

# AKWA IBOM STATE

## THE LAND OF PROMISE



## — A COMPENDIUM —

*Edited By*  
Sunday W. Petters, Edet R. Iwok & Okon E. Uya

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(The Largest offshore platform in Nigeria)



## 3.5 TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

By  
*Mr. Moses E. Inyang-Abia*

**T**echnical and vocational education refers to formalized systematic learning processes which are designed to shone up individual skills, knowledge, attitudes and morals so that the person can fit neatly into gainful employment, within recognized occupational groupings as semi-skilled workers, skilled technicians or paraprofessionals in specific occupations. The type of education which is relevant to a specific job or career or which refers to courses in craft-skills can be generally categorized as technical and vocational. Therefore this type of education includes those related to agriculture, distributive trade, home economics, health, plumbing, shoe making and mending, printing, trade and industries, business of typing, shorthand and office practice, technical activities and technology. Others include radio and television servicing, textile works, sculpturing, blacksmithing, carpentry, carving, fashion designing, dyeing, catering weaving, hairdressing, mechanical works, boat building among numerous other practical subjects. In the past, technical or vocational education was seen as a dead-end. It required neither degrees nor diplomas but skills to perform the job to an acceptable level of satisfaction. But currently diplomas and degrees in vocational related and technical-oriented courses are encouraged through the polytechnics, colleges of technology, the National Technical Teachers' College (NTTC) and Universities of Technology. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) oversees in Nigeria the technical and vocational education programmes. The board examines, restructures and gives accreditation to technical and vocational programmes in the various related schools, colleges and universities.

In Nigeria generally and in Akwa Ibom State in particular, technical and vocational education is provided through:

- (a) the prevocational and vocational schools many of which are widely scattered in the state
- (b) the post-primary institutions e.g. trade and technical schools and technical colleges
- (c) the polytechnic e.g. Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua

- (d) the college of technical teacher education (none yet in Akwa Ibom State)
- (e) universities of technology (none yet in Akwa Ibom State).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine technical and vocational education in Akwa Ibom State and recommend some ways of improving the system.

**Traditional Technical - Vocational Education:** Technical - Vocational education is indigenous to Akwa Ibom State. It did not come with the arrival of Western education in the 1840's. Training and practice in the traditional technical-vocational education spanned from infancy through adulthood. Apprenticeship was the mode of training. Every adult was supposed to be meaningfully engaged in productive activities that had both social and economic rewards.

The traditional technical-vocational education as then practised by the people had much importance attached to it. It was collective and social in nature, especially among the occupational groupings. An intimate tie with the social, material and spiritual wellbeing of the individual was important. That is perhaps one reason why our traditional leaders and indigenous blacksmith still call upon their ancestral experts to assist in times of occupational difficulties. The traditional technical-vocation education was also gradual, emphasized progressive acquisition of the related skills, conforming to the stages of the mental physical and emotional development of the young apprentice.

Intellectual skills and technical/vocational education were interwoven. Children were directly taught the local and family history, heroic deeds of their ancestors, local proverbs, puns, folklores and human relations along with the technical and vocational skills in agriculture, weaving, black-smithing, house building and mending, carving, textile works among others. All these notwithstanding, certain traditional occupations that required apprenticeship were family membership exclusive. They were taught and practised on family lineage. For example, the secrets in traditional medicine including bone-mending and circumcision were jealously



guarded by and taught to the family members. The weaving and kneating of special dresses such as the "Ekpe cloth, the "Ukad" and "Ikpiya" were exclusive to members of the Ekpe and other related cults. Hair-dressing, body painting, general weaving among others were vocations exclusively for women; so also were garri processing and pottery.

Traditional training in agriculture and fishing as vocations included climatology, local geography, mathematics, religion and technology. For example, the direction and location of any particular piece of land was learnt and known with mathematical precision using specific land marks. Accurate determination of the type and direction of wind and the cloud was essential to the farmers when burning the bush and to the fisherman when going to the sea so also were the gods associated with particular activities. How to appease them was an exclusive prerogative of the priests. The gentle wind "Ofim- usuk usuk" was excellent for the fisherman and the farmer for going to sea and burning the bush respectively. The violent wind "Ofim-Ikot-Idombi" was to be avoided for all outing activities. These were easily associated with the position and nature of the cloud. Wine-tapping, an occupation which needed expert skills and tact involved carpentry skills for making of ladder and black-smithing skills for sharpening the chisel, among others. All these, among many others, were necessarily in preparation for life and living.

The purpose of traditional technical-vocational education in Akwa Ibom State was, therefore, to prepare for adulthood. Consequently functionalism, social responsibility and productivity were emphasized.

