

Assessment of Archaeology Education in Nigeria Universities via the Perspectives of Students; Challenges and Solutions

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ABSTRACT: *Archaeology has been integrated into the Nigeria course system since the 1970s and is presently part of the curriculum in few Universities. However, the course has remained unpopular and at a backstage to a few other courses due to the inability of Nigerian public to draw a nexus between archeology and development. This has resulted in cases of several drop out amongst students due to lack of a view of archaeological relevance to contemporary issues. This paper presents case studies of the experiences of some Archaeology students, the resultant feedbacks, and recommends possible approaches to project the image of the discipline.*

KEYWORDS: *Archaeology, Education, Nigeria, University, Students.*

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Introduction

The perspectives of the public to archaeology and its educational system have been a source of concern and debate among many archaeology professionals worldwide. As a result, various studies have been carried out by various organizations such as the Society for American archaeology, groups, and individuals to evaluate the public's perception of Archaeology Education in primary, secondary or high schools as well as the University level (Perkins, Spaeth and Trainor 1992, Burkitt 2014, Rakestraw and Reynolds 2001, Okpoko 1986, Nichols, Prangnell and Haslam 2005, Gundu 2008, Ogundele 2005, Little 2009, Pikiyari 2009, Agbelusi 2015). Most of the studies were carried out without a particular focus on the individuals or students that have passed through Archaeology in the Universities atleast a year (in Nigeria, students study archaeology at the University level) in order to assess their perception of the state of the discipline. For instance, a research and survey was carried out in Australia in 2001 on Western Australian undergraduate students asking them about their knowledge of and interest in archaeology as well as their beliefs in other explanations for the past. However, of 119 students only two students studying archaeology as their major course were captured in the survey (Balme and Wilson 2004). Moreover, the survey reveals that school is not considered an important source of information about archaeology for recent school-leavers and that popular constructions of archaeology among 'educated young Australians' are characterized by a number of common misconceptions, including the notion that there is no archaeology to do in Australia, and that archaeology has little contemporary relevance to Australian society (Balme and Wilson 2004 in Nicols Stephen, Pragnell, J and Haslam, M. 2005). Similarly, surveys of archaeology undergraduate students in Sydney (Colley 2005 in Nicols Stephen, Pragnell, J and Haslam, M. 2005) demonstrated that although school may be a significant context in which some people develop a general interest in archaeology, such interest is predominantly based on Old World and classical themes together with various romantic images of archaeology as adventure and discovery in 'exotic' overseas locations.

Although, many of the discusses centering on the state of Archaeology Education in many part of the world have yielded results in terms of greater awareness of the need for archaeological practices in all endeavors of humanity. Much has been done in the areas of curriculum review, public engagement in Archaeology in places like America, Australia, Europe and South Africa. However, the case has not been the same in some other countries including Nigeria.

In Africa, however, the role of archaeology in presenting a critical facet of its past has been appreciated in the literatures over the past two decades and in recent syntheses of Africa archaeology (Phillipson 2005; Stahl 2005 in Segobye 2005). Despite the diversity and richness of its archaeological resources when compared to other parts of the world, archaeology is still fairly undeveloped in Africa. A review of the status of Archaeology education across all of sub- Sahara Africa painted a fairly dismal picture of the potential for teaching Archaeology in Schools with the exception of Zimbabwe and South Africa. The situation was that of less developed archaeological services and educational programmes (Segobye 2005).

Here, it must be admitted that Archaeology as a discipline all over the world even in Africa has encountered and still encounters its own share of challenges. These challenges have transcended into its education within the university system so much so that the teaching of Archaeology at all levels of Education still faces a lack of resources that challenges our capacity to deliver high quality education (Segboye 2005).

