



The Covenantal Priest-Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko And The Development Of Technical Theatre Practice In AkSU

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Abstract

The Covenantal Relationship of leadership and followership in Akwa Ibom State University during the period that Very Revered Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko worked in different capacities within the Institution can only be described as amazing. This research endeavour entitled “The Covenantal Priest-Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Nyoyoko and the Development of Technical Theatre Practice in Akwa Ibom State University. Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Nyoyoko” is therefore a scholarly endeavour aimed at joining voice with numerous others to affirm the fact that this indefatigable Scholar and University Administrator is indeed a God sent Priest, Scholar and University Administrator that has contributed his quota to the development of mankind, Technical Theatre Practice inclusive. Our genius should not only be bestowed with praises at death, but while still alive, hence this exercise. This research endeavour adopts descriptive type of research and utilises both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. At completion, the outcome of this research promises to remain a rich source of information for the future researchers in respect of the pillars and fathers of Akwa Ibom State University in general and Technical Theatre Practice in particular. It also promises to serve as a dependable reading material for Technical Theatre Scholars, Students and Practitioners. This research concludes that it is beneficiary to give honour to whom honour is due and make known to the world and future generation the contributions of great men to motivate them to do more and also to encourage others to be of great importance to their environments and beyond. This work recommends that people in positions of authority and responsibility should eschew corruption and focus on giving their best to the society so as to engrave their names and personalities on the marble of greatness and on the sands of times.

Keywords: Covenantal, Priest, Development, Technical and Theatre.



Introduction

Great men are known by their achievements and contributions to the development of institutions and organisations within their immediate society and beyond. While some people are looking for every possible opportunity to embezzle and impoverish their people, some in the likes of Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko are longing for opportunities to contribute their quotas to the development of their people through diverse media. This moral contrast is important because corruption and crime continue to weaken Nigerian society and frustrate meaningful institutional development (Edem & Udom, 2024). Thus, the covenantal relationship of leadership and followership happened to manifest itself in Akwa Ibom State University through the personality of Professor Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko as he was divinely sent to lay the superstructure in which Akwa Ibom State University is resting and Technical Theatre Practice being the anchor point of the Department of Performing Arts is gaining grounds. University-based theatres serve as spaces for teaching, learning, cultural exchange and artistic development (Edem, 2025).

Before units, departments, faculties and institutions are properly established to make positive impact in the society, there must be that human factor to propel the wheels of development and progress. This is why it is strongly believed that no historiographical presentation of Akwa Ibom State University with the different departments and faculties can be complete and objective without the name of Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko prominently engraved.

Conceptual Framework

In this research endeavour, certain concepts are operationally utilised, some of which include:

Covenantal:

Covenantal is a concept that is derived from the word covenant which has to do with a solemn agreement of fellowship and faith between members... (Geddes and Grosset 2007: 128). Covenantal in this context therefore really has to do with the divine relationship of leadership in the personality of Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko and the followership being the staff and students of Akwa Ibom State University. One who enters into a covenant is known as covenantor while one in whose favour a covenant is made is called covenantee.

Priest:

A priest is any person who is “specially trained to perform religious duties and ceremonies” (Gadsby 2003, 1299). In the words of Geddes and Grosset (2007, 378), priest is “a person authorised to perform sacred rites”, while the work of a priest and its related skills are generally referred to as priestcraft.



Development:

Development is a word highly associated with increase, maturation, progression and expansion. Iniobong Umotong (2020) avers that, “development has to do with transformational changes..., whatever exists is in a process of becoming and as it journeyed to become, it is said to have undergone some developmental strides which in turn qualifies such a thing; society or organism, as mature in a way toward its ultimate realisation. It is reorganization and orientation of the entire economic and social system (Sibani and Oko, 2014,p.84).In this context, development has to do with issues surrounding the commencement and gradual advancement of Technical Theatre Practice instituted in the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University. Development, therefore, should not be limited to physical structures alone, but should include moral responsibility, social transformation and the improvement of human welfare (Essien & Edem, 2024).

