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A HUNDRED YEARS OF ETINAN INSTITUTE, ETINAN, 1915-2015: AN ASSESSMENT

Uwem Jonah Akpan
University of Uyo, Uyo

Abstract

Education is the process of preparing people to fit into a complex social structure, and to play particular social roles as members of more than one institutional group. Formal Western education in Nigeria was introduced by Christian missionaries. The colonial government was initially slow to assume its responsibilities in this sphere. In Ibibioland, the Qua Iboe Mission takes the credit for blazing the trail of secondary education in the area with the establishment of Etinan Institute in 1915. Undoubtedly, the institution has contributed immensely to the manpower development of Nigeria, even though it is facing many challenges. This paper examines the centenary history of the Institute; it pays tribute to the founding fathers and admonishes relevant stakeholders to salvage it from decline.

Introduction

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 Nigerian peoples.¹ In the Cross River Region, Western education was introduced in 1846 when the Presbyterian (or United Free Church of Scotland) missionaries arrived in Calabar from Jamaica, West Indies, and in the same year, established schools at Duke Town and Creek Town.² Up to the late 1870s, the mission confined its activities mostly to Old Calabar and devoted its teaching primarily to the "Four Rs" (Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). During the period, the Efik people acted as middlemen between the European traders on the coast and the Ibibio agricultural 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 restricted its spread into Ibibioland. They did this for about 60 years (1846-1906).³

The Efik restricted the spread of Western education to Ibibioland because they found Western education to be a new source of power and wealth greater than what *Ekpe* society offered them. Although Uruan Clan in Ibibioland borders western Efikland, the missionaries were not allowed to open schools and churches there until the opening of Ibibioland from 1902 during the period of the missionary scramble for spheres of influence in Ibibioland.⁴

However, the experience of the people of the present day Akwa Ibom changed for the better with the advent of Qua Iboe missionaries in 1887. Shortly after his arrival in Ibuno, 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. Other primary schools were subsequently established by the Mission.⁵ By 1898, the missionary influence had extended to Etinan, a distance of about 30 kilometers from Ibuno with Rev. John Kirk, an Irish missionary, as the pioneer missionary. Rev. Kirk was assisted by a young Ibeno man named Stephen Equilo. The establishment of the first school in Etinan is also associated with Rev. John Kirk. According to the available records, the school was a night school.⁶ This early experience laid the foundation of the Etinan Institute in particular and the expansion of Western education in Ibibioland in general.

The Establishment of Etinan Institute, Etinan

Etinan Institute, Etinan is said to be a free gift from a Presbyterian Minister who had willed that part of his money should be spent in building a school anywhere in West Africa for the education of Africans under the umbrella of Qua Iboe Mission. A delegation was sent abroad to negotiate the execution of this will through Rev. Kirk who was then acting for Rev. Bill who was on leave overseas. During this negotiation, Mr. Robert James Taylor, who later became the first Principal, was contacted. With the completion of negotiation, the school was first built at Okat in the present day Onna Local Government Area, as Qua Iboe Mission Boy's Institute in 1891. It was a special primary school and remained at Okat from until 1896. In 1896 the school was transferred to Nditia in Ibeno and after seven years it was transferred to Ikot Edong in Abak. After more than a decade it was closed down. In 1915 it was re-opened as Boy's Institute, Etinan.⁷

The principal aim of the Institute was to prepare its pupils for effective evangelistic work in the newly established Qua Iboe Churches. The pupils were to become preachers and teachers. At its inception there were 30 pupils on the roll, most of who were village preachers engaged in teaching in the village schools. Some of these first set of students were older than the Principal, Mr. Taylor and many of them came to the boarding house with their own houseboys. These pupils were drawn from the Mission Districts of Ikot Ubo, Uyo, Ikot Edong and Etinan.⁸ The school started with only one building which consisted of a large hall and two small classrooms. Mud dormitories were used later and a few structures were built while a bungalow with corrugated iron sheets was built for the Principal, whose house was at that time used for administrative purposes.⁹

Initially, the school used a syllabus prepared by its Principal for Standards One to Eight, and for some years this was the only school offering lessons up to Standard Eight. Later, it adopted the Government syllabus. As other primary schools also developed and could serve as feeders to the Institute, the Institute dropped its lowest classes. Thus, in 1917 when there were only 41 pupils in the school, the school had just three classes, namely: Standards III, IV, and V. Standard Six was added in 1918 and in September of that year, two pupils sat for the Institute's Standard Six Examination for the first time.¹⁰

