

## **The Ibibio Union and Educational Development of Ibibioland: 1928-1966**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The Ibibio Union was established by the Ibibio people in 1928 as an instrument of development and social mobilisation. Although the Union recorded landmark achievements in many areas of national life, this study is concerned with its contributions to the educational development of Ibibioland. The Union established a Teachers' Training College in Uyo, in the 1930s following the failure of the colonial government to establish either a technical training institution or a grammar school in the area. It also initiated the first community based tertiary educational programme in the country – the Ibibio Union's scholarship in 1938, for the training of six Ibibio scholars overseas, built the Ibibio State College at Ikot Ekpene in 1946, The paper discovers that the Union's educational schemes contributed significantly to nation building and filled the gap that was created through inadequate educational services by the missionaries and colonial government. Adopting a historical narrative method, the study challenges ethnic unions and individuals in modern Nigeria to learn from the example of the Ibibio Union and contribute to the development of the education of their respective communities.

### **1.0. Introduction**

The Ibibio live in Akwa Ibom State and constitute the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Abasiattai, 1987; Offiong, 1991). 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 day Akwa Ibom State passed for Ibibio. But no sooner has sub-national consciousness and divide-and-rule tactics by 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; Akpan, 2015).

As a result of this situation, a scholar working on the Ibibio at present has two conceptions to choose from. He could take the Ibibio as those people who accept at present that they are Ibibio or could take the historic conception of the Ibibio as accepted unchallenged by the various Ibibio groups up to the early 1960s and documented by European and African scholars who did their work during the “age of innocence”. This paper is based on the latter 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 the groups (Akpan, 2015).

It should be noted that the present day Akwa Ibom State was referred to as the six Ibibio districts in the colonial era, and consisted of, Uyo, Itu, Opobo (Ikot Abasi), Eket, Abak and Ikot Ekpene districts. In 1928 the Ibibio people from the six colonial districts formed the earliest welfare organization in Nigeria, known as the Ibibio Union. Unlike the Owerri Improvement Union in Port Harcourt, (1916), the Egba Society (1918) and the Onitsha Improvement Union, Lagos Branch (1920), all of which only involved segments of either Igbo or the Yoruba people, the Ibibio Union embraced all the Ibibio people. Throughout the period of its existence, the Union was effectively used as an instrument of social mobilization of the people of the area for progressive programmes and development. The Union viewed Western education as *sine qua non* for all development programmes. It was this cardinal standpoint that triggered the landmark educational contributions which this study examines (Noah, 1988, Akpan, 2004).

## **2.0. The Evolution of Western Education in Ibibioland**

The early Europeans were almost certainly the first people to bring some rudiments of Western education to Ibibioland. They bartered spirits, cloth, guns, household goods, and so on, for slaves, palm oil, ivory etc. and transmitted

elements of their culture and language to the privileged locals, some of whom in all probability acquired some writing skill. Formal Western education, however, came in the wake of the evangelizing activities of the Christian missionaries and radiated from Calabar along the navigable waterways of Akwa Ibom (Ette, 1991).

In specific terms, by 1846, the seed of gospel had been sown in Calabar, following the arrival of Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, of the Presbyterian Church (United Free Church of Scotland) and his partners, from Jamaica. In that year a school was established in Duke Town in Calabar, and Creek Town. In 1858, a school was established at Ikot Offiong, in Itu, because Ikot Offiong was an Efik settlement in Ibibioland. Later, another school was established in Ikoneto along the Cross River, using Europeans, West Indian and Efik teachers. Apart from trade, the Efik also controlled Western education and prohibited its spread into Ibibioland for about 60 years. They, however, allowed the United Free Church of Scotland to operate along the Cross River Igbo area. Thus, in 1888, Unwana, 165 kilometers north of Calabar, was occupied by that mission. By 1890, the missionaries had explored the river up to a point, 380 kilometers north of Calabar. Before the scramble for missionary influence (1904-1952) set in, they had reached Uburu, about 40 kilometers west of the Cross River. Although Uruan in Ibibioland shares a

common boundary with Western Efikland, the Presbyterian was restrained from venturing into the area. Eventually, in 1903, Mary Slessor “rebelled” and moved into Itu in Ibibioland to open a station in 1903 (Udo, 1983, Abasiattai, 1987; Akpan; 2017).

