

# Sociology and Social Work in Nigeria: Characteristics, Collaborations and Differences

Ayodele Ogundipe, Ph.D

*and*

Patrick A. Edewor, Ph.D

*Department of Sociology  
Covenant University Ota  
Ogun State, Nigeria  
E-mail: edeworpat@yahoo.com*

## *Abstract*

*This paper presents the evolution of sociology and social work in Nigeria and examines the current characteristics and areas of convergences and divergences in both fields. It was only in the 1960s that universities in Nigeria began to offer degree programmes in sociology with the first sub-department and full department of sociology established at the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka respectively in 1960. These were followed by the other first generation universities and subsequently, the newer universities. There are now scores of Nigerian universities that offer degree programmes in sociology both at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. In discussing the characteristics of sociology and social work, the paper examines the teaching of sociology and generic social work at the tertiary level in two universities and the national social work policy and its limited implementation by the Ministry of Social Development under which social work is placed. This provides a reasonably clear picture of the current situation of sociology and social work in Nigeria. The findings show that the teaching of social work employs considerable sociological theories and sociology students are influenced by their exposure to social work. Some universities accept/approve the situating of social work in sociology departments for now. Social welfarism remains an area to be implemented in the future.*

*Keywords: Sociology, social work, social development, social welfarism, Nigeria*

## Introduction

When we consider the origin of sociology, we will observe that the discipline emerged in response to the social problems that prevailed in the society of the time. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who is usually credited with being the founder of the discipline – he coined the word “sociology”, intended to develop a discipline that would employ the methods used in the natural sciences in studying human society. He initiated this because he wanted to find solutions to the problems that pervaded the French society during his time. Similarly, as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) in North Africa had used the Arabic word, *Al Umran*, which may be translated to mean sociology – the science of the structure of human society. Whether we accept Ibn Khaldun or August Comte as the father of sociology or whether the discipline evolved from speculative social philosophy and empirical science, one thing 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 societal development (Otite, 2008).

Just as many sociologists focus on social problems in their research, social workers on the other hand, help to bridge the practical to the analytical aspect of sociologists' work. Although sociology and social work have a common origin in many parts of the world, today they are separate disciplines. Rather than being the clinical or applied aspect of sociology, social work has become a separate and distinct field of study. Yet there are areas of convergences and divergences, with both disciplines having their distinct characterization.

In this paper, we present the evolution sociology and social work in Nigeria and also examine the current characteristics of both disciplines as well as the areas of convergences/collaborations and divergences/differences in both fields. We first consider the historical antecedents or evolution of sociology in Nigeria (and its characteristics and contributions) before considering those of social work. Thereafter, we examine the collaborations and differences and then the conclusion.

## Evolution and Characteristics of Sociology in Nigeria

As far back as 1939, a Nigerian, Nathaniel Akinremi Fadipe, obtained a doctoral degree in sociology from the University of London (Okediji and Okediji, 1970). Another Nigerian pioneering sociologist was Bankole Apata who obtained his doctoral degree in sociology from Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in the early 1950s (Rotimi, 2006). However, the establishment of sociology as an academic discipline was not until early 1960s. Although the University of Ibadan had begun as a 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. Be that as it may, the department at Ibadan formally organized training with scholarships by Rockefeller and Ford Foundations for its young graduates to be trained overseas, especially in the United States of America and Canada. This was with the view of returning home to improve the academic staff strength of the department. This turned out to be very beneficial as this crop of staff constituted a formidable force which contributed to sociological knowledge in Nigeria (Erinsho, 1994).

Other first generation universities including the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) founded in 1961, Ahmadu Bello University (1962), University of Lagos (1962), and University of Benin (1970) all established and developed their own departments of Sociology. Many of the third generation universities that were established started their own departments of sociology as well. However, like their predecessors, the sociology courses were largely western-oriented.