The first set of pupils included, Pastor D. S. Usanga, Elder Frank U. Eshiet, Elder T. M. U. Etuk and Andrew Umoren.¹¹ For about two years, Mr. Taylor served as the only teacher in the school. He was later assisted by some pioneer pupils like T. M. U. Etuk and Jimmy Mfon. For many years, no school fees were charged; the pupils brought their food from home and each was responsible for cooking his meal. The school became government grant-aided in 1928. From that time, each pupil was charged school fees. In the early days, much emphasis was placed on the teaching of the Scriptures, good handwriting and mental Arithmetic.¹²

In the 1920s and 1930s, the school metamorphosed rapidly. In 1937 Standard Four was re-named "Preparatory Class". Standard Five became Secondary Class One while Standard Six was Class Two. Standards Seven and Eight were dropped. The number of teachers also increased though there were no graduate teachers on the staff list. By 1937, the school moved from primary to full-fledged secondary school status. The House System was introduced in the school by Mr. S. O. Udoukpong in 1938. The Houses were first named as Block A, B, C, D. During the period of World War II, one of the Houses was renamed "Churchill House", in appreciation of Sir Winston Churchill's contributions to the Commonwealth war effort. When the girl's dormitories were built in 1950, all the four blocks were named after the then capital cities in Nigeria – Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu. These names were changed in 1964 to bear the following: Lady Ibiam, Margaret Johnson, Mabel Tector and Constance Malpas.¹³

In 1938, the primary school section was closed down. In 1942, a separate department for teacher training courses was established in the school. This was however closed in 1946 to

create more space for the secondary school. In 1944, the first set of students of the school, seven in number, took the Cambridge Overseas Certificate Examinations. Five of them passed while two failed.¹⁴

Of special significance is that in 1945, the path-breaking contributions of Mr. Taylor were acknowledged by Mr. Milburn in his inspection report thus:

The Institute has character – a character caught by staff and pupils alike from Mr. R. J. Talyor, the Principal, who after 32 years teaching service in Nigeria intends to retire by the end of 1946. It is no small achievement with a staff of 20, many of whom are cheerful, well mannered and trained, to have organized a secondary school of 235 Boarders, smart, healthy, cheerful, well mannered and trained to habits of neat work in the compound, in the workshop and in the exercise books. The Institute also would not have been half as effective without the help of Mrs. Taylor, who though not a class teacher, makes her influence felt in the compound and in a Sunday School of 700 children and adults. The Institute under Mr. Taylor has provided an education which is of real use to the country.¹⁵

In 1946, the first graduate Principal, Mr. W. C. Wylie, succeeded Mr. Taylor who retired in the same year. Mr. Wylie carefully followed the tradition already established by the founding fathers. As a lover of Mathematics, he ensured the study of the subject throughout the school. He was an organizer and planner and believed in long term results of a foundation well laid. The management of the school during his tenure was acknowledged in June by Mr. W. E. Holt, Chief Inspector of Education thus:

The management of so large a staff requires a lot of organization, and there is at Etinan. The new Principal is well in his saddle and is keeping things moving very smoothly indeed. He is ably assisted by one or two teachers who have served for years under Mr. Taylor.¹⁶

The first girl pupils were among the pupils who took a one-year teacher training course in the Institute in 1942.¹⁷ However, the school became co-educational in 1949. The first set of female students were those brought back by Mrs. Mabel Tector from Calabar, when the Qua Iboe Church decided that it would not join in the establishment of the Christian Council Union Secondary School for girls at Ibiaku in present Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Miss Nne Benson Akpaette, who later became the wife of Dr. Clement Isong, former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and later also Governor of the old Cross River State, was the among the first set of female students.¹⁸ In 1951, a separate quarter was built for the girls at *Adaha Enai*, a distance of about one mile from the school compound. The results of the West African School Certificate Examinations taken up to 1959 confirmed that the academic standard of the school was very high based on the high level of performance the institution recorded. 38 students sat for the examination and 36 passed.¹⁹