The year 1887 remains an important historical and cultural milestone for the Ibibio people, because that was when the Qua Iboe Mission led by Rev. Samuel Bill, arrived the area from Northern Ireland to establish a base at Ibeno at the mouth of the Qua Iboe River. Shortly on arrival in his new home, Rev. Bill organised Bible classes for some boys in his house which eventually became the first school in the area. A separate church was later built which served on weekdays as school for about 30 pupils. Later, the mission extended its frontiers to other places within the Qua Iboe River basin and further inland such as Okat, Etinan, Eket, Ikot Ubo, Uyo, Abak and Inen, etc. After some time, many villages had not only a church building but also a tiny school built of local materials attached to it. There, the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and Christian religion were taught to children and youths in the day time and to their parents and the adults at night. It should be added that the primary objective of the early educational efforts by the missionaries was to get the early converts to be able to read the Efik Bible, and acquire the requisite knowledge to facilitate their service as preachers, teachers and interpreters (Ette, 1991; Esen, 1994).

Other missionary bodies also accorded enthusiastic reception in Akwa Ibom territory included the Primitive Methodist which arrived Archibong Town in 1897 and established the Methodist Boy's High School at Oron in 1905. In 1903, the Roman Catholic arrived in Ibibioland and built its first post-primary school, Holy Family College, Abak, in 1942. The Qua Iboe Mission had already established Etinan Institute, Etinan in 1915. For a long time, these were the only post-primary institutions in the area, though they offered only mid-school education. The Ibibio Union, though a non-missionary enterprise had the distinction of being the first to conceive a post-primary institution that was from the outset, a full secondary school (Ette, 1991; Esen, 1994). Consequently, following the establishment of the Ibibio State College at Ikot Ekpene in 1946, the number of post-primary schools in the state increased to four.

The Christian missions operated under protection and with the active encouragement of the colonial government. Like elsewhere in Nigeria, direct involvement of government in the establishment of educational institutions was minimal. Indeed, except for the government primary schools and subsequently, the establishment of the Teachers' Training College (now the University of Uyo), government was content to allow the missionaries full reign in the educational sector.

Okoko(1988)has observed that the nature and quality of educational services provided by the Qua Iboe Mission, the oldest and at that time the largest Christian body in Ibibioland was far from being adequate. He notes thus:

...for many reasons, the educational policy of Qua Iboe Mission, the oldest in Ibibioland, which became a church in 1944, was slow, tortuous and unprogressive. For instance, in 1921 that is after 35 years' work the Qua Iboe Mission had 178 schools in Calabar Province with 6,167 pupils and 179 teachers. These figures amounted to mere one-class; one-teacher schools doted all over the place. Seven years later, that is on the 4th of January 1928, when Rev. Samuel Bill dedicated the Etinan Hospital, he declared that "wherever the gospel is carried, two things are always linked together, preaching and healing...he did not and could not mention "educating" because, as far as he and his mission were concerned, education was not necessary beyond being able to read the Bible and the song book"(Okoko, 1988: 140).

He adds:

The Etinan Institute, although founded in 1915, remained a mere boarding primary school for 21 years, until it was converted into a junior secondary school in 1936. It remained in this status for 15 years and became a full-fledged secondary school in 1951. Thus, it took Etinan Institute 36 years to become a full secondary school. Moreover, the fact that whereas, the Qua Iboe Mission had established a hospital in 1927, but opened only a junior secondary school almost 27 years after, confirms the policy enunciated by Rev. Bill, the founder, above, i.e. preaching and healing; with nothing about educating (Okoko, 1988: 141).

The inability of the Qua Iboe Mission to take a bold step towards higher education seemed to have been caused by its lack of a “Home Mission” as such. The Qua Iboe Mission Council formed in January 1891 to sponsor the Qua Iboe work was comprised of members who represented leading churches of different denominations in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and this Council could pay the Qua Iboe Mission workers only up to 1908 and then decided that “all native work should find its support from native sources. From that time the Qua Iboe Church has been solely and wholly responsible for the support of its ministry without any external help. Therefore, either because of a laid down policy or lack of sufficient financial support from external sources or a combination of both, the Qua Iboe Church became unable to embark on the provision of higher institution of learning in Ibibioland (Okoko, 1988).