In the early years of the sociology programme at the University of Ibadan, the scholars who pioneered the teaching of sociology were mostly foreigners, several of whom were social anthropologists. For example, Peter C. Lloyd played a key role in the sociology programme at the University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan). Later on, Ulf Himmelstrand, a Swedish sociologist and former president of International Sociological Association (ISA) made immense contribution to the development of sociology programme at Ibadan. Not only did he expose young Nigerians to the new vistas that the sociological enterprise offered, he 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 which were established in other universities (Erinsho, 1994).

Other Nigerian scholars such as Akinsola Akinwowo of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and the late Francis O. Okediji of the University of Ibadan also made tremendous contribution to the growth of sociology as well as the indigenization of the curricula in their respective universities. Most of the Chairs of sociology in the country today owe their inspiration to the vision, contribution, mentoring and support of these pioneers. Both Akinwowo and Francis Okediji trained in American universities (Boston, and Ottawa and Kansas respectively).

In addition to these, there were other first generation sociologists who were trained mainly in American and British 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 trained in Britain include William Ogonwo (Leeds), E. O. Akeredolu-Ale (London), Philip Olusanya (London), Onigu

Otite (London), Onalapo Soley (Manchester), Simi Afonja (Manchester), Ibrahim Tahir (London) and Michael Angulu Onwuejeogwu (London). Nkemna Nzimiro trained in Western Germany, while Stephen Imoagene trained in Ibadan. These are just some of the first generation Nigerian sociologists, majority of whom took up teaching appointments in the first generation Nigerian universities (Rotimi, 2006). Table 1 presents the universities in which they taught in those early years of sociology in Nigeria.

On March 20, 1971, the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA) was inaugurated. This association was aimed at organising and directing Nigerian sociologists and anthropologists to identify issues of enlightenment and national development. As its amended 1989 constitution shows, two of the principal objectives of the association are to “promote the application of social sciences in the formulation and execution of socio-economic policies” and to “mobilize and orientate sociologists and social anthropologists toward the liberation of Africa and other Third World peoples. Following its inauguration, NASA organized its first annual conference which was held in September 1971 at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The theme of that conference was *“Anthropology and Sociology in Nigeria, what for?”*

**Table 1:** Nigerian first generation sociologists/anthropologists and the universities in which they taught.

S/N	Nigerian first generation sociologists	Where trained	Where they taught
1.	Akinsola Akinwowo	Boston	Ife
2.	Francis O. Okediji	Ottawa 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.	William Ogionwo	Leeds	Ibadan, Port Harcourt
13.	E. O. Akeredolu-Ale	London	Ibadan
14.	Philip O. Olusanya	London	Lagos
15.	Onalapo Soley	Manchester	Ibadan
16.	Simi Afonja	Manchester	Ife
17.	Ibrahim Tahir	London	Zaria
18.	Nkemna Nzimiro	West Germany	Port Harcourt
19.	Stephen Imoagene	Ibadan	Ibadan

The second conference took place two years after (December, 1973) at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with *Rural Development* as the theme. This was followed by that which took place in December 1974 at the University of Ibadan on *National Integration* (Otite, 2008). Subsequent conferences and themes which provided the reference point through which Nigeria's post-colonial social structure and socio-economic conditions were analysed by the Association include: *The Challenge of Culture to the Development of Africa* (1975); *Power in Contemporary Nigeria* (1979); *Mobilisation of human resources for National Development* (1981); *Corruption in Development* (1982); *Strategies for Authentic Development in Nigeria* (1987); *Social Justice, National Integration and the Third Republic* (1989); *Nigeria at Crossroads: Which Way Out?*(1995); *The Challenges of Sociology and Anthropology in the New Millennium* (2000); *The Challenge of Development and Social Order in Nigeria* (2010); and *The Social Dimension of the Nigerian Democratizing Process* (2011). Some of the proceedings of these conferences were subsequently published and circulated among libraries in the country and handed over to national authorities and ministries for information and policy formulation (Erinosho, 1994, Otite, 2008). *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* is one of the official organs of NASA. It was first published in 1974 and issues of the journal have been published since then from time to time subject to the availability of funds. Its articles have always been reflections on social problems and reflections on various aspects of the problems of development of the Nigerian society.