From the foregoing, it is evident that in Akwa Ibom State technical-vocational education can be grouped into three: agriculture, trade and crafts and paraprofessionals.

### THE PERIOD, 1840-1900

The period 1840 -1900 witnessed not only the arrival of different missionary societies such as the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Wesleyans but also the budding establishment of churches and schools. There was, however, no formal emphasis on technical and vocational education because the missionaries who were the sole proprietors of the schools emphasized reading, religion, arithmetic and writing. These subjects were most relevant to the needs of the missionaries, the colonialist administrators and their trader brothers where the products of the schools served as interpreters, clerks, evangelists and teachers. This trend set the pat-

tern which the education system in the State was to follow for the next eighty or more years.

However, the establishment of the Hope Waddell Training Institute in Calabar in 1895 as a combined normal, vocational and secondary school had slight influence among indigenes of the state owing to the attenuation effect of distance which to a great extent limited admission opportunities.

### THE PERIOD, 1900 - 1960

Technical and vocational education expanded very slowly in the state. There was little or no conscious effort to promote this area of education. However, some trading companies such as the United Africa Company and John Holt provided employment for some indigenes as sales clerks, mechanics and draughtsmen. Such employments afforded them the opportunities for on-the-job technical and vocational education in the company's workshops. Some of these companies concentrated along the coastal towns including Itu, Ifianyong and Oron.

The Church of Scotland mission played a front-line role in Akwa Ibom State in the area of technical-vocational education by establishing the Boys Vocational School at Ididep and the Girls Vocational School at Mbak Atai (but later moved to Ikot Obong) all in Itu Local Government Area. The focus was the training of the probationary teachers who were proficient not only with their heads and hearts but most importantly, capable of using their hands efficiently, acknowledging the dignity of human labour. The prime objective was to promote the teaching of technical and vocational subjects and the local crafts at the primary school level. The schools were later abolished when they were overtaken by increasing need to train professional teachers.

### THE PERIOD, 1960-1987

This period witnessed a boom in the development of the educational sector in Nigeria generally and in the state in particular. Within these twenty-seven years many technical and vocational schools and other related establishments sprang up in the area. The church gradually lost grips of the schools. Most of the technical and vocational schools established during these years were either government-owned or community-found. Private schools were mostly in the commercial and business-oriented courses such as accounting, Shorthand and Typing, among others. Technical and vocational courses such as auto-mechanics, electrical-electronics, metal work; technical drawing, wood-work initially looked down



## **SECTION 8: EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Primary Education**



**Mission-founded primary school at Ikot Osukpong, Ibiono, Itu L.G.A.**



**Catholic Convent Nursery and Primary School, Ifuho, Ikot Ekpene L.G.A.**



## Secondary Education



Methodist Boys High School, Oron (established in 1905).



Holy Family College, Abak



Regina Coeli College, Esene, Ikot, Abasi, LGA

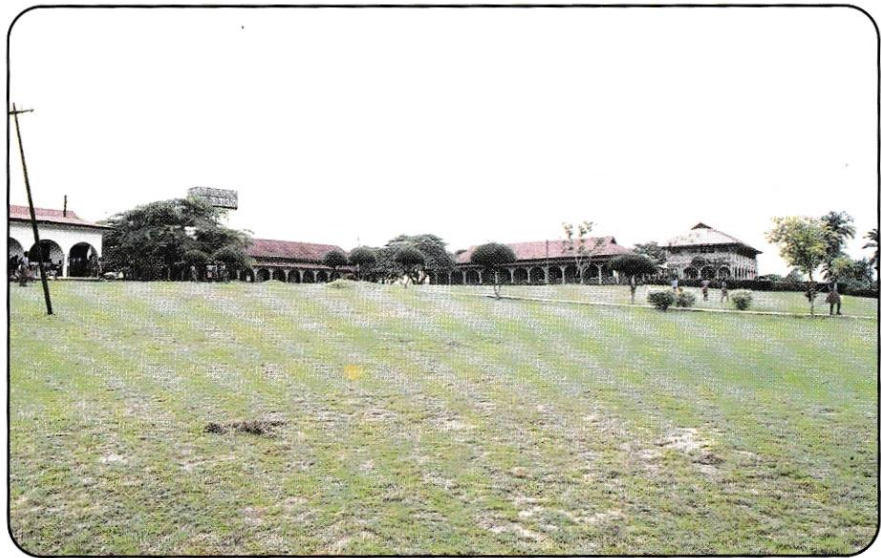


## The Etinan Institute



The Etinan Institute, founded by the Qua Iboe Mission in 1915 has provided primary, secondary, technical and teacher's training education at different times.





