Challenges of Doing Sociology in a Globalizing South: Between Indigenization and Emergent Structures

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Abstract
As sociology emerged from the womb of the industrial revolution in Europe and the challenges of the anomic socio-economic environment, the concern of its founding fathers naturally gravitated around Western ideologies and challenges. The modernization paradigm facilitated the hegemonic ascendancy of Western sociology in the South until the recent ideological impasse, when the South began to grope for fresh insights. Currently, attention is still being drawn to the sociological significance of emancipation from systemic inequality created by social structural variables in the development process globally but particularly in poorer countries. This study, therefore, draws from Professor Peter Ekeh's "Colonialism and Social Structure" and his theoretical statement on the two publics to highlight the consequences of uncritical engagement in the Periphery with the sociology of the Core, the importance of agency in post-imperialistic thinking in sociology, and the implications for repositioning sociologists in the South for the task of a more creative local engagement with globalizing ideologies that are integral to mainstream sociology in the North. The paper also highlights the roles of international, regional, and national associations such as the International Sociological Association (ISA), the African Sociological Association (AFSA), the Nigerian Sociological and Anthropological Association (NASA), and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in setting the agenda.

Key words: sociology, globalization, Indigenization, emergent structure, sociological association

Introduction

The development of sociology and anthropology in Nigeria can be divided into three broad but related periods as follows: the colonial to immediate pre-independence period, characterized by foreign domination and utilization of academic research; the period of indigenization efforts from 1959 to the 1980s; and the period of systemic crisis and neo-liberal globalization from the 1980s onward. Many of the major works cited in this paper were part of the proceedings from the first conference of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association held in 1971. The theme of the conference, "Sociology and Anthropology for Nigeria: What For?" was a reflection of the concern among Nigerian scholars at that time about the domestication of the discipline. Here I highlight the works of anthropologists and sociologists that strove for the indigenization of social scientific knowledge. I also reflect on the crisis period in the Nigerian university system characterized by unwholesome

expansion beginning in the 1970s and the twin dictatorship of the market and the military that paved way for a rather irresponsible state relationship with the Nigerian academia within the framework of neo-liberal globalization - what I regard as the second incorporation. Mention is also made of rescue attempts by a number of institutions, including NASA.

The Period of Foreign Domination of Scholarship

The initial activities in sociology and anthropology in Nigeria were founded on foreign interests and ideology as well as external experience. Little or no effort was made to integrate borrowed knowledge with local experience or generate indigenous theories that explained the post-colonial African or Nigerian social structure. Hence, at the onset of social sciences in Nigeria, working in the area of sociology and anthropology was characterized by foreign control of ideas and research. The process was driven by colonial and imperial institutions and a number of establishments including the Nigerian Institute of Economic and Social Research which supported research scholars most of whom were expatriates funded by charitable academic foundations with their own political and economic agendas. The establishment of the Faculty of Economics at the premier university in Nigeria - the University of Ibadan - did not improve the situation, because it was headed by an Irish Professor who had little regard for Nigerian scholars (Nzimiro, 1971).

The pioneer anthropologists, in particular, worked as the intellectual arm of the colonial masters. Some of them were establishment anthropologist whose commitment to their work was to support the colonial government so as to ensure the effective political domination of Nigeria. For instance, such anthropologists guided numerous district officers who wrote over two hundred intelligence reports on the Igbo people after the 1929-3 Women Riots. Since the above institute and its new faculty were controlled by expatriate scholars, they made little or no intellectual contribution to the changing Nigerian society (Nzimiro, 1971).Their commitment to Nigeria was marginal, since they concentrated on conducting research, gathering materials, and going home to publish in journals abroad, on the basis of which they were branded experts in particular Nigerian tribes or aspects of a particular branch of social science (Otite, 1971). Similar trends were observed in Australia (Connell, 2007).