The characteristics of sociology in Nigeria can better be understood in terms of its curricula and the specializations. Prior to the inauguration of the Accreditation Committee of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1988, it was the responsibility of the Senates of the different Nigerian universities to determine the contents of their respective sociology curricula. The Accreditation Committee of the NUC is charged with the responsibility of harmonizing the curricula of all universities in Nigeria in order to ensure uniformity and that minimum standards are met. Consequently, all sociology programmes were reorganized and sociology, like other subjects, now offer comparable courses at all levels in all universities. Newly established universities are also guided by the NUC guidelines in the preparation of their sociology curricula.

There are usually compulsory (core), required and elective courses. The compulsory courses normally include: History of social thought, sociological theory, methods of social research and social statistics. These are in addition to NUC general courses which are designed to develop the cognitive skills of students and they usually include: the peoples and culture of Nigeria, introduction to philosophy and logic, computer appreciation, use of English as well as peace and conflict studies. The elective courses are wide ranging and they focus on such thematic areas as family, religion, health, crime and delinquency, industry, development, population, ethnic relations, the military, social anthropology, social psychology and political sociology. These thematic areas have also been the areas of specialization in which sociologists have made specific contributions toward the development of Nigeria.

## **Social Work defined**

Social work can be said to be the flip side of the coin of Development Sociology. There are no concise terminologies for the concepts of social welfare, social work, social services and social security. As with most terms we use in the social sciences, no universally accepted definitions exist. One makes up one's definitional salad from the smorgasbord of available meanings and usages.

Social work is paid work involving the giving of help and advice to people living in the community who have financial, family and other problems (Oxford Advanced Learners). It is based on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations to help individuals, groups or communities obtain social and personal independence. It is both a science and an art. It draws scientific knowledge and insight (theories) from sociology, anthropology, biology, education, economics, history, law, philosophy and psychology synthesized into social work theory/treatment. Therefore, social work depends on a body of knowledge of these mentioned disciplines as well as on the specific structure and functions of social services and the skill and responsibility of professional social workers (Morales and Sheafor, 1983).

Social work is a social institution in the sense that it is social intervention to encourage, enrich and increase the ability of individuals or groups to socially function. It, therefore, caters for those who have difficulty attaining social performance due to physical, psychological and social factors.

Social work has a different orientation from social welfare. Social welfare is wider in scope in that it includes organized activities aimed at helping individuals and communities to meet their basic needs. The 'social' in social work refers to human society, its organization or quality of life while 'work' refers to activity carried out to improve the quality of life of those who have difficulty accomplishing their life tastes, alleviating their distress and realizing their aspirations. It is a professional activity aimed at enriching and enhancing individual and group development. On the other hand, social security is social legislation against illness, joblessness, loss of life of a worker, traumatizing accidents and other unexpected contingencies. It includes social insurance, public assistance, health and welfare services.

## **Indigenous social work in Nigeria**

Prior to the advent of colonialism, there was indigenous social work in Nigeria. Pre-colonial Nigeria had its very solid institutions in, for example, kinship, family and marriage systems. These institutions were very complicated but understood and practiced by the societies in which they were found as, for example, in the concept of the family. "Nuclear" family is a Eurocentric construct which never suited or captured the

idea of family in Africa. Western titillation of the idea of polygyny and polyandry aside, one can only properly understand the idea of family in Nigeria as full and not extended family because by the classificatory system of family in most Nigerian cultures full families are perfectly understood in the indigenous culture. Not having terms like 'uncle', 'cousin', 'niece', 'aunt', 'nephew' etc., Nigerian families are not "extended" to indigenous people. The idea of 'nuclear' family even in western countries today with the high incidence of divorce and remarriages gives the tie to the father, mother and their children in today's world.