Technical:

Technical is connected with the knowledge of how machines and other equipment function toward the actualisation of identified organisational objectives. In this context, it has to do with practical utilisation and manipulation of equipment using scientific methodology peculiar to Performing Arts Practice. It should be noted that:

Every design element has one thing or the other to do with the other design elements in order to make any play production a success in the theatre. This is also the position of various scholars on the subject of theatre and the collaborators that make up the technical theatre. All the design elements are to be put into serious consideration in the planning, designing, plotting, and the eventual process of any play production (Oke Olufemi 2012, 258).

Therefore, the creative and effective consideration and utilisation of the different technological elements or components in a theatrical performance in furtherance of revelation of form and locales, character status and aesthetics are generally referred to as Technical Theatre. The five (5) recognisable areas of Technical Theatre are scene, lighting, sound, costumes and make-up design and these are quite essential and inevitable in Performing Arts Practice. Technical elements also support storytelling when music, movement and design are properly integrated into performance (Ekpo, Edem, & Edet, 2023).

Theatre:

Theatre is defined in this context as a setting for important performative events. African theatre often depends on performance space, ritual arrangement and communal participation to convey cultural meaning (Edem, 2024, pp. 91–92). It may be a building or other found spaces where plays, dances, operas or other related activities are usually performed before audience



members. In this context, Gadsby (2007, 1717) explains that, theatre is “a building or place with a stage where plays or shows are performed”. In Akwa Ibom State University, there is a well and purpose built theatre called The Pinnacle Theatre which came into existence as a result of Professor Nyoyoko’s unwavering efforts toward the development of Technical Theatre Practice in the Institution.

The Personality of Very Rev. Fr. (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko

Very Reverend Father (Prof.) Nyoyoko is an indigene of Adiasim Ikot Essiendot in Essien Udim Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. At present, Prof. Vincent Nyoyoko is a Professor at the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies(RCS), Akwa Ibom State University. Very Reverend Father (Prof.) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko holds a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) which he obtained in 1990 in Biblical Studies (Old Testament) Christian Theology. His career objectives include to contribute towards the academic, administrative and students in Nigeria and beyond.

Professor Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko is an erudite scholar with special skills and abilities. He is a dedicated, result-oriented and dependable scholar, a covenantal priest with over forty (40) years of priestly, research, academic and administrative experiences. He is highly resourceful and innovative with proficiency in Information and Computer Technology (ICT). Professor Nyoyoko’s research interest is on interaction between Biblical Studies, Christian Theology and African Culture.

With regards to his contributions to knowledge, Prof. Vincent Nyoyoko’s main focus of research has been in the two broad areas of:

Biblical Studies and Christian Theology, with particular attention to the socio-cultural setting and historical sequence of Biblical Writings as well as the interaction of Biblical Studies and Theology in Africa..., this approach is important and relevant for a contextual hermeneutical understanding of any Biblical periscope and theology in this twenty-first century society in which Biblical Stories and Theology have been badly battered by many preachers and teachers of the Bible and theology (Professor Nyoyoko’s CV, 2022).

From Professor Nyoyoko’s area of interest and contributions to knowledge, this indefatigable scholar and covenantal priest has more than ten (10) published books, either as single or co-authored, over fifty (50) articles and has edited many journals and book chapters. He is widely read within and outside Nigeria. He is a member of a good number of professional associations some which include Bible Society of Nigeria (BSC), Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABS) amongst many others.



Professor Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko is a Resource Person to Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and has served as External Examiner to many Universities some which include the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies in University of Uyo, University of Jos, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Gombe State University and Catholic Institute of West Africa at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels amongst many others.

Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko served at one time or the other in many Akwa Ibom State University Ad HOC and Statutory committees including: Chairman, Akwa Ibom State University Senate Business Committee; Chairman, Akwa Ibom State University Examinations Misconduct Committee; Member, Akwa Ibom State University Finance and General Purposes Committee; Member, Akwa Ibom State University Central A&PC for Junior and Senior Staff; Member, Akwa Ibom State University Governing Council; Member, Akwa Ibom State University Academic Programmes Development Committee amongst many others. Professor Vincent Nyoyoko was the Head, Department of Philosophy; Head, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies; Dean, Faculty of Arts and Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration and Head of Obio Akpa Campus, Akwa Ibom State University, the position which he held from July, 2013 to July, 2017 and contributed immensely to the development of Technical Theatre Practice in Akwa Ibom State University.

Finally, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko is a philanthropist per excellence. As a result of his selfless services and philanthropism, numerous awards have been bestowed on this patriotic son of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria some which include: Fellow, Institute of Corporate Administration (FICA) and Fellow, Institute of Industrial Administration (FIIA) to mention but a few of them. He has always been a blessing to the people around him and he is still in the business of blessing people as exemplified in his relationship with staff and students of the Department of Performing Arts and Technical Theatre Practice of Akwa Ibom State University.

The Role of Very Rev. Fr. (Prof) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko in The Establishment Of Performing Arts Department In Akwa Ibom State University

The role of Very Rev. Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko in the establishment of Performing Arts Department in Akwa Ibom State University is indelible. At first, during the first National Universities Commission (NUC) verification visit in 2012, Prof. Nyoyoko played a key role of sitting as the Head of Department and presented the Department to the visiting NUC Team. At the end of this exercise, the Department was adjudged qualified to be established as a full fledged Department in the Faculty of Arts, Akwa Ibom State University.

As a result, during 2012/2013 session, the Department of Performing Arts started full academic activities with twenty (20) students and four (4) lecturers. It was at this period that this researcher, Dr. Okon Udofot Jacob was appointed as the Pioneer Head of Department. Other lecturers working with Dr. O. U. Jacob were Nkiruka Akaenyi Jacinta, Charles Asuquo Effiong



and Lucy Michael Iseyen. The man at the helm of affairs as the Dean of Faculty of Arts, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus was the Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko and he undoubtedly exhibited his academic prowess by nurturing the young Performing Arts Department with other departments of English, History and International Studies, Mass Communication, Philosophy, as well as Religious and Cultural Studies to enviable positions.

On brief History of the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University, the Departmental Staff Information Handbook (Revised Edition 2021, 10) states that:

The Faculty of Arts was established in Akwa Ibom State University (AKSU) during the 2012/2013 academic session in Obio Akpa Campus of the University with six departments. Out of the six departments, Department of Performing Arts is one. The first batch of students in the Department of Performing Arts were 20 in number and four (4) lecturers started in March, 2013 with the general and borrowed courses. The first batch of lecturers at the Department assumed duties in March, 2013. The pioneer members of staff were: Dr. Jacob, Okon Udofot, the Pioneer Head of Department; Mr. Charles Asuquo Effiong; Mrs. Nkiruka Akaenyi Jacinta and Mrs. Lucy Michael Iseyen.

In the same vein, the Akwa Ibom State University Annual Report (2015-2019) explains that:

The Faculty started in February 2013 with Professor Vincent G. Nyoyoko as the Pioneer Dean. He was succeeded in August 2013 by Prof. Otoabasi E. Akpan to consolidate on the gains and efforts of his predecessor. Academic activities in the Faculty started with six (6) Departments, namely: English and Literary Studies, History and International Studies, Mass Communication, Performing Arts, Philosophy, and Religious and Cultural Studies. A total of 188 students matriculated for 2012/2013 session. In compliance with the National Universities Commission accreditation requirements, some changes were effected in the Faculty as the Department of Mass Communication was moved into the Faculty of Social Sciences while the Department of English and Literary Studies was renamed the Department of English.