Discussions surrounding archaeological education in many nations focus on issues bordering on archaeology curriculum at university level (Beck and Balme 2005; Colley 2003, 2004; Hall et al. 2005; Lydon 2002 in Stephen Nichols, Jonathan Prangnell and Michael Haslam 2005, Gundu 2008), funding, training and limited professionals in diverse fields of archaeology. Such discussions according to Hamilakis 2004 in Stephen Nichols, Jonathan Prangnell and Michael Haslam 2005 have been necessitated by a variety of factors, including the professional and ethical requirements of a growing heritage management sector, and the colonization of our higher education environments by the forces of so-called 'academic capitalism'. Teaching Archaeology promotes the premise that traditional "humanistic" educational programs are no longer relevant to the majority of archaeologists. Clearly, many people are convinced that the traditional academic training in archaeology is seriously out of step with the realities of archaeological practice today (Nichols, Prangnell and Haslam 2005).

In Nigeria, Archaeology has been integrated into the course system since the 1970s and is presently part of the curriculum in few Universities. It can be stated categorically at the moment that in addition to the three federal universities (University of Ibadan, University of Zaria, University of Nigeria, Nsukka) having archaeology as part of their course systems in Nigeria are a private university (Ibrahim Babangida university, Lapai, Niger State) and a State University (Kwara State University, Malete) and more Universities are intending to embrace the discipline in the nearest future. This is as a result of the realization of the importance of the discipline to the study of humanity in general and the story of our own origins as a species.

However, the course has remained unpopular and at a backstage to a few other courses due to the inability of Nigerian public to draw a nexus between archeology and development. Archaeology is still a highly misunderstood subject in Nigeria, just as in other parts of West Africa. To the general public, including educated lay persons, archaeology is a government-funded triviality without any relevance to today's challenges and expectations. The poor image of archaeology in Nigeria is a reflection of a wide communication gap between the practitioners as well as governments and the general public (Ogundele 2005). However, this has resulted in cases of several drop-out amongst students due to lack of a view of archaeological relevance to contemporary issues.

Therefore, this paper presents case studies and the resultant feedbacks of the perspectives of students who have passed through archaeology for at least one year. This is done with a view to examining the state of Archaeology education in Nigerian universities via the experiences of individuals that have had various degrees of exposure to the discipline, and recommend possible approaches to project the image of the discipline.

Background

Experience has shown that many students who start off with Archaeology in the course of their University education end up walking away during their undergraduate or postgraduate studies (as a result of failure in major Archaeology courses or/and a desire to change course) while those that eventually complete their first degree may eventually not come back for their postgraduate degree in Archaeology. These experiences occurred during and after the author's period of study as an undergraduate and post graduate student of the University of Ibadan. Many of the author's colleagues did not come back for their postgraduate study in archaeology while some changed over to other programmes. Their reasons range from inadequate understanding of the significance of the course to contemporary issues, disinterest, and fear of failure, curriculum issues, and attitude of some practitioners. Comparison of archaeology course contents of some institutions in Australia, America, Europe and South Africa with those of Nigeria institutions conducting Archaeology reveal that there are lapses in the curricula that needs to be filled for the discipline to retain its relevance in our society. For instance, courses like indigenous archaeology, public archaeology, advanced field techniques, Archaeology photography are missing in the Archaeology course content of many of our institutions in Nigeria. This in turn has effect on the output of their students in relations to their knowledge and skill developments in the discipline.

Methodology

An assessment of Archaeology education in Nigeria Universities via the experiences of Archaeology Students from two Universities was captured through the use of a survey which contained 12 specific questions. These students were drawn from the Universities of Ibadan and University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria respectively (although the intention of the author is to draw respondents from more than the two schools as Archaeology is being taught at present in four public Universities and one private but there was no readily available contact from two of the Universities while the other one (Kwara State University, Malete just started the course. The assessment was in form of a survey questionnaire that was sent out via emails to these respondents. Most of the email addresses were obtained directly from the students (many of respondents were known to the author) and

referral method (the author emphasized the need for the referrals to have had at least a year educational background of archaeology). The author also requested that each respondent should signify under the following four categories;

- Drop out as an undergraduate.
- Undergraduate.
- Graduates.
- Post graduates (archaeology).
- Post graduates who had their first degree in archaeology but 2nd degree in another course.

The email address of the author was attached to the questionnaire for submission of responses from the respondents for further analysis.