**Connelia Connelly College, Afaha Offiong, Uyo L.G.A.**



**Union Secondary School, Ibiaku**



**Federal Government College, Ikot Ekpene**



## Vocational Training



Government Secondary Science School, Ndon Eyo, Onna L.G.A.



Carpentry Department of St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Centre, Ukana Iba, Essien Udim L.G.A. - one of the four special schools in the state.



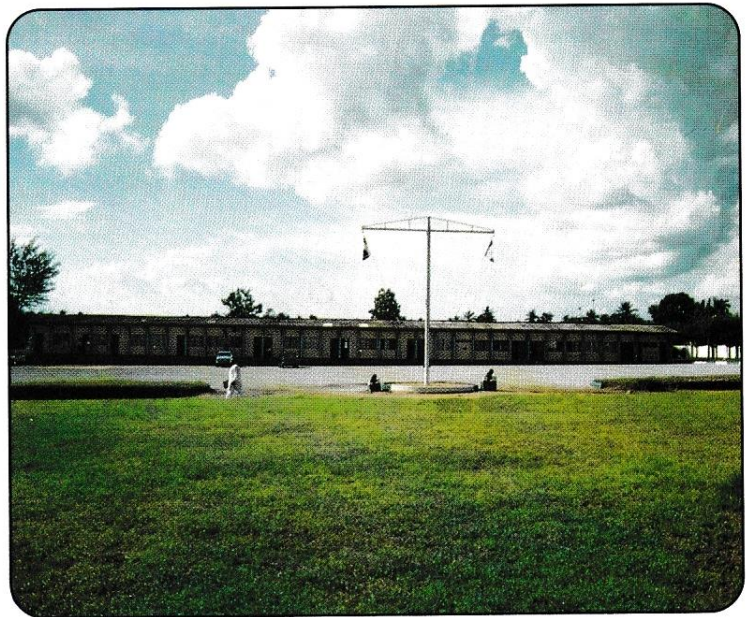
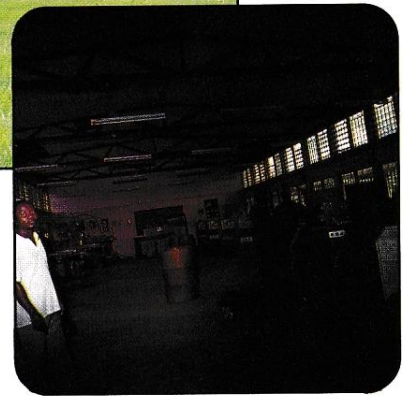
Slawd Peters engineering training centre, Etinan.



## Technical Education



Government Technical College at Ikot Ada Idem, Ibiono, Itu L.G.A.



