

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**SOCIOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY
NIGERIA: THE CHALLENGE OF
RELEVANCE**

A Valedictory Lecture

BY

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Programme

1. **GUESTS ARE SEATED**
2. **INTRODUCTION**
3. **THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS**
4. **CITATION**
5. **THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat. The Vice-Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

6. **CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**
7. **VOTE OF THANKS**
8. **DEPARTURE**

Dedication

To All My Former Students.

Acknowledgements

I cannot thank God enough for His blessings. I thank Him for keeping me alive to see today. My wife Dr. (Mrs.) Fanny Anikpo has been the pillar of support in all I have accomplished. I am sincerely grateful to her, my children and grandchildren; to my younger brother, Dr Lawrence Anikpo and his family and to the entire members of the Anikpo family. I am grateful to my sisters for all their goodwill and concern for my well-being. To all my former students in the Department of Sociology, I say keep the flag of our discipline flying. To all my colleagues in CENTECS, Sports Complex, Sociology Department and Faculty of the Social Sciences, you made my stay in Uniport worthwhile. All my other colleagues and friends in Uniport, I really appreciate you all. I will surely miss you all.

Preface

It is normal for an academic at the end of his or her career, not only to take a bow, but also to take a look back at the discipline that had engaged his/her attention for so many years and suggest the way forward. Sociology has provided fulfillment to me and many other colleagues and I believe it is appropriate to make some parting comments on what I consider a challenge to the discipline especially as an intellectual tool for understanding and solving the problems of society.

The presentation is focused on how relevant Sociology as a scientific discipline has been in unraveling and providing solutions to new challenges in contemporary Nigerian society. These challenges seriously interrogate the relevance of Sociology as a scientific discipline and provide a verdict of declining relevance. There is therefore an urgent need to reverse the observed negative trends. In particular, Sociologists must take a very critical look at their discipline and rescue it from a one sided slide into conservative functionalism.

The critical conflict perspective has, throughout history, proved more effective in exposing and tackling the ills of society and abandoning it is proving disastrous to the discipline and to society. Again, the contemporary recourse to micro research endeavours is not enhancing the relevance of the discipline. Rather, holistic macro research knowledge has become inevitable if Sociology will remain relevant to contemporary Nigerian society.

Mark Anikpo

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SOCIOLOGY IN COMTEMPORARY NIGERIA: THE CHALLENGE OF RELEVANCE

INTRODUCTION:

Sociology has had a chequered history, not only as a social scientific discipline but also as a relevant tool for social development. Its origin as an academic discipline was heralded by social forces and institutional transformations that gave it relevance and intellectual appeal. That was back in the 19th century. Since then, sociologists had responded to whatever challenges that threatened their social and academic relevance in a way that repositioned the discipline to sustain its relevance at times through significant paradigmatic shifts. We shall presume in this analysis that the relevance of any academic discipline is the extent to which it facilitates the development process.

In his analysis of **The Crisis In The Social Sciences: The Nigerian Situation**, Ikenna Nzimiro (1986) reminds us that " the development of social theories emerged as thinkers ruminated upon the social problems of their times". In doing so, they created ideas and visions that sustained their societies. At some point in the development of these societies, such ideas are confronted with new realities that diminish their relevance as effective tools in understanding the workings of society and solving its problems. In other words, the challenges that face a society at any time in its development process, are indeed challenges to the intellectual disciplines that generate the ideas and material conditions upon which societal survival so much depends. The question that confronts sociology today is: how relevant has it been in our understanding of the contemporary social problems of our society and in solving such problems? In Nigeria and indeed all over the world, it is doubtful if anybody can boldly and convincingly score the discipline high in those regards. What exactly went wrong and what should be done? We shall keep in mind that, as is often said, a science is valueless if it

cannot provide for the solution of the problems of that environment.

A Look Back-wards At Sociology And The Social Sciences: As late as the 18th century, there was no clear distinction between the social sciences "into such separate disciplines as sociology, anthropology, social psychology, economics, political science and jurisprudence" (Bottomore and Nibset, 1979; 40). There was so much cross fertilization of ideas focusing on the study of man that a compartmentalization of these ideas into separate disciplines was not contemplated. Even the later emergence of the social sciences into separate disciplines was an attempt to apply the same ideas in specific contexts and create division of labour among the various practitioners. For instance, Economics emerged because of the need to specify the importance of economic phenomena in the lives of human beings. It received a boost after the publications of Adam Smith's **Wealth of Nations** and David Ricardo's **Principles of Political Economy** (see Anikpo, 1986). It was however Paul Samuelson who formalized the concern of Economics as "the study of how human beings go about the business of organizing consumption and production".

