

HARVESTS FROM THE GOWN

VOLUME 2



FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR COMFORT M. EKPO

INTRODUCTION

A university lecturer essentially renders a threefold service: teaching, research and publication of the outcomes of the research, and service to the different strata of the lecturer's community. In these three fields, **Professor (Mrs.) Comfort Memfin Ekpo** has excelled and left lasting legacies. She has produced several senior-ranking academics; has conducted ground-breaking researches around her area of specialization; and has a robust cache of publications to show for her over three decades of continuous labouring in the vineyard of scholarship. She has also served superlatively creditably her primary constituency, the University of Uyo, the entire Nigerian university system, her state of origin in Nigeria, and the nation in various capacities, including her present responsibility as Vice-Chancellor, University of Uyo, a position which she is the first female to occupy. When she turned 60 last year, it was only fit that she be celebrated in the very language of her primary calling: promotion of knowledge through research and publication by publication of a festschrift in her honour, which will suffice as an invaluable teaching material across academic disciplines.

In consonance with the definition of a festschrift as "A volume of miscellaneous learned essays by several hands, written by the students, colleagues, or admirers of a distinguished scholar and presented to him [her] on some special occasion, such as retirement or ...birthday (Holman, 1980, p. 184), the Festschrift Planning Committee had envisaged a publication with a multidisciplinary tinge, but with Education, the celebrator's primary faculty, as the thrust of the book. The broad theme was, hence: **"Education and the Challenge of Resource Management in the 21st Century: A Road Map for Africa"**, and the sub-themes were legion. But the responses that came rather reflected Professor Ekpo's status as Vice-Chancellor who is, necessarily, a colleague and mother-figure for scholars across disciplines in the University of Uyo and beyond, and who has been a teacher and mentor of many. Both the Planning Committee and the Editors were thus prompted by this welcome development to shift ground by broadening the scope of the festschrift beyond

the frontiers of the Faculty of Education to encapsulate submissions from the wide plethora of scholarly fields, while Education still retains its special place in the book as the primary disciplinary constituency of the celebrator. This explains the dominance of essays that relate to the Education-centred broad theme over those from other fields, and the placement of these contributions as the first section in the book with a total of over 40 chapters. In a way, the breaking of disciplinary boundaries has become one ebullient strength of this publication in the sense that it has spiced it with that special flavour that comes only from variety. The book's content thus replicates the umbrella status of the celebrator as Vice-Chancellor of a university. It is significant to also note that the contributions are not only from the celebrator's university, the University of Uyo, but also from other institutions of higher learning in the country, and do indeed include one from outside the shores of Nigeria, specifically from Université Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon, a university with which the University of Uyo has established a formal collaboration relationship as a part of the achievements of the Professor Comfort Ekpo-piloted administration.

The leading segment of the title of the book, *Harvests from the Gown...* is conceptualized from the traditional tripartite division of society into the *Crown* (representing political authority), the *Town* (representing the ordinary people on the streets) and the *Gown* (standing for the intelligentsia). "Harvests" in this context is polysemous: it refers to the Professor's multiple harvests from her superlative fidelity to serving the university system across the seasons, and also to the idea that the book itself offers readers a rich harvest of information across many disciplines within the orbit of the Gown. The book is divided into three broad sections: A - Education, B - Environmental Management and C - the Arts and Humanities, each of which is further subdivided into categories according to the theme of each individual contribution. The essays on the broad category of Education are about 20, and they are further split into three: Library Science and Educational Technology, Education and Resource Management and Health, Information Technology and Media Production. Essays dealing with Environmental Management are five in number and constitute the broad category B, while Arts and Humanities-related contributions are a total of 20. These are further placed in three sub-categories: Translation and French Studies, English Studies (comprising Literature in English and Linguistics) and History, Social Sciences, Law and Philosophy making up the last sub-section. Because of the huge number of the contributions, we have preferred to dispense with the tradition of providing a synopsis of each essay in the Introduction. However, it is necessary to provide a highlight on some of the contributions. For instance, contributors in each

broad or sub-category are not necessarily members of the given academic faculty as there have been a few cases of disciplinary cross-breeding and carpet-crossing. Dr. Paul Maixcent Moussinga, for example, is in the Department of English in his Université Omar Bongo, but his contribution snugly bestrides history and political science. Similarly, Dr Aniekan Brown is of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, but his essay cuts into Education.

It is also auspicious to point out that the categories are only roughly and not precisely based on disciplinary nomenclatures. While papers under Education are placed almost exactly according to their official disciplinary designations, the rest are grouped based more on similarities of themes than on the traditional names of the author's disciplines. This accounts for the inclusion of the paper by Dr Samuel O. Ebong and Dr Faith Ekong in the Environmental Management section. And since there is only one contribution from the Faculty of Law, we naturally placed it within the fold of papers for the Arts and Humanities, more specifically the Social Sciences, especially given the history that the Faculty of Law of the present University of Uyo had actually begun as a department in the Faculty of the Social Sciences in the days of the erstwhile University of Cross River State, Uyo.

