a result of this, Mr. Isong decided to withdraw with his group from the membership of the Ibibio Union, with a view to creating a separate educational scheme for Oron. The Oron group justified their decision by sponsoring O. O. Ita to study law in London. He was called to bar in 1948 (Usendiah, 1995:29)

Before the departure of the Ibibio scholars, a written agreement was entered into, between the Union and the beneficiaries, in the Chambers of solicitor and advocate of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, F. O. Lucas in Port Harcourt. One

interesting clause was that the scholars were not to marry any foreigner, to which they all agreed. Another point was that they were given sealed envelopes, only to be opened on arrival in their different destinations. The envelopes contained nothing but the Ibibio earth or sand, perhaps always to remind them of their roots, and as a beacon to come back home (Usendiah, 1995:29)

The news that six Ibibio students had sailed abroad for higher education took Nigeria by storm. It was sensational and a rare event. It was also topical and formed the subject of conversation throughout the country. The Ibibio Union had by that remarkable achievement opened a new concept - a phenomenon—within the context of the philosophy of self-help and self development in the annals of Nigerian history. The path-breaking achievement also inspired editorial comments in many Nigerian newspapers, notably, *The West African Pilot* and the *Daily Service*, who extolled the achievements of the Union to the sky coupled with exhortations directed towards other communities to follow suit (Udoma, 1987:71)

It should be added that Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was awarded one of the scholarship slots by the Ibibio Union to study law, but he declined the offer. He reasoned that he did not start the scheme to benefit from it. The demonstration of such rarest of qualities and selflessness portrayed him as a great leader (Ekpenyong, 2003:16) However, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was the one who led the young scholars abroad as a self-sponsored student.

Sir Udo Udoma, one of the “merchants of light” described their departure under the leadership of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk thus:

*“On 5th August, 1938 we all, under the leadership of Sampson Udo Etuk, boarded the Elder Dempster mail boat, M/V Apapa at Apapa harbour for Liverpool. After several days in turbulent and heavy seas at Bay Biscay, we finally berthed in the port of Liverpool calling only at Plymouth en-route. On the Mersey side, emissaries or representatives of the Sainly Pastor Ekarte, the Head and Founder of the African Churches Mission of Liverpool fame, met us on arrival. They assisted all of us through the custom and immigration authorities of the United Kingdom. After having been through the formalities usually associated with new arrivals at the Liverpool harbour, all of us scholars, under the leadership of Sampson Udo Etuk, were driven in a big bus to the residence of the Sainly Pastor Ekarte within the precinct of the African Church Mission, Liverpool” (Udoma, 2008:38)*

He added:

*“There we were given a very warm reception commencing with a Christian Church thanksgiving service in praise of God for happy deliverance of all of us through the vicissitudes of heavy and sometimes stormy seas until were able to set our feet once more on firma terra and ending in general entertainment. Thereafter, the scholars for America departed, under the leadership of Sampson Udo Etuk, as transit passengers to London for the procurement of visas at the American Embassy for their onward journey*



*to the United States of America" (Udoma, 2008:38)*

With the exception of one of these beneficiaries (Asuquo Udo Idiong) who died in Canada, all the students successfully completed their studies under the sponsorship of the Union. That arrangement produced Hon. Sir Udoma, regarded as the first Nigerian and probably the first African to have obtained a Ph. D in Law, a one-time Chief Justice and Acting-Governor General of Uganda and a retired Supreme Court Justice and the first indigenous Chairman of a Constituent Assembly in Nigeria, whose son, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma served as a two term Senator, and Senate Chief Whip of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, representing Eket Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State (1999 to 2007). The other was Chief Bassey Udo Attah, (the second Nigerian to hold a University degree in Agriculture and the first to obtain a Masters degree in Agriculture), whose son, Architect (Obong) Victor Attah was a two-term Governor of Akwa Ibom State (1999 to 2007), while Chief Ibanga Udo Akpabio was a prominent Minister in the Eastern Region, Deputy Premier and Acting Premier in the First Republic. His nephew, Barrister Godswill Akpabio became the Governor of Akwa Ibom State in 2007 (Abasiattai, 2011).

