

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

By

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Abstract

This is an exploratory research work. It is an attempt to examine the development of sociology and anthropology as a discipline in Universities in Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to discuss the early years of sociology and anthropology in Nigeria; professional association of sociology and anthropology; characteristics of sociology and anthropology and the future of sociology and anthropology in Nigeria. Documentary evidences and materials from periodicals including journals, books, magazines, and websites were utilized for data collection. Data analysis was descriptive. The study discovered among others that the future of sociology and anthropology is promising and bright. Concrete suggestions are proffered for improvement.

Sociology is the science of society, social institutions, and social relationship. Specifically, it is the scientific study of the development, structure, interactions and collective behaviour of organised groups of human beings. Sociology can also be defined as the scientific analysis of social institution as a functioning whole and as it relates to the rest of society (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Whereas anthropology is the scientific study of various aspects of humans within the past and present societies. Social and Cultural Anthropology is the study of norms and values of societies. Linguistic anthropology, studies how language affects social life. Biological and physical anthropology studies the biological development of humans. Archaeology which studies past human cultures through investigation of physical evidence is thought of as a branch of anthropology in the United States of America (Herald et al, 2010). Anthropology builds upon knowledge from natural sciences, including the discoveries about the origin and evolution of *Homo-sapiens*, human physical traits, human behaviour, the variations among different groups of humans, how the evolutionary past

of *homo-sapiens* has influenced its social organization and culture (Wikipedia, 2107). Sociology and Anthropology courses are taught in the universities. Universities are institutions of learning of the highest levels having colleges of liberal arts and programmes of graduate students together with several professional schools such as Theology, Medicine, Law, and Engineering and authorized to confer both undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. In Nigeria, we have over 100 universities comprising, Federal, State and Private Universities.

Globally, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was credited to be the founding father of sociology. He initiated, coined, and developed the concept “sociology” as a discipline, and employed the methods used in studying natural sciences in studying human society in order to find solution to the problem which pervaded the French society at the time. IbnKhalidun (1332-1406) in North Africa had used the Arabic word *Alumran* which translated to mean, the science of the structure of human society. However, Otite (2008) states that whether we accept IbnKhalidun or Auguste Comte as the father of sociology, or whether the discipline evolved from speculative social philosophy and empirical science, one of the things that is clear, is the fact that sociology is a product of a response to the need to confront issues of social decay and to formulate relevant policies aimed at rescuing society from decadence, and bringing about positive change, and general society development.

Development of Sociology in Nigeria

In 1939, a Nigerian, Nathaniel AkinremiFadipe obtained a doctorate degree in sociology from the University of London (Okediji and Okediji, 1970). Another Nigeria pioneering sociologist was BankoleApata. He obtained his doctoral degree in sociology from Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in the 1950s (Rotimi, 2006). However, the establishment of sociology as an academic discipline was started in early 1960s. Although, the University College of London in 1948, it was only in 1960 that a sub-department of Sociology was created from the Department of Economics and Social Studies. A chair of sociology was appointed for this sub-department in 1964. Similarly the University of Nigeria, Nsukka established a full department of Sociology and Anthropology in October 1960. University of Nigeria Nsukka, is thus, the first university in Nigeria to establish a full department of Sociology and Anthropology. The department of Ibadan formally organised training with scholarships by Rockefeller and Ford Foundations for its young graduates to be trained overseas in the United States of America, and Canada so that on return they would help to improve the academic strength of the department. It turned out to be very beneficial because the crop of staff constituted a formidable force which contributed to sociological knowledge in Nigeria (Erinosho, 1994).

Other first generation universities including the University of Ife (now ObafemiAwolowo University founded in 1961, AhmaduBello University, (1962); University of Lagos (1962); and University of Benin; (1970) also established and

developed their own departments of sociology/anthropology. However, just like their predecessors, the sociology courses/Anthropology were largely western oriented.