The expression 'political science' was coined in 1701 by Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm although its concern with the problems of democratic polity dates back to Plato and Aristotle. It is about human beings and the struggle for power or the "authoritative allocation of values" (David Easton, 1965).

Psychology received its distinctive character from the writings of William Wundt and later Pavlov and Skinner to determine the internal urges and motivations in human behaviour.

In the case of Anthropology (coined from the Greek words **anthropos** and **logos** meaning **study of man**), concerns about man and his varied characteristics had been on even among the Greeks but "in its modern form anthropology is a product of the nineteenth century" (Greenberg 1968). As Carol and Melvin Ember (1973) stated, ancient travellers such as "Herodotus and Marco Polo recorded and commented on the

exotic life styles of foreign peoples. Philosophers such as Rousseau in his "Noble Savage", concocted pictures of primitive peoples which had no bearing with reality." They aroused the need for answers to man's curiosities over culture and physical differences which were observed and revealed when the voyages of exploration broadened spatial perspectives and brought into limelight whole continents of people hitherto unknown to the Western world. There was also the need to decide whether the newly discovered peoples possessed souls like the Western man and therefore worth saving.

The scientific revolution was ignited in 1543 by the publication of the book –**"On The Revolution of Celestial Orbs"** by Copernicus. By the late seventeenth century and mid nineteenth century, the scientific revolution had reached its peak with the publications of Newton's **Principia Mathematica** in 1687 and Darwin's **The Origin of Species** in 1859. In between these years, most of the scientific disciplines including sociology, had firmly established themselves. As Carol and Melvin Ember (1973) also noted, under the influence of the scientific revolution, "those who were interested in learning about other cultures realized that, if they were to produce anything of scientific value, they would have to study their subject in the same way other scientists studied theirs".

The origin and development of Sociology is rooted in this intellectual milieu and was no less novel. The name Sociology was coined by Auguste Comte in 1839. It was however known that in formulating the principles of Sociology, Comte synthesized many of the ideas of other thinkers such as Turgot, Condorcet, Montesquieu and Saint-Simon. (see Kenneth Thompson, 1976). The scientists at the time were engrossed with the idea of discovering the laws of progress. Comte was trained as a Physicist and he believed that human society was also amenable to the same laws of science as in Physics, Biology, etc. Hence he first called his proposed science of society "Social Physics" and later renamed it "Sociology". In the six volumes of **Course of Positive Philosophy**, written between 1830 and

1842, Comte set out the “law of three stages”. Knowledge, he insisted passes through three stages – the theological, the metaphysical and the positive. He also insisted that the mission of the new science of Sociology “was to discover the natural and immutable laws of progress” (ibid: 19). Comte himself acknowledged that the main contributions to his synthesis were from the 18th century philosophers of progress (Condorcet and Turgot) and the scientists especially those in Biology and Medicine. He was also influenced by the liberal political economists such as Adam Smith; Greek philosophers (Plato and Aristotle), other philosophers such as Kant, Hume and Descartes) and social theorists and historians such as Montesquieu, Bossuet and Adam Ferguson. Comte’s evolutionary ideas were in consonance with the prevailing ideas of progress at the time. It will be recalled that this was the same influence that guided Darwin’s biological evolution in 1859. In other words, Sociology and some other sciences have a common intellectual ancestry. Sociology was concerned with the comparative study of social phenomena with a view to understand the dynamics of human society in order to scientifically determine its development dynamics.

Emergence of Sociology.

It is on record that the industrial revolution in Europe and the colonial expansion by Europeans into other parts of the world were historically coterminous with the emergence and growth of Sociology. The scientific principles unleashed by the Renaissance stimulated the spirit of inquiry, the resultant voyages of discovery, the growth of commerce, industrial manufacture and the development of technology. In Britain particularly, James Watt, a mechanical engineer in 1769 invented the steam engine. James Hargreaves and Roger Arkroyd in 1764 had perfected the spinning jenny, and in 1785, Edmund Cartwright developed the power loom.

As Bram et.al (n. d) noted.