In the post-independence era, according to Nzimiro (1971), foreign scholars funded by American foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford whose allegiance was more to these benevolent donors became Africanists (so-called) and lecturers in various American Universities, where they established African centres in such places as Boston, UCLA, Columbia, Howard, Northwestern, and Wisconsin. In Nzimiro's (1971:4) words, "The field of studies that come within our discipline has been dominated by these establishment scholars most of them serving the interests of imperialist governments, but camouflaged as scientific objective studies".

Otite (1971) similarly observed that in this process of academic scrambling, social anthropologists carved out "territories" for themselves

through a glorification of exclusive symbols and relationships founded on some kind of grand theories based on these symbols. The colonial system of indirect rule tended to consolidate the socio-cultural units marked out by these anthropological and quasi-anthropological investigations. Relating Western-dominated social science to imperialism, Ake (1971) stated, "When Western scholars turned their attention to the study of Africa and other Third World regions, they did so not by inventing new analytical tools, but by using the tools already in vogue, especially those which were conducive to the comparative study of Western countries and Third World societies". Whether such tools fitted the African environment was of little or no concern to them.

While it is not necessary to assume a conspiracy to or consciousness of serving imperialism among Western scholars working on Africa and other parts of the Third World, the foregoing nevertheless suggests that the practice of sociology and anthropology in the colonial period in Nigeria were rarely founded on a passion for the development of Nigerian society but on an exogenous agenda designed to meet the hegemonic colonial and imperial project motivated by the desire for external control of the emergent Nigerian state.

The Indigenization Effort

A couple of events that tended to modify the above scenario towards the indigenization of sociological and anthropological work are noteworthy: the founding of the Nigerian Economic Society in London in 1959 by Nigerian scholars (including sociologists); the establishment of the Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies (NJESS) in Ibadan that provided publication opportunities for Nigerian social scientists; and the founding of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA) in 1971 and the Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology that served as the publication outlet for sociologists and anthropologists in Nigeria (Nzimiro 1971). As used above, "indigenization" broadly refers to the contextualization of sociological theory and methods to account for the peculiarities associated with pre-colonial and neo-colonial structures as well as features of underdevelopment in non-Western societies like Africa. It implies a re-orientation of sociological research towards the development of Africa through the generation and application of endogenous concepts and tools (not necessarily language) to illuminate indigenous social reality. It involves an effort to explain emergent social patterns in the neo-colonial situation, some of which have no equivalent in the West. Emphasis is placed on a guarded application of social theories and methods emanating from Western experiences onto non-Western situations.

The above development provided a platform for a more indigenous explanation of social reality in Nigeria. Prominent among these was the work by Akiwowo's (1971) entitled, "Contributions to the Sociology of Knowledge from Oral Poetry." The work stimulated debates on the issue of indigenous sociology (See Akiwowo, 1971; 1983; 1986; Connell 2007; Adesina, 2000; Otite, 2008). Indeed, in his presidential address to the First Conference of NASA in 1971, Akiwowo emphasized the need for the utilization of sociology for the

development of Nigerian society, stating, among other things, that NASA should give strong moral support to the development of social indicators for the measurement of societal growth comparable to the economic indicators used by economists (Akiwowo, 1974). The United Nations Development Programme accomplished this in the 1990s.

Professor Peter Ekeh, on his part, contended that there was a significant distinction between civil society in Western society and that found in Africa. He observed that unlike civil society in the West, which has one public realm mediating between the state and the individual or the family, there is no single public realm in Africa. Instead, the heritage of the post-colonial social structure in Africa has produced a non-homogenous public realm divisible into two: the civic public and the primordial public. Contrary to the situation in Western society, where the public realm and the private realm are defined by a common underlying societal morality, there is no monolithic public realm in Africa enjoying common morality with the private realm. Instead, the public realm is divided into two. One is a primordial public within which the social behaviour of individuals is guided by norms defined by societal morality and is therefore bound to the private realm. The other is a civic public that is devoid of any claims to morality and hence amoral. Colonial engagement with Africa, therefore, bred a duality of moral perspectives in the new states, generating two broad spheres of moral and amoral behaviour, as distinct from the moral and the immoral typical of Europe.