In 1954, General Science was introduced in the school and the first teacher of this subject was Miss Constance Malpas. With the financial assistance provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds, a laboratory block was built between 1958 and 1959. In addition, the first storey building now used as the administrative block which also houses the school library was constructed. Some staff quarters; a dining hall, dormitories, a kitchen and a store were also built. In 1960, the school was inspected by Mr. A. P. Knottenbelt, a Ministry of Education Inspector. The purpose of the inspection was to advise the government and the West African Examinations Council as to whether or not the school could be recognized for teaching of Science as separate a subject.²⁰

In a bid to produce well trained teachers for the school, a Leader's Education Committee was inaugurated. This body mobilized funds for the training of eligible members of the Qua Iboe Church at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone and the newly established University College, Ibadan. The first product of this effort was Elder Archibong Joshua Udo Ekong who returned to the Institute in 1951. Other staff who were also trained by the Mission included: Elder Onofiok Andrew Ufot who attended the University of Ibadan, and later became the first Registrar of the University of Calabar²¹. Mr. Jacob B. Adiakpan and Mr. Udo S. Ekpo, were also trained at Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone. In January 1959, an Arts Sixth Form was started in the school with 11 students and in November, 1960, these students took the Higher School Certificate Examination for the first time during the tenure of Mr. J. R. Johnson as Principal. Nine of the students passed while two failed.²²

In terms of extra-curricular activities, several school clubs were established in the institution, such as the Boys Scouts Movement (1938), a Choir (1950), Literary and Debating Society (1950), Thinkers Club (1952), Geographical Society (1953), the Craft Club (1956), the Dramatic Society (1960), Boy's Brigade (1963), Current Affairs Club (1964), Science Club (1964), The Red Cross Society (1964) and so on.²³ The students also took active part in the annual Festival of the Arts competition and won laurel for the institution. At the Provincial Festival, the Choral Group and the School Choir won First Prize at their various levels of competition. The Choral Group went to Enugu for the Regional competition, and there also, won First prize. The school competed in the Uyo/Annang Provincial Athletics Competition which was held at Uyo in February 1965. The girls came top in the Women's event. They later went to Enugu for the Regional Women's Amateur Athletic Championships where one of the students, Ekponwan Tom, was selected to join the Eastern Regional Team at the inter-regional championships, at Ibadan.²⁶

In the later part of 1960, Elder Archibong Ekong, an ex-student of the school, then a teaching staff became the first Black Principal. Since then, the school has been administered by Nigerian Principals. During Ekong's tenure, the school was approved by the West African Examinations Council to teach Biology, Chemistry and Physics.²⁴

The Higher School result of 1962 showed that nine out of the 11 students who sat the examination passed. The total enrolment at the close of 1964 school year was 339 students, made up of 281 boys and 58 girls. As usual, a number of pupils who registered in January had to abandon their courses before the end of the year because of failure to pay fees. By 1964, one year before the school marked its golden jubilee, the number of students on the enrolment had slightly increased. Within the same period, the school had 12 graduate teachers out of which five were qualified to teach Science subjects. Also in that year, out of 49 students that wrote the West African School Certificate Examination, 10 had Grade One, 25 had Grade Two, 11 had Grade Three and only three failed.²⁵

The growth of the school was adversely affected during the period of the Nigerian Civil War which lasted from 1967 to 1970. The institution became a camp for the Biafran soldiers and was temporally closed down.²⁷ At the end of the war, the South Eastern State Government, like most of the State Governments of the Federation, took over mission schools from their original proprietors. From the perspective of the Government, there was need to use education for the achievement of national unity. Opposition to the takeover of schools by the government came initially from the Christian missions because they owned most of the schools. From that time till date the school is a government-owned.²⁸

In the late 1970s much attention was paid to physical development of the school through the intervention of the United Nations sponsored International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The intervention led to the construction of many structures in the school compound such as a new refectory, a kitchen, four blocks with eight classrooms each and

a technical workshop with up to date equipment. The development package also included the provision of an electric generating plant, drilling of water borehole and over-head tanks, tarring of the paths and so on. The essence of the face-lift was to upgrade the school to the status of a comprehensive secondary school. This handsomely improved the status of the school.²⁹ The school has continued to grow and has become the leading post-primary institution in Akwa Ibom State and one of the famous schools in Nigeria.³⁰