### **3.0. The Formation of the Ibibio Union (Later the Ibibio State Union)**

The Ibibio Union was an amalgam of two separate organizations of the Ibibio people, namely: the Ibibio Mainlanders Association based in Calabar and the Ibibio Welfare Union which was based in the mainland part of the Calabar Province (Ibibioland). The Ibibio Welfare Union was made up of mostly teachers in

government schools and others – clerks, road overseers, and others. On the other hand, the Ibibio Mainlanders Association was formed in Calabar mainly as a result of some misunderstanding that occurred between the Ibibio and Efik following the publication by one Mr. E.N. Amaku, a headmaster with the United Scotland Mission in Calabar, of some materials which the Ibibio considered defamatory (Noah, 1988).

The Amaku's episode took place, following the decision of the colonial administration to introduce the teaching of literature in the vernacular in schools in Calabar Province. Sequel to this development, teachers were encouraged to send materials for consideration. Mr. Amaku, in an attempt to write what he called, "the history of the Efik people", made a submission of an anthropological/historical slant in which the Ibibio were disparaged. 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, who eventually took a legal action against Mr. Amaku. However, due to the passionate 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 totally set aside. The outcome of the incident led to the formation of the

Ibibio Mainlanders Association in Calabar (Udoma, 1987; Noah, 1988, Akpan, 2017).

The formation of the Ibibio Union (later Ibibio State Union) on the 28th of April 1928 represented the coming together of the Ibibio Mainlanders Association and the Ibibio Welfare and it took place at the Qua Iboe Church, 2 Abak Road, Uyo. The foundation leaders of the Union were: Chief Sampson Udo Etuk, (General President), Chief Robert Umoinyang, (Vice-President), Mr. Usen Udo Usen, (General-Secretary), and Chief Thomas Udok, (Treasurer), among others (Noah, 1988).

In terms of its structure, the Union had a central secretariat at Uyo with a president and two deputies, a secretary and two assistants as well as other officers including the legal adviser, a field secretary, a financial secretary and an auditor. Duties and functions were specified for each of the offices. The basic unit for organising the Union was the district and each district Union had its officers including the president and secretary who were required to keep in touch with the central secretariat at Uyo and through whom the decisions from the centre were communicated to the respective districts. In addition to the district unions, there was the Branch Union. The branch was established to cater for all Ibibio indigenes resident abroad or outside of Ibibio territory. Apart from these agencies, the Union had a number of meetings which consisted of the Annual

Conference and the National Assembly. The Annual Conference was a deliberative body mandated to meet once a year, usually in the first week of August. This was a representative body but prominent traditional rulers were also members. The National Assembly was both a deliberative and legislative body, which served as the supreme legislative authority of the Union (Udoma, 1987; Akpan, 2017).

#### **4.0. Educational Programmes of the Ibibio Union**

The primary 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 energetically 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 Teachers' Training College at Uyo in the 1930s, though the Union had actually desired a grammar or technical school. The institution metamorphosed into the Advanced Teachers' Training College, College of Education, University of Cross River State and now the University of Uyo (Noah, 1988, Akpan, 2017).

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

By the second decade of the 20th century, Nigeria never had facilities of higher education, yet the thirst for higher education was increasing in geometric proportion. Even when the Yaba

Higher College was established in January 1932, as the first higher institution in Nigeria, the facilities it had could not accommodate many students. Apart from the lack of facilities, the institution had unique policy which was dictated by availability of employment vacancies in government civil service. This inadequacy did not deter the Ibibio leader's firm belief that higher education in particular was fundamental to the construction of knowledge, economy and society in all nations (Akpan, 2004).