The industrial revolution inaugurated the growth of manufacturing centers, which in turn attracted a large urban working class. The new factory laborers, extremely depended on their employers and subjected to severe economic depressions, needed protection in the form of social legislation (q.v.). In addition to greatly increasing production, the industrial revolution substantially raised income and, as markets widened, complex systems of transportation and communication had to be developed. The larger scale of business accelerated the evolution of the corporation (q.v) and the prosperous new enterprises generated further scientific research and technological progress.

The overall impact of this revolution was the sharp decline of the agricultural economy or the feudal system and the upsurge in the industrial sector or the capitalist economy. It transformed Britain into the leading economic, colonial, naval and political power of the 19th Century. It gave impetus to the expanded reproduction of capital through industrialism and colonialism. It also set in motion the rudiments of the phenomenon of globalization. In all these developments, sociology came in handy to x-ray the social problems arising from the new system and made recommendations for solution. For instance the demographic movements occasioned by the new factory system; the intensification of urbanization and the explosion in transportation generated new social problems such as family instability, delinquency, crime and labour –management conflicts. In France, Comte was actually seeking for a solution to the social disorganization caused by the French Revolution.

These negative fallouts of the new industrial and urban system and upheavals of a social revolution were threats to the stability of the society as whole. To deal with these problems, sociologists were on hand to offer explanations and suggest

solutions. Through macro-historical researches and theory formulations, guidelines were provided for practitioners in various sectors of the economy. In the context of the scientific enterprise, sociological research dug out empirical facts that clarified the problems of the society and facilitated solutions to such problems. For instance, as Timasheff (1967) noted, the definition of Sociology as the scientific study of society on a highly generalized and abstract level, means also that society must be defined by Sociology. This is done when in a scientific inquiry, "the object of study is given a working definition, that is an approximation sufficient for the present purpose". That definition is then confirmed or not confirmed leading to a clarification and solution of an identified problem. Thus, the discipline of sociology emerged from the onset not only in response to societal problems, but also as a tool kit for solving societal problems. The first set of Sociologists – Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Herbert Spener (1820 – 1903), Adolphe Quetelet (1796 – 1874). Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) and others indeed responded to the social disorganizations of their era and offered explanations for solutions to the problems. Understandably, the problems that confronted them were not exactly the ones confronting sociologists today. In the next section therefore, we shall examine the problems of contemporary Nigerian society and how today's sociologists are responding to the challenges posed. In other words, how relevant is sociology today in understanding and solving societal problems.

Challenges for Contemporary Nigerian Society:

The challenges facing contemporary Nigerian society arise from both external and internal sources. Since the turn of the new century, human society, globally and nationally has come under the influence of new social forces which have either reinforced old societal problems or generated new ones. As had always happened, it is the historical responsibility of intellectuals to articulate ideas for a clearer understanding of these new social

realities and hence the methodologies for their solution. Some of the challenges and their sources may be identified as follows:

(i) The Challenge of Globalisation and Environmentalism

As the 20th Century drew to a close, two related concepts 'globalisation' and 'environmentalism' had already become the new buzzwords of international and scholarly discussions and analyses. On globalization in particular, the literature increased very fast as efforts were made to define it and spell out its characteristic features in several institutional frames. Economists focused on the process of financial liberation involving the deregulation of trade and expanded market flows all as result of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1972 – 73. The perception of globalization as an economic phenomenon has been firmly established. It involves "the liberalization and intensification of international linkages in trade finance, markets production research, production research, transportation, energy, medicine, education, politics and culture "(1998 Annual IGSR Distinguished lecture by Ibrahim Babangida).

Political scientists are emphasizing the realignments in the international political system for transnational competition and "the mobilization of people for increased democracy" (Ihonvbere, 1996). Paradoxically, while the process of globalization is "drawing the whole world into a global vaillage", it is at the same time "compelling wider regional integrations world wide" (ibid). The question is, why would a process that is tearing down all national/international boundaries at the same time be fostering integrations at regional levels as seen in the emergence of the European Union, Organisation of American States. African Union, etc. One would accept that the collapse of the existing ideological, socio-economic and political boundaries actually opened the world as one huge ,market where everybody was 'free' to compete. Ironically, "competition in such an expanded socio-economic arena requires larger groupings

than the erstwhile national groupings for effectiveness hence the integration at the wider regional levels" (Anikpo, 2005).

Sociologists in the same vein were re-examining the inter-group relationships occasioned by these global events – what was happening to the underdeveloped Third World Countries as they are dragged more and more into this new world system. While Euro-American Sociologists presented their societies as development models to be copied by the Third World countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Third World Sociologists found evidence to link the underdevelopment of their societies to the imperialist exploitations of Europe and America. Walter Rodney (1974) showed "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."