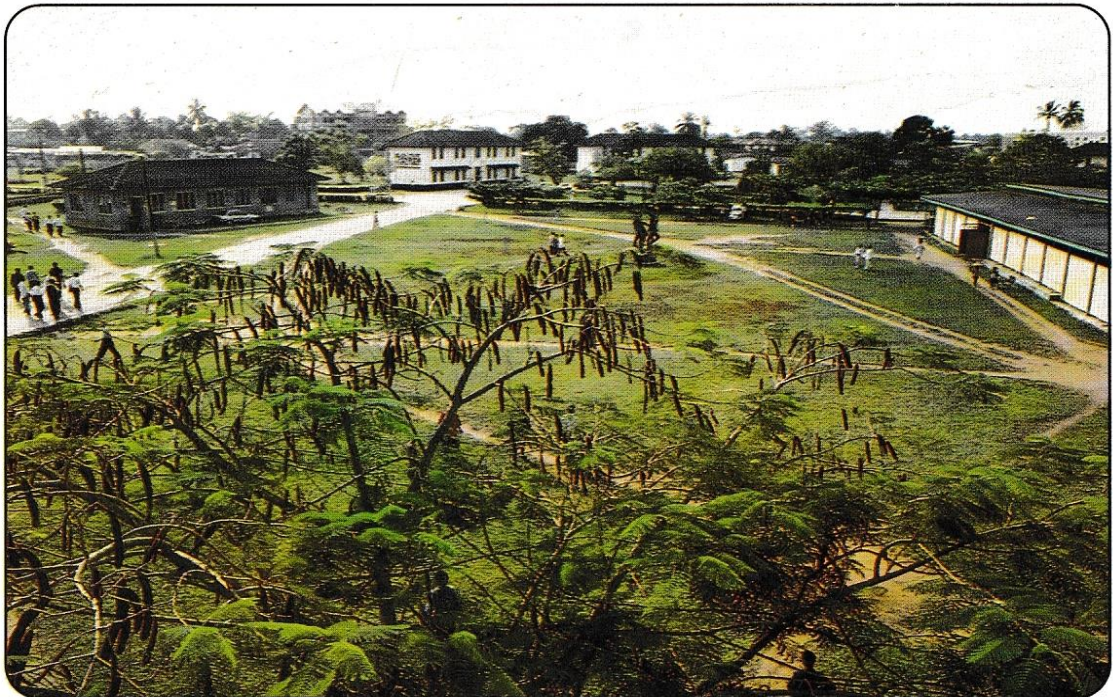
Nigerian Maritime Academy, Oron



## Higher Education



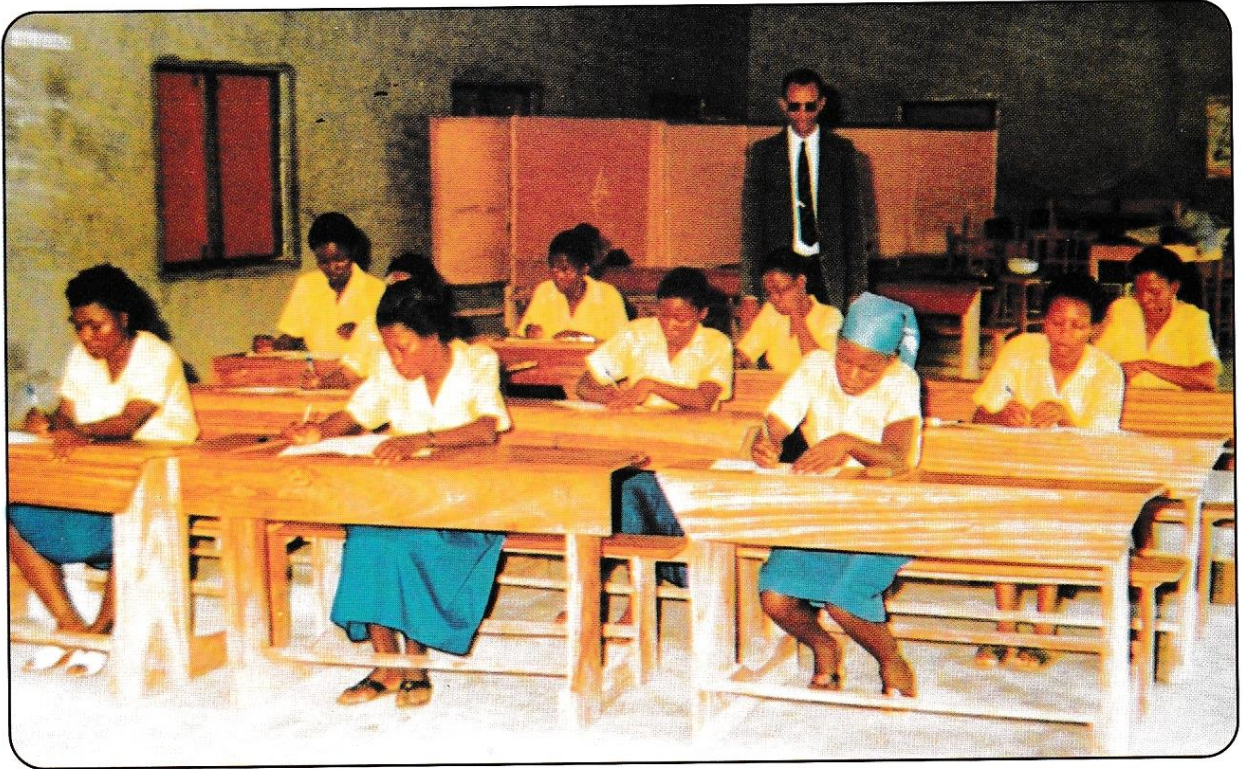
The new Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic at Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene.



