SOCIAL SCIENCES AS PANACEA FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The paper examines social sciences as scientific disciplines that focus on the study of human behaviour. Understanding of human behavior is enhanced through different social science perspectives such as anthropology, political science, sociology, economics and psychology. Although this grouping differs from one university to another, it is still the most common grouping of social science descriptions. Given the depth of knowledge in each of these perspectives, the social sciences can provide a better understanding of any phenomena that can assist in formulating policies to serve as panacea for rural development in Nigeria and elsewhere. The method of analysis adopted in this paper is qualitative and the findings is that, the curricula of social sciences in the western world appear to dominate the pedagogy and teaching of social sciences in non-western setting such as Nigeria. This is inappropriate for policy formulation that can serve as panacea for rural development. The paper recommends that, until something serious is done to reverse the trend, the enormous investment in social sciences education will for long time continue to yield nothing meaningful for national development.

Keywords: Social sciences, panacea, rural development

Introduction
Social sciences generally refer to all disciplines that primarily focus on human behavior in society. Social sciences are also called behavioral sciences. However, there is no universal consensus on the number of disciplines that make up social sciences. This is even more compounded by the inability of the social scientists to give definite boundaries between one social science discipline and another. This explains the reason for the variation in the number of disciplines categorized as the social sciences from one university to another. The National Universities Commission NUC (1962) categorized the following disciplines as social sciences with minor variation from one university to another, Anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics and political science. Social sciences are clearly distinct from the natural sciences, yet they share inter-disciplinary boundaries with mathematics and English language as major link between them. This link is established more in the school of general studies where natural sciences students take elective courses from social sciences, while the social sciences students take theirs from natural sciences.

From Ogunbameru (2009) submission, it can be deduced that the number of disciplines recognized as social sciences depends on the criteria used in the process of classification of science into natural, social and other sciences from one university to another. What-ever is the classification, social sciences deal with the study of man in society one chemical element is exactly the same all over the world, any variations in its composition can be tested and explained, it is difficult to consider problems of man in the same exact way as we consider problems of matter. Social phenomena are perpetually undergoing changes and are more difficult to control. As the study of man and his environment, social sciences are designed to provide information for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Thus, social scientists are the change agents in transforming societies, they create large scale change using pattern breaking ideas to address the root causes of social problems such as income inequalities, unemployment, poverty, rural – urban migration among others.

To discuss how social sciences can serve as a panacea for rural development in Nigeria, the paper is divided as follows, part one is this introduction, part two reviews social sciences literature, part three discusses the concept of rural development, part four shows how social sciences can serve as panacea for rural development in Nigeria, while part five concludes the paper.

Review of social sciences literature
The sayings that “no man is an island” “a tree does not make a forest” suggest that no single individual can possibly succeed, live and survive alone. An individual needs to interact with others to survive. The same goes for academic disciplines. Birds of the same feather flock together. Academic disciplines with similar goals, orientation, vision, focus, ideology and mission are often centered into the same faculty across universities.

In the same vein, disciplines whose focus of study is man, his behavior and environment are known as social sciences. The best place to start the review of social sciences literature is to understand the meaning of anthropology.

(1). Meaning of Anthropology
Anthropology is a social science discipline interested in studying and understanding man’s problems and how to solve them (Hoebel, 1958).

Osezua (2009) defines anthropology as the ability of man to think, invent, act and adapt to new situations and ways of living. The Chambers of Twentieth Century Dictionary (2000) “defines anthropology as the science of man in its widest sense”. Anthropology is the study of humanity and nature of human kinds in all ramifications his biological, physical and social characteristics and above all why and how people are different? Anthropologists are interested in understanding how the societies work, its social structure and human behavior, its past, present and future. Since its inception as an academic field of study, anthropology has gone through scrutiny and tremendous growth. It has spread across the world like wild fire as an applied field of study with a promise to understand and help solve practical problems facing mankind. When anthropology is mentioned in the public domain, people tend to think of a discipline that is only interested in the people of the past, this is a wrong notion because anthropology as a field of study is a living subject that concerns itself with the study of mankind of all ages, both past, present and the future.

