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SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: WHICH WAY FORWARD?

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ABSTRACT

The global crisis of social science manifests in Nigeria in remarkable ways. Beyond the fundamental issues of worldview and methodology, which are neither unique to the social sciences nor to Nigeria, are the apparent lethargic response of Nigeria policy makers to social science research and the complication and contamination of both this response and the research agenda itself by the preferences of external agencies using funding of policy implementation and research as a bait. However, to leave the matter at this is to "pass the buck".

This study uses the method of content survey of prominent social science journals in Nigeria to assess the structure of contemporary social science research in the country. The survey reveals that contemporary research emphasizes basic research over and above policy-relevant research, and hence, questions their relevance to the needs of policy makers. Some suggestions are made as to the way out of this situation.

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INTRODUCTION

All over the world, social science faces a crisis of relevance to state and society. Scholars have addressed this problem from different perspectives and are likely to continue to do so (Brodbeck 1968; Ostrom 1974; Sanda 1981; Lambo 1982; Barongo 1983.; Manicas 1987). Particularly for underdeveloped countries, it is a necessity that social science should prove itself to be a "discourse" by which society "might enact its own emancipation". This necessity is emphasized by growing disenchantment with social science scholarship on issues of content and quality of curriculum and research, as well as orientation and relevance (Simmons 1971; Diejomaoh 1982; 1988; Oculi 1984; Brown 1989). Underlying the disenchantment are problems and obstacles external and internal to the social science community.

In the present "era of big science", in which about 85 per cent of those internationally listed as "scientists" work on the technological application of science (Grove 1989:48), the issue of the relevance of social science needs to be revisited. And with the transformation of scholarship "from a self actualizing activity into a commodity to be purchased in the open market" (Awa 1992), the service of social science research to the Nigerian society stands to be scrutinized. This study undertakes this task in a bid to assess the relevance of contemporary social science scholarship in Nigeria as a resource bank for policy making.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE CRISIS OF RELEVANCE

Two fundamental issues which hitherto defined the crisis of relevance of contemporary social science concern its methodology and *Weltanschauung*. The former borders on its status as a science and the latter, its worldview. Questions have been raised, and answered, regarding the scientific status of social science, its research methodologies — including the validation of its results and policy advice based on its methods. There have also been discussions regarding the exact nature of social science: is it merely a method of analysis or a body of knowledge? These issues are neither new nor exclusive (Brodbeck 1968; Awa 1992), and might even be considered "settled". Yet, they continue to feed the sub-consciousness of the social scientist, reminding him both of the form which social science knowledge takes, and particularly, that there are no self-evident truths since social practices feature a high degree of spatio-temporal variation. Such concerns underlined the "positivist" movement in social science which attempted to order social phenomena and human behaviour along "scientific" lines in keeping with the belief that phenomena conform to the objective laws of nature which are determined by "an endless chain of causation". One lesson has been that

the concern of positive social science for scientific procedures rendered it "sterile and introspective". Moreover, while the term "scientific" - sometimes implying quantitative research — might mean standardized data, applied qualitative research e data context to add to the richness of data in value terms and enhances its responsiveness to the needs of end-users of research results (Walker 1985:9,10-11). The end which social science should serve in a given context needs to be kept in view at all times.

A number of scholars have staunchly denounced the scientific claims of Western Social science practice in Africa (Nabudere 1977; Ake 1979a&b). They question its ideological character and submit that it amounts to "imperialism". The logic is that in the guise of scientific knowledge, Western social science facilitates imperialist domination and underdevelopment. for Ake (1979a):

This social science is heavily impregnated with values... [whose]
... Scientific utility is limited by [the] uncompromising commitment to stability and capitalism. Its instrumental role for social engineering in Africa, a continent preoccupied with change and ambivalent towards capitalism, is equally limited by these commitments. There is no chance that this social science will aid the liquidation of underdevelopment in Africa, for it fosters the exploitative dependence which underlies it.

This tendency of Western social science to inhibit "scientific understanding" has long been noted by other commentators on the issue (Frank 1967 and Amin 1973).

Much social science research both from the radical and conservative perspectives suffer "conceptual imperialism", that is, the tendency to explain phenomena by reference to rigid ideological categories like "class", "profit" or "tribe". We take exception to the exception made for Marxist social science to the imperialism charge in the critique of the particular *Weltanschauung* which Western social science expresses (Ake 1979b), for even Marxism foists alien values and institutions on underdeveloped countries.

Ake (1979b) argues that the alternative to Western social science is not a social science that pretends to ideological neutrality:

That type of social science is neither possible nor desirable. The alternative has to be a social science whose thrust and values are more conducive to the eradication of underdevelopment, exploitation and dependence. A social science which meets that requirement will necessarily have socialist values.