So, kinship, family and marriage ties were iron clad in their responsibilities in traditional indigenous societies. Kinship groups met the recreational, religious, legal and economic needs of their members. They served as social security and social welfare agencies providing for the elderly, the sick, the unemployed, and gave shelter and food to new migrants. They were a form of friendship network of relatives, a readymade source of companionship and care-giving. Members were not usually turned away in times of need. Financial and moral assistance was provided primarily from parents to children in the early years of marriage. Other forms of mutual aid include the exchange of services and gifts and the giving of counselling (Odetola *et. al.* 1983:28). Age grades, traditional rulers, elders, local religious leaders and other influential members of the community also rendered services and assistance.

Ogundipe (2002) clearly articulated the historical antecedents of Social Work in Nigeria. The rendering of social service is as old as the earliest human communities and Nigeria has a long tradition of assisting the individual within the community. In traditional Nigeria as elsewhere in traditional Africa, corporate existence was supreme. People came together and lived in harmonious clan or lineage in groups where sense of belonging, solidarity, and affinity defined the individual and subsumed them under the general will. Here, we first consider the colonial period before considering modern social work practice in Nigeria.

Underlying Africa social structures is a labyrinth of relationships by blood or marriage, networking entire communities, and in that manner making everyone his brother's keeper. The sense of relationship and solidarity provided by kinship expresses itself in mutual support, assistance and succor.

Traditional Nigerian social structure includes organizational divisions into clans, lineages, families, households and individuals. Some of these structural divisions avail concerted action in times of stress, crises, sorrow, loss and failure. They encourage shared joy and success. Learning of genealogies of dissent is a traditional form of education, instilling a sense of origins, rootedness, sacred duty and history. Genealogies also established linkages between the living and the ancestors. The latter are believed to watch over the living from a higher plane than the earthly one and to render assistance or punishment as appropriate. Clan and lineage members by believing in a common ancestor possess a strong sense of identity with one another which often leads to further cooperation.

The family in Nigeria is the nucleus of individual and corporate existence. People

have full families, including grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, their families and other relatives. This is quite unlike the partial (nuclear) families of husband, wife and their children of Euro-American societies. The full family unit provides even more service, aid and succor to its members. Within these full families, it is understood that people will nurture, share resources, socialize and educate one another.

Life in the family compounds is a communal one where the older ones share in the upbringing of the younger ones: the females playing the role of nurturing and tending, the males serving as authority figures and decision-makers. The old ones provide example and experience. The young in turn respect and provide for the old in the evening of their lives.

The need for solitariness is provided in the education given by the family in the home. Education at this level is pragmatic, utilitarian and religious-oriented. Obedience to decision towards the public good, harmony and efficiency is a rule of thumb. Intense development of communal spirit is fostered through socialization into clan and lineage structures. Communal duties and obligations rather than rights to clan and lineage members are mandatory. The duties include responsibility for the welfare of clan and lineage members, assisting the indigent and the disadvantaged, integrating the orphaned and widowed and showing hospitality to strangers. Moral and spiritual obligations include protecting human dignity and observing religious laws and sanctions.

Life is corporately lived in traditional Nigerian societies. The individual does not exist alone. He is part of a whole. The community invents and presents the individual who in turn is dependent on the corporate groups. The individual emanates only in terms of other people and it is in terms of the community, the clan, the lineage and the family that he becomes conscious of his own being. His duties, privileges, and responsibility towards other people define him. Since the individual is a corporate man and sees himself in terms of others, he is never alone. He shares his striving, achievements, failures with his kinsmen, neighbours and relatives, living or dead. Whatever happens to him happens to the whole group.

Therefore, the values of cooperation and continuity were high on the priority list. Welfarist values of friendliness, kindness, hospitality, generosity, honour and respect for the older people and helpfulness were enshrined in the socialization, education, belief and practice of Nigerian people in traditional times.

With the breakdown in social, political and economic organization by colonialism and its attendant ills, Nigerian social structure fell apart and the result of colonization, modernization and westernization created changes which fostered modern social problems.