The target students were those that dropped out or changed their course of study from Archaeology, undergraduate and post graduate students' of Archaeology, and graduate archaeology students. However, 100 emails of the archaeology survey questionnaire were successfully sent of which 65 of them eventually responded. Of the 65, 54 were from the University of Ibadan while the remaining 9 were from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Survey containing questions on their relationships with Archaeology education during their study within the discipline was captured. The archaeological survey were presented to the respondents in an attempt to capture students' experiences in the discipline, their initial awareness of the discipline, their level of interest and satisfaction in the discipline within the schools, their displeasures about the discipline as related to the state of the curriculum and other factors. practitioners encountered.

These experiences are relied on in order to examine archaeology education in Nigeria universities, the resultant positive and negative feedbacks, and review recommended possible approaches to project a sustainable image of the discipline.

The Survey Questions And Case Studies

The survey questions are in opened ended structure such that the respondents were allowed to express themselves within the context of the questions. The following were the questions put forward for consideration:

Where and when did you first hear about Archaeology?

Why did you study Archaeology?

What was your first impression about Archaeology?

Where you ever discouraged at any point and why?

What area of archaeology do/did you like most?

What area do / did you not like most?

Are you enjoying Archaeology so far?

What prospects do you think are in archaeology?

Do you/did you enjoy Archaeology?

What perspective do you have about the practitioners that you have had encounter with or taught you?

Do you think the curriculum needs reviewing? What do you think should be changed?

Did you at any time change your course of study from Archaeology either at the undergraduate days or post graduate and why?

i. TABLE 1: Analyses of the Responses of 65 Participants

STATUS OF RESPONDENTS	DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS
DROP OUT@UNDERGRADUATE	5
UNDERGRADUATE	23
GRADUATES	14
POST GRADUATES (ARCHAEOLOGY)	7
POST GRADUATES WHO HAD THEIR FIRST DEGREE IN ARCHAEOLOGY BUT 2 ND DEGREE IN ANOTHER DEPT	16
TOTAL	65

Of the twelve (12) questions put forward, Six (6) was analyzed for the purpose of this paper as the resultant responses that emanated from the questions were more coherent. Moreover, the analyses of the responses that emanated from the six (6) questions used cover the general perception of the students. The questions analyzed were; 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12.

1. When did you first hear about Archaeology? The responses were grouped into three categories. I heard:

Through media

In secondary /high and / or University

Through a and b above

Of the 65 students, 8 fell under category a, 36 fell under category b while 21 fell under c.

2. Why are you or did you study Archaeology?

Adventure

Interest in history and culture

I did not meet the initial cut-off mark to study law, archaeology was the available option

Indifference

29 people fell under a, 05 people fell under b, 16 fell under category c while 15 fell under indifferent.

What was your first impression about Archaeology?

An adventure into discovery

Interesting but not well-recognized.

An archaic course and boring.

Foreign discipline that requires laborious work in its practice.

It was fascinating. I had been greatly intrigued by Thurstan Shaw and Bassey Andah.

Where you ever discouraged at any point and why?

Yes

No

43 of the respondents said YES

While the remaining 22 said No

For those that picked YES, their reasons range from; teaching styles of some of their lecturers, putting up with some uninteresting courses, curriculum issues, 15 of them did not give any reason. 20 of those that picked NO did not give reasons for their choice while the remaining 2 have reasons such as “it is an interesting course”

Do you think the curriculum needs reviewing? What do you think should be changed?

All the 65 picked YES and what they think should be changed/added ranged from:

Their responses are summarized below:

- Most people do not keep up with the current trend in Archaeology and as they should. There should be improvements in the content and new and interesting courses that specifically deal with national problems in the 21st Century should be introduced. More techniques and methods should be introduced into field archaeology.
- I absolutely think so. Archaeology should be made to be seen as not an outdated, ancient and boring course of study. There should be more fusions in the curriculum from fields like geography, geology, history etc. Moreover, there is need for a connect between gown and town as regards enlightenment of the town on the subject matter of archaeology.
- I strongly believe that other modern areas of specialization in archaeology, such photographic archaeology, be introduced into the system this is because not everyone would want to specialize in Environmental Archaeology or Lithic Archaeology for example. Also, revised materials should be used in lieu of the old teaching materials. New links should be formed between the department and other departments within and outside the country, not just between the lecturers, but the students as well. This would create opportunities for students to interact with their counterparts in other regions and improve themselves, thereby improving archaeology practice in Nigeria.