Arguments as this underlie the erstwhile popularity of Marxist social science in some Nigerian universities. However, with trend setting developments in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, Marxism seems to have lost its "appeal" to radical social scientists in Nigeria either as a "superior ideology" or a "political amulet" (Hughes 1992) and so should not detain us here.

Without discounting the predictive and other values of science, it must be recognized, as Walker (1985:18) does, that social science research "has value when and because it is applied and can be validated with reference to the value placed upon it by policy makers and by the success or otherwise of policy decisions based on it". But even when this is recognized, achievement of this purpose is complicated by the problem of multiplicity of "schools of research" in social science disciplines which, in spite of their shared language and analysis, and a vision of the central concern of the discipline, reflect

deep conflicts over appropriate assumptions, foci and methods of analysis, and they offer hypotheses and theories that directly contradict one another. ... The research schools of political science [for instance] voice much agreement on the methods and goals of analysis but much disagreement on the results of analysis (Zuckerman 1991:13).

Because these "schools" structure analysis, they tend to produce conflicting options when oriented in a policy direction.

One thing which emerges from this discussion is that for Nigeria and other underdeveloped countries, the relevance of social science is to be sought in its applicability to the problem of development. Exposed to this context, the assumptions and commitments of contemporary social science research might have proved inadequate in recognizing the cultural specificity of the countries in question; hence the characterization of the research arena with "contradictions, confusion and futility".

POLICY MAKERS' RESPONSE LETHARGY

Speaking for economists, a former Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) once noted: "The reasons for our failure to date are complex and fundamental. Part of this problem is inadequate knowledge but perhaps a greater part of the problem is the gap in communication between researchers and policy makers" (Diejomaoh 1982:17). In the past, this gap hypothesis was partly explained by reference to the assumed tendency for Nigerian social scientists to confine themselves to their "ivory towers".

The same cannot be said now. Social scientists now write extensively in the press; and take part in public discussions in the electronic media. Through their teachings, writings and interactions, social scientists have stood in good stead to influence state policy in Nigeria, especially in the last decade. The inauguration of the Political Bureau in 1986 to review Nigeria's political history and identify its basic problems, and suggest ways of coping with and resolving them was a most explicit demand for policy input from social science. Apart from recommending a philosophy of government for Nigeria and providing a time-table for restoration of civil rule, the Bureau also provided detailed recommendations on the national question 1992 18-22).

In 1978, all heads of departments of political science served as members of the Constituent Assembly (CA). A decade later, many also served on the CA of the time, some of whom represented the interest of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA). Social scientists of all vocations are to be found in various executive positions as ministers or commissioners, and chairmen of parastatals. In particular, many political scientists have participated in government in recent years. Such social scientists are at a vantage position to influence official policy. It is hence difficult to still sustain the argument that social scientists are an underprivileged work group in the policy arena in contemporary Nigeria.

However, occupation of a prominent position in the policy arena cannot be taken as a measure of impact on policy. Similarly, the demographic presence of social scientists in government does not automatically translate into the government's use of social science research finding, nor to the latter's response to the imperatives of policy (cf. Sanda 1981:3-4). At present, the lethargic response of policy makers to the end result of social science research is still quite noticeable.

Policy makers are concerned about the practical value of social science research. It is commonplace to hear administrators dismiss social science research findings intended to be implemented as policy as "too academic", "too technical" or "too theoretical". Such concerns for pragmatism is implied in the observation of one Secretary to the Federal Military Government when he volunteered that:

I must mention ... that I strongly believe that no matter the accuracy of a research or the coherence of a theory, it may remain a "theory" if it does not correlate with, and take into cognisance the political culture of the given environment it is supposed to serve (Mohammed 1990:7).

Because of the nature of their subject matter, social scientists tend to adopt probabilities in their methods. Protests can and have been raised against this on the grounds of the possible interference of values in decision making procedures. In

recent history, "good advice" from Nigerian social scientists rejected by the government include (i) the adoption of a philosophy of government as recommended by the Political Bureau; (ii) Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (QIC); (iii) Autonomy of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) (Awa 1992).

It must be conceded that such rejection might be informed by the failure of previous policy advice from the social science community. The 1970s—the boom decade—witnessed much false perception of Nigeria as a wealthy country by social scientists of all vocations, local and foreign. This resulted in disastrous policy decisions from whose effects Nigeria is yet to recover (Diejomaoh 1988).