Like other concepts in social sciences, anthropology is not easy to define. It has pitifully remarked that anthropology had been called many things and many things have been called anthropology, it is both abstract and concrete, theoretical and practical, idealist and mythical, very old and entirely modern, it is a philosophy of life, a sort of religion ethical code of conduct expected of every society, it is an interpretation of the past and vision of the future, a violent revolution and gentle revolution, a gospel of love and hatred and finally, it is the hope of mankind. It is interesting to note that all the social sciences disciplines are product of anthropology (Oke, 1984).

(2). Meaning of Sociology
One of the closest allies of anthropology is sociology. They are related in many ways. The relationship between the two cannot be over emphasized. Hence, sociology is defined as the scientific study of society, of the ways in which society is organized and operates, and of the factors contributing to both societal stability and social change (Kenneth, et al, 2005). While anthropology is mostly concerned with the biological characteristics of human life in order to explain and understand human physical and biological variation and characteristics, sociology is more concerned with social issues that relates and differentiates one human being from another. Sociologists are interested in analyzing how people create, maintain and go about altering the society in which they live.

Sociology is useful in that it can help people distinguish between their own personal troubles or problems that individuals might hope to solve and public issues socially harmful, societal conditions whose solution requires collective political action. To understand the difference between personal troubles and public issues a way of thinking called the “sociological imagination” is helpful. That imagination is field by knowledge about how society is presently structured, how and why it seems to be changing and how features of society affect people’s biographies.

A sociological imagination allows people to play an active role in influencing the directions their biographies are likely to take. Human beings not simply be passive object to whom life happens. Working alongside like-minded others, people have the capacity to exercise influence and capture some control over their series of life experiences. Contemporary sociology is influenced by
important intellectual traditions that we have termed the functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives. While quite different in their ways of perceiving society and its members, each has contributed to the core concepts that sociologists use in asking research questions and generating new knowledge about the working of the society.

The functionalist perspective stresses the importance of order and stability within society as a prerequisite for social progress. It examines functions served by different features of society and the contribution they make to the organization and operation of society as a whole. Core concepts associated with the functionalist perspective include culture, socialization, deviant behavior and social control.

The concern of sociology is with social structure or those patterned and regularized arrangements through which people relate to each other and which form the basic skeletal frame work or what Giddens (2006) called the building blocks of society and groups within society. For this reason, the subject matter of sociology is indeed very complex, varied and wide in scope and range of coverage. As well, sociology is concerned with social processes those actions and behavior expected of people in society as well as the specific interpretation given by those to whom they have been directed. These include micro phenomena, such as the relationship between husband and wife, student and teacher, police man and suspect, employer and employee, tenant and landlord, doctor and patient seller and buyer in the market etc. in order to bring about changes in society the society must be studied in all aspects of the relationships of the social phenomena mentioned above with the view to knowing where the problem actually lay (Ritzer, 2011).

### (3). Meaning of Psychology
Psychology is one of the social sciences disciplines. It has been defined differently by different scholars. The differences in definitions reflect the different focus of the scholars and the continuing development of the discipline. Some of the definitions include the following:

- The scientific study of behavior and mental processes
- The science of the behavior of living organisms, both human and animal with focus on how environmental stimuli influence behavior
- The scientific study of behavior, cognition and emotion
- The study of behavior, mind and thought and the neurological bases of behavior.

These definitions reflect the different focuses and theoretical orientation in Psychology. While some psychologists focus on cognitive perspective i.e how people think about and comprehend the world in which they live and how the comprehension of it influences or determines their behavior, others focus on externally observable behavior defined as the physical activity of an organism in response to environmental stimuli. Thus, in spite of the different definitions and opinion about inner and outer stimuli, the focus of the discipline has come to resolve around the question; why do people behave the way they do? In order word, Psychology seeks to understand, to explain, to predict and to control behaviour. Thus, Psychology is concerned with the key questions that people ask in their day-to-day interaction. These questions include:

- What are the determinant of behaviour?
- How do people learn to function properly as members of society?
- How do Psychological factors influence people’s mental and physical functioning and environment?
- How are people’s thoughts and behaviour influenced by specific features of their society?
- How are people’s thoughts influenced by others with whom they come in contact?
- How do thoughts, feeling and perception develop? (Myers, 2007).