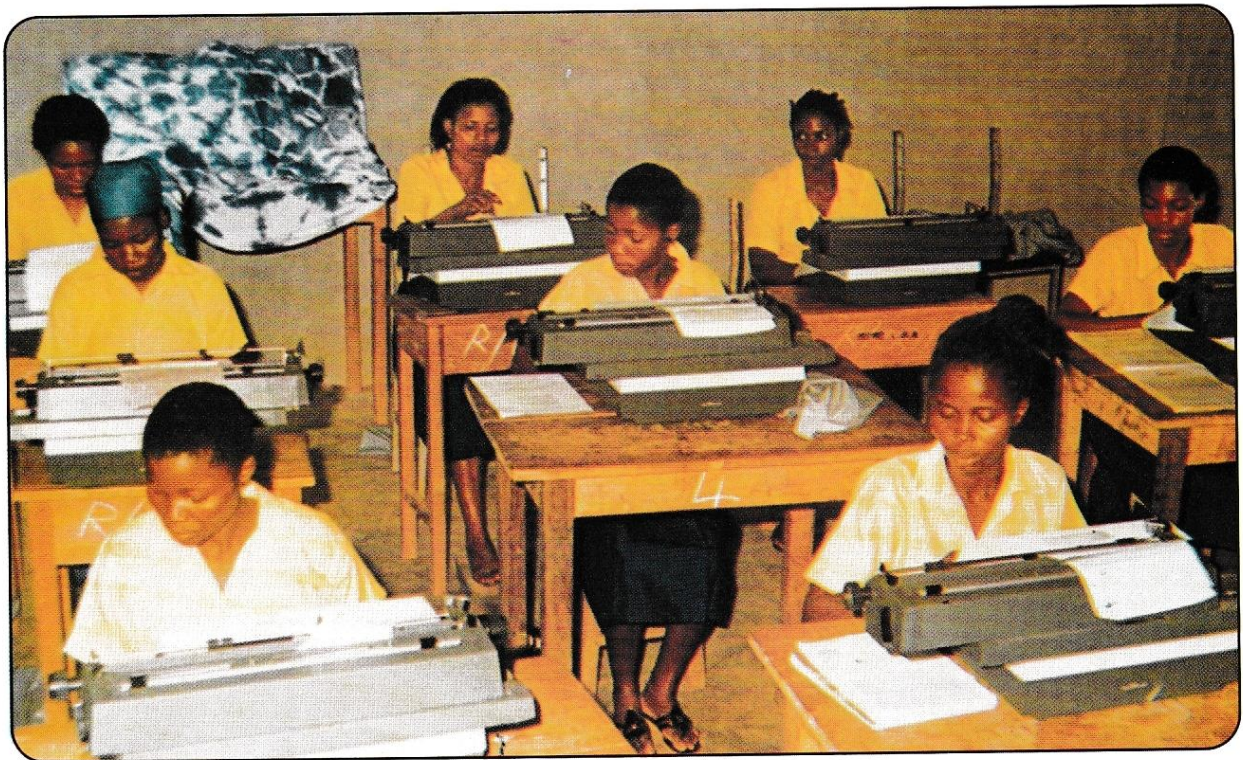
The University of Uyo – From an Elementary Teachers Training Centre in the 1930s to a Federal University in 1991: no other Nigerian University can claim a pedigree like that.



## Adult Education

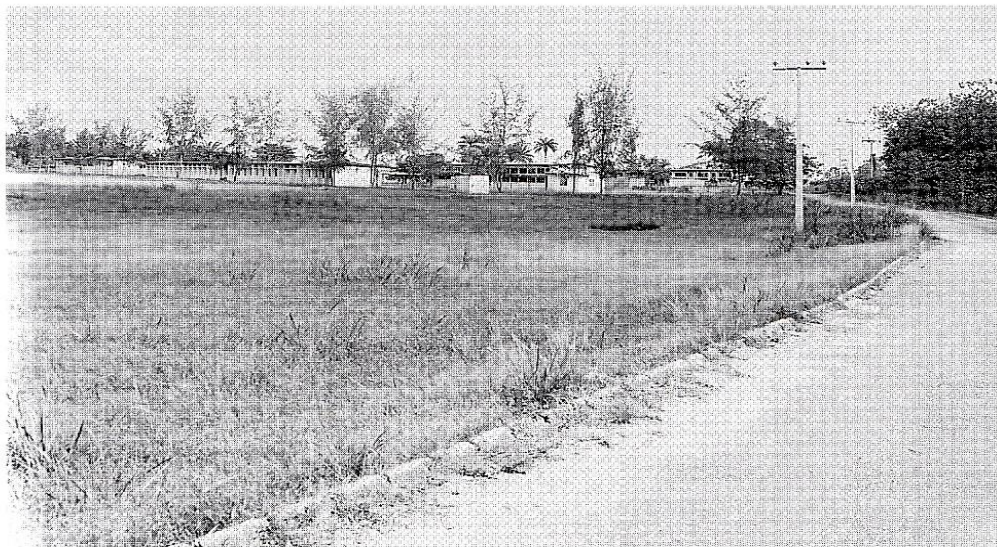


Adult education – literacy class.