The problem of policy makers' scepticism towards social science research is also reflected in the inadequate funding of the relevant institutions. The Nigerian Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) have specific research funds. NISER only started having a regular annual research fund in 1982. Without adequate and regular funding, social scientists can but make do with underdeveloped research artifacts. At present, the status of social science can be inferred from national enchantment with science and technology to the extent that a separate ministry was established to promote it (Nigeria 1981). By so doing, social science research and practice suffers official discrimination at the level of state policy. Its direct consequence for the development of the social sciences is evident in the officially prescribed structure for university admissions which de-emphasizes the social sciences and the humanities. The national policy on science and technology insists on strict enforcement of "an absolute minimum of 60:40 of science based to other disciplines in student yearly enrolment into the nation's Universities, with a target ratio of 70:30 by the year 1988" (Nigeria 1986). It is doubtful, though, that this target has been met.

The tardy response of policy makers to social science research is aggravated by the known tendency for some Nigerian social scientists to prevaricate. This uncanny ability and propensity to simultaneously hold paradoxical and often contradictory viewpoints on the same issue at the same time has thrown up two shades of meaning; one, the "academic opinion" and, two, the "private opinion". Extended to the policy arena, this is often reflected in sycophancy by which social scientists kowtow to the whims and caprices of policy makers for personal benefits. One consequence is that state officials are then able to use social science research findings as justificatory rhetoric, that is, the government makes up its mind on something and asks social scientists to justify its logic. The cliché about "no alternative to SAP" and the exhortation that what is necessary is that social scientists come up with contributions on how to make it work is one example. In all its expressions, equivocation contributes to a loss of credibility for social scientists and their vocation (Roberts 1991).

What we have then is a situation in which policy makers muddle through the from crisis to crisis, executing major projects not informed by social science research. The situation warrants an assessment of the available channels of communication.

A prominent channel of communication between policy makers and social scientists results from executive directives setting up special panels or commissions of inquiry such as the one which constituted the Political Bureau. In recent times, agencies actively involved in policy formation and transmission include the Nigerian Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), the now defunct Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS), National Centre for Economic Management and Administration (NCEMA), and Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA). The former Directorate for Social Mobilization (MAMSER) and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) also played significant roles. These are in addition to existing bodies such as the Central Planning Office of the Federal Ministry of National Planning, and the Policy Analysis Department of the Federal Ministry of Industries. The incorporation of a Planning, Statistics and Research Unit in government ministries and extra-ministerial departments, as part of the recent reform of the Nigerian public services should also contribute to the promotion and utilization of social science research results.

There are also private sector organizations which churn out policy relevant social science information. These include the Centre for African Settlements Studies and Development (CASSAD), the Development Research Bureau (DRB), the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS) and the like. These bodies routinely organize or co-sponsor workshops and conferences on policy-relevant themes with various organs of the state.

Apart from these formal institutions, professional associations of social scientists Such as the Nigerian Economic Society (NES), Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) and the recently resuscitated Nigerian Association for Public Administration and Management are also playing active roles in contributing directly to policy formulation. Until the political impasse of 1993, the NPSA in particular basked in the splendour of relevance to the General Ibrahim Babangida political transition programme. The umbrella organization of the social sciences — the Social Science Council of Nigeria (SSCN) — has as its declared primary preoccupation, the acceleration of the pace of national development in Nigeria.

Whereas at a time, scholars were concerned that they were out of touch with each other and moreso with policy makers (Simmons 1971), social scientists are now able to communicate freely with their peers through the various journals in

print. The problem still remains that of the inadequacy of mutually valued communication with policy makers, and hence, the linkages between development policy and the findings and recommendations of social scientists (ef. Akiwowo 1971). This raises doubts about the efficacy of the existing channels of communication. For instance, it is doubtful that the SSCN is optimally performing its expected responsibilities as a coordination "house" for research efforts in the social sciences as such efforts are still very dispersed from institutional research memoranda to conference proceedings and communiques, and various social science journals and texts.

From the above considerations, the seeming "irrelevance" of social science to the Nigerian policy makers might have been sustained by neglect. This underlines the necessity for a symbiosis between policy makers and social researchers since it is obvious that the end result of social science research and policy implementation are closely knit. Hence, the relevance of media in the mould of NISER's *Policy Research Bulletin* and the *Research Policy Briefs* of the African Technology Studies (ATPS) network (Nigerian chapter) which bring information about research outputs of the agencies concerned not just to policy makers but also to scholars and other interested individuals and organizations world-wide. Other such medium include the *Lecture Series* of the NPSA instituted in 1989 to address public policy issues of immediate concern to Nigerian people. The *Series* has become a forum for constructive analysis and stock-taking on national development. These seek to overcome the dependence on academic journals with restricted circulation and to which policy makers have little access.