Allied to globalization, not necessarily as an imperialist force but more as an academic paradigm, is the phenomenon we have chosen to refer to here as environmentalism. Concern about the environment however reached epochal proportions in the second half of the 20th Century. Discussions on isolated disasters in different parts of the world and observations by astronomers and physicists revealed a pattern and consistency that drew attention to the possible destruction of planet Earth as a human abode. They argued that dislocations in the atmosphere as a result of the depletion of the Ozone layer by the emission of greenhouse gases and also in the ecosystem as a result of massive deforestations were slowly but steadily eroding the capacity of the Earth planet to sustain life. Humanity was heading for a major disaster. Nigeria has its own share of this looming environmental disaster and its social implications.

The warning was loud enough to attract the attention of the United Nations which summoned the first world conference on the environment, the UNCHD in 1972 at Stockholm in Denmark. The Stockholm Conference led to the setting up of the United Nations Environment programme (UNEP) and the signing of the Stockholm Declaration "which enumerated 26 joint principles relating to human rights and responsibilities for the

global environment, as well as a Plan of Action consisting of 109 recommendations.

The eventual inadequacies of the Stockholm Conference led to the second World Summit in Nairobi, Kenya in 1982. This led to the establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. It produced the famous document titled ***Our Common Future*** (generally known as the Brundtland Report). This was the document that gave the universally accepted definition of “sustainable development” as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs . . .”

New concerns on the environment, poverty and economic inequality gave rise to the 3rd World Summit, the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). It was at the Rio Summit that a definitive interdependence was established between peace, development and environmental protection and that both developed and underdeveloped countries depend on one another for the sustenance of the earth's environment. The Conference also gave rise to the establishment of the Rio Declaration and signing of the Agenda 21. It involved a Climate Treaty, a Biodiversity Treaty and a Forests Declaration and was signed by more than 150 countries. The later World Summit in 2002 at Jo'burg. South Africa was convened specifically to review the extent to which the earlier plans of Action had been implemented. It re-examined in particular the NEPAD proposal and the WEHAB (World Energy, Health. Agriculture and Biodiversity) Agenda as they affect the developing countries.

All these issues are of interest to Sociologists because of their impacts on society. The phenomenon of globalization poses a peculiar challenge to those in the 3rd World countries especially Africa. Sociology as an academic discipline must further explore its implications and provide solutions to them. Poverty is still a major scourge despite national/international attempts to eradicate or at least alleviate it. Communication

technology has impacted tremendously on several modern and traditional institutions both positively and negatively. New sociological knowledge is needed to understand and tackle the new developments.

Similarly, the phenomenon of environmentalism has raised serious doubts over man's future survival on the Earth planet as a result of man-made problems. In particular is the environmental devastation of the country's Niger Delta zone. Crude oil spillages on farmlands and water sources; gas flaring and oil bunkering have polluted the entire Niger Delta almost beyond remedy. The new reality that development must be sustainable to save the planet poses new challenges to Sociology and other sciences in terms of providing adequate response to the impact of the environment on human society. Already some universities have introduced the course on Environmental Sociology. Some have not. More macro researches are needed to pre-empt and define impending social problems. There is need for a Sociology of Modern Technology and Communication.

(ii) **The Challenge of Bourgeois (Conservative) Intellectualism**

We earlier referred to Ikenna Nzimiro's concern about **The Crisis in The Social Sciences: The Nigerian Situation** (1986). In his analysis, he took a holistic view of all the social sciences including Sociology which is the major focus of our current presentation. Nzimiro was unequivocal that "the theoretical assumptions of our social scientists are now unable to identify the ills of our society". Their theories are formulated to sustain the very ills of the society because many of them have become beneficiaries of the social structure that generates these ills or are in the service of the system that generates the ills. For him therefore, the crisis in the social sciences resulted from the intellectual dependence of our theoretical models on those of our erstwhile colonizers.

Such models hinder the development of critically rigorous thought in our teachings and research and are thus

unable to provide answers and solutions to the problems of our contemporary society. In his opinion, our economists are abandoning the Marxist Political Economy models which reveal the contradictions in the social relations of production that reveal, not only the holistic and historical dialectics of social phenomena, but also the distortions of the liberal capitalist economic models. He also argued that our political scientists have abandoned the analysis of the class structure of the state and "are unable to see the contradictions inherent in the political system" (P. 4). Therefore, he notes,

Our political scientists of the functionalist consensus school are reproducing the intellectual garbage of the liberal social scientists, the apologists of Western imperialism.