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PROFILE OF
PROFESSOR (MRS.)
COMFORT M. EKPO

In the ninth month of her existence, Professor (Mrs.) Comfort Memfin Ekpo left the warmth of her mother's womb into the larger warmth of the Isok family in Etoi Clan, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This was on November 12, 1954. She was named Comfort and Nkoyo by both parents. Unlike many girl-children of that time whose parents were still not inclined to sending them to school for formal western education, her case was blessedly different. Her parents ensured she began the long walk through the forest of western education at the age of six, and this was in the year of Nigeria's independence, 1960. Her first port of call was the St. Luke's Lutheran (Primary) School, Ibiaku Itam, Itu Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Seven years later she was done with this first rung of the trek through formal western education and moved on to the highly prestigious Queen's College, Yaba, Lagos, in 1968. Having obtained the West African School Certificate (WASC) in 1973, she spent the next two years (1973 to 1975) at one of Nigeria's famous Unity Schools, the Federal Government College, Kaduna, where she added to her kit the Higher School Certificate (HSC).

Professor Ekpo crossed from the pre-tertiary to the tertiary level of education in 1975, and her landing point was again far from home: the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, one of Nigeria's first generation universities. She earned the Bachelor of Library Science from the Ahmadu Bello University in the Second Class, Upper Division (2:1) in 1978, the same year she also harvested the Graduate Certificate in Education. In 1985, she brought home to herself and family the Master of Education degree in Instructional Technology, and crowned it all with the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Educational Technology in 1990, which she obtained from the University of Wales, Cardiff, United Kingdom. From 2005 through 2006 Professor Comfort Ekpo did a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol, U. K. Today, Professor Ekpo is proudly armed with the highly covetable Teacher Registration Certificate.

Although Prof. (Mrs.) Ekpo's journey through formal education has not been noticeably truncated, it has still been laced with service to the Nigerian state at different strata. Before joining the Nigerian University system, for instance, she had been a Teacher Librarian at the famous Immaculate Conception Secondary School, Itak, Ikono Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, a Reference Librarian at the Ministry of Education in the erstwhile Cross River State, and a Teacher Librarian and Mistress 11 at the Universal Primary Education Teacher's College, Zaria, Kaduna State. These various services were rendered from 1978 to 1981. Her movement into the terrain of the university system began in 1981, when she was a part-time lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Moving homeward, she was later appointed Lecturer 111 in the defunct College of Education, Uyo, which subsequently

transformed into the erstwhile University of Cross River State (UNICROSS), Uyo, and thereafter into the federal University at Uyo in 1991. Following the elevation of the defunct College of Education, Uyo, to the status of a university in 1983, Prof. Ekpo's status as Lecturer 111 was accordingly changed to that of Teaching Assistant in the same year. Thenceforth, she rose steadily and sure-footedly through the ranks until **October 1, 2001**, when she attained the position of full **professor of Educational Technology** of the University of Uyo. She became the first woman to be so promoted in the University of Uyo.

Prof. Ekpo's ascent through the ranks of her career has been quite eventful as she has imprinted her mettle as a scholar in all the three basic flanks of the profession, which include teaching, research and publications, and community service. As a teacher who has been closely associated with the profession from her infancy, first as a daughter of a head teacher in primary school, then as a secondary school teacher through the tertiary level, she has produced students several of whom have entered the professorial orbit of the profession. Thus far, she has to her credit the supervision of some 45 undergraduate and postgraduate students' researches. In addition to her routine tasks as a teacher in the University of Uyo, she has made her cache of knowledge and experience in her chosen field available to many other tertiary institutions of learning outside Uyo, in many ways. She has, for instance, been the external examiner to the Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, the Osun State College of Education, the University of Port Harcourt, where she examined postgraduate students, and the University of Benin, where she equally midwived the production of a doctoral degree as external examiner. Further, as external assessor, she has also produced an avalanche of professors and associate professors spanning Federal University of Science and Technology, Minna, University of Port Harcourt, University of Benin and the University of Jos. As a researcher, Prof. Comfort Ekpo has a robust harvest to display for her keen commitment to the activity. She has a total of about 86 publications which include a thesis and dissertations, books, book chapters, conference papers, articles and microforms in highly respected journals around the world. In addition to these, she has recorded no fewer than 8 media productions of instructional materials, many of which have largely been iconoclastic both in their conception, execution and diversity of fields covered. And in recent times she has participated in about twenty academic conferences both in the country and around the world.