Of course, in making their vocation relevant to the state and civil society, social scientists — indeed all scientists — bear some social costs, especially in relation to loss of freedom to pursue knowledge without interference by state authorities, as well as the freedom to communicate their ideas freely to their peers without let or hinderance imposed by official confidentiality or security considerations (Grove 1989). We should also not lose sight of the fact that social science research constitutes just one input into the official decision making process.

THE DOLLAR DIKTAT

The effort of Nigerian social scientists to make their vocation relevant is undermined by a related problem (to government's lethargic response), that is, the attitude of state officials to their policy prescriptions vis-a-vis those of their foreign colleagues. This is an enduring problem that needs to be highlighted, hi 1971 it was observed in respect of the cooperation between policy makers and social scientists that:

One hindrance to this kind of beneficial cooperation, however, may be the distrust of indigenous academicians by the executives of the civil service and the latter's preferential treatment of a visiting foreign scholar who is given easy access to the Nigerian "secret" files of Government from which Nigerian scholars are precluded (Akiwowo 1971:225).

It is tempting to subscribe to the reasoning that there is something in the Nigerian psyche associated with the imposition of Western values since the colonial era that "has given many people an inferiority complex" (Awa 1992:31). This colonial mentality, it is argued, is facilitated by the openness of the Nigerian system which means that foreign views compete favourably with indigenous appraisals of the system (Diejomaoh 1988). Foreign agencies have duly exploited this by successfully selling project ideas to the Nigerian government. It is believed that Nigerian policy makers tend to favour social science research contributions from foreign social scientists over and above contributions by Nigerian social scientists regardless of merit.

"Expatriation", justified academically as "a key to more objective judgement" (Dogan and Pelassy 1984:6), has shaped current attitudes of end users of research results in Nigeria who tend to show preference for the "perspicacious stranger". Import substitution in the policy arena, that is, the preference for the "importation of finished ideas" places indigenous social scientists at a disadvantage relative to their foreign colleagues as policy makers treat them as second fiddle. Apart from its being very unclear if Nigerian policy makers *actually* utilize research results at all in the course of their policy decisions (Aiyepoku 1983), this attitude has *real costs*.

Quick visits by foreign "experts" not backed by appropriate scientific methodologies have proved to be "quick-and-dirty", and hence, of no better value than the pristine anthropological fieldworks which were "long-and-dirty" in terms of cost effectiveness, length of field work time, and quantity and quality of data gathered (Chambers and Carruthers 1986). Often, the problem analyzed by such tourist intellectuals amounts to a straw man. Although referring to urbanites in discussing the rural development problematic, Chambers' (1983:4) observations are apt for reference at this juncture.

Outsiders [read foreigners] have their own interests, preferences and preconceptions, their own rationalization, their own defences for excluding or explaining the discordant and distressing. *Selfishness is a powerful force...* Disillusion with development failures and a knowing cynicism about "where the money goes" are given as reasons for doing nothing (emphasis added).

When concerned enough to do something, these foreigners conduct "brief and hurried visits" which Chambers (1983:10-12) refers to as "rural development tourism".

Beyond the logic of colonial mentality, we suggest that the disparate official attitude towards local and foreign social science research has an objective materials basis. Unlike their local counterparts, foreign social scientists are often backed by donor agencies which provide a potential resource pool to facilitate the implementation of their recommendations. Underdeveloped and in dire fiscal straits, policy makers in non-advanced countries fall easy prey to the dollar bait and readily favour the recommendations of the dollar-dangling consultants. The dollar *diktat* forces policy makers to ignore research output of local scholars. The result of such uninformed ignominy is often disastrous. One illustration with Nigeria's structural adjustment programme (SAP) will suffice.

Notwithstanding official argument to the effect that Nigeria's SAP is "home-grown", and while acknowledging the input of local scholars in defining its ultimate complexion, SAP reflects the favoured policy preferences of Western donor agencies interested in rolling back the state in line with liberal ideas of capitalism. The SAP gambit was successfully sold to Nigeria because of the promise by Western financial institutions to fund the external financial requirements of the programme. At the time, there were even indications that the government might have discontinued the oil dedication approach to implementing major development projects to ensure the availability of foreign exchange earnings to fund the programme (Ajakaiye 1987). Today, the crisis or crisis management that has characterized the stunted implementation of SAP in Nigeria has to be pinned down to the failure of the external (funding) component - which was the nucleus of the input by the foreign "experts". By falling for the dollar bait, Nigeria has been the worse off for it. Akiwowo (1971:223) long noted the tendency for state officials to accept foreign project ideas whose financial implications "are sometimes not clear at the initial stage"