Anthropology did not fare any better-Riddled from the start with a functionalist liberal orientation in support of European colonialism the later attempt at liberation Anthropology could not extricate the discipline from its already floored theoretical models.

On Sociology, Nzimiro wrote as follows:

Sociology, the science which encompasses other social sciences, the science born out of the crisis of the post-revolutionary period in France, with its humanistic philosophy for change was transformed by the 20th Century theorists and their Cold War follow-up (Parsons, Shills and Aaron) into a conformist, reformist discipline, finding its inspiration in the bedrooms of members of the reactionary establishment. This transformation from a dynamic discipline founded to espouse the cause of the thinking of the sons of the bourgeoisies, who, because of the radical Marxist ideas, which espoused the social conscience of the exploited proletariat of Europe, challenged the

capitalist social order, began to evolve alternative social theories and models to diffuse the radical models and rationalize the status-quo.

Consequently, many contemporary Sociologists, in their morbid dislike of Marxist critical analysis are no more able to see the country's problems as the product of the dialectical relationship between the society's economic base and its superstructure. They are conjuring practical and distorted images of social phenomena as if the society is fundamentally in order and required only eclectic understanding of its constituent parts. Thus not being able to permeate the dialectical interconnections between these parts, the functionalist equilibrium models fail to provide appropriate solution to emerging societal problems. Its relevance to society is thereby diminished.

(iii) The challenge of Adapting Research and Curricula to Development Needs:

The 21st Century brought with it some other development needs which pose new challenges to the discipline of Sociology. The society has become skills and knowledge driven. The electronic age of information and communication technology requires specialized knowledge for both individual and group survival. Practical rather than theoretical skills are imperative in contemporary capacity building. Sociologists face the challenge of adapting their research efforts and school curricula towards the acquisition of relevant practical skills. For instance in many parts of the world today, as a result of rising unemployment, schools attempt to inculcate skills for employment generation rather than employment seeking. Hitherto, the practice had been for the graduates of Sociology to seek employment in government and private establishments. The curricula for the disciplines did not include the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. Now the jobs to be employed into are no more in existence. The alternative is for the graduates to acquire the necessary skills to create jobs for themselves. The challenge to the discipline is to redefine its research objectives and review

existing curricula to deal with the new situation. A situation where unfolding events are affecting the global environment whereas sociological researches are assuming more micro and eclectic dimensions is not appropriate.

(iv) The Challenge of Weakened Professional Associations

All disciplines everywhere form professional bodies to ensure their advancement and continued relevance. The associations hold regular executive or general meetings and conferences at which issues of concern to their disciplines are critically reviewed and resolutions are formulated for improvement. The professional associations also use the opportunities of these meetings and conferences to keep the public informed of their activities and the developments in their professional disciplines; reinforce public perceptions and knowledge of the disciplines and their relevance to society.

Although this presentation has been kept at a very general level, it will be presumptuous to claim knowledge of what is happening to the American Sociological Association; the Royal African Society in London or the Association of Indian Sociologists and Anthropologists. Since we are more familiar with the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA) and the Nigerian Sociological Society (NSS), we shall limit our comments to the two especially NASA. It may not be an exaggeration to say that since the turn of the new century, NASA has been more of an embarrassment to Nigerian sociologists and anthropologists. The association has been comatose since 1985. The vacuum created gave rise to the formation of the NSS but its impact in publicizing Sociology has not achieved the desired effect. It has been so bad that General Olusegun Obasanjo when he was still president of Nigeria wondered aloud whether sociology is still being offered in our universities. In the 21st Century when the communication explosion has created the wide world web where information is freely exchanged, Nigerian Sociologists have been ineffective in using their professional associations to sustain the discipline. It is a

formidable challenge to all sociologists in the country. Most of those who formed NASA and kept it active until 1985 have retired from university service. The remaining few are about to retire. This shifts the challenge to the new generation of scholars and they must act now before it is too late. The current efforts by NSS to make Sociology relevant is commendable but unfortunately, not enough.

(v) **The Challenge of Internal Contradictions**

The discipline of Sociology is inherently plagued by internal contradictions which ironically are being ignored. It is facing a paradox of Declining when it should be Progressing. The travails of Sociology in contemporary society show clearly that the discipline is dwindling in relevance when it is needed most, that is, when its theories and methodologies should be most helpful in confronting the challenges of the new era.

