

AN APPRAISAL OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ASPECTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA THROUGH GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAMME: GSP 208 – NIGERIAN PEOPLES AND CULTURES

By

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Abstract

The General Studies Programme provides students with a broad educational experience. The teaching and learning of aspects of archaeology through Humanities Unit is aimed at introducing students to the fundamentals of archaeology. This paper x-rays the role of GSP 208 in archaeology promotion with a view to identifying the aspects of archaeology taught in GSP 208, teaching and learning materials used by Humanities Unit and students' understanding of aspects of archaeology prior and after GSP 208.

Key words: Teaching and learning, Archaeology, General studies programme, Nigerian peoples and cultures

Introduction

Archaeology is the study of the human past through its material remains. As a field of inquiry, the discipline has grown from amateur's pastime to a scientifically based profession. It uses past remains to order and describe ancient events and to explain the human behavior behind those events (Sharer and Ashmore 2003:15). The value of archaeology has only been appreciated by a few Nigerians; thus, the increasing need to incorporate archaeology into the curriculum of primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions in order to create wider awareness amongst Nigerians. Okpoko (1986) noted that this lack of awareness is due to the fact that archaeology is not taught as a subject in the primary and post-primary schools and even in teachers' training colleges. In consonance with Okpoko, Itanyi (2002:261) argued that the public are not much aware of the importance of the discipline and there is an urgent need to introduce the discipline into our post-primary institutions. This would encourage the students towards taking up archaeology as their field of study in their future educational pursuit. In essence, for archaeology to fulfill its role of inculcating the love of cultural heritage in the public, it has to be valued by the people, taught effectively to potential students and cherished by lecturers and students in tertiary institutions.

The General Studies Programme (GSP) on the other hand, is a programme of courses in the Arts and Sciences that provides students with a broad educational experience. The programme is aimed at exposing students to the various forms of expression, fields of knowledge, and methods of inquiry fundamental to intellectual growth and to a mature understanding of the world and the human condition as distinguished from "specialized education", which prepares individuals for particular occupations or specific professional responsibilities (Cronk 2004). In other words,

General Studies Programme is oriented toward common learning, with a view to creating a sphere of higher education shared by all students and faculties (Cronk, 1983).

GSP is hosted by School of General Studies and the school is administered by the Dean of the School of General Studies Programme (SGSP). There are four Units in the School of General Studies Programme: the Use of English Unit, the Humanities Unit, the Social Sciences Unit, and the Natural Sciences Unit; however, each unit is run by a Coordinator. Of the four units, the Humanities Unit is earmarked for our study because of the unit's curriculum, which is designed to give students the opportunity to understand and participate in significant value expression embodied and preserved in books, works of art, religion and philosophical systems (SGS 2012).

The Humanities Unit offers two courses: GSP 207 – Logic, Philosophy and Human Existence and GSP 208 – Nigerian Peoples and Cultures. The later is adjudged more relevant to our study as the course introduces student into the operation of diverse belief systems in Nigeria, expressed in various forms like history, music, language, paintings, religion, archaeology/tourism, and other related areas. Thus, every student offering GSP 208 must come across the term archaeology. This research report is therefore aimed at appraising the teaching and learning of archaeology through GSP 208.

Background Information

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) is a federal University located on 871 hectares of hilly savannah in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. It was established in 1955 and formally opened on October 7th, 1960. UNN has about 1,828 academic staff and 28,581 students with four campuses: Nsukka main campus (UNN) and Enugu extension (UNEC), University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH) at Ituku-ozalla, and Aba campus, Abia State. GSP 208 (Nigerian Peoples and Cultures) is a mandatory course for 200 level students in faculties of Agriculture, Biological Sciences, Education, Engineering, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Mass Communication Department (in faculty of Arts).