It is, for instance, the institutionalization of amorality as a principle of social existence in the colonial and neo-colonial state that may explain the manipulation of ethnic groups by class identities in Africa – in the socio-economic and political interests of the latter (Ekeh, 1975; 1992; 1996). The civic public is also the realm of contests for political, economic, and social resources with competing ethnic groups, both at the collective and interpersonal levels. In this sphere the moral content of competition is considered insignificant and this tends to promote corruption and indiscipline at various levels of society in Africa. Passing philosophies like "it depends," underpinned by a free rider attitude, tend to define the struggle for power and wealth in the civic public realm. Hence, as Ekeh (1992:197-8) puts it:

> *There are in European nations single consolidated public realms, which effectively offer common platforms for the activities of the state and the public behaviors of individuals. Here on the contrary there is segmentation of the public realm. There is a civic public realm over which the state presides and over which the ordinary man (or woman) does not feel that he is part-owner of this realm. When he is wronged in it he withdraws from it to his own primordial public realm whose ownership he asserts vigorously.*

Ekeh's thesis on the two publics in Africa is enhanced by his position on the nature of African social formation in colonialism. The first form is the "trans-

formed pre-colonial indigenous institutions." These consist of traditional structures, which in their transformed states operate within the new meanings and symbols of colonialism and in a widened new socio-cultural system and framework. Ekeh (1983) explains, "The moral and social order which formally encased the pre-colonial indigenous institutions is burst by the social forces of colonialism and they seek new anchors in the changed milieu of colonialism". Sometimes, such a transformation is the product of a process of dynamic social adjustments in the emergent plural and competitive social environment.

The second is "migrated social structure and constructs." These are Eurocentric institutions, models, principles, ideologies, and institutions that were almost literally parceled or imported wholesale from the imperial West and uncritically grafted onto the new colonial situation. Bureaucracy, rational organization, federalism, and the modern military are examples (Ekeh ,1983).

The third form is the "emergent social structures" which are neither indigenous to Africa nor imported from outside. They are peculiar social structures that developed from the space and time of colonialism, with a logic of their own - distinct sociological entities with remarkable complexity. Although they may have similarities in the West and elsewhere, these emergent social structures have a logic all their own, and their peculiar situation in colonialism marks them out as distinct political and sociological structures, sometimes of baffling complexity. They grew with colonialism and in colonialism; these emergent social structures are generated by colonialism itself. They emerged to meet societal needs that indigenous social structures and the migrated social structure could not fulfill in the new colonial environment (Ekeh, 1983).

Emergent structures present enormous explanatory challenges to scholars engaging with neo-colonial Africa's social formations. Unlike the first two types of social formations in colonialism, emergent social structures are difficult to discern for two major reasons. First, while the first two represent formal aspects of the colonial and post-colonial situations, the emergent social structures represent the informal elements of colonialism. Second, "The emergent social structures are very often consciously smeared with tradition or modernity, to give them the appearance of ultra-tradition or ultra modernity" (Ekeh, 1983: 20). An example of this is also the ethnic group. Nigerian ethnic groups have their sociopolitical meaning only in terms of the development of Nigeria. For our work, this has implications for ethnic configurations and class composition; the shifting social boundaries and coalitions constructed by primordial/ethnic groups and other plural identities in Nigeria; the dynamics of class structuration of ethnicity and conflicts; the social processes involved; as well as the nature of morality thrown up. Ekeh's thesis on the two publics was put forward as a general theoretical statement applicable to various social scientific analyses.

Meanwhile, two things are noteworthy from the foregoing. First is the fact that social life in Africa is characteristic of Ekeh's emergent structures and constructs. Second is the fact that the morality and loyalty of the average African is rooted in the primordial public in contrast with the civic public. According to Ekeh (1992:198):

> *In most of Africa, historically, the civic public was seen as the property of the imperial European rulers. In the post colonial period, it is owned by their successors - the soldiers and personal dictators who have ceased its power. When a frustrated Nigerian exclaims, "Nigeria is not worth dying for", he is complaining that he has no share in the control of the civic public realm. But he would be ready to fight and die for his primordial realm - which is managed and owned by his own ethnic group.*