Adult education: typing lessons





**Government Technical College, Ikot Ada Idem.**

upon became more attractive especially as this period witnessed a new National Policy of Education that emphasized pre-vocational and technical aspects of education.

Problem of general acceptability in this area was still rife. There was limited job and further studies opportunities for products of the few existing vocational/technical and trade schools. In short, the technical/vocational certificate was still seen as a dead-end to any young person in spite of the establishment of such technical and vocational institutions as at Abak, Ikot Akata, Ewet, and Ikot Ada Idem.

#### **THE PERIOD, 1987-1994**

These seven glorious years not only marked the inception of the state but more especially have seen gallant leaps of technical and vocational education in the area. The establishment of Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua opened up opportunity for technicians and paraprofessionals in different fields to aspire up to the Higher National Diploma (HND). With the establishment of vocational-related departments including the Departments of Home Economics and Communication Arts in the University of Uyo, greater opportunities are now open to the young Akwa Ibom people who are talented technically and voca-tionally. The

school-on-wheels programme has also come to assist the local people too.

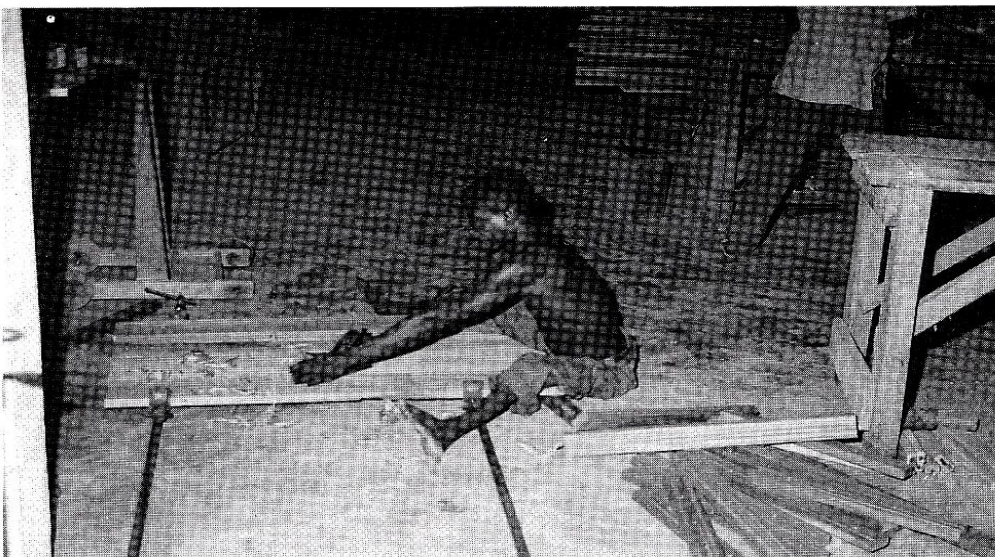
#### **STATUTORY PROVISIONS**

Akwa Ibom State (then part of Cross River State) was one of the very few states in Nigeria that started the junior secondary component of the 6-3-3-4 system in 1982/83. This component of the system emphasizes the technical-vocational aspect of education. As

such pre-vocational subjects, especially Business Studies and Home Economics were introduced in most schools while Woodwork, Metalwork, Electronics and Mechanics were limited only to a few schools that had the relevant human material resources. The use of local craftsmen for teaching of local crafts was bedevilled with a wide variety of logistics problems. Consequently it did not thrive in most schools.

#### **CONTRIBUTIONS**

In many technical and vocational areas, the state has contributed significantly to the economic development of the country. For example, cane work, raffia work, woodwork, foundry smelting and smithing which are within the indigenous vocations and technologies have in recent years assumed greater dimensions. Cane products, raffia materials and carved works from the state are



**Carpentry Department**





**Women weaving Cooperative**

presently contributing as foreign exchange earners. Foundry especially in areas related to palm oil and rice milling and cassava crating has made it possible for many cottage industries to be established. Unfortunately, most of the technicians involved in such developments are those who either passed through ordinary street-side apprenticeship or had learnt their trade the hard way, informally. This trend, however, indicates that Akwa Ibom State has lots of potentials in the technical and vocation sector which are yet untapped.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL POTENTIALS

The untapped potentials in the technical and vocational areas in Akwa Ibom State range from pottery to mechanics, architectural designs to music and printing, leather works, woodworks, sculpturing and metal works. The state has very budding creative potentials which need just a little financial, and sometimes only

moral, encouragement. Increasing encouragement of indigenously appropriate technologies, functional co-ordination and successful training opportunities are necessary to generate adequate multiplier effects among vested interests.