In 2016, four (4) out of the five (5) departments, namely: English, Performing Arts, Philosophy, and Religious and Cultural Studies secured NUC accreditation while History and International Studies got theirs in 2018.

As the Dean of Faculty in 2013, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko took his time out to mentor and nurture the young scholars towards effective teaching and learning in the newly established Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University, through the time that he was the Head of Obio Akpa Campus up till now that he is



warming up for retirement in 2022, hence his role in the establishment of the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University.

To corroborate the above discourse, O. U. Jacob, Iquo Ebong Okon and Salome Ibok Etim Effiong (2015, 42) comprehensively explain that:

Performing Arts is one of the programmes offered for the award of Bachelor of Arts, B.A. (Hons.) Degree in the Faculty of Arts at the Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus. The Department was established by the Pioneer Vice Chancellor, Professor S.W. Peters in 2012. The First set of (Pioneer) students arrived on 25th February, 2013 and started registration on 26th February, 2013. The first set of Academic Staff were Dr. O. U Jacob, Nkiruka Akaenyi Jacinta, Charles Asuquo Effiong and Mrs. Lucy Michael. They arrived the campus on 25th March, 2013 for documentation. It was at that point that Dr. O. U. Jacob was first appointed as the Pioneer Co-ordinator of the Department. The post held till 6th May, 2013 when he was appointed the Pioneer Ag. Head of Department (H.O.D).

To further chronicle the detailed development of activities in the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University, Jacob, Okon and Effiong (2015, 42-43) expound that:

As soon as the academic staff reported on campus for duty, lectures commenced as the students were eagerly waiting to feel the taste for lectures in the citadel of intellectualism. The Department held its first meeting on 10th April, 2013. The first Departmental Production was held on 20th September, 2013 with a play entitled *Pathway to Success*. The first departmental outing was on 21st June, 2013. The programme was South-South Cultural and Exhibition Performance at Le Meridian Ibom Hotel & Golf Resort. First Semester examinations commenced from 17th June, 2013. The first (Pioneer) Administrative Staff, Miss Salome Ibok Etim Effiong reported on 2nd August, 2013 while the second Administrative Staff, Iquo Ebong Okon assumed on 26th May, 2014. Resumption of 2nd Semester for pioneer students was on 20th October, 2013 and they had their first ever Matriculation Ceremony on 26th April, 2013 presided over by the pioneer Vice Chancellor, Professor S. W. Petters. After the matriculation ceremony, the Department of Performing Arts organised the first ever Induction Ceremony for her pioneer students on the 20th September, 2013.... The first batch of students were 20 in number while the second set were 18. The Departmental Orientation Ceremony was held on 15th July, 2014 for the second batch of students and the second Induction



Ceremony for the second batch of students was held on Thursday 18th December, 2014. The Internal Appointment of Iquo Ebong Okon as the Departmental Secretary was on 8th January, 2015.

The above discourse is the story of the birth of the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University.

The Covenantal Priest And The Development Of Technical Theatre Practice In Akwa Ibom State University

Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko – The Covenantal Priest has so far contributed immensely and immeasurably to the development of Technical Theatre Practice in the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University. From the point of the establishment of the Department in 2013 to the present stage in 2022 where the Department is competing favourably with other similar departments in the Country (Nigeria), the Technical Theatre Unit of the Department has undergone a lot of metamorphoses, passing through one memorable stage to the other, propelled by significant exigencies. At the inception of the Department in 2013, the Department operated with just a small bungalow of four (4) small rooms assigned to the Department by the then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent G. Nyoyoko.



Plate 1: The Bungalow where the Department of Performing Arts Started in 2013.

Source: Researcher's Archives, 2013.