As undergraduates in the early 1970s, we were taught that Sociology is the Queen of the Social Sciences; that Sociologists were the priests and voices of the Society. We believed that with our scientific methodologies, we could unravel any mysteries of human society and provide the necessary knowledge for solutions. Four decades down the line Sociologists seem to have lost their prime place and radical voice in the task of defining society and its development trajectory.

Nigerian society is imploding from poverty, hunger, youth unemployment, cultism ad insurgency, political hooliganism, and inordinate greed whether as corruption or stealing; chronic environmental destruction through oil spills, gas flares, oil theft and illegal refining of crude oil, social structural disequilibrium occasioned by conflicts of all types, kidnappings for ransom, and ritual killings have created a social anomie with heightened anxieties among Nigerians. As in earlier times, Sociology must come to the rescue. It must restore its relevance as a tool for understanding society and finding solutions to its problems.

These days, there are no more critical debates even at the global level. Nothing has replaced the intellectual fireworks that characterized the seminars of the Social Science Faculty of UNPORT personified in the last century by Claude Ake, Samnel Kodjo, Ikenna Nzimiro, Kimse Okoko, Tunde Ojo, Cliff Edogun, Late Catherine Mosely, Terisa Turner, Tom Taiwo, Eme Ekeke, Mark Anikpo, Late Goddy Nwabueze, late Peter Onyige, Julius Ihonvbere, etc. One expected that the academic debates would have by now institutionalized the Port Harcourt School of Social Science. Sociology would have benefited positively from them. But people seem not to be interested in academic debates any more.

WHAT TO DO?

It has become imperative that Sociologists must rethink their discipline, its methodologies and theoretical models in the context of contemporary Nigerian society and their challenges to the relevance of the discipline.

- (i) There is need for more macro research initiatives. The history and scope of the contemporary social challenges must be brought together to reveal their characteristics and patterns. Only in so doing, can a relevant analysis emerge and an appropriate prescription for solution be offered. This is a direct responsibility to Development Sociologists and Theorists.
- (ii) More effort should be directed to its more practical areas such as Conflict Resolution, Labour-Management Relations, Social Welfare, Security and Crime Prevention. They offer implementable policy suggestions and praxis but only as parts of a dialectical hologram.
- (iii) The intellectual tradition of conferences is on the decline in many Nigerian universities. It must be revived so that ideas should circulate and contend with one another.

Conclusion

We have attempted to highlight some of the challenges confronting Sociology and Sociologists in contemporary Nigeria. There are issues such as the waning appeal of sociology; the weakness of the discipline in grappling with the practical demands of the electronic information age, and the research imperatives of globalization and environmentalism. There are also the issues of non-functional professional associations and the replacement of retired and retiring members of the discipline. These issues and many more pose tremendous challenges to sociology and sociologists today. They are not just important, they are urgent.

The points were noted that,

- (i) Sociologists have stopped defining the society to reveal its contemporary dynamics and demands and it is affecting its relevance as a tool for understanding and solving contemporary social problems.
- (ii) Isolated micro research endeavours have, at best, merely scratched at the emerging challenges without really proffering adequate solutions to them. There is therefore need for more macro studies based on the historical dialectical transformations of the society.
- (iii) Theoretical models have shifted to conservative functionalist models which are unable to critically expose the ills of the society. More critical analysis from critical political economy models are now imperative to enhance the capacity of the discipline to understand and solve emerging social problems.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, what I have done is to offer my parting views on how to sustain and make more relevant, the discipline of Sociology that has sustained me professionally since 1970. I sincerely hope somebody is listening.

THANK YOU ALL.

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CITATION ON



PROFESSOR MARK ANIKPO
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Mark Okeke Chibuko Anikpo was born on the 29th of May, 1945 at Enugu. His father, Mr. Camillus Ekwe Anikpo was a Civil Servant at the then General Hospital, Ministry of Health, Enugu. His mother, Mrs. Mabel Ukanukwu Anikpo, was a known trader on food items at the Ogbete Main Market, Enugu. Mark was the 3rd in a family of six children.

Mark Anikpo, could not start school at the age of five (5) years because his right hand could not go round his head to touch his left ear, as was the practice in those days. Consequently in 1952, at the age of 7 years, he was registered into the infant I class at St. Brigid's Primary School, Asata Enugu.