Among the numerous problems challenging technical and vocational education in the state the following are particularly important:

**Negative Attitude:** The attitude of the parents, the students, the government and the private sector need to be more positively oriented towards the technical and vocational components of the educational sector. Greater opportunities for accepting technical and vocational education as being of great value functionally and financially can encourage more youths to prefer this type of education to the literary type.

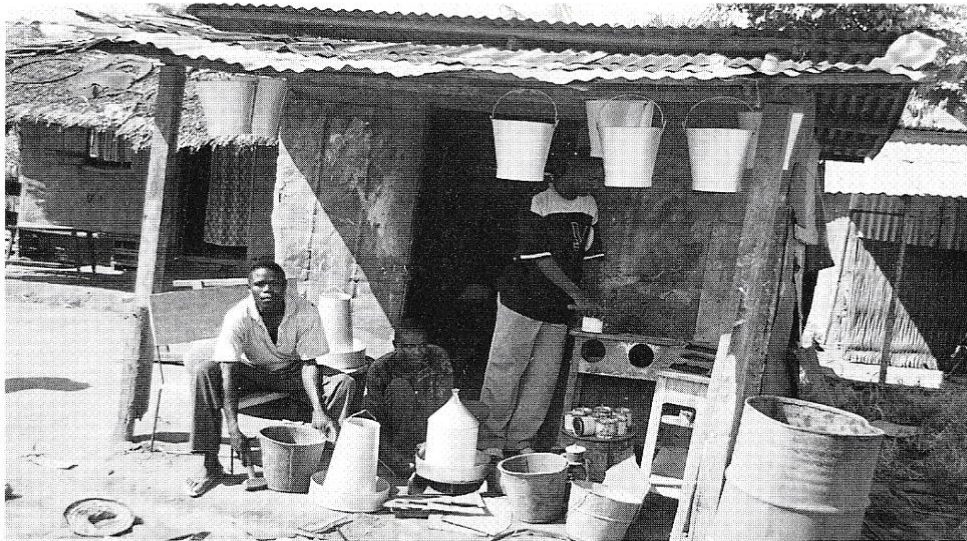
**Lack of Job Opportunities:** Most indigenes of the state still hope for government employment after training despite the self-employment opportunities afforded by technical/vocational education. This situation is attributable to inadequate financial base.

**Inadequate Resources:** Qualified teachers in the different vocational and technical education areas, funds, workshop space and equipment are in short supply. Relevant textbooks are not only unaffordable but most often not available. The Parents-Teachers Associations. (PTAs), Old Students Associations, philanthropists, external agencies, special industrial interests and companies among others can increase availability of resources including training and retraining of teachers. Imported equipment should always consider the spare parts and related softwares along with the original import.



**Slawd Peters Technical Workshop**





A Tinker with his apprentices

**Government Ambivalence:** Government policies should be consistently reinforcing and co-operatively functional. Teacher training and recruitment programmes must reflect the technical/vocational needs of the state. Political decisions and their educational effects should balance or tilt towards educational rationality rather than the insatiable political convenience. Government should stop basing its technical and vocational education policies on mere assumptions of what are not available. For example, the availability of potable water and electricity are usually assumed when planning for equipment of technical and vocational establishments when, in fact, most rural schools do not have electricity and potable water.

**Examination-Oriented Programmes:** The technical, vocational and trade schools are still heartily reliant on and pigeon-holed by the examination loaded curriculum. This means that the direction of teaching and learning is greatly influenced by the type of examination to be taken. This situation stifles originality, creativity and individuality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Course Relevance:** Courses which emphasize locally appropriate technologies and which reflect the current and future needs of the society should be integrated into

the curriculum for technical/vocational education.

**University of Science and Technology:** This type of educational institution is long overdue for the state, considering the lost opportunities of the past for the indigenes of the state who had no such opportunities elsewhere.

**National Board for Technical Education:** The State needs to be more aggressive at encouraging the road-side

technicians and mechanics to improve upon their apprenticeship programmes.

**Foreign Support:** Efforts should be intensified towards securing foreign technical partnership and support for some of the existing programmes in the State Polytechnic. This can allow opportunities for exchange programmes.