The discipline of Psychology has had along history. While it does not pretend to have the definitive answers to questions of human behaviour, it does possess useful powerful tools for the understanding of that behaviour. The discipline has adverse number of sub specialties which not only provide career opportunities for new trainees but which taken together, provide a comprehensive
understanding of the causes, course and consequences of human behaviour and solution to human problems. As the world gets increasingly global and complex, with attendant increase in social and psychological problems, the discipline of Psychology shall continue to be relevant in understanding and confronting the challenges and opportunities presented by the new world order.

(4). Meaning of Political Science

“Power is central to political science as utility is central to economics” politics is the struggle for the acquisition of power, the uses and the abuses of it.

It is important to note that as a field of study, political science seeks to understand and provide solutions to fundamental problems affecting societies such as uniting and regulating the various activities of the state (human conduct). Thus, even though political science does have universal origin and appeal, its internal development has always been defined by its environmental context. This is perhaps because socio-economics and politics of societies are context – specific. Political science must therefore be context specific to be relevant to its environment and be able to respond adequately to the challenges of rural development in Nigeria and elsewhere.

To understand Aristotle’s thought on the subject of political science, we must continue with his proposition that man is by nature a political animal. This mean that the social instinct is implanted in all men and women by nature, and men and women can rise to their full potential only through their participation in politics. According to Aristotle politics exists for the sake of life, and continues for the sake of best life, and continues for the sake of best life which is the end of man not for the increase of its population or wealth or the extension of its influence. It exists for the exercise of the qualities which make men good husbands and women good wives, good fathers, mothers, head of households, and soldier, good citizens and good leaders and good followers.

Adams Smith (1923-90) in his Wealth of Nations (1776) laid down the following proposition: The sovereign has only three duties to perform: one, the duty of protecting society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies, two, the duty of protecting as far as possible, every member of society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing, an exact administration of justice and three: the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which can never be for the interest of any individuals, to erect and maintain because the profit yielded would never repay the expenses to any individual or small number of individual because of externalities. Political science is a master science and is the most important social science disciplines. Politics is the most central of all human activities because human being is a political animal with animal instincts, instincts for unlimited accumulation of wealth at the expense of others.

(5). Meaning of Economics

Economics as a social science discipline goes beyond market forces. This is because not all economic goods and services are subject to market forces. What is central about economics is the provision of utility. Utility is the satisfaction derived from consuming of goods and services. Economic deals with the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

In capitalist economic system factors of production (land, capital, labour and entrepreneur) are motivated to do their jobs through the reward of rent, interest, salaries and wages and profit or the punishment of unemployment and poverty. The meaning of the Greek word “economy” is literally refers to “one who manages a household”. It is associated with the means by which we look after our basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Ancient economics were based on subsistence farming. For most peoples; the exchange of goods and services to fulfill their needs took place through social relationships, rather than through what we would now recognize in terms of market exchange. However, there were also traders who battered for goods in the market place.

As the exchange of goods and services became more frequent and widespread, we see the emergence of economic systems within given regions or nations. An economic system essentially involves the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services between the
individuals, households and institutions which together comprise a given society. A wide range of different systems have developed over-time with capitalism, socialism and mixed economy being the most dominant and well-known today.

(6). Rural Development Administration in Nigeria

Rural development is policy designs that aim at improving not only the quality and quantity of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas but also the quality of the lives of the citizens. It is an attempt to develop rural people in terms of public health, education, providing enough and nutritional food for the people, good accommodation, good water, good roads, enough security, electricity, and above all to give people basic skills to fend for themselves instead of relying on government for everything.