In the early years of Sociology/Anthropology programme, at the University of Ibadan, the scholars who pioneered the teaching of sociology were mostly foreigners; several of them were social anthropologists. For instance, Peter C. Lloyd played a key role in the sociology programme at the University College Ibadan, (now University of Ibadan). Later Ulf Himmelstrand, a Swedish sociologist, and former president of International Sociological Association (ISA) made an immense contribution to the development of sociology programme at Ibadan. He exposed young Nigerians to the new vistas that the sociological enterprise offered, and also made the department to gain both local and international recognition. The success of the sociology department at Ibadan had a multiplier effect on other departments of sociology/anthropology established in other universities (Erinosh, 1994). Other Nigerian scholars such as Akinsola Akinwowo, of the University of Ife (Now Obafemi Awolowo University) and Francis O. Okediji of the University of Ibadan also made tremendous contributions to the growth of sociology/anthropology as well as the indigenization of the curricula in their respective universities.

Most of the **Chairs** (Professors of sociology/anthropology in Nigeria today) owe their inspiration to the vision, contribution, mentoring and support of these pioneers. Akinsola Akinwowo and Francis Okediji were trained in American Universities. There were other first generation sociologists/anthropologists who were trained in American, British, and German universities. Among those trained in American Universities were Ademola Igun (Columbia and the New School); Oladejo Okediji (Columbia); Tunde Oloko (Harvard); B.A. Oloko (Harvard); T.O. Odetola (Rutgers); Ayodele Ogundipe (Indiana); Cyril I. Clark (Indiana); and Omafume Onoge (Harvard) to mention but a few. On the other hand, those who were trained in British universities include William Ogionwo (Leeds); E.O. Akeredolu-Ale (London); Philip Olusanya (London); Michael Angulu Onwuejeogwu (London); Onigu Otite (London); Regina U. Obi (London); Ibrahim Tahir (London); and Onalapo Soleyeye (Manchester) to mention but a few. Others include Ikenna Nzimiro (Western Germany); Stephen Imogene (Ibadan). Majority of them took up appointment in the first generation universities where they taught in the early years of sociology/anthropology in Nigeria.

Professional Association of Sociology and Anthropology in Nigeria

The Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA), currently known as Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Practitioners Association (NASA) is the body established for the regulation of teaching and practice of sociology and anthropology in Nigeria. It is a registered non-governmental organization with registration number 44324. NASA as a professional body was inaugurated on March 20, 1971 in the Drapers Hall, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. This was preceded by a pre-inauguration meeting held on January 15, 1971, chaired Professor

OniguOtite, and supported by Professor S. Imoagene. The Objective of NASA is to enlighten sociologists and anthropologists and instruct persons in related disciplines to abide by appropriate ethical conduct in teaching, research and practice of sociology and anthropology, and to stimulate them to contribute sociological insights towards scholarship and national development. After the inauguration, NASA organized its First Annual Conference which was held in September 1971 at AhmaduBello University, Zaria. The theme of the conference was “Anthropology and Sociology, What For?”. Since then, about twenty national conferences had been organized with different themes within the confines of the objectives of the association. The 22nd Annual National Conference NASA 2017 with the theme

Table 1: Nigerian First Generation Sociologists/Antropologists and the Universities in which they Taught

| S/N | Nigerian First Generation Sociologists/Antropologists | Where Trained | Where they taught |
|-----|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Akinsola Akinwowo | Boston | Ife |
| 2. | Francis O. Okediji | Oteawa and Kansas | Ibadan |
| 3. | Onigu Otite | London | Ibadan |
| 4. | Ademola Igun | Columbia and New School | Ife |
| 5. | Oladejo Okediji | Columbia | Lagos |
| 6. | Tunde Oloko | Harvard | Lagos |
| 7. | B.A Oloko | Harvard | Lagos |
| 8. | T.O Odetola | Rutgers | Ife |
| 9. | Omafume Onoge | Harvard | Ibadan, Jos |
| 10. | Ayodele Ogundipe | Indiana | Benin |
| 11. | Cyril I. Clark | Indiana | Benin |
| 12. | E.O Akeredolu- Ale | London | Ibadan |
| 13. | Michael Angulu Onwuejeogwu | London | Benin |
| 14. | Philip O. Olusanya | London | Lagos |
| 15. | Regina U. Obi | London | Benin |
| 16. | Ibrahim Tahir | London | Zaria |
| 17. | William Ogiowo | Leeds | Ibadan, Port Harcourt |
| 18. | Ikenna Nzimiro | Western Germany | Port Harcourt |
| 19. | Onalapo Soleye | Manchester | Ibadan |
| 20. | Simi Afonja | Manchester | Ife |
| 21. | Stephen Imoagene | Ibadan | Ibadan |

Source A: Ogundipe, and P.A Edewor, 2012. With Amendments (Obi, 2017).