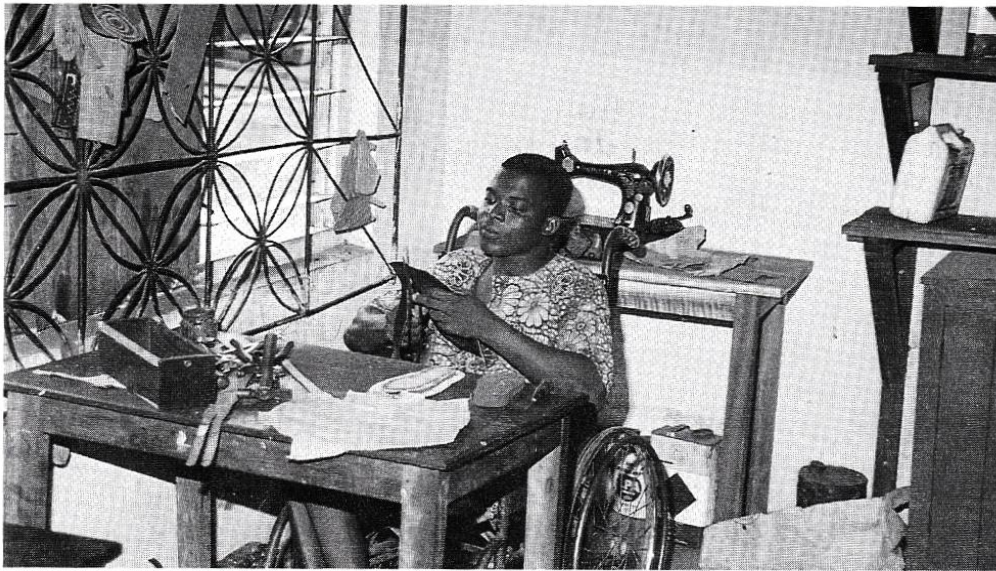
**Talent Hunt:** This should mature into the formation of a technology village which should be charged with the responsibility of developing new and relevant technologies for solving some cottage industrial problems for the state.

**Technical and Financial Support:** The need for technical and financial support to qualified, creative and originally productive technicians through community banks and co-operative societies cannot be over-emphasized. Technical and financial support could also be achieved through



Brass products





**A handicapped Shoe maker at work**

inter-ministerial and inter-company exchange programmes.

**Greater Emphasis on Continuous Assessment:** In order to allow for greater creativity, origi-

be spared. The Federal and State governments, individuals and organizations, at state, national and international levels should be involved in the development of the blossoming Akwa Ibom State.

nality and guided individuality which are basis of technological development, there is greater need to encourage that continuous assessment in technical and vocational education be reviewed upward.

## CONCLUSION

The state is blessed with abundant untapped technical and vocational talents. Efforts to maximize their capabilities should not

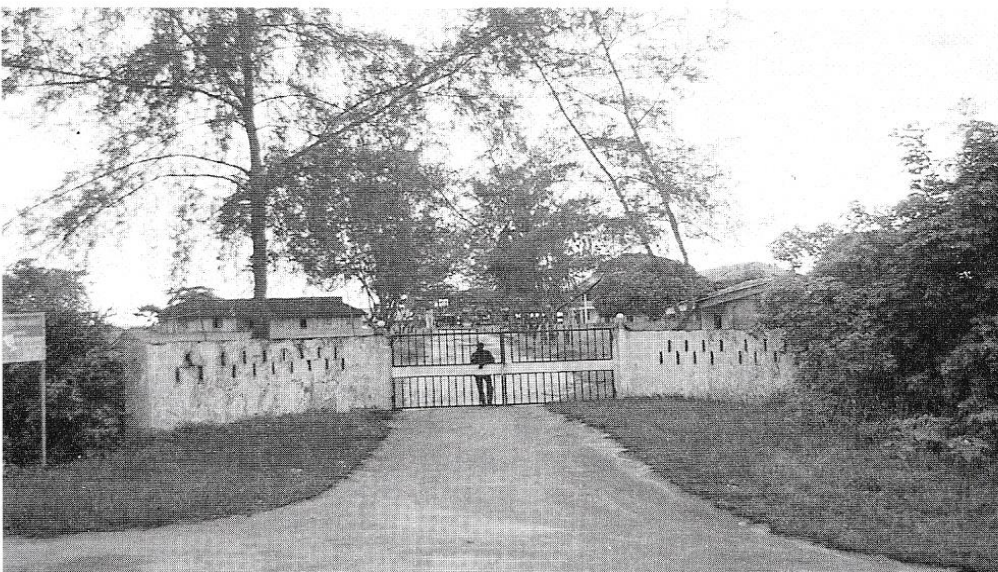




Shoe making department in a Technical School.



Technical School mechanical workshop.



The Government Secondary Science School at Ndon Eyo, Onna. It occupies the old TTC building.