In 1936, Obong Sampson Udo Etuk, the President of the Ibibio Union inaugurated the first major communal educational Scheme in Nigeria, the Ibibio Union scholarship fund. He untiringly traversed the nooks and crannies of the six Ibibio districts to raise money for this landmark scheme. 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 skeptical of the project. 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, 1988, Akpan,

2013). The beneficiaries from each of the Six Ibibio Districts were as follows:

<b>Name of Candidate</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Course of Study</b>	<b>Location</b>
Bassey Udo Attah	Uyo,	Agriculture	USA
Obot E. Antia-Obong	Itu,	Medicine	Scotland
Ibanga Udo Akpabio	Ikot Ekpene,	Education	USA
Egbert Udo Udoma	Ikot Abasi (Opobo)	Law	England
Lawson James Nsima	Eket	Education	USA
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. They insisted that any candidate chosen should come from Oron group. The Oron group led by Mr. Isong, a Native Administration Treasurer then appealed to the Central Union to intervene and secure the slot for an Oron candidate. The Union demonstrated a non-interference stance 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 indigenes. The Oron group justified their decision by sponsoring O.O. Ita to study law in London. He was called to bar in 1948. (Udoma, 1987; Usendiah, 1995; Udoyo and Wilson, 2006).

Before the departure of the Ibibio scholars, a written agreement was entered into, between the Union and the beneficiaries, in the Chambers of a 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 (Udoma, 1995).

As rightly observed by Esene (1994), it was considered very prestigious for a clan to sponsor a favourite son for “further studies overseas”, and to see him off amidst festivities, fanfare and the blare of brass instruments. That was when the Ibibio Union sent off a total of six of their sons for further studies in the United Kingdom and America. By that act, the Union blazed the trail for other cultural organisations throughout the country during the pre-independence period, and earned a warm pat on the back from the best minds in Nigeria, indigenous or foreign. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in an article in the famous *West African Pilot*, enthusiastically nick-named the lucky six Ibibio sons as “true merchants of light”. Even the conservative colonial government of Nigeria went out of its way to pour encomiums on

the Ibibio Union for clear-sighted leadership and purposeful mobilisation of the people.

It should be mentioned that Obong Sampson Udo Etuk, the leader of the Ibibio Union, 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. However; Obong Etuk was the one who led the young scholars abroad as a self-sponsored student. 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 PhD in Law, a onetime 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, representing Eket Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State (1999-2007), and is currently (2017) the Minister of Budget and National Planning of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Other products of the educational scheme that made remarkable impact to nation building were Chief Bassey Udo

Adiaha Attah, (the second Nigerian to hold a University degree in Agriculture and the first to obtain a Masters degree in Agriculture). His son, Architect (Obong) Victor Attah was a two term Governor of Akwa Ibom State (1999 to 2007). Another beneficiary, Chief Ibanga Udo Akpabio later became 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, and at present (2017) is the Minority Leader of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Abasiattai (2011, Akpan, 2013).

#### **4.2. The Establishment of the Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene**

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).

As a response to the above deplorable situation and in tandem with its laid down educational objectives, 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. In addition, Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio and Mr. Lawson Nsima were appointed as the Joint Secretaries of the Ibibio Union. Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio was placed on initial salary of £360, per annum apart from allowances (Akpan, 2012).

The Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene was regarded as a symbol of unity of the Ibibio people; the emblem of the partial but proximate realisation 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-organised because Mr. Akpabio had 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. Moreover, Mr. Akpabio claimed the institution as his personal property and this resulted in a legal tussle which was decided in favour of the Ibibio Union (Udoma, 1987, Akpan, 2012).

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 institution is now called “State College” following the agitation by the Annang people as a distinct group. The Ibibio State College has been described variously as being the first secondary school in the country built and financed solely by a “tribal” union or the first community-owned Secondary Grammar School in Nigeria (Usendiah (1995).

#### **4.3. The Ibibio Union’s Women Education Programme**

Although women education was not accorded importance in most African traditional societies, it was not neglected by the Ibibio Union in the colonial period. According to Noah (1980), during the meeting of the Ibibio Union held at Etinan on the 5th

of December, 1931, Obong Etuk observed that the Uyo College was established for boys therefore, he counselled that the Ibibio Union should consider the female education. He reminded the people that without the education of women, no nation and “tribe” can ever rise. He made several contacts with the District Educational Officer to enlist support of the government to support women education in Ibibioland. He also shared with the leaders of the Ibibio nation, the kind of education that should 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 one of the meetings of the Ibibio Union, he suggested that every village in Ibibioland should make a subscription of £2 or palm oil equivalent to the value of £2 for the take off of the project.