The purpose of rural development is to bring the living standard of rural people at par with the urban dwellers, to help reduce inequalities in income and unemployment, access to public goods and services and the reduction of poverty.

The United Nations social and economic council (1978) defines rural development as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the government authorities to improve the economic, social, medical, political, cultural, infrastructural, housing, educational, agricultural conditions of the communities in order to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and to enable them contribute meaningfully to national development. The conference of Regional planning and Economic Development in Africa (2003) defines it as the outcome of a service of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among a given rural population and whose converging effects indicate in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concern.

Rural development thus means making the condition or environment of the nations’ rural communities better, decent, focus, self-reliant, secure and have vision and mission to face challenges posed by globalization. It means providing rural communities or assisting them to provide for themselves with such amenities like roads, adequate and nutritional food, good water, decent shelter, health facilities, qualitative education and basic skills and training, electricity, cottage industries etc. Buttern(2001) defines rural development as almost any form of local betterment which in some ways achieved through the willing cooperation of the people living together in a defined area. According to Ekong (2003) rural development is a process by which a set of technical, social, cultural and institutional measures are implemented with and for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving their social economic conditions in order to achieve harmony and balance both at the regional and national level.

According to the Third National Development Plan (1975 - 1980) the main objectives of rural development are to increase rural productivity and income, diversify rural economy and generally enhance the quality of life in the rural areas. In addition to raising agricultural productivity, effort will be made to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas through the provision of basic social amenities such as health centre pipe borne water, feeder roads and electricity. Rural Nigerians must be appreciated beyond their roles as a mere producers of food and other agricultural products for the needs of the urban economy, to their roles as consumers and citizens equally entitled like their urban counterparts, to the good things of life.

(4). How social sciences can serve as a panacea for rural development in Nigeria: The social sciences generally refer to all disciplines that primarily focus on human behavior in society. The emergences of the social science are the growth of human knowledge which resulted in the advent of scientific and industrial revolution. Social scientists are the agent of change in any society, with their interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to the study of social problems, they are in better position to understand the peculiarities that exist in every society, yet this is not necessarily the case in Nigeria, because despite the study and research in social sciences in Nigerian universities, since political independence social problems are still on the increase. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the kind of social sciences education dispensed is too elitist to enhance relevance to the rural environment of
Nigeria. Atteh (2006) located the origin of this problem in the inherited colonial educational system that till date has failed to respond to Africa’s development needs. So for social sciences to serve as panacea for rural development, the colonial inherited model of social sciences must be reversed. The Nigerian social scientists must focus more research on burning issues such as poverty, inequality, rural urban migration, rural development, marginalization, conflicts etc. instead of the current undue emphasis on western values and cultural environment to the detriment of Nigerian values and cultural environments. Adequate funding is also required for such research to take place. Since the knowledge of social sciences is required for thorough understanding of any phenomenon in the world, the method of teaching and the curricula of social sciences must be indigenous to reflect the social problems and solutions of the people concerned, the present situation in which the curricula of social sciences in the western world appear to dominate the pedagogy and teaching of social sciences in non-western settings is inappropriate and should be reversed.

Conclusion
Until something serious is done about our values and our mentality of inherited western model of educational system especially the pedagogy and teaching of social sciences in our universities, the enormous investment in education will for long time continue to yield nothing meaningful for national and rural development.

A situation where social scientists are operating without research grants because of endemic corruption cannot make for true national development. Already, the influence of Europe and North America remain very strong in the social sciences due to the spread of western civilization with continued use of their languages. The social sciences disciplines outside the western world are yet to fully develop their own curricula as they largely reinforce the perspective developed from the west. This suggests the need to harmonies western and non-western perspectives in the processes of the social science research. Nigeria should take advantage of numerous opportunities provided by globalization and information communication technology to bail herself of this primitive living and underdevelopment in the midst of civilization. However, taking advantage of these opportunities requires significant investment in human resources and a sound policy framework.

Social sciences are policy sciences because public policy utilizes information from all of these social science disciplines with the aim of understanding the various aspects of human life, including man’s problems and how to solve them.

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