Did you at any time change your course of study from Archaeology either at the undergraduate days or post graduate/would you ever change your course of study and why?

A. Yes, I did

B. Yes, I would

C. No

D. I do not know yet

21 respondents picked A. 22 respondents picked B. 13 picked C while 9 picked D.

ii. *Case Studies*

The following Case studies were picked from each category of respondents.

Case Study 1

Drop-out/ changed course

A prospective postgraduate candidate dropped out of the course after a year into his post graduate degree. His reason was that he could not stand his assigned supervisor as he was always reminded of the fear the lecturer instilled in him during his undergraduate days. He was made to feel that no amount of effort exerted by the students would amount to their success in the discipline. In the end, he became discouraged when he realized that it was this same lecturer that he was assigned to as a supervisee; hence his dropping out of his M.A degree for good without completing it.

Case Study 2

Graduate student of archaeology

- I heard about archaeology at the University of Ibadan in the year 2008 but since I could not meet up with the cut-off mark to study law, archaeology was the available option. To me, archaeology is an archaic course and boring. The lecturers made it look like a very difficult course of study, so my aim was just to study and get a degree. Although, I like going for fieldwork because that is the platform through which I get to know the behavioral characters of my course mates and will have fun chatting with them. Well, I never liked Cultural resource management because the lecturer did not make the course interesting. To me, Archaeology can help awaken the tourism sector in Nigeria, people will show a lot of interest in studying archaeology if Archaeologists promote the benefits and its significance to the society. Yes, the curriculum needs to be reviewed as many of the courses seems irrelevant to contemporary issues and as far as I am concerned I am not going for archaeology if I ever will go for my postgraduate. The reason is simply because I did never wanted to do the course and there are no many jobs for archaeologists here in Nigeria.

Case Study 3

Post graduate student of archaeology

I got to know about Archaeology in 2007 while reading the University entrance requirement Brochure.

I found the course interesting and I decided to do further research on it on the internet. I did Archaeology because of my interest in history and culture.

Archaeology is interesting but not well-recognized.

No, I was not discouraged because of my interest but there were certain times I expected more e.g. there was no fieldwork experience in the first year and only two weeks of fieldwork were undertaken in subsequent years.

I enjoyed Environmental Archaeology and later, Conservation and Material Science course.

I found every part of the courses I took very interesting. There is opportunity in cultural heritage sector or in an academic environment. My experience with various practitioners I met mostly on the field has been wholesome.

I also learnt a lot from practitioners that I have met in Archaeological conferences. The curriculum should be revised to meet modern day challenges and aspirations. It should be developed to a level where the course itself can give adequate skills to students which can make them marketable in this 21st Century.

Case Study 4

Post graduate student who had their first degree in archaeology but 2nd degree in another Department.

A female student who did archaeology in her first degree but Tourism and Event management in her second degree responded to the above questions as follows.

I got to know Archaeology on a movie tomb raider which is based on the archaeology of Egypt. I decided to do archaeology because I love adventure and wanted to explore, do something different and uncommon. Yes, I was discouraged most times when I realized archaeology as depicted in films is not the same in practical.

Moreover, I was made to feel that despite my effort in doing very well in the course, I cannot make a first class or a good grade, so I decided to quit and move to a more student-friendly department for my postgraduate studies. I like Archaeology of Africa and the Sahara and data analysis or analogy. Yes, I did like Archaeology.

The curriculum needs to be added to especially the part on current trends in Archaeology, most people don't keep up with that and we should.

However, the responses of all the 65 respondents were summarized into 8 case studies as many of the responses were same or similar and borders on the same issue.