## Modern Social Group Work Practice in Nigeria

### *The Missionaries*

The first missionaries came to Nigeria to proselytize Nigerians in the late 19thC. Travelers and explorers had earlier written and brought back to their countries in Europe stories about dark-haired people living in societies strange to the white man and practicing a different form of Religion. Explorers also described land rich in spices and ivory and gold. Following these reports, trading companies from Europe came on the heels of the colonizing colonials and the missionaries followed soon after that to save the souls of people on the West African Coast for Christ.

In 1842, Thomas Birch Freeman established the first Christian mission in Nigeria and in the following year, the first primary school was established in Badagry. Between 1842-1900, several missions including the Church Missionary Society had established themselves in various parts of Nigeria. The early missions provided schools where knowledge of the bible, singing of hymns, chanting of psalms and the reciting of denominational catechism predominated. Much of the learning was by rote. Adults who completed the primary six were quickly hired by the missionaries as catechists, teachers and priests. The trading companies employed many of the products of mission schools as clerks; the District Commissions hired yet others as workers, subalterns and interpreters in the Native Administration. Very quickly, products of mission schools were considered very learned, earned good salaries in those days and were considered to be socially mobile.

Missions introduced informal social work into their activities. Therapeutic rather than preventive types of social services were provided. Much of the concentration was on health. They provided drugs and opened clinics, taught midwifery and simple nursing sanitation and hygiene was introduced and child welfare and women's programmes were designed. These social educational services were primarily to lure more converts into Christianity and in return the trained converts were hired to expand missionary activities. The Salvation Army was also very busy providing welfare services.

Following the Depression of the 1930s and World War II social welfare in the colonies became an important colonial government concern. Formal social work started in Nigeria in the 1940s. Based on concern against child labour the Colonial Welfare Act was passed in 1940 with particular focus on labour and child welfare and a sanction against labour for children under 14 years of age. During World War II, the influx of migrants and abandoned children and juvenile in the streets activated the colonial welfare service which placed young migrants in boys' clubs. The Native Children's (Custody and Reformation) Ordinance was passed and Salvation Army home reverted by the government.

Social welfare services have grown since 1960 when Nigeria became independent. A Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports was fashioned in 1972 so that social welfare services could be centrally policed funded and controlled. The Ministry today is a tripartite one of Social Development, Youth and Sports with equal attention paid to welfare services, youth development, voluntary youth organizations and national and international voluntary organizations.

Group work services in Nigeria today are provided through three channels: (i) Institutional Groups for therapeutic purposes, (ii) Voluntary Groups for training and discipline, and (iii) Community Groups for training and development.

Group work services in Nigeria aims at developing the personality and spirit of comradeship, mutual understanding and tolerance. They also aim at discovering activities and hidden talents among youths. Voluntary organizations are subsumed under group work services.

### *Institutional Groups*

Institutional groups include Remand Homes, day-care centres, Approved Schools, Prison and Hospitals.

### *Remand Homes*

Remand Homes were not originally approved schools, although today due to lack of staff and facilities, juveniles who should be in approved schools are placed in Remand Homes. Remand Homes in Nigeria were established as places of safety for children and young persons who are caught wandering and loitering because they are truants or because they are neglected and lacked parents or close supervision. So Remand Homes are shelters for children and young persons needing care, protection and control. They provide remedial and corrective training. Children are taught to read, write and numerate. Rigid roster of activity introduces from the discipline into their youthful lives and through group assignment and activities they learn to share, to take responsibility and to open up, even to show leadership abilities and capacities. Recreational activities include indoor and outdoor games such as soccer, table tennis, board and card games. Remand Homes provide a conducive atmosphere for diagnosing the problems of inmates and enable recommendation of the appropriate treatment. Social group work is practiced in such places as Remand Homes by the social workers attached to such institutions.