#### **Obong Sampson Udo Etuk's Higher Educational Training and Career**

Obong Sampson Udo Etuk first obtained a Diploma in Education from the Institute of Education, University of London in 1939 and a coveted Master of Arts Degree from the Teacher's College of the prestigious Columbia University of New York City, United States of America in 1940 specializing in the Organization and Administration of Education for Superintendents and Principals, and Development of Education in Rural Areas (Etuk, 1993:3)

He returned to Nigeria and became the first African Principal of the Teacher's Training College (T. T. C.) Uyo. That institution has metamorphosed into the Advanced Teacher's Training College (A. T. T.C.), the College of Education (C. O. E.), University of Cross River State (UNICROSS) and now University of Uyo (UNIUYO). The evolution took shape from the vision, dedication and direction of a committed indigenous educationist, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk (Etuk, 1993:3).

Akpan J. A. Esen, a distinguished Professor of Education, who served as the Provost of the Advanced Teachers Training College and the College of Education Uyo, later, Dean of the Faculty of Education of the defunct University of Cross River State, recalled that when the institution that has now metamorphosed into the University of Uyo was initially established by the colonial government as an Elementary Teacher's Training Centre (E. T. T. C.). it was then a small institution for the training of teachers for the lower classes of the primary school. The students were selected holders of the Standard Six Certificate and their training was for three years; and the certificate awarded on successful completion of the programme was the Elementary Teacher's Certificate (Esen, 1991:152).

He added:

*"During the period of World War 11, the government threatened to close down the Centre for want of competent leadership; but the Clan Councils and Native Administrations of the territory intervened and protested strongly against its closure. Finally the search for leadership led to the discovery of Mr. (later Chief) Sampson Udo Etuk, a young intellectual and educator, famous for his pioneering work in the area of higher education within the Ibibio Union. Mr. Etuk was appointed Principal of the T. T. C., Uyo, the first Nigerian to hold that position and the Centre survived that crisis. Later, the E. E. T. C, Uyo, was upgraded to a Higher Elementary Teacher's College to train teachers not only for the "Lower Elementary" (Standards 1 to 4), but also the "Higher Elementary" classes (Standard 5 and 6) of the Primary School. The H. E. T. C., Uyo, lasted through independence and the Nigerian civil war as the only government Teacher's Training College for men in the Eastern Region of Nigeria" (Esen, 1994:152).*

In 1944, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was transferred to Warri as the Provincial Education Officer, a post previously held only by the British Colonial Officers. He planned and supervised education in the entire Warri Province. While in that office, Obong Etuk amongst other achievements, founded the Abraka College, which later became the Abraka College of Education in the then Bendel State, and later a campus of the Bendel State University and now the Delta State University. He also founded the Government College, Warri which later became Warri College and subsequently Federal Government College, Ughelli. In 1948, he was transferred back to active teaching as English and Mathematics Master at Government College, Ibadan (Etuk, 1999:4)

The colonial administration continued to use the rare expertise of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk to the enhancement of education nationally. In 1949, he was again transferred to the administration and supervision of education, where he was appointed the Provincial Education Officer in-charge of Ijebu Province. By 1950, he was returned to the classroom as a Master at the King's College, Lagos from where he retired from national service after 30 years as an accomplished Educationist and an outstanding Education Administrator.

As an accomplished teacher, he taught and nurtured such well known citizens as Ntisonng Sebastain James Umoren, the Patriarch of Akwa Esop Imaisonng Ibibio, Mr. Gray Longe, a former Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria and Head of Service, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, former Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji A. K. Amu an outstanding national and international athlete and Dan Anyiam one of the national football captains that toured The United Kingdom in the late and early 1950's amongst others (Etuk, 1999: 4)

### **The Ibibio State College - Ikot Ekpene**

As noted earlier, early Christian mission school was an adjunct of the Church. Moreover, the first education ordinance promulgated in 1882 covered educational services in the Colony of Lagos. Following the establishment of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1900, the colonial government extended its educational interest to the south-eastern part of Nigeria. In 1903, Education Department was established for the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and in the same year, education code was promulgated. It laid down rules for the provision of primary and secondary education in the Protectorate (Fafunwa, 1970:80). By 1926, the deplorable level of education reflected the paucity of government aid in education and the lack of control of the mushroom growth of schools which were of the poorest quality (Taiwo, 1980:70)

The Phelps-Stokes report on Education in Africa, published in 1922 and distributed widely in the United States of America and Britain, not only confirmed the picture of education in Nigeria, but also showed the appallingly low government aid and the dubious quality of education in Nigeria (Taiwo, 1980:70). Prior to 1946, education was virtually beyond the reach of the majority of children of the six Ibibio Districts. To the vast majority of those who finished primary school, the Standard Six or First School Leaving Certificate was a terminal education qualification. Many factors were responsible for this unhealthy situation. Apart from the general poverty of the people which made it difficult for most parents to bear the cost of their children's secondary education, secondary schools were far too few in the area, and those few were often perceived as separated from the people by both physical and psychological distance (Esen, 1994:149).