The four (4) rooms were intelligent assigned to the pioneer staff thus:

- Head of Department's Office – One (1) Room
- The Two (2) Female Lecturers – One (1) Room
- One (1) Male Lecturer – One (1) Room
- General Office – One (1) Room

In terms of rehearsals and performances venues, the Department had none. As rightly observed by Edem (2024), the absence of adequate performance venues often limits theatre training, production quality and cultural development. Within the entire Obio Akpa Campus, there was just one (1) Assembly Hall. In this Hall, lecturers were scheduled, meetings, Conferences, Workshops, Solemn assemblies, other church activities like choir rehearsals and fastings were all scrambling for attention, therefore the Department of Performing Arts that was seen as noise makers and sources of distraction within the campus was not given any opportunity to make use of the Assembly Hall either for rehearsals or for play productions and other Performing Arts activities necessary for the development of a young Department. However, with the assistance of Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko, occasional permissions were sparingly granted for the Department to stage very important performances such as the first season of

productions staged from Monday, 18th-Thursday, 21st August, 2014 (Production Brochure, 1st AKSU Season of Productions, 2014).

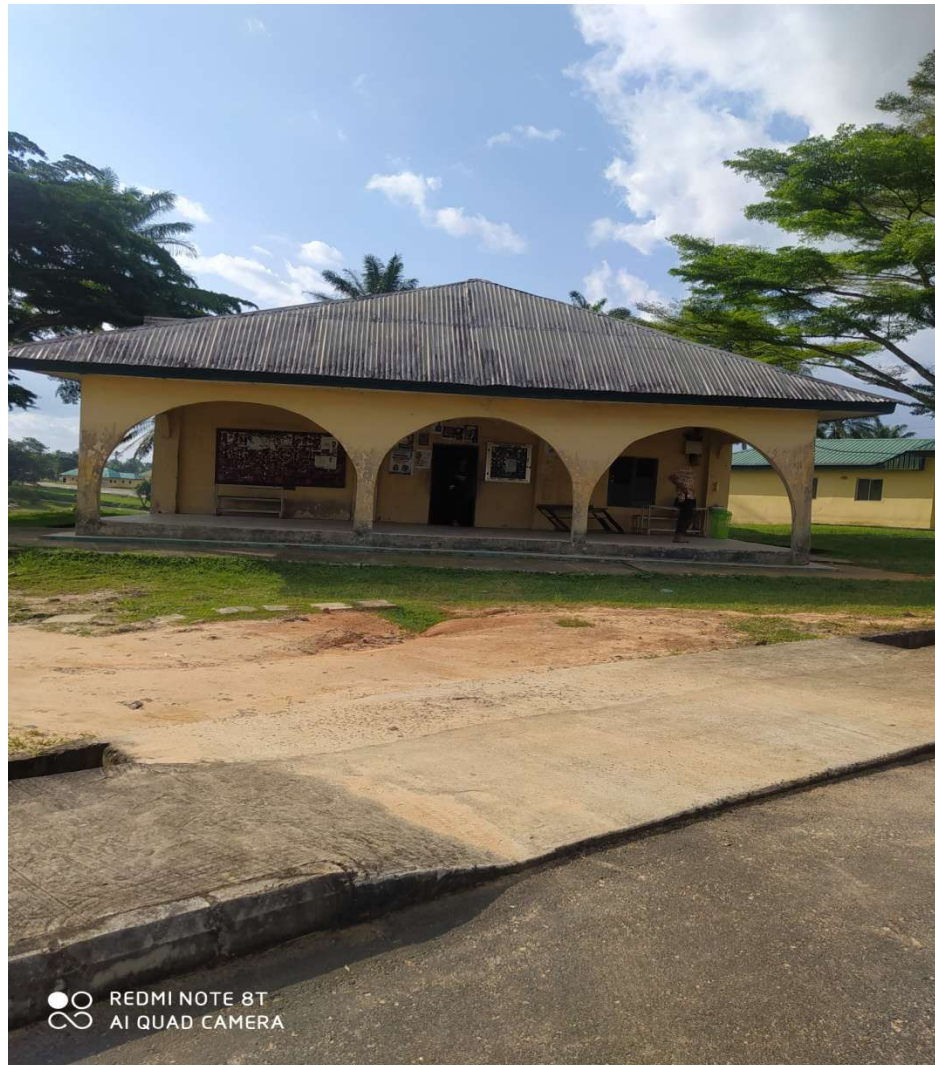


Plate 2: Assembly Hall of AKSU, Obio Akpa Campus

Source: Researcher's Archives, 2013.