“Contours of Change, Modern Conflict and Mode of Production in Nigeria” was scheduled to hold 6th–9th November 2017, at the University of Ibadan (Nasanigeria.org,

2017). The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology is one of the official organs of NASA. It was first published in 1974. Since then Issues of the journal have been published subject to availability of funds and circulated to libraries, national authorities, ministries and parastatals for information, policy formation and implementation (Erinosho, 1994; Obi, 2000; and Otite, 2008).

All departments of sociology/anthropology are expected to have Nigerian Sociological and Anthropological Students Association (NSASA), and NSASA secretariat. The key role is to help students organise themselves and discover knowledge about social life. NSASA has magazines/journals where they publish and document events and activities, circulate to membership and other stake-holders.

The Characteristics of Sociology and Anthropology

This can better be understood in terms of its curricula and specialisations. Before the inauguration of the Accreditation Committee of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1988, it was the responsibilities of the Senate of different Universities in Nigeria to determine the contents of their respective Sociology/Anthropology curricula. The Accreditation Committee of the NUC is charged with the responsibilities of harmonising the curricula of all universities in Nigeria in order to ensure that uniformity and minimum standards are met. Consequently, all Sociology/Anthropology programmes were re-organised. Newly established Universities - Federal, State, and Private are not excluded; they are also guided by the NUC guidelines in the preparation of their curricula, and periodical departmental accreditation exercises. Core courses and elective courses are approved and offered to students across levels.

Core courses include Introduction to Sociology and Anthropology, History of Sociological and Anthropological Thoughts; Methods of Social Research; Industrial Sociology, Social Statistics, Linguistic Anthropology, Social Anthropology and Population Studies. Elective courses are not compulsory courses; they are optional courses. They focus on thematic areas such as Health, Crime and Delinquency, Gender and Society, Medical Anthropology, Industrial Sociology and Labour Relations. These thematic areas have also been areas of specialization in which sociologists and anthropologists have distinguished themselves and made specific contributions towards the development of Nigeria. Students should write examinations at the end of semester, and those successful are promoted. Job vacancies are advertised internally and externally for interested candidates to apply. Appointment, placement and promotion should be on merit and not otherwise.

The Future of Sociology and Anthropology in Nigeria

Sociology and Anthropology as a discipline is likely to experience huge change as people from different cultures interact, share views and experiences, and act on them indiscriminately and unconsciously. School curricula, method of teaching and scientific

investigation will more-or-less change as modernity becomes more and more complex and complicated with rapid advancement in technology and the entire universe seen, and behave as a small global village. The effects will be greatly diverse and multifarious, and could have positive and negative impacts on the traditional cultures, norms and values of the department and the Nigerian people.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Nigerian society is not static; it is fluid, and dynamic. Sociology and Anthropology as a discipline had experienced change, and will continue to experience change in curricula, method of teaching and scientific research and investigations. People will experience cultural variations, attitudinal changes, and related social implications in the era of globalisation, and even beyond. To retain our identity and cultures, we must be very careful in selecting what we copy from the western world, and in the web-sites on the internet so that our Nigerian cherished culture and identity will not go into extinction and disappear. Today, Sociology and Anthropology is on the apex of all academic disciplines including medicine, engineering, law, history and arts. Nobody can float in the air; the base is the solid foundation to land. That solid foundation is the knowledge of sociology and anthropology. To understand sociology, we must first of all understand, and be well-grounded in anthropology. This paper opposes any debate and clamours to divide sociology and anthropology into two separate departments. It therefore recommends that Sociology and Anthropology will remain as one department in order to avoid half-baked knowledge in the scientific study of man in societies, past, present and future.

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