There were about four secondary schools, (all Mission schools) in the entire six Ibibio Districts ( present day Akwa Ibom State), namely, Etinan Institute, Etinan, Boys high school, Oron, Holy Family College, Oku Abak and Regina Coeli College, Esene, Ikot Abasi. The number increased to about nine by 1948 (Esen, 1994:149)

In a bid to positively address this ugly situation in line with its fundamental stance of adopting education as a benchmark of development, the Ibibio Union applied to the colonial authorities in the middle of the 1940's for permission to open schools in Ibibioland. It was finally recognized as a voluntary agency, a status that authorized it to open and manage schools similar to what the Christian Missions did. Following the return of Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio and Mr. James Lawson Nsima, the two Ibibio Union scholars who studied education in the United States of America, the Ibibio Union, in its capacity as the Proprietor of the Ibibio College, appointed them as the Principal and Vice Principal respectively (Esen, 1994:150). In addition, Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio and Mr. Lawson Nsima were appointed as the Joint Secretaries of the Ibibio Union.

Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio, being the Principal of the College, was placed an initial salary of £360 per annum apart from allowances. Mr. Akpabio subsequently promoted himself to the Senior Service grade for expatriate officers in Government Service on the



salary of £540 per annum without the approval of the Ibibio State Union. This provoked a strike by the staff of the College (Udoma, 1987:321)

The Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene, was regarded as a symbol of unity of the Ibibio people; the emblem of the partial but proximate realization of a dream come true; and the manifest justification for the formation of the Union in 1928. In March 1956, the Ibibio State Union secured a certificate of incorporation, No. 404, executed by the Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir James Robertson as the registered trustees of the Ibibio school. The school's management was subsequently re-organized and Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was appointed the Manager of the school. He held the position until he voluntarily resigned due to some unhealthy development concerning the school (Udoma, 1987:272)

The establishment of the school contributed immensely in providing the means for the education of Ibibio youth, most of whom later occupied prominent positions in the society. It should be noted that the institution bore the name "Ibibio State College", Ikot Ekpene, from its establishment in 1946 till the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. The Ibibio State College has been described variously as being the first secondary school in Africa built and financed solely by a "tribal" Union or the first community-owned Secondary Grammar School in Nigeria (Usendiah, 1995:34)

#### **The Ibibio Union's Women Education Programme**

Although women education was not valued in time past in most African societies, it was not neglected by the Ibibio Union. According to Monday Noah, during the meeting of the Ibibio Union held at Etinan on the 5th of December, 1931, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk observed that the Uyo College was established for boys therefore, he counselled that the Ibibio Union should consider female education. He added wisely that : "without this no nation and tribe can ever rise". He also informed the meeting that he had an interview with the District Educational Officer on the matter and enlisted the support of the Officer in this direction. He also gave an idea of the kind of education to be given to the girls. He emphasized more on practical education that would make the girl-child fit in all aspects of life e.g., the home and child management. At the meeting, he also suggested that every town in Ibibioland should make a subscription of £2 or palm oil equivalent to the value of £2 for the take off of the project (Noah, 1980:145)

According to Udoma, following the precedent already established by the Ibibio Union when the first batch of six male scholars were selected and sent abroad to obtain University education, some female beneficiaries of the Ibibio Union's scholarship were chosen from the Six Ibibio Districts in 1949 to study Nursing in England. The beneficiaries were as follows:

Miss Ibium Bassey	Uyo District
Miss M. Nsagak	Itu District

Miss J. Ibok

Eket District

Miss Victoria U. Inyang

Ikot Ekpene District.