In 2015, another hall was build and commissioned for usage in Obio Akpa Campus for the three (3) faculties in existence then being Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social and Management Sciences (Now split into two). The newly built Hall is the Tetfund Lecture Hall. Here, the problem of scrambling for venues in Obio Akpa Campus still persisted. At this point, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko had assumed the position of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration and Head of Obio Akpa Campus, and the population



of students and lecturers had increased with accompanied demand for more performances venues. The then Head of Department in the person of Dr. Jacob, Okon Udofot had to write a letter of appeal for permission to use the Hall to the DVC (Admin) and the Head of Campus- Prof. Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko through the Dean, Prof. Otoabasi Akpan (All from the Faculty of Arts). This letter was graciously approved by the Head of Campus, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko. After approval, the DVC Admin. and H.O.C had to come for inspection of the Hall by himself and in the process, assigned a room in the Tetfund Lecture Hall for the storage of the few Technical Theatre equipment (Mostly Locally Fabricated) such as the lamp stands, cables, control board and this marked the beginning of Technical Theatre Practice in the Department of Performing Arts, Akwa Ibom State University, hence the role of our Covenantal Priest (Prof. Nyoyoko) to the development of Technical Theatre Practice in Akwa Ibom State University because most of the fabrications and purchases of cables and bulbs were sponsored by the Head of Campus then being our Covenantal Priest, Prof. Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko.

From the single room in the AKSU Tetfund Hall, the preparation for provision of a decorous theatre in Akwa Ibom State University set in as the maiden Natioal Universities Commission (NUC) Accreditation drew near. Professor Nyoyoko in his usual manner of always looking for opportunity of developing and standardising the activities of Performing Arts in general and Technical Theatre Practice in particular swung into action. As the DVC (Admin) and Head of Obio Akpa Campus, Professor Vincent Nyoyoko in company of the then H.O.D, Dr. O. U. Jacob led the Management Team of the University for the inspection of a befitting site for the proposed theatre to be built. After the inspection of the site, a Task Force for the Provision of Infrastructural Facilities for the Department of Performing Arts, Department of English and Department of Mass Communication was set up and Professor Nyoyoko ensured that Dr. O. U. Jacob the then Head of Performing Arts Department was included in the committee as the end user of the proposed theatre. This action by the Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko gave birth to the design and construction of the first internationally and purpose built Theatre in Akwa Ibom State. The Task Force swung into action and by May, 2016, the Theatre was ready for use. This attracted the Governor of Akwa Ibom State and the Visitor to the University to lead his Executive Council Members for the commissioning of the Theatre on 16th May, 2017.

This is the bedrock and the superstructure of the development of Technical Theatre Practice in Akwa Ibom State University. This assertion is a truism because at the period of constructing the Theatre which was later christened The Pinnacle Theatre by the then Head of Department Dr. O. U. Jacob, the then Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) Administration in the person of Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko ensured effective supervision of the Task Force and facilitated timely release of funds for the expeditious completion of the project.



This world class edifice had virtually all the functional spaces and Technical Theatre equipment at the time of commissioning although some are yearning for maintenance. Speaking on this subject matter, Okon Udofot Jacob (2017, 57) avers that:

A Task Force for provision of infrastructure and equipment to the Department of Performing Arts in preparation for the accreditation exercise was set up in May, 2016. This Task Force set out for vigorous work and by November, 2016, a World Class Theatre was put in place, lighting and sound control systems and equipment were moderately installed for the requisite effects creation. In the area of costumes and make-up, different classes of sewing machines and other accessories with complete make-up box were procured for the Department. So, by the time the National Universities Commission (NUC) Team arrived on 17th November, 2016, things in the five different areas of Theatre Design and Technology were put in place to near perfection, though not without some challenges. Therefore, by the time the accreditation result came out, the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University got back-to-back full accreditation.