Contributions of the Institute to Nation Building

The institution has contributed immensely to the development of Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general. This could be primarily viewed from the perspective of the products of the institution since its establishment in 1915. Although space and time would constrain the listing of all the products of the school, it can be stated without exaggeration that there is hardly any sphere of our national life that the products of this famous institution cannot be found. Indeed, wherever they are found, they are easily distinguishable by their exhibition of discipline, and strong character. Some of the prominent products include:

- Brigadier General Udokaha Jacob Esuene , pioneer Military Governor of South Eastern State
- Obong Akpan Isemin, first civilian Governor of Akwa Ibom State
- Group Captain Idongesit Nkanga, former Military Governor of Akwa Ibom State
- Group Captain Sam Enwang, former Military Governor of Ogun and Rivers States
- Obong Ufot J. Ekaette, former Secretary to Government of the Federation
- Prof. Sunday Peters, former Vice-Chancellor of Akwa Ibom State University
- Late Prof. Monday Abasiattai, a renowned Historian
- Later Prof. Ime Ikkideh, a renowned Professor of English
- Late Prof. Akpan J. A. Esen, a prominent Educationist and former Provost of the Advanced Tacher's Training College and later College of Education, Uyo (which metamorphosed into the University of Cross River State and later University of Uyo).
- Late Chief Charles Ekere, Permanent Secretary/Acting Secretary to Government of Eastern Region
- Deaconess Nne Clement Isong, retired Permanent Secretary and wife of the Former Governor of old Cross River State.
- Elder Effiong Esang, former Secretary of Akwa Ibom State Government
- Late Obong John Ekwere, a renowned broadcaster and community leader

The Institute since the 1990

A critical assessment of the journey of the school shows that its fortunes started to dwindle in the 1990s. Several factors contributed to the downward trend. The primary factor is the fact that succeeding governments did not pay serious attention to the infrastructural development of the institution. In other words, the explosion in terms of student enrolment did not match the existing facilities and amenities. This scenario contributed to the fast decay of the existing infrastructure.²⁸

In specific terms, currently the classrooms are in a poor condition. For instance, none of the classroom windows has any louver blade or a single door; the roofs of all the classrooms are leaky. The dormitories are also in a state of total neglect; the beds in use were provided in 1970. The school fence has broken down, exposing the school to danger and making it impossible for the authorities to maintain discipline among the students.²⁹

In November, 2014, the school had a population of about 5,000 students and staff of about 135: 120 teaching and 15 non-teaching. Consequently, the school, despite its poor state of infrastructure, is one of the largest post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

The teaching staff has declined significantly in number. The available staff handles many classes. Sometimes classes are merged for a single teacher to deliver instructions; this results in overcrowding of the classes. Also core subjects like English Language, Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science do not have experienced teachers to handle them. The library, which is supposed to be a key arm of learning, lacks enough relevant reading materials, seats as well as space to accommodate the students.

In 2013, Exxon-Mobil donated some science equipment to the school worth about 3.5 million Naira while the National Communications Commission donated about 100 laptops with solar lighting with internet facilities to the school to aid the teaching of Computer. The Parents Teacher's Association also donated an 18-seater bus to the school to abate its transportation challenges. Work is also on-going on a proposed library complex embarked upon by the Old Students Association of the school. It is hoped that when completed the current problems experienced by the students would be considerably reduced.

It should be noted that ever since the government took over the running of schools, the level of discipline in schools has drastically dwindled. Whereas, the missionaries paid high premium to the moral up-bringing of the students particularly with emphasis on the teaching of subjects like Christian Religious Knowledge, the present situation is a far cry from what was obtainable then. The free and compulsory education scheme which the Akwa Ibom State Government introduced in 2007, can best be described as a "political action". It was not accompanied with the training of relevant teachers and upgrading of facilities.

Conclusion

From its humble beginning in 1915, Etinan Institute, Etinan has recorded remarkable strides in the annals of education in Nigeria. The institution has established an enviable tradition in academics and extra-curricular activities. Judging by the products of the institution in the last 100 years of its existence, it is certain that the school has consistently served as a veritable tool of nation building although the existing physical infrastructure cannot match its relevance to the Nigerian nation.

The founding fathers of the institution deserve praise for their vision and labour. Despite the fact that the early phase of the Qua Iboe Mission was beset with a lot of challenges, particularly in the area of finance, they still forged ahead with the idea of providing evangelism and Western educational services to the people. In fact, the challenge has been noted by Sir Udo Udoma who said,

The evangelists were not sponsored by any well established and recognized organized missionary association unlike the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The evangelists of the Qua Iboe Mission, were a daring and enterprising lot...resourceful and enterprising as they were, they lacked financial support from an organized body in Great Britain and Ireland.