Two candidates were later selected by the Opobo (Ikot Abasi) and Abak Districts and sent abroad.<sup>57</sup> It was in the same year that Effiong Udo Ekpo of Abak was selected and sponsored by the Ibibio State Union to study Medicine in England, as a replacement of the late Asuquo Udo Idiong, (an Ibibio Union's scholar), who died in Canada in 1943 after completing his medical training.<sup>58</sup>

### **Obong Sampson Udo Etuk's Family**

Obong Sampson Udo Etuk had set an enviable record of achievements during his brief life. His strength was from his unshakable belief in his God, the unflinching support of his family, the goodwill of his friends and his confidence in the correctness of his direction. He was survived by six children, two sons and four daughters each contributing his or her quota as the extension of Sampson Udo Etuk's legacy (Etuk, 1999:4).

His children were: late Mrs Iba C. Amobi, Nurse, Sister, Tutor, First African Principal, University College Nursing School, Ibadan, Founding Principal, University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Nursing School, Enugu, Member, Board of Orthopaedic Hospital, Lagos, past President, West African College of Nurses.

Dr. Ebong Etuk, Physician, Author, Retired Medical Officer in Cross River State, Former Chairman of the Health Services Management Board, Cross River State, Medical Director, Etuk Clinic, Uyo.

Late Mrs Eno Iruku, Broadcaster, Administrator, UNESCO Consultant, National President Media Women's Association, Vice President, World Association of Women Writers and Journalists, and Presidential Nominee to the 1986 United Nations General Assembly.

Professor Elizabeth Eke, Teacher, Author, Director Curriculum Development and Instructional Materials Centre, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Member, University Visitation Panels, Former Council Member, University of Maiduguri.

Architect Ekong Sampson Etuk, Architect-Urban Designer, Lecturer, Politician, President, Intellect Associates, Chairman, E.E.I. Consortium.

Mrs Regina Ikott, Industrial Psychologist and business woman.

Obong Sampson Udo Etuk's death in 1954 was a big blow to the Ibibio people who loved him dearly.

### **Accolades for Obong Sampson Udo Etuk's achievements**

The remarkable contributions of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk to the development of Nigeria received accolades from far and near. A few of such commendations for his selfless services are hereby considered. Monday Abasiattai, a Professor of History,

observed that Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was perhaps the most learned Ibibio man by 1937, having acquired Primary School education, the Senior Teacher's Certificate (the highest then awarded by the Education Department in Nigeria), the Senior Clerical Certificate, and was appointed a Government Travelling Teacher in 1930 (Abasiattai 1994:42).

In its letter of May 1937, in which Etuk was nominated to the colonial government for appointment into the Legislative Council, Lagos to represent the Ibibio people, the Ibibio Union described Etuk as an "invaluable, long standing leader and good adviser," and added:

*"A leisurely survey of Ibibioland by the Union to examine the weight of trust they have in their men, considering their usefulness to the community, character, self-sacrifice and patriotism, led the Union...unanimously to convey their implicit confidence upon Sampson Udo Etuk at present in the employ of government in the Education Department as a fit person to represent them in the Legislative Council. He is of a good, well known and leading family in Etinan....Finally, he is known for his excellent organization of his family and as the most capable Prseident of the Ibibio Union. The sincerity and efficiency with which he manages the business of his family, village, clan and that of the Ibibio community win him the favour of our race" (Abasiattai, 1994:43)*

Sir Udo Udoma one of the beneficiaries of the 1938 Ibibio Union's scholarship noted that: the scholarship scheme was brilliantly executed under the able and distinguished leadership of Chief Etuk, "a retired Government Education Officer and College Master of outstanding qualities, and a born leader of his country men and women. He held office as the President-General of the Ibibio Union from its foundation in 1928 to the fulfillment of a dream – the sending of Ibibio Union scholars overseas for higher learning in August 1938. What an achievement! truly, it has been said that out of Ibibioland there is always something new. A new chapter was thus opened, and a new concept – a phenomenon – within the context of the philosophy of self-help and self development was thus created. It mounted the stage and took its place of honour in the annals of Nigerian development" (Udoma, 1987:72).