The dollar diktat targets not just the policy maker, but also the local social scientists through offers of research grants and jobs in international organizations. The availability of research funds from external donor agencies then determines the research agenda of Nigerian social scientists (Sanda 1981). Diejomaoh (1982:7) acknowledges that international organizations and foreign agencies play a role in diverting the attention of Nigerian social scientists from national issues "by tuning up their energies in their own concern". That way, it becomes evident that Africa's future "has already been partly mortgaged through research projects carried out [not just] by non-Africans" (UNDP 1986:x), but also by Africans. Oculi (1984) actually paints a horrid picture of the "possible European-led recolonization of the entire African continent", and identifies this as one of the central problems political science

in particular has to come to discourse with. These concerns underline the need to -reclaim" the future (UNDP 1986).

Having, in this section, identified the basic problems which broadly affect the relevance of social science research to policy formulation— including the bureaucratic and functional context for the utilization of research results, it is apt to ask if everything is well with contemporary social science research in Nigeria itself. Assuming, and perhaps granting, that governments become vitally concerned with implementing research findings, can social science research measure up to expectations? This concern demands an inward look to the structure of contemporary social science research to assess, among other things, the degree to which it has been policy oriented. We address this in the next section.

STRUCTURE OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN NIGERIA

At the analytical level, the social responsibility of Nigerian social scientists is suspect to the extent that much social science research lacks a policy relevant component. This is evident from the structure of research effort represented by a sample of major social science journals in Nigeria.

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a high rate of atrophy of academic journals. Many journals in the various social science disciplines that commanded attention in the 1970s and early 1980s are virtually extinct. For others that manage to publish occasionally, the frequency of publication has been very epileptic. The current economic down-turn in Nigeria, which has affected production and subscription capacities, is largely to blame for the situation. However, a few journals have remained fairly available to merit inclusion in this review. These include *Annals of the Social Science Council of Nigeria*; *Studies in Politics and Society*; *Research for Development*; *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*; *The Quarterly Journal of Administration*; and the *Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners*.

The Annals of the Social Science Council of Nigeria is the official organ of the SSCN established to provide a forum for the dissemination of ideas. With a publication run dating back only to 1988, the journal publishes "original" research contributions in Economics, Sociology, Political Science, Demography, Geography, Business Administration, Psychology, Mass Communication and related social science disciplines. It is therefore sufficiently representative in its coverage. *Studies in Politics and Society*, the journal of the NPSA, the first issue of which was dated April 1984, aims to encourage "creative articles and notes which raise substantive controversies about, and contribute to, the content, purpose and methodology of the social and historical sciences". This editorial

policy makes no direct claims to-being relevant to state policy.

Research for Development is a NISER journal. First published in 1981, it has turned out eight volumes bunched into nine issues. It is the one social science journal in Nigeria that traditionally believes in "meaningful applied research" as "the engine of socio-economic and political growth and development". Its editors admit their bias towards contributions which portray "rigorous analysis" and "mature reflection" on "issues of development planning, policy and administration" of relevance to Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The journal is hence presented as a forum for dialogue between persons and institutions engaged in *formulating* and *implementing* economic and social policies.

The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies (NJESS) is published by the NES, and like the *Annals*, has a reasonably comprehensive coverage. It is acknowledged as the "foremost among the local journals utilized as a medium of communication with policy makers and the rest of the society" (Sanda 1981:4). *The Quarterly Journal of Administration* published by the Institute of Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, is "devoted to the study, research, dissemination and exchange of knowledge and information on all aspects of public administration and management".

The maiden issue of the *Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners* (JNITP) presents the journal as one "meant to advance and enrich the principle and practice of town and country planning in Nigeria through the publication of articles and materials on the problems of human settlements particularly hi Nigeria and in developing countries in general". It was hoped that the journal would serve both scholars and practitioners in the course of advancing understanding of the problem of focus, that is, human settlements. It is to be admitted that the subject matter of the JNITP might not be classified as mainstream social science. Yet we include it in this review both because, in recent years, it has had a lot of influence from the social sciences to warrant its recognition as a "profession [which] owes the social scientist a great debt" (Rodwin 1981:26), and because it enriches the comparative purpose of the review. Table 1 Presents the structure of the selected journals.

A total of 349 published articles in the six journals are reviewed. The articles reviewed cover mostly those published between 1980 and 1990. For some journals, like the *Annals*, all issues so far published are included. For others, there are unavoidable gaps due to lack of accessibility. Exclusion of sonic issues of the journals is, therefore, not purposive. It is essential to stress that the classification presented in the table is not unmindful of the possibility of a particular article making a contribution to two or more categories. However, the classification is premised on the central thrust of the article reviewed.