The foregoing corroborates the Nzimiro's (1971) observation that every Nigerian traditional community is founded on the lineage structure or the line of descent through which the individual derives his social attachment. Nationality is, therefore, a structure that has grown from the lowest descent unit, the clan and sub-clans, and emerged into a wider group: a nationality, an ethnic group. Although the sizes of these nationalities vary, each nevertheless has cultural indices in common. Colonial domination brought these nationalities together under the modern influence of European civilization. The new institutions of the colonial regime exposed all Nigerians to new norms, values, and cultures of the West. These new norms were generated by the new institutions - political, economic, educational, and religious - and these norms became the new binding forces that brought all the ethnic nationalities together. The colonial domination which brought Nigerians together under the modern influence of European civilization also exposed them to the values of new nationhood and impregnated them with the ideals, concepts, and values of Western economics. Nigerians were taught to accept the profit motive and the selling of labour power in the labour market, be it the labour market controlled by voluntary agencies, by commercial enterprises, or by government institutions. Nigerians came together under these various economic institutions and worked under the directions of the British, who controlled most of these institutions.

The complexity of what is described above has implications for doing sociology in Nigeria: the Nigerian sociologist and anthropologist, the social scientist for that matter, should be committed to understanding the dynamics of social changes related to the emergent social structure and constructs in their society. They should pay less attention to marginal research and investigating aspects of the society that are not intrinsically vital to the development of the nation. This follows from Nzimiro's observation that the pioneers of social science and sociology were men committed to searching for solutions to the social problems of their countries. They were not just doing that out of intellectual curiosity alone. They had a sense of history, and they influenced social change through their ideas. They were both deeply involved in the affairs of their fatherland but, as social scientists, were also detached enough to analyze social facts. There was no contradiction between their involvement and detachment. There was no false idea of "objectivity" devoid of participation. Both were synonymous to them. As Nzimiro (1971:9-10) noted:

> *No social scientist of note can operate if he or she is ignorant of the structure and functions of our society. This understanding is his first intellectual weapon. He can understand it if he knows the structure and functions of our traditional society before he can understand the intricacies of the changing modern society. The tasks of the anthropologists and sociologists are crucial, and here I must state that the sociologists who limits himself to the understanding of the modern European societies without studying the social structure of our society in its traditional setting has not yet completed the picture of his image of our society. It becomes imperative that he must know both if he is to operate scientifically.*

The heterogeneity and complex nature of present African society in its traditional setting, internal conflicts, and contradictions should attract more endogenous investigation in focus and design that would not simply impose functionalist regularities on the system. In Nigeria and much of Africa, for instance, the functionalist consensus, order, and structuring of the parts to sustain the whole are rarely applicable. More visible are social tensions and disorder associated with allegiance to ethnic and ethno-religious groups to the detriment of the nation-state as well as primarily self-interested political elites and the parasitic ruling classes, whose attitudes are antithetical to the public interest. In all of this, the character of the parts is in contradictory relation to the whole, suggesting difficulties in the application of the Western-dominated sociological paradigm for explaining and interpreting emergent structures in Africa. Given the lack of explanations in the specific case of Nigeria, such trends have come under the mythical term "the Nigerian Factor." African social reality is not quite the same as that of Europe, and this should inform the application of classical sociological theory in the region. As Horowitz (1994) observed in a related argument, the beauty of theory is the explanation of specific events, while the curse of theory is the use of the same, overgeneralized explanations to interpret unlike events. Also important for our discourse is Horowitz's (1994) view that, "The function of sociological theory, in contrast to ideological posturing, is to put into full view the nature of the specific paradox that divides people along class, religious, gender, racial and ethnic lines … to show the forces at work in moving a specific paradox to resolution or dissolution".

Crisis of the 1980s and Beyond: Toward the Second Incorporation

Beginning in the 1970s, educational policy in Nigeria emphasized that the greatest investment the nation could make for the development of its economic, political, sociological, and human resources was in education. The development of universities, therefore, followed the trajectory of rapid expansion: government control of curricula, admissions quotas and policies; free tuition and minimal other charges; and government dominance of provision and funding of university education. To ensure firm government control, a National

Universities Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 to regulate the establishment of new universities, distribute government grants to universities, and approve programmes.