Mark Anikpo completed his primary education in 1959 and in 1960 began his Secondary education at the College of Immaculate Conception, C.I.C. Enugu. In 1964, he obtained the West African School Certificate in Division One. While at C.I.C., Mark was also prominent in Sports and leadership positions. He was the Senior Refectorian in 1963 and Class 5 Prefect in 1964.

Early Work and Military Life

In April 1965, Mark Anikpo was employed as a 3rd Class Clark at the then Premier's Office, Enugu and was later transferred to the Divisional Office, Afikpo in today's Ebonyi State. Bored by the

lethargic monotony of civil service work, Mark resigned and returned to Enugu in March 1966. He was employed two weeks later as a Library Assistant at the Eastern Nigeria Library Board, Enugu. In 1967, the Nigerian crisis forced him, like many other young men of his age then in Enugu, to enlist into the Biafran Army to defend the newly declared State of Biafra. He saw battle, as an Infantry Officer in many sectors of the Nigeria-Biafra war including Nsukka, Mid-West, Onitsha, Atani and finally the Port Harcourt sector where he again narrowly escaped death after a bullet pierced through his right chest. He was to spend 4 months at Emekuku hospital in today's Imo State.

University of Career

In 1970, after the civil war Mark Anikpo registered as an undergraduate at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) where he met Professor Ikenna Nzimiro who became his intellectual mentor. Despite a very active student life during which he played decisive leadership roles in the Students Union Government and Departmental Association, Mark graduated with a First Class Hons in 1974.

He was posted to Kwara State the same year for the National Youth Service. He served as the Divisional Social Welfare Officer for Kabba Division (which was then still in Kwara State). After almost one year in Kabba, Mark was discharged to start the usual search for a job. That was when fate played another crucial role in his life. Although he had no intention to become a teacher, he ended up as a Junior Fellow, (the UNN equivalent of Graduate Assistant) at the same Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1975. He taught Social Research Methods and Social Statistics for one year and was admitted to the University of Cambridge, U.K. for a straight PhD in the Sociology of Developing Nations.

In 1978 Professor Claude Ake contacted Mark Anikpo through Professor Ikenna Nzimiro asking him to join the new

experiment in Social Science at the new University of Port Harcourt. It sounded exciting and challenging and as soon as he completed his PhD programme in 1979, Professor Anikpo returned to Nigeria to take up the appointment as Lecturer II in the Sociology unit of the then school of Social Sciences. He rose fast through the ranks. Following the departure of Dr Ukaegbu, the pioneer Director of Studies (H.O.D) of Sociology in Jan. 1981, Professor Mark Anikpo, the only other person with a PhD in the Unit at the time, became the Acting Director of Studies. By the time the University reverted to the Faculty/Department system in 1983, Professor Anikpo had become a Senior Lecturer and was appointed Acting Head, Department of Sociology. Later that year, Professor Anikpo attracted his former teacher and mentor, Professor Ikenna Nzimiro from UNN to Uniport and he took over as the substantive Head of Sociology. In 1989 Professor Anikpo became for the 3rd time, Acting Head of Sociology.

International Assignments.

In 1986, the University of Port Harcourt signed a joint academic exchange programme with the Graduate School of International Studies, (GSIS), of the University of Denver, Colorado, USA. Mark Anikpo was the first faculty exchange to GSIS, Denver,

In 1987 he won the Fulbright Senior African Scholar award and returned to Denver to complete his research on "The Sociology of Global Agricultural Transformations" for which he had earlier visited the United Kingdom and the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK). Also, while in Denver, he delivered lectures at Harvard University, Cambridge–Massachusetts; the University of Florida at Gainesville; the University of Akron, Ohio and co-edited 2 books with two world renowned Professors, one on '*Human Rights*' co-edited with Professor George W. Shepherd Jnr of GSIS; and the other on '*The State and Development in the Third World*' co-edited with Professor Hamza Alavi who was also visiting at GSIS. He returned in 1988 and in Sept., 1989 (before he was appointed

professor in November, 1989) was reappointed for the 4th time Acting Head of Sociology.

Assignments at Uniport

For the 36 years he has now spent as a staff of Uniport, Professor Anikpo has not had a dull moment. He has been Head of Sociology Department 4 times, he was Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences from 1993 - 1996. He was Chairman, ASUU Uniport (and zonal coordinator of what was the Port Harcourt zone) from 1989-1993 when he became the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences. While he was on Sabbatical leave at Shell Petroleum Development Company, SPDC in 1999, he was drafted by the Enugu State Government to serve as the Acting Vice Chancellor of the Enugu State University of Technology (ESUT). However, because he could not play along with the political intrigues that bedeviled the state and the university at the time, he was relieved of the position in February, 2000.