Table 1
Content Survey of Selected Social Science Journals

CLASS OF PUBLISHED RESEARCH (Per cent)					
JOURNAL	No. of Articles Reviewed	Philosophy of Soc. Science	Methodology	Other Basic Research	Action/Policy Research
Annals of the					
SSCN	22	4.54	68.18	27.27	
Studies in					
Politics & Society	22	4.54	4.54	72.72	18.18
Research for					
Development	95	1.05	1.05	53.68	44.21
Nig. Journal of					
Econ. & Soc. Studies	66	1.51	74.24	24.24	
Quarterly					
Journal of Administration	87		79.31	20.68	
Journal of the					
Nig. Inst. of Town Planners	57		1.75	50.87	47.36
TOTAL	349	1.94	1.22	66.49	30.32

Out of the 349 articles reviewed, only 1.9 per cent engage in discussion relevant to the philosophical foundations and worldview of the social sciences. Fewer still (1.2 per cent) pay any direct attention to methodological issues. This evidence indicates that little research effort is being directed to dealing with the known inadequacies (Awa 1992) arising from pedagogic deficiencies of current social science research as reflected in the lack of rigour in methodology and limited theoretical analysis evident, for example, in the bulk of studies on Nigerian local governments (Roberts 1994). From all indications, there has been little effort directed at questioning existing worldviews of various social science disciplines by way of published articles on the philosophy of social science, and even less attention on the methodologies of social science.

The table also reveals the significant fact that the bulk of published articles in Nigerian journals are oriented towards basic research. Apart from the few that discuss "philosophy" and "method", as much as 66.4 per cent of the articles reviewed report other forms of pure research not perturbed by concerns for policy. Only 30.3 per cent of all the reviewed essays reflect policy-oriented research. In various degrees, this general structure of contemporary social science research in Nigeria reflects the pattern for specific journals such that in none of the reviewed journals is up to 50 per cent of the published articles dedicated to policy, not even in the *Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners* and *Research for Development* which published the most action-based research—47.3 and 44.2 per cent, respectively. This evidence reflects the academic community's traditional emphasis on pure or basic research over applied or action research. The apparently accepted distinction between pure social science and applied social science, rightly perceives the latter as social science "intended for application" and whose research is tailored towards the realization of a practical purpose. However, it is important to acknowledge that the distinction between basic and applied research is time dependent, such that a basic research contribution today could well become the centrepiece of applied research tomorrow, and vice versa.

One explanation for the "research for research sake" which has characterized the emphasis of most social scientists on basic research is the numbers game. Pure research affords easier opportunity for scholars to beef up their *curriculum vitae* for self aggrandizement. Stochastic as the efforts might be, the "publish or perish syndrome" is in vogue, and with it, energies are inappropriately diverted from action-based research. As Simmons (1971:208) observes, the attitude is reinforced by the prevailing "sanctioning system" in academic institution which rewards intellectual productivity in quantity of publications, but hardly motivates public service contributions. And because basic research is not undertaken specifically with the policy maker in mind, even when its findings are policy-relevant, they might require "vital repackaging" to make them usable by policy makers (Aiyepoku 1983:12).

Beyond the empirical delineation of what proportion of social science research is action-based or not, we also make a distinction between contributions which recognize and point to the *need* to do one thing or the other and those which go beyond this to specify *what precisely* is to be done and *how* it should be pursued. It is the latter we classify as policy or action-oriented research. Sometimes when research reports have concluded with sections with captions like "Way Forward"; "Policy Recommendations", "Remedial Measures". "Policy Implications"; or even "Lessons for the Future", they have ended up with vague prescriptions that offer no easy handle to the policy maker. For instance, one essay that intended "to propose strategies

that will ensure proper integration of physical planning with national development planning" ended up with itemizing the "obvious defects in the planning efforts". A sample of such policy nothings from the journals reviewed in this study is revealing:

- i. "Effective measures [what measures?] must be taken to alleviate Africa's debt burden and to arrest the deterioration in trade and consequent reduction in export earnings for debt servicing"; and "At the national level, effective mechanisms [what specific mechanism?] for national debt management and rationalization must be established. Non-productive and non-essential activities [for example] that do not help in the repayment of loans and which constitute drains on foreign exchange resources should be closed down".
- ii. "What remains ... is for the government of the day to ensure [how?] that human resources at the local level match both finances, functions and responsibilities of local governments".
- iii. "For effective strategizing (sic) of poverty alleviation, the solution lies in measures [such as?] aimed at raising or increasing the range of goods and services as efficiently as possible and making available at affordable prices to the majority of the people, food, housing, clothing, education and health services".
- iv. "More positive efforts [like what and what?] should, therefore, be made to break the traditional control which individuals, families or communities exercise over land".
- v. "It seems relevant, therefore, to observe that the future situation with respect to leisure and recreation in Nigeria may rest on balancing [how?] the effects of these barriers and the intensity of people's aspirations for greater- participation. If this proposition is implemented, increased participation may be expected in future".