In Edo State there is Ugbekun Remand Home which because of less than ideal funding, poor staffing and poor facilities have over the years become a combined remand home and approved institution. Juvenile offenders awaiting admission to approved

schools, under-age criminals, juvenile court detainees, young people needing care and protection, truants who are beyond parental control and those who have committed a breach of recognizance are all placed together at the Ugbekun Remand Homes in Benin City, Edo State. This should not be so. A staff of principal social welfare officer, warden, matron, assisted by supervision officers, typists, clerks, gardeners and gatemen keep the place running. Inmates are categorized as: (i) criminals/delinquents, (ii) care and protection, (iii) beyond control and, (iv) breach of recognizance. Each category is further classified as: (a) remand, (b) awaiting repatriation, (c) detention, (d) referred cases, and (e) awaiting admission into Approved Schools.

### *Approved Schools*

Approved Schools are residential establishments approved by the government for the education and corrective training of boys and girls who failed to respond to treatment while on probation. Generally, Approved Schools are primarily for hardened criminals/delinquents. Examples of such Schools in Nigeria are Birrel House Approved Schools (for junior boys) and Isheri Approved School (for intermediate boys). The primary objectives of Approved Schools' corrective training are those of readjustment and social reeducation in preparation for return to the community. Hence Approved Schools offer training in selected trades such as agriculture, carpentry, smithery, and tailoring. Such training is aimed at preparing trainees for adult life in a competitive environment and thereby lessening the possibility of their becoming adult criminals.

Government interest in the welfare of the juvenile delinquent does not stop at the approved schools. Government attempts to rehabilitate the delinquent so that he can be reabsorbed into his family and be a useful member of the community for the rest of his life.

### *Voluntary Associations*

Voluntary Associations are encouraged to fill the gap in the provision of social services which the government would otherwise have provided. Group work are provided through voluntary associations which serve as a means of making available various types of constructive social, moral, intellectual and physical activities to their members in order to make them integrated personalities and useful citizens.

The Ministry recognizes and subverts some voluntary youth organizations prominent among which are:

1. The Boy Scouts of Nigeria;
2. The Boy's Brigade of Nigeria;

3. The National Youth Council of Nigeria;
4. The National Federation of Yoruba Farmers' Club;
5. The National Council of Youth Women's Christian Association of Nigeria;
6. The Islamic Youth League of Nigeria;
7. The Girls Guides Association in Nigeria; and
8. The Girls Brigade of Nigeria

## **Social Work Education, Training and Collaborations with Sociology**

Social work is currently placed under the Ministry of Social Development. The government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria came up with a national policy on social development tagged: "Social Development Policy for Nigeria" in October 1989. A revised version of the policy was published in 2004. This newer version has a sub-section on social work education and training under the section on social welfare services. It states *inter alia*:

Social Work Education and Training has the task of producing various levels of manpower capable of applying professional knowledge and planned skill intervention in the various problem situations to achieve a suitable welfare state. The growing dimension of social problems without a corresponding increase in the number of qualified social workers to competently arrest these problems has created serious demands for professionally trained social workers in Nigeria.

Social problems and social welfare delivery in Nigeria have evolved to a stage which requires a proper handling by social workers who are adequately trained and equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, orientation, value and competence. This demand for professionally trained social workers has led to the establishment of a variety of educational courses, utilizing and contributing to the growth of professional social work (FRN, 2004).

Social work education and training is considered a process of professionalization of social work based on improved scientific knowledge which enhances the skills of social workers in human relations and problem solving.

A number of Social Development Institutes are established in the country in which the training of social workers is done. An example is the Social Development Institute, Iperu, Ogun State, which runs a one-year certificate course and a two-year diploma course in social development respectively. The curricula for these two programmes have both sociology and social work courses.

In addition, a number of Nigerian universities have both sociology and social work programmes. However, there are far more universities with only the sociology programme

than those with both. The few universities with the social work programmes usually situate the social work programme in the department of sociology. In one or two cases, social work later became a full-fledged department. One of such cases is the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Based on the request of the Federal Government, Social Work programme was established in 1976 in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in the Faculty of the Social Sciences. The programme was principally to train and produce middle level manpower who can man the Social Welfare Departments in the Ministries.