As the school marks its first 100 years of existence, tribute should be paid to Rev. John Kirk, the missionary whose name is synonymous with the introduction of Western education in Etinan area: Mr. Robert James Taylor, the Principal of the school for 32 years and other pioneers of this phenomenal institution and its liberating power also deserve commendation. The Government and ex-students as well as non-governmental organizations and individuals should come together to redeem the lost glory of this citadel of learning in Nigeria for the benefit of the present generation and those un-born..

Endnotes

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- ⁹Enoch Eno Udofia. (2014): Interviewed at Etinan, 12/9/2014
- ¹⁰*Qua Iboe Mission Secondary School, Etinan (1915-1965) "Jubilee Souvenir"*. October, 1965. p. 4
- ¹¹Mkpong Onyong Obong (2014): Interviewed at Etinan 14/9.2014
- ¹²Effiong Jimmy Udo Usoro (2014): Interviewed at Etinan, 28/10/2014
- ¹³*Qua Iboe Mission Secondary School, Etinan (1915-1965) "Jubilee Souvenir"*. October, 1965. pp. 5-6
- ¹⁴*Ibid.* p. 4
- ¹⁵Idongesit Ekerette Markson. "Etinan Institute Etinan: 1915 – 2007". B. A. Long Essay, Department of History & International Studies, University of Uyo, Uyo, 20014, p. 18
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- ¹⁷*The Focus. Etinan Institue. A Publication of Etinan Institute*. Etinan. 2005, p. 11
- ¹⁸Effiong Jimmy Udo Usoro. (2014): Interview, 14/9/2014
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- ²¹*Ibid.* p. 13
- ²²Okon Edet Uya and Sunday W. Peters. (Eds.) *Knowledge for Service*. University of Calabar, 1975 – 2002. Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2004, p. 5
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- ²⁴*Ibid.* pp. 24-31
- ²⁵Enoch Eno Udofia. (2014): Interview, Etinan, 12/9/2014
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- ²⁹Enoch Eno Udofia. (2014): Interview, Etinan, 12/9/2014
- ³⁰This writer was a student of the institution during this period and saw when the intervention projects were undertaken.

Appendix

Principals of the Institute, (1915-2014)

1. Mr. Robert James Taylor (1915 – 1939)
2. Mr. M. G. Clarke (1937-1939)
3. Mr. Robert James Taylor (1939 – 1945)
4. Mr. W. C. Wylie (1946 – 1949)
5. Mr. J. R. Johnston (1950 – 1952)
6. Dr. A. R. Nicholson (1953 – 1955)
7. Mr. J. R. Johnston (1955 – 1956)
8. Dr. A. R. Nicholson (1957)
9. Mr. J. R. Johnston (1958 – 1959)
10. Chief A. J. U. Ekong (1960 – 1969)
11. Mr. Ada S. Ekpoh (1970)
12. Elder Udo S. Ekpoh (1970 – 1971)
13. Mr. Michael T. Akpan Udonquak (1971 - 1972)
14. Elder Udo S. Ekpoh (1972 - 1973)
15. Mr. A. E. Udo (1973 – 1974)
16. Elder Okon J. Udom (1974 – 1979)
17. Mr. V. I. Equali (1979)
18. Chief Inyang Amos Inyang (1979 – 1981)
19. Mr. Smith John. Bassey (1981 – 1984)
20. Mr. Essien Udo Akpan (1984 – 1985)
21. Elder Etim Obot Okpongnam Akpabio (1985 – 1986)
22. Elder Edet G. Utuk (1986 – 1989)
23. Elder Edem E. U. Umana (1990 – 1991)
24. Mr. Aniefon F. Ufot (1991 – 1993)
25. Mr. Utin Yellow Utin (1993 – 1998)
26. Mr. Okokon S. Nkan (January, 1998)
27. Rev. Sebastian Andrew Umontuen (1998 – 2004)
28. Elder Enobong Wilson Udo (2004 – 2007)
29. Elder Eno Ben Ukim (2007 – 2010)
30. Mr. Emeti E. Anana (2010 – 2014)
31. Elder Ebong Akpan (1915-)