The above sample, which, at best, is merely indicative of policy direction, reveals social scientists at their best as policy pretenders. The intention here is not to pass value judgments on the efficacy and logic of policy recommendations, nor do policy prescriptions always have to be those addressed to what government should or should not do; but more to ascertain whether a set of policy prescriptions *qua* prescriptions have been articulated. The mere indication of policy direction or "implication" is not tantamount to a recommendation of policy. It might even complicate the problem of the applicability and predictive efficiency of "recommendations" by social scientists.

A reading of the articles reviewed also reveals other problems with contemporary

social science research in Nigeria. It is evident that social scientists have continued to present their research findings in technical jargon and arcane semantics and adopt complex models which might be repulsive to the policy makers. Marxists and economists are perhaps the more guilty, and so risk losing sight of the ultimate practical value of social science knowledge. The consciousness of this danger informs the appeal in the maiden issue of *Research for Development* that social scientists should:

pay special attention to the language and style of their presentation without necessarily lessening the rigour and depth of their analysis. In particular, since one would expect many who may not have been initiated into the technical jargon of the social sciences and others who may not be familiar with sophisticated types of quantitative analysis to be able to understand the issues of development to which any paper is addressed, contributors should endeavour to resort to these devices only where necessary.

As Simmons (1971) concedes, the truth is perhaps that few social scientists have managed to acquire the communication skills for ordering and "translating" thought into a form usable by the policy maker. They probably also do not understand the optimum input nodes in government for policy relevant research (Aiyepoku 1983). These apart, the impenetrable jargon of social science not only impede understanding, but also the motivation to understand (cf. Simmons 1971).

It is also the case that a substantial proportion of social science research effort in Nigeria is reactive rather than proactive. Most of the journal articles reviewed react to problems rather than anticipate them. Economists had a full decade — the 1970s - when crude oil sales on the world market spilled a cornucopia on the Nigerian economy to warn about the difficulties in the 1980s and beyond. Political scientists failed to forewarn, if at all they foresaw, the ritual of May riots that has defined the contours of mass protests in Nigeria in the late 1980s and the political debacle that followed from the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election results. Rather mountains of studies are undertaken to *explain* these developments *after* they have taken place. Some merely embark on a search for culprits, particularly state functionaries, for acting or failing to act in a particular way, and then sometimes to proffer "solutions"!

To be sure, academics are trained to criticize and are applauded in proportion with the vitriolic depth of their criticism. Social scientists, especially, are taught to argue and to find fault (Chambers 1983:30)—particularly with government policies. But often, the insightfulness and predictive power of social science is wrongly deployed. The situation tempts policy makers to believe that academic social scientists hold "extremist", "jaundiced" or at best "partisan" views.

Diejomaoh (1988:8) thus observes that:

there is a great danger in limiting social science analysis to short-and medium-term perspectives and in projecting the immediate and current state of development into the future. This type of perception leads to thinking that booms will last forever.

Oculi (1984:46) also argues:

The major defect of protest intellectual enterprises is that they often come in after someone else has set the agenda for intellectual work. Protest intellectualism thus spends its force and energy in exposing and demolishing given paradigms. It tends to forfeit the opportunity for creating new paradigms and setting the intellectual agenda for a given decade or even an era.

Follow-up research hardly contributes to the relevance of social science for social planning and, at best, leaves a gap between what policy makers expect of Nigerian social scientists and what is on offer — particularly, the temporal dimensions of the offer. Self-criticism gone wild also means that social science is unable to create a positive public image for Nigeria and so strengthen the confidence of the citizenry in their state (Diejomaoh 1988). Such "negative" research in particular, and the focus on abstract research in general, poses the danger of a possible slippage from theory to doctrine, clarification to distortion, concept to myth, and ultimately from tragedy to farce, as is recognized elsewhere (Dogan and Pelassy 1984:24), and emphasizes the dire need to blend the theoretical and praxiological dimensions of social knowledge.