Challenges And Recommendations

Some scholars have stated some obvious reasons why archaeology in Nigeria is still in its infancy. Such reasons range from a dearth of qualified archaeologists, Lack of good training facilities such as equipment and current literature, Lack of awareness by the general populace, and Archaeology is not on the priority list of educational programs in the country and as such it suffers funding.

The following has been suggested in form of recommendations for improving the image of the discipline:

The early introduction of archeology into primary and secondary school level; Many authors have stressed and advocated for the introduction of archaeology in the primary and secondary education level for the purpose of early interest development and public education. The archaeologist is introduced to primary concerns of pedagogy: issues of cognitive and moral development in children, learning and teaching styles, and considerations of special education. This is predicated on the willingness of the archaeologist to cooperate with teachers and educational consultants who would instruct them on how students of different ages learn (Smartz 1990 in Agbelusi 2015).

Improved engagement in archaeology discourses with the public through the media, face to face contact in order to create a better understanding of the subject. Consistent review of archaeology curriculum to

accommodate courses in applied archaeology. Demonstration of the potential of archaeology to meet a wide range of existing educational goals across the school curriculum may be possible to open up spaces for more formalized and ongoing involvement of the profession in both the theory and practice.

Fostering of improved cordial Student-Lecturer relationships for better mentorship, improved facilities/training materials and educational services, that is, The adoption of Information technology to enable exposure of students to both actual data and methodology, development of national/international exchange programs/opportunities, recommendation and recruitment of archaeology professionals in other fields such as heritage, tourism, architecture, engineering industries.

Conclusion

The archaeological survey questions was presented to the respondents in an attempt to capture students' experiences in the discipline; their initial awareness of the discipline, their degree of interest and satisfaction in the discipline within their universities, their displeasures about the discipline as related to the state of the curriculum and practitioners encountered.

However, the real life case studies reveal that most of the students were dissatisfied with the way the discipline is being handled in Nigerian Universities. Their dissatisfaction ranges from curriculum issues and negative attitude of most professionals to mentorship and motivation. For instance, all the students agreed that the curriculum needs to be reviewed while in another case, most of the students revealed their unwillingness to return for postgraduate degrees in archaeology.

A comparison of archaeology courses offered within those universities in Nigeria and that of the some universities in the United States of America, Europe and southern Africa reveals that many of the courses that are relevant to contemporary issues such as public archaeology, indigenous archaeology, photographic archaeology, research and presentation skills, advanced field techniques which are offered by these Universities are not found in the most of Nigerian archaeology curriculum. However, the Universities where some of these archaeology courses are in existence may not have them properly taught.

Discussions surrounding archaeological education in many nations focus on issues bordering on archaeology curriculum at university level, funding, training and limited professionals in diverse fields of archaeology

The education and training of archaeologists in Nigerian universities are still regrettably based on a curriculum that does not yet align with current technical or with emerging perspectives that require archaeologists to appreciate the public arena and the need to partner with the different publics in the study of the past and the production of archaeological knowledge. This lapse has adverse implications for the quality of archaeological approaches coming out of the Nigerian university system and has created an urgent need to rethink archaeological curricula, methods, and practice in Nigeria (Gundu 2008).

Although, it must be admitted that Archaeology like any other discipline worldwide has its own share of challenges. These challenges have transcend into its education within the university system so much so that that the teaching of Archaeology at all levels of Education still faces a lack of resources that challenges our capacity to deliver high quality education (Segboye 2005).

Clearly, many people are convinced that the traditional academic training in archaeology is seriously out of step with the realities of archaeological practice today.

The need to raise the profile of the discipline in Nigeria as archaeological benefits to our contemporary societies is enormous. As Barbara Little (2009) rightly pointed out " archaeology can examine deep history of contemporary issues such as migration and treatment of foreigners, poverty, hunger, and subsistence; military power, and urban decay...."

Therefore, in the face of our many challenges in Nigeria, professional archaeologists must be willing to enhance and maintain a positive outlook and do whatever it takes to motivate more students to do and stay within the discipline. However, these must include; Introduction of new and innovative archaeology best practices, active engagement of professionals as well as students encouragement in archaeological issues and discourses.

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