By 1982 the number of universities had risen to 28, and student enrollment exceeded 120,000.This led to a dramatic increase in student intake with a nearly 120% increase between the 1974/75 session and the 1979/80 session; the NUC on its part received less than 30% of its requirement for the university system. Since this rapid expansion occurred at a period of economic decline, it resulted in inadequate funding of the universities (Onyeonoru, 2000; Lebeau, Onyeonoru and Ukah, 2001).The decline in funding became worse over the years; 1996 and 1997 total recurrent grants were, for instance, only half the levels of 1988.The effect on remuneration was frustrating for academia, and it resulted in a brain drain, both internal and external. By internal brain drain, I refer to the fact that the social reproduction of sociologist was impeded by pull factors accounted for by better remuneration in the organized private sector of the economy. First class graduates were drawn away from the university system to the corporate world by better conditions of service, posing a problem for capacity-building through mentorship. The second aspect of the brain drain had to do with the out-migration of sociologists and other members of academia to the West, America, and Southern Africa. This affected teaching and learning standards in Nigerian universities.

In these circumstances, there was little systemic capacity for creative work that could contribute or advance the initial effort at indigenization of sociology or indeed doing sociology at any level. This was particularly so with the constraints engendered by the non-availability of local research grants and funds for conferences, both local and international. External funding continued to reinforce the hegemonic scholarship of the West and of the external funders. Atomization of research efforts and the lack of databases for researchers and their work hampered opportunities for collaborative scholarship, intellectual development, and the harnessing of synergies in the system.

The crisis period accounted for the moribund state in which NASA found itself between 2000 and 2007. Of particular note was the ascendancy of neo-liberal globalization within the framework of the twin dictatorship of the market and military rule. The state "rolled back" much of its funding responsibility while increasing its administrative strangle hold on the university system, denying the system autonomy and academic freedom (Onyeonoru, 2004).The likes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund became the policy dictators, while sociologists and other Nigerian scholars and their research findings were confined to the four walls of the universities. Two parallel knowledge/policy tracks, therefore, seemed to be in operation: one for academics derived from research, the other, which informed policy in practice, for the government, imposed by the World Bank and IMF. Benefits accruing from the mutual relationship between town and gown were, therefore, compromised. The situation has not really improved in the current dispensation.

Challenges facing teaching and learning sociology in Nigeria within the crisis period include environmental, infrastructural (poor physical structures, poor libraries/current teaching and learning materials, and the digital divide), embassy aggression (visa refusals), low funding for research and poor conditions of service for faculty members. Related to the foregoing is the lack of local funding for international conferences. A few funding from abroad available for research and international conferences are often imbued with external interests and agenda. These constitute impediments on the path to endogenous intellectual work in Nigeria. The result is that the average Nigerian academic has limited opportunity for international engagement with contemporary issues.

Several protests in the form of strikes embarked upon by the university staff unions[1] to compel Nigerian governments to pay adequate attention to the crumbling structures and poor remuneration of university workers have not succeeded in making the issues a matter of concern for the government. Given the struggles for economic survival, members could not meet their financial obligation to NASA until the resuscitation effort by scholars in Ibadan in 2007.

The erratic power supply, though only one example of a wider infrastructural problem in Nigeria, deserves special mention. Power generation in Nigeria has declined from 30.61 Kilowatts in 1996 to about 15.58 Kilowatts in 2007. This was grossly inadequate for the country's more than 140 million people. It translated to about 0.06 kilowatts of energy consumption per million people behind Ghana's 0.43 (International Energy Agency, 2007).[2] By 2009, power generation further declined to about 10.00 Kilo-watts (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). The frustrations arising from this scenario have negatively affected teaching and research. Electricity, water, telephone lines, and Internet access all raise productivity, but they are also severely inadequate in Sub-Saharan Africa.