The prevailing situation is critical for social researchers because ultimately, the analytical capacity of social science research *directly* relates to its capacity to operationalize concepts oriented to practical efficiency (Dogan and Pelassy 1984). Social science is relevant if it is able to take leaps into "alternative futures" from past and present conditions. This means going beyond the analyses and interpretations of current realities and critiques of existing inequalities and imbalances to coming to terms with as yet undiscernible developments on the societal landscape, and which promise to shape the quality and direction of human existence in the relevant geographical region. Such was the rare attempt by Olofin (1987) in his "Trade Concentration and Instability of Export Earnings: Some Future Evidence" in *Research for Development*, 4(2), even though the elaborate empirical analysis was not matched with corresponding policy projections. It is in this sense that Future Studies has been recognized as: "A science whose time seems to have come on the African continent"

(UNDP 1986:ix). Futures Studies are built on the theoretical and methodological foundations which assume that the future is cognizable to some degree and this cognizability can be achieved by a variety of specific methods and techniques (cf. Agiobenebo and Agiobene 1989). We subscribe to this position.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To surmount the obstacles that underlie the crisis of relevance of social science research in Nigeria, a number of positive measures are necessary. Firstly, there has to be a continuous dialogue between policy makers and social scientists. In this respect, policy makers have to appreciate the dictum that charity begins at home and realize that what is advanced as the expert opinion of foreign scholars is often little more than refined opinions of local scholars sampled from quick visits. Such visits cannot be a substitute for first-hand experience and acquaintance with the development problems of Nigeria, or any other underdeveloped country for that matter. Policy makers have to jettison the suspicion that social scientists are intruders into their domain. Intellectually and in praxis, a distinction between the academic and policy arena has little heuristic value for the underdeveloped society in the present age.

Secondly, on their part, researchers have to cultivate persistence in focussing on a wide-range of policy-relevant issues *on a consistent basis*. This is essentially a call for efforts to be directed towards anticipatory research efforts. Anticipatory or proactive research has the advantage that it shortens the time lag between the demands of the end-users of research results and the availability of such results from the desk of the social scientist.

Thirdly, for social science research to remain relevant to the needs of an underdeveloped formation as Nigeria, it has to re-orient in an action-based direction. It is in this respect that current efforts elsewhere to re-orient the language and practice of the social sciences to make them an agency for the empowerment of citizens is to be understood (Brown 1989). To achieve this, it might be necessary to give some incentive for policy-related research with outputs beneficial to the managing of the political economy. Such incentives can come in the form of a change in the mode of evaluation of social science research output to give more weight to policy-oriented research. In this regard, Simmons (1971:213) had the foresight to suggest "salary scales commensurate with the opportunity cost (of) individuals". The trade-off is that this has to be done notwithstanding how well they do not measure up to positivist "scientific" standards. Already, the increasing popularity of semi-scientific research methodologies developed under the rubric of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) proves the acceptance of such trade-offs to both the intellectual and development communities (Chambers and Carruthers 1986; Scoones and McCracken 1989; Pretty et. al. 1991).

Fourthly, both the objective limitation of the time available to the policy makers, and the issue of appropriate language of communication emphasizes the relevance of transmission of "accurate, capsule-type and jargon-free" policy recommendations, for instance, in the format of executive summaries, briefs and digests.

Fifthly, to facilitate the attainment of the above suggestions, there is the need for further integration and indigenization of social science. Current emphasis on research based on indigenous knowledge argues this point well (Atteh 1989) and merits official support.

CONCLUSION

The problem of Nigeria's underdevelopment is varied. Yet, one aspect of the problem can be put down to the failure of government officials to appreciate the worth of social science knowledge as a crucial input into modern decision making. This attitude is itself affected by other factors including what we have called the dollar diktat, that is the tendency for dollar-dangling external agents to dictate policy and research agenda for nationals of developing countries. However, this study also reveals that social science vocation in practice in Nigeria, judging by the structure of contemporary research, hardly stands up to expectation in its contribution to policy. This problem is of such magnitude that, in commemorating his receiving the Nigerian National Merit Award in 1992, one toast to Professor Claude Ake was given: "to the *maturing* of Ake's potential and to the realization of Nigeria's potential" (Lawrence 1993 - emphasis added). For one of Africa's foremost political scientists, the talk of Ake's potential" needing to "mature" represents a strong argument to the effect that Nigerian social scientists still have much to do to demonstrate the worth of their vocation.

With "science" remaining essentially a "prescriptive exercise" (Grove 1989), Nigerian social scientists must attend to the arrangement of Nigerian society. Policy Prescriptions have been proffered. Yet the issue of relevance will ultimately be resolved both by advancement in knowledge within the social sciences, the ability of researchers to communicate this knowledge to policy practitioners, the receptability of the latter, and especially their ability to translate received social science knowledge into actual policies.

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