Jacob (2017, 57) further explains that, “in 2017, the Department of Performing Arts of Akwa Ibom State University that started in March, 2013 without any spectacular technological equipment and infrastructure, has become the hub and the centre of attraction in the state where command performances for convocations and other important occasions are stages”. Of all these expatiations, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabreil Nyoyoko is the personality in which the success stories of the Department of Performing Arts in general and Technical Theatre Practice in Particular revolve around.

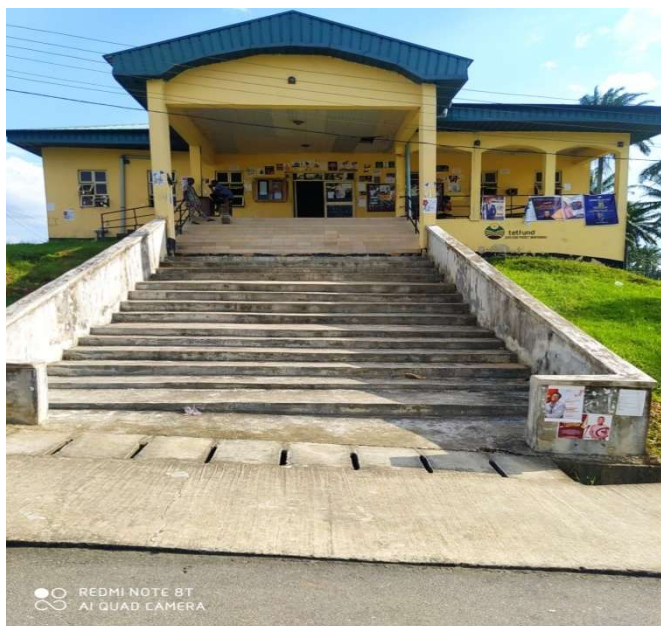


Plate 3: The Front View of the TetFund Hall, AKSU, 2015.
Source: Researcher's Archives, 2015.



The World Class Intentionally Built Pinnacle Theatre, Akwa Ibom State University, 2022.
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022.

Summary and Conclusion



In summary, after a comprehensive study of the issues surrounding Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko and his contributions toward the development of Technical Theatre Practice in Akwa Ibom State University, it is pertinent to posit that when righteous men are on the throne, the people are bound to rejoice. Again, when genuine contributions are made towards the development of individuals or organisations, such persons deserve to be appreciated and immortalised, hence this endeavour.

In conclusion, Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyooko came to Akwa Ibom State University and laid a solid foundation for the future generation, and that he has done thereby engraving his name on the annals of history as one man that shunned all forms of corruption and tribalism and worked tirelessly in furtherance of the development of Performing Arts Department in general and indeed Technical Theatre Practice in particular. Very Reverend Father (Professor) Vincent Gabriel Nyoyoko is a virtuous man, he is a legend and a rare gem that will always be remembered in this generation and generation to come. This example is significant in a Nigerian context where corruption and poor leadership continue to weaken social cohesion and sustainable development (Edem, Ukpog, & Ndaeyo, 2025).

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, this work recommends that people that find themselves in one position of authority or the other should say no to corruption and ensure that they put in their best towards the right mentoring of the younger ones to ensure that the right thing is always done at the right time.

Furthermore, people in the management cadre should ensure that good policies are formulated so that there would be sustainable development within their organisations and by extension the development of the society at large.

Finally, when people eschew all forms of negative tendencies and vices in furtherance of developing our environments, organisations and by extension the society, such people should not be forgotten but should be celebrated while alive and immortalised even after death. We should refrain from the culture of celebrating the corrupt people that embezzle public funds and make bad and detrimental policies for their selfish aggrandisement.

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