He returned to SPDC to conclude his Sabbatical leave and returned to Uniport in September, 2000. In September 2003, Prof. Anikpo was appointed the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration) in the Emeritus Professor Nimi Briggs' term as Vice Chancellor. When Professor Briggs ended his term, Prof. Anikpo was appointed by Council as the Acting Vice Chancellor on the 9th of July 2005. That was again short-lived because shortly after that, Prof Baridam was appointed substantive Vice Chancellor of Uniport. By the time he concluded these assignments in 2005, Professor Mark Anikpo had proposed and got Senate approval for the establishment of the Centre for Ethnic and Conflict Studies, CENTECS. He was appointed the Director (till further notice). At the same time, because of his role in the building of the Sports Complex, his position as the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee of the 2004 NULGA and also his passion for the protection of the Sports facilities, Professor Anikpo was appointed chairman of the newly established Sports Complex Management Committee (SCMC) - till further notice.

Professor Mark Anikpo has been a member of The University of Port Harcourt Senate since 1980. He was elected twice as member of the University's Governing Council between 1993 and 1997. He again served the University's governing council from 2003 to 2005 by virtue of his position then as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration). Professor Anikpo also served in virtually all the standing committees in UNIPORT since 1980. In addition, he was Chairman, UNIPORT Revenue Generation Committee (2001); Chairman, Review Committee on Academic Allowances; Chairman, Committee on Staff Remuneration from Non-NUC Funded Programmes; Chairman, Committee on Review of the 2003-2013 University of Port Harcourt Strategic Plan. He served as the Consultant to the committee on the new UNIPORT 2015-2020 Strategic Plan.

Awards

Professor Mark Anikpo's contributions these 36 years have not gone unnoticed. He has received several awards in recognition of his tireless contributions. For his work on "ethnicity", he was cited in the COMPENDIUM OF SCHOLARS, International Centre of Ethnic Studies, Sri Lanka. He has also been cited in other sources such as the "Who is Who in Nigeria", "Icons of Enugu State", etc. In 2012, The University of Port Harcourt presented to him a shield of special honor with the inscription '*In recognition of your service and contribution to the University*'. The Student's Union Government, University of Port Harcourt, followed suit in 2014 with a Merit Award, '*For Your Wonderful Impact towards Students/Youth Empowerment*'. The Nigerian Social Science community also in 2014 admitted him as a Fellow of the Social Science Academy of Nigeria (FSSAN). His Community, Mmaku in Awgu LGA of Enugu State long ago conferred on him the Chieftaincy Title of '**Ugwumba 1 of Mmaku**' (which means, Pride of the Community).

Academic Output

Professor Anikpo was part and parcel of the famous Port Harcourt School of Social Science which flourished in the 1980s. Recently while celebrating the UNIPORT 40th year anniversary for the Faculty of Social Sciences, the UNIPORT Weekly (March 9-16, 2015) reported that

"The Indelible footprints of great brand names such as Claude Ake, Ikenna Nzimiro, William Ogionwo, Inya Eteng, L.S. Kodjo, Olatunde Ojo, Mark Anikpo, Julius Ihonvbere among others will for a long time be remembered in the annals of the Faculty and the University. These scholars were firebrand academics and activists who did not only stretch the frontiers of knowledge; they also impacted same to their students and younger academics."

In terms of publications, Professor Anikpo has several articles, published and unpublished, monographs, books and technical reports. It is on record that virtually all the lecturers currently in the Department of Sociology were his students and/or supervisees.

Family Life

Despite all the involvement with academic and University work, Professor Mark Anikpo is a passionate family man. His darling wife, Dr (Mrs.) Fanny Anikpo is a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology. Their four children who were all born and schooled in the University of Port Harcourt have distinguished themselves in their own rights. Professor Anikpo has two grand Children and is expecting more soon.

Vice Chancellor Sir, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you an academic giant of national and international repute; a Marxist-oriented Sociologist, a humane teacher and

mentor. I present to you a war veteran, a union activist, the *Ugwumba 1 of Mmaku*; Fellow, Social Science Academy of Nigeria; a loving husband, father and grandfather. I present to you Professor Mark Okeke Chibuko Anikpo to deliver his Valedictory Lecture.