A combination of emphasis on the private sector within the framework of neo-liberal economic globalization and the poor state of infrastructure in public universities in Nigeria tend to make private universities the preference of the elite class. The issue of quality assurance and sustainability is, however, a major concern.

On the issue of the digital divide, it is noteworthy that in six short years (1992-1998), the number of Internet host computers worldwide increased from less than 1 million to almost 30 million. But, the core of the information society still resides in the developed countries. For instance, one quarter of American households use the Internet on a daily basis (less than one-tenth of academics do in Nigeria), and more than half of all Internet users live in the United States or Canada. The information revolution has not gained a foothold in most developing countries, including Nigeria, because they lack the basic

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[1] Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), and Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU)

[2] See http://www.eia.doe.gov/.

infrastructure: phone lines, electricity, and literacy. The digital divide between people who are Internet-empowered and those who are not is wide and real.[3]

A most critical issue for Internet access in Africa is the poor infrastructure and ridiculous bandwidths in a large portion of countries. The number of African Internet users is somewhere between 1.5 to 2 million out of a continental population of about 750 million, and most of these (about 1.5 million) reside in South Africa. As of 2002 in Africa each computer with an Internet or e-mail connection usually supports between 3 and 5 users. This puts the number of users of Internet in Africa at around 5-8 million. The figures represent about one user to every 250-400 people compared to a world average of about one use for every 15 people and a North American and European average of about one in every 2 people. Internet in Africa is characterized by low connectivity density and very little local or indigenous African content, even among institutional users who have direct Internet access. Even when they have access to email, government ministries and research centers rarely have web sites; where Internet is used, email predominates, or websites with relatively poor contents and education. Sciences and community development sites have the least content.[4] The low Internet support relates with the fact that many university teachers and researchers from the South utilize Yahoo email, which is often regarded as insecure, and hence, not accepted by several internet users in the North. This also limits the rate of international interaction by Southern scholars, with implication for exclusion. The above situation has negatively impacted the level of scientific production (Nwagwu, 2005) and visibility of African scholars in the global scientific community.

Stabilizing Efforts: CODESRIA, AFSA and NASA

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) has been at the vanguard of capacity building among African intellectuals. This is evident in the following programmes of the Council: the Multinational Working Group (MWG) on Youth and Identity; the Trans-national Working group (TWG) on Africa and its Diasporas; future research in collaboration with the African Futures Institute; South-South Comparative Research Workshops; National Working Groups (NWG); Programmes on Gender, Humanities, and Transnationalism; Comparative Research Networks and Working Groups; and South-South Research Collaboration.

The magnitude of the capacity building challenge for teaching and learning in Africa is reflected in CODESRIA's observation in 2006, with reference to its TWG, that only a few of the proposals came from scholars residing in Africa and even fewer from second, third, and fourth generation diasporan Africans. Thus a conscious attempt was made to enrich the composition of the group with researchers drawn from both recent and distant African diasporas

[3] See http://www1.worldbank.org/devoutreach/spring00/article.asp.
[4] See http://demiurge.wn.apcorg/africa/afstat.htm

around the world (including Asia, Melanesia and Polynesia, Australia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe, and North America.[5]

The African Sociological Association (AFSA) had its debut conference on July 15-18, 2007 at Rhodes University in Grahamstown-iRhini, South Africa. The theme, "Sociology: the African Challenge," was a reflection of the concern to make sociology in Africa relevant to regional needs. The conference witnessed the participation of a large number of African scholars. The association has been very active, among others, in providing information on opportunities for capacity building for African academics.

Conclusion

Doing sociology in Nigeria has passed through various challenging periods. Currently, the most pressing challenge for sociologists in Nigeria, and indeed Africa, is to develop a critical capacity not only for explaining and interpreting African social reality, enhanced by endogenous models that capture the nature of the paradox and tensions in the emergent social structure, but also the character of agency thrown up by such a process. To achieve this, we need a paradigm shift, perhaps towards the sociology of everyday life. These pose a challenge for NASA and AFSA as professional associations.

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[5] See http://www.codesria.org/Links/Home/annual_report06.

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