Following the precedent already set by the Ibibio Union by training the six Ibibio male students abroad, 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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>District</b>
1. Miss Ibium Bassey	Uyo
2. Miss M. Nsasak	Itu
3. Miss J. Ibok	Eket
4. Miss Victoria U. Inyang	Ikot Ekpene

Two candidates were later selected by the Opobo (Ikot Abasi) and Abak Districts and sent abroad. 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, (one of the scholars who benefitted from the 1938 Ibibio Union's scholarship), who died in Canada in 1943 after completing his medical training (Udoma, 2008).

### **5.0. The Colonial Education Policy and Western Education in Ibibioland**

Politically, Ibibioland was then part of Calabar Province, one of the component provinces of the Eastern region of Nigeria, and all schools in the territory were under the administrative control of the Provincial Education Officer at Calabar and, through him, the Deputy Director of Education at the regional headquarters at Enugu. The Christian missionaries had the largest number of primary schools in the area, and government did establish a few schools known as "Government Schools", one in each of the administrative districts of Uyo, (Ikot Ekan), Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Itu, Opobo (now Ikot Abasi). This was merely of token gesture by the colonial government, but the positive influence of the Government Schools was much greater than their numbers could have suggested. Staffed with relatively well-trained products of

the Government Teachers' Training College at Bonny, these schools actually served as models for other primary schools around, and as centres of excellence at that educational level (Esen, 1994).

The Christian mission secondary schools, while doing a great job, did always exercise a salutary influence on the social attitudes of the people. The youths in the existing schools were not encouraged to co-exist amicably with or tolerate other persons holding different religious views from theirs. A boy of Qua Iboe Mission parentage could hardly be admitted into a catholic secondary school unless he denounced his family's religious denomination, nor a Catholic student normally transfers to a Lutheran secondary school. Thus, the Christian religion was turned into an instrument of implacable social divisiveness. Moreover, during the pre-independence period, secondary education was virtually beyond the reach of the majority of children in Akwa Ibom area. To the vast majority of completed primary education, Standard Six or First School leaving School certificate was a terminal educational 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, there was also the fact that secondary schools were far too few in Akwa Ibom territory, and those few were often perceived as

separated from the people by both physical and psychological distance.

The colonial government did nothing to ease matters for the people. There were three government secondary schools for boys in the Eastern Region, located in Umuahia, Owerri and Afikpo, and Queens's Secondary School for girls in Enugu. Not one of those schools was sited in (or even near Ibibioland). Since the government secondary schools were model schools acknowledged as centres of excellence, one could see, even from this single example, the lopsidedness in the pattern of distribution of social amenities in the Eastern Region at that time. It was this official policy of deliberate denial of basic amenities to some sections of the population that fueled the fire of agitation for the creation of a separate state for Akwa Ibom people.

## **6.0. Conclusion**

The concept of education as used in this study refers exclusively to formal, systematic, Western style training arrangements and learning experiences, to which society exposes its youth in the process of socializing them in the culture, using institutional agency of school. According to Fafunwa (1974), education is what each generation gives to its younger ones, which makes them to develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviours that are of positive value to the society in which they live. This notion reflects the sociological perspective.

It became clear to the Ibibio people that in order to fit into the new scheme of things created by the colonial situation, they would have to adopt aspects of the values of the colonising power and work for changes within limits imposed by the colonial authorities. Military confrontation with the British had proved largely futile and the court system, even with many flaws, had given permanence to the new order. The new order emphasized among other things, development along Western values and colonial prescription involving the embracement of Western education not only as a means for securing employment in the new economic structure but more importantly as a means for gaining familiarity with Western styled constitutional provisions and legislative procedure. By this time too, it had become clear that the traditional educational system was inadequate when placed against the new economic, political and legislative demands. Efforts on the part of the Christian missionaries to provide Western education were not only desultory but haphazard. These bodies were conservative in their educational policies and divisive in their attitude towards other missions. These attitudes on the part of the missionaries militated against any meaningful educational development in Ibibioland (Noah, 1988).

It was in response of this situation that the Ibibo Union stepped into the scene and promoted education in Ibibioland and

by extension contributed significantly to nation building. The historic educational agenda example of the Ibibio Union could serve as a template for communities in the Niger Delta region in view of the years of deliberate neglect by the Nigerian central government which is only interested in the rich resources of the region and not human resource development of the region.

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