Since 1976, the social work unit in that University has pioneered the training of university level social workers in the country, in order to satisfy the need for this specialized manpower. At the initial stage, only the undergraduate diploma programme was offered. However, it began to offer the degree programme in 1985 and postgraduate programmes (PGD, M.Sc, Ph.D) as from 1986/1987 academic session. The social work unit acquired a sub-departmental status in November, 2001 and later, a full-fledged department in 2006.

The Nsukka undergraduate social work curriculum has considerable number of sociology courses such as Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Anthropology, Elements of Scientific Thought, Deviant Behaviour, Methods of Social Work Research, Ethno-cultural Relations and the teaching of social work employs considerable sociological theories.

Similarly, the University of Benin offers social work programmes both at the diploma, first degree and postgraduate levels but housed in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The social work programme was started in 1979 but only offered at the postgraduate levels (M.Sc and Ph.D) at the inception. Later on (in March, 1983) the two-year undergraduate diploma programme (Diploma in Social Work) was introduced but was on a part-time basis. This was followed by the five-year undergraduate degree programme in the 1995/1996 academic session, also on a part-time basis. The degree programme emphasizes the pragmatic aspects of sociology, anthropology and allied disciplines in the service of the Nigerian society. It grew out of the cognizance of the needs of the wider society and the mounting trend towards professionalization. It is aimed at providing students with an opportunity to critically study the issues involved in effecting personal and social change.

An examination of the degree programme shows that such sociology courses as *Introduction to Sociology and Anthropology*, *Social Deviance*, *Ethnography of Nigeria*, *Sociological and Anthropological Analysis*, *Social Statistics*, *Social Problems in Nigeria*, *Deviance and Criminology*, *Political Sociology*, *Marriage and the Family*, *Research Methods* as well as *Demographic Problems and Family Planning* are among the courses taken by students of social work.

At both Nsukka and Benin, most of the members of Faculty (Lecturers) have their backgrounds in sociology with specializations ranging from criminology to social

psychology, social anthropology, industrial sociology, population studies, sociology of development, gender studies, political sociology and family studies. The teaching of social work thus employs considerable sociological theories. Since social work is situated in the departments of sociology, there is considerable interaction between sociology students and those of social work as they take some courses together. The students of sociology are considerably influenced by their exposure to social work while social work students also tend to reason sociologically due to their exposure to sociology.

## **Sociology and Social Work: Divergences**

Sociology and social work are not the same. They are two separate and distinct disciplines. One might say that social work is basically an applied science studying how sociological knowledge is used to help people solve some social problems. Sociology, on the other hand, is primarily a basic science seeking valid knowledge about human social behaviour. Three conclusions can be arrived at from the comparison of sociology to social work: (i) Sociology is a wider field than social work covering all important aspects of human social behaviour. It covers not only their economy, religion, government, language and literature but also the social organization, the social structure, and the social matrix within which these various phenomena are found. (ii) Sociology also studies some aspects of each the other social sciences. (iii) Although sociology overlaps with these other disciplines, it differs from them in some ways. Ogunbameru (1998) has identified seven characteristics unique to sociology:

1. Sociology is a social science and not a natural science. This distinction is by content not by method. That is, sociology simply serves to distinguish those sciences dealing with the physical from the social universe.
2. Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline. By this is meant that sociology confines itself to statements of what is, not what ought to be.
3. Sociology is not an applied science but a pure science. Its main goal is the acquisition of knowledge about human society, not the utilization of that knowledge. For instance, sociology is mainly concerned with acquiring the knowledge about society that can be used to solve some of the world's problems, but it is not itself an applied science.
4. Sociology is not interested in the concrete manifestations of human events but rather, in the form they take and the patterns they assume.
5. Sociology is a generalizing, not a particularizing or individualizing science. It looks for general laws about human groups and societies not as the case of history which seeks complete and comprehensive descriptions of particular societies.