Apart from local accolades, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was widely acclaimed nationally and internationally. The revered Hon. Herbert Macaulay who was the Chairman at the reception organized in his honour, on his return to Nigeria after his University education in the United States of America, stated that:

*"In that position (as a Travelling Teacher), he won the respect not only of the Officers of the Education Department, but also of those in the Administrative Service whom he came in contact...Mr. Etuk was a combination of genius and patriotism. In spite of his success, he rejected the ivory tower approach to personal living; and elected for himself the precarious role of beacon to his race, a role that the government of the day looked upon with considerable suspicion...together with a young companion, Mr. (later Chief) James Udo Eka, he successfully inaugurated the Ibibio Unon in the year 1928,*



and never failed to use every opportunity he had while travelling as a teacher to preach unity to his countrymen, the Ibibio wherever and whenever he met one or more of them" (Esen 1982:185)

At the London University, the Director of Institute of Education, Mr. F. Clarke, had this to say of him:

"Mr. S. Etuk as an African in a strange land has put in a very strenuous year's work, under conditions which called for more than ordinary patience and courage; he has surmounted all difficulties and shown himself full, self-effacing but still a leader. His outstanding quality is a great faith in his own people; and he is a genius for putting their case so reasonably that he wins respect and affection both of this people and himself" (Etuk, 1999:16)

Also, T. R. Batten, a renowned Professor in World History in the University of London's Institute of Education, in his publication on *African Welfare - Thought on African Citizenship*, through the efforts of sincere and literate Africans to help their own people and their country to develop towards self-government, bore the following testimony about Obong Sampson Udo Etuk:

"The Ibibio Union is a society formed in South Eastern Nigeria to work in the interests of the general welfare of the Ibibio people. It was started by an educated African who has already put into practice some of the principles of active citizenship....He realized that Africans cannot afford to sit and wait for government to solve all their problems. He urged the people of his tribe to co-operate among themselves to improve the conditions in which they lived. By travelling among them, talking over difficulties and encouraging them to join a Union to develop all sides of Ibibio tribal life. Members have given the necessary money. By joining many local groups into one big Union, they have helped to develop a greater feeling of tribal unity. The Union has been able to settle quarrels between different villages, thus, saving the expenses of obtaining a judgment from the law courts. It has even helped clever students to complete their education overseas in the United Kingdom and America, in the hope of training them as future leaders in tribal agriculture, crafts, education, health and other needy work...here is one practical example of self-help on a very large scale and is a most helpful sign for the future if similar societies can be developed in every community (Obioffiong, 1958:55)

It is clear that the Ibibio people under the visionary leadership of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk appreciated the role of education in nation building. As a result of this, the Ibibio people tasked themselves to provide education for their children. This is indeed a pointer to the present and future generations, especially in time that funding of education occupies the front burner in national discourse.

## Conclusion

Western education has come a long way from the people's initial opposition or apathy in the 19th and 20th centuries to almost fanatical zeal in the 1930's. Not surprising, its impact on the people and society has been profound. Increased literacy acquisition of technical and professional skills have opened up economic and employment opportunities to thousands of people.

Education along Western lines in the era of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk was regarded as focal point for all development; the orientation was even beyond consideration of employment in government establishments. The acquisition of Western education was by itself, self-liberating with potentialities of independence of both mind and body. Therefore, the Ibibio Union reasoned that, by advocating education for Ibibio men and women, it desired to produce more "intelligent and capable leaders and useful citizens for the country".

Obviously, the history of Akwa Ibom State in particular represents the vision of Chief Sampson Udo Etuk because he was the one who laid its solid foundation through the educational programme he initiated. As one of the earliest Nigerian educators whose educational services encompassed many parts of Nigeria, his pioneering and unassailable contributions helped in the establishment of modern Nigeria. Without any controversy it could be stated that the history of education in Nigeria cannot be properly documented without Obong Sampson Udo Etuk being accorded his due place.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup>Monday Noah, *Ibibio Pioneers in Modern Nigerian History*. Uyo: Modern Business Press, 1980. p. 1

<sup>3</sup>Offiong T. Abia, "Epilogue: The Challenges Ahead", in (Ed.) Monday Abasiattai, *The Ibibio: An Introduction to the Land, the People and their Culture*. Calabar: Alphonsus Akpan Press, 1991. p. 591

<sup>4</sup>Otoabasi Akpan Umana, *First Among Equals: A Chronicle of Pioneering Efforts of Akwa Ibom in National Development*. Calabar: Saesprint. 2004. p. 14