Prof. Ekpo's attributes of brilliance, hard work as a teacher and researcher, and of having an impeccable personality have reflected in the frequency and nature of responsibilities that have been entrusted into her care over the many seasons of her

sojourn in the university system. She had been head of her department, the Department of Educational Technology and Library Science, for 6 years during which she designed and mounted the Diploma Programme and the Bachelor in Library and Information Science as well as organized a state-wide instructional media production workshop for primary and secondary school teachers. From headship of her department she rose to become the Director of the Institute of Education, where she again left long-lasting legacies. Some of these include introduction of conference computation of the backlog of results she had inherited; introduction of collaborative research on phonics with some United Kingdom-based researchers under a non-governmental charitable organization christened the "Stepping Stones Nigeria". The fast-track reading scheme using the Jolly Phonics was one of the outcomes of this project. This has already been adopted by the Akwa Ibom State Government for use in the training of all primary one and two teachers in the State. Dr. Thelma Ekuinam and Dr. Olubusola I. Eshiet's joint contribution in this compendium provides an overview of the project. It was also Prof. Comfort Ekpo who hosted the first of the annual conferences and seminars that culminated in the publication of a Book of Readings entitled, *Effective Teaching of Science and Technology*, and also in the birth of the Institute of Education Journal entitled *The Journal of Research and Development in Education* (JORDE).

The celebrator's responsibilities and services within and outside the University of Uyo have been quite numerous, stretching from headship of several committees in her faculty through University-wide tasks and duties to services to Akwa Ibom State and other parts of the country and the world. Highlights of these include nomination by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to serve on panels to draw up SIWES Job Specification Document and Benchmark for Education in Nigerian Universities; Visiting Scholar, University of Port Harcourt and of the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol, UK; and Founding Editor, Journal of Research and Development in Education. She has also been a member of the Governing Council, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria; member of Commonwealth Interview Panel; member of the Goodnews Community Education Board; member of the Interim Management Board of the Akwa Ibom State Institute of Technology; pioneer Coordinator, Women in Nigeria (WIN), Akwa Ibom State; founder and first General Coordinator of Women-In-Total-Girl Development (WIT-GIRL) and the team leader for the collaborative research on Synthetic Phonics (The Jolly Phonics Read and Write Forever Project).

Professor (Mrs.) Comfort Ekpo was also the first female academic of the University of Uyo to be appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of the University. Besides assisting the Vice-Chancellor in the daily running of the University, this office

placed on her shoulders chairpersonship of 12 invaluable committees within the University. Some of these committees were University Research Committee, Committee on the Review of Academic Brief of the University, University Library Committee, In-House Accreditation Committee, Senate Appeals Committee, University Examination Conduct Monitoring Committee and several investigative panels and committees.

The celebrator is also a member of several professional bodies, some of which are Nigeria Association of Educational Media and Technology (NAEMT), in which she has been Treasurer; member of the Association for Promoting Quality Education in Nigeria (APQEN); member and National Treasurer of the Association for Research in Education and Humanities (AREH); member of the National School Library Association (NSLA); Zonal Coordinator and member of Gender, Science and Technology Association (GASAT – Nigeria Chapter); member, International Association for Continuing Professional Development (IACPD); and member, Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD). Prof. Ekpo was ultimately interviewed and appointed the first female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Uyo with effect from December 1, 2010, and has since been replicating her history of visionary leadership and ingenious innovations in many aspects of the life of the University. As Vice-Chancellor, two of her cardinal ideas of leadership, namely, to “make the weak to become strong” and to “take the poor to the realm and place of wealth”, which have been espoused in this festschrift by two of the contributors, Dr. Gabriel E. Idang, and Dr. Adekunle Ibrahim, have been translated into concrete reality. This is in the establishment of the Hope Scheme for indigent students which, when fully operational, will forestall the dropping out of school by any student who is financially weak but academically brilliant and ready to study.

Even in our world in which, to paraphrase William Shakespeare, the good that men do “is oft interred with their bones”, Prof. Comfort Ekpo's strides in various fields and ways have not gone without appreciation by some of the groups, governments and bodies. She has thus received from these to date some 23 different honours, scholarships and awards. Among the scholarships have been those from the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Commonwealth, while the honours and awards have come to her from a myriad of associations, clubs and organizations. While these expressions of recognition would be too numerous to be itemized here, some of them are too compellingly outstanding to be ignored. For instance, she is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Education, Fellow of Nigeria Association of Educational Media and Technology (NAEMT), Fellow and recipient of the Award of Excellence in Educational Development.

Prof. Comfort Ekpo is happily married to Prof. Memfin Ekpo, a professor of Pathology; and they have two children. Both she and her husband are co-tillers in the same vineyard of the University of Uyo. As this designer of academic programmes, this hostess of the first of a certain series of annual conferences and seminars, this Founding Editor of a reputable academic journal, this first female Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), this first female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Uyo, this first daughter of Akwa Ibom State to be Vice-Chancellor, this great but quiet achiever, teacher, researcher, preacher, author, mentor, project moderator, mother of all, eminent university administrator, humanist, campaigner for gender equity, and lover of the young turns 60 this year, it has been thought most auspicious that a festschrift be done in her honour as a modest addition to the appreciation she has already earned for fossilizing her vision very strongly in the lives of those she has come across in her existence thus far. This book by her colleagues, friends and former students is a modest token of appreciation of her labour of love for the advancement of humanity. It is also significant that one of her great teachers at the undergraduate level, Professor M. Afolabi, is still very much around, strong and energetic, and has felt sufficiently fulfilled and proud of his former student to do her the honour of editing the compendium.

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