6. Sociology studies those phenomena that are common to all human interactions.
7. Sociology is both a rational and an empirical science. This final characteristic concerns methodological issues. In the course of investigation, science adheres to principles of objectivity, relativism, ethical neutrality, parsimony and skepticism (Ogunbameru, 1998).

The central distinguishing characteristic of social work is its capacity for providing the means and opportunities by which persons can work. Several efforts have been made to induce social as well as individual change, prevent social problems as well as alleviate their end results. The following, therefore, constitute the purpose of social work:

1. The planning, development and implementation of social services, programmes and policies required for meeting basic needs and supporting the development of capacities and abilities of individuals, groups, communities, and organizations.
2. The promotion, restoration, maintenance or enhancement of the functioning individuals, families, households, social groups, organizations and communities, by helping them to prevent distress and utilize resources effectively.
3. The pursuit of policies, services and programmes through legislative advocacy, lobbying and other forms of social action.
4. The development and testing of professional knowledge and skills related to this purpose.

However, on the interactions between people and resource systems, the social worker must:

- Help people enhance and more effectively utilize their own problem solving and coping capacities;
- Establish initial linkage between people and resource systems;
- Facilitate interaction, modify and build new relationship between people and societal resource systems;
- Contribute to the development and modification of social policy;
- Dispense material resources; and
- Serve as agent of social control.

In Nigeria, funding resources, resource systems and social workers are not there for the most part. Hence, social work education is the way it is. Social services, social security and social welfare are not there hence things are the way they are.

## Conclusion

One of the problems faced by all societies is to develop ways to meet the needs of the non-self sufficient, the orphan, the blind, the physically challenged, the poor, the mentally disabled, the sick (particularly cases of HIV/AIDS) etc. In the past, the responsibilities were largely met by the family, church, neighbours and other similar agencies. In recent times the burden has become increasingly difficult for the immediate family to cope with the erstwhile functions of the full (extended) family, the age grade, church and neighbours. To accomplish these tasks the social workers must focus not on the problems of people or the problems of resource systems, which in Nigeria, for example largely are not there.

## References

- Erinosho, O., 1994, 'Thirty-three Years of Sociology in Nigeria', *International Journal of Sociology* Vol. 9, No. 2, pp.209-216.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004, *Social Development Policy for Nigeria*, Abuja: FRN.
- Morales, A. and Sheafor, B. W., 1983, *Social Work: A Comprehensive Helping Profession*, Massachussets: Allyb and Bacon.
- Odetola, T. O., Oloruntimehin, O. and Aweda, D. A., 1983, *Man and Society in Africa: An Introduction to Sociology*, London: Longman.
- Odrah, C. I., 1991, *Identification of Gaps in Social Work Education in Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Toronto.
- Ogunbameru, O. A., 1998, 'Sociology: A Biographical Approach' in Ogunbameru, O. A. and Rotimi, W. R., eds., *Man and His Social Environment: A Textbook in Sociology*, Ibadan: Cardinal Crest Ltd.
- Ogundipe A., 2002, *Social Group Work*, Benin City: Ambik Press.
- Okediji, F. O. and Okediji, O. O., 1970, 'Introduction' in N. A. Fadipe *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Onokerhoraye, A. G., 1984, *Social Services in Nigeria: An Introduction*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Otite, O., 2008, 'Four Decades of Sociology in Nigeria', Text of a keynote address presented at a Conference to celebrate four decades of Sociology in Nigeria. Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, October 16.
- Rotimi, W. R., 2006, 'The Development of Sociology as a field of Dscipline in Nigeria' in Ogunbameru, O. A. and Rotimi, W. R., eds., *Man and His Social Environment: A Textbook in Sociology*, Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Wayne, J. H., 1986, *The Social Services: An Introduction*, New York: Peacock Publishers.