<sup>5</sup>Monday Abasiattai, "Prolegomenon to Akwa Ibom State: A Historical Framework", in (Ed.) Etop Usoro and Philip Akpan, *Akwa Ibom State: a Geographical Perspective, A special Publication of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Uyo, Uyo*, Enugu: Immaculate Publication, 2010. p. 8

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<sup>10</sup>Edet Akpan Udo, *Who are the Ibibio?* Onitsha: Africana FEP Publishers, 1983. p. 35

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. p. 36

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. p. 37

<sup>13</sup>Uwem Jonah Akpan. *A History of Iman Ibom People*. (Forthcoming), p. 204

<sup>14</sup>A. I. I. Ette, "Priorities for the Development of Education in Akwa Ibom State," in I. I. Ukpogon & P. U. Iniodu (Eds.), *Priorities for the Development of Akwa Ibom State, Centre for Development Studies, University of Cross River State*. Calabar: Centaur Press, 1991, p. 487

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p.1

<sup>19</sup>Joseph Okokon Charles, *Ethnography-The Sub-Saharan Region*. Calabar: Serenity Publishers, 2010, p. 92

<sup>20</sup>Akpan J. A. Esen, *Ibibio Profile: A Psycho-Literary Projection*. Calabar: Paico Press, 1982, p. 183

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. p. 183

<sup>22</sup>Udo Udoma, *The Story of the Ibibio Union*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1987, pp. 27-28

<sup>23</sup>Uwem Jonah Akpan, *Historical Perspective (A Historical Based Magazine)*, October, 2008, p. 6

<sup>24</sup>Udo Udoma, *The Story of the Ibibio Union*, p. 45

<sup>25</sup>Monday Noah, *Proceedings of the Ibibio Union, 1928 – 1937*, Uyo: Modern Business Press, 1988 .p 54

<sup>26</sup>Souvenir Programme of Obong Sampson Udo Etuk Annual/Reception & Dinner/ Excellence Awards Ceremonies, by Mboho Mkparawa Ibibio, 27/ 12/2003, p. 16

<sup>27</sup>Monday Noah, *Proceedings of the Ibibio Union, 1928 – 1937*. p 59

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid. pp. 38-39

<sup>35</sup>Monday Abasiattai, "Prolegomenon to Akwa Ibom State: A Historical Framework", in (Ed.) Etop Usoro and Philip Akpan, *Akwa Ibom State: a Geographical Perspective, A special Publication of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Uyo*. p. 8

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<sup>38</sup>Akpan J. A. Esen, "Educational Development" in (Ed.) Sunday W. Peters, *Akwa Ibom State the Land of Promise: A Compendium*. p.152

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p. 4

<sup>43</sup>A. Baba Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Ibadan: NPS Education Publishers, 1974. 80

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. Ibid. p. 94

<sup>45</sup>C. O. Taiwo, *The Nigerian Education System, past, Present & Future*, Lagos: Thomas Nelson Nigeria, 1980, p. 70

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<sup>47</sup>Akpan J. A. Esen, "Educational Development" in (Ed.) Sunday W. Peters, *Akwa Ibom State the Land of Promise: A Compendium*. p.149

<sup>48</sup>Uwem Jonah Akpan, *Etinan Institute, Etinan: A Centenary History*, (Forthcoming), p. 38

<sup>49</sup>Akpan J. A. Esen, "Educational Development" in (Ed.) Sunday W. Peters et-al, *Akwa Ibom State the Land of Promise: A Compendium*. pp. 149-150

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid. 320

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. p. 321

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. p. 272

<sup>54</sup>Offiong T. Abia, "Epilogue: The Challenges Ahead" in (Ed.) Monday Abasiattai, *The Ibibio: An Introduction to the Land, the People and their Culture*. p. 591

<sup>55</sup>Otu Usendiah, "The Roles of Professionals in Educational and Leadership Development in Akwa Ibom State", A Paper Presented at a Symposium on Educational Development in Akwa Ibom State, Organised by the State Ministry of Education, Uyo. p. 34

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<sup>57</sup>Otu Usendiah, "The Roles of Professionals in Educational and Leadership Development in Akwa Ibom State", A Paper Presented at a Symposium on Educational Development in Akwa Ibom State, Organised by the State Ministry of Education, Uyo. p. 31

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