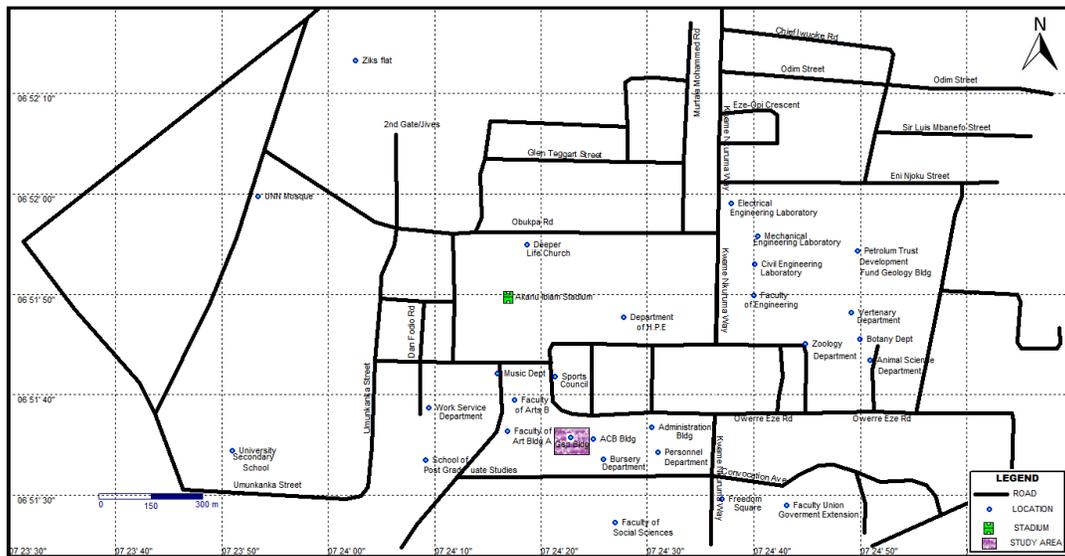


Figure 1: Map of UNN Showing School of General Studies Programme Building

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The design employed simple random technique and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with some resource persons including some lecturers in the Humanities Unit. A total of nine hundred (900) respondents were administered structured-interview questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to students currently offering and/or have offered GSP 208 between 2009/2010 and 2011/2012 academic sessions. The questionnaires were distributed in eight faculties and one department (in faculty of arts), all in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The distributions are as follows: Agriculture (104), Biological Sciences (100), Education (105), Veterinary Medicine (100), Pharmaceutical Sciences (100), Engineering (104), Physical Sciences (107), Social Sciences (120), and Mass Communication Department [faculty of Arts] (60). Administered questionnaires were pre-tested through face-validation by an expert and some anticipated problems in the field corrected. The data were collated and simple proportional analysis carried out; results were represented in tables. Secondary sources of data collection such as library materials were used to supplement primary data.

Conceptual Understanding of Terms: GSP 208 and Archaeology

i. GSP 208 – Nigerian Peoples and Cultures

The course Nigerian Peoples and Cultures is all about man, his environment, culture and development. It is used to understand man's past, which has created the present; thus, the course exposes student to indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in parts of Nigeria. The primary purpose of GSP 208 is to give the students the opportunity to understand and appreciate in significant value, their cultural heritage as these are embodied and preserved in books, works of art, religion and philosophical

systems (SGSP 2010; 2012). The course is designed to enable students to understand and internalize ultimate values, through the study of imaginative and creative productions of man in the areas of language, literature, music, drama, art, history, philosophy and religion. One of the aims of this course is to make the students appreciate the nature and dynamics of culture in a rapidly changing society especially in these recent times. In addition to producing graduates with broad knowledge of the Nigerian peoples and cultures, the course also equips students with cultural knowledge of their backgrounds, cultural skills and sustained indigenous practices in today's society with a view to surmounting challenges. GSP 208 allows students of different cultures to communicate fairly and intelligently with each other.



Plate 1: School of General Studies Building



Plate 2: Humanities Unit

ii. Archaeology

To the public, archaeology is all about the old fashioned way of learning things about the past. However, Archaeology has in fact evolved into (and is today a highly) specialized technical field and often in its own rights exotic discipline with basic philosophies, concepts, jargons and methods, which as with many other disciplines

continue to grow and expand (Andah and Okpoko, 1994:1). Archaeologists concern themselves with retrieving material remains of past human activities through excavations. These remains (artifacts) are collected not as an end themselves, but as a means of obtaining information about their makers, the lives they lived and how they related to the environment (Andah and Okpoko, 1994:1). These material remains are archaeological record.

According to Sharer and Ashmore, (2003:120) archaeological record is referred to as all the material remains of past human activity, from the smallest stone-chipping debris to the most massive architectural construction. They further noted that the components of this record become archaeological data when their significance as evidence from the past is recognized and they are collected and recorded to provide the basis for reconstructing human behavior. Thus, the collection and recording of remains of the past constitute the acquisition of archaeological data (Sharer and Ashmore, 2003:120). Shaw (1963) asserted that archaeology comprises a system of techniques for deriving the maximum amount of information from the material culture and physical remains, which has been left behind by past generations of mankind, and which has survived to the present.

The three basic classes of archaeological data are artifacts, ecofacts and features. Artifacts are portable objects whose form has been modified wholly or partially by human activity (e.g. stone hammer or clay vessel); ecofacts on the other hand are non-artifactual material remains that nonetheless have cultural relevance (e.g. remnants of both wild and domesticated animals and plant species – bones, pollen, granules etc.); while features are non-portable artifacts that cannot be recovered from the settings in which they are found (e.g. burials, hearths, storage pits, roads etc.). However, all forms of archaeological data are processed (cleaned, labelled, sorted etc.) in order to prepare them for analysis in field laboratory. Furthermore, analysis of archaeological data is followed by interpretation. Thus, interpretation refers to the meaning archaeologists infer from their analysis and synthesis of data (Andah and Okpoko 1994:193).

Thomas (1974) summarized the ultimate goals of archaeology as: i) reconstructions of culture history, and past ways of life; ii) the study of cultural process; and iii) the building of a sound chronology. Itanyi (2002) observed that we study archaeology because it is one of the disciplines that study man from his earliest period; thus, the study of archaeology deals with the past. He further noted that researching into the past will not only stimulate local interest in ancient traditions of people, but will also help to maintain their sense of continuity in the rapid changes now coming upon them. Therefore, it is imperative to note that teaching aspects of archaeology in General Studies Programme as is obtainable in GSP 208 will play a vital role in inculcating archaeology value in the public, and will further expose students to the rudimentary knowledge of their cultural values. It should be noted that the study of available material culture helps archaeologists to make intricate deductions about the non-material culture of a given society. Thus, through the study of the culture of our people, their philosophy (ethic) and

etymology are imparted into the students who are knowledge trustees of the next generation.

Results:

900 structured-interview questionnaire were administered to the respondents and the results are shown below:

Table 1: Aspects of Archaeology Taught in GSP 208

S/No	Respondents	Yes [No. (%)]	No [No. (%)]	Total (%)
1.	Definitions of archaeological concepts	168 (18.7)	46 (5.1)	214 (23.8)
2.	Archaeological sites/finds	112 (12.4)	35 (3.9)	147 (16.3)
3.	Museums/museum objects	107 (11.9)	50 (5.6)	157 (17.5)
4.	Cultural resource management	149 (16.5)	41 (4.6)	190 (21.1)
5.	Archaeology and nation building	154 (17.1)	38 (4.2)	192 (21.3)
	Total (%)	690 (76.6)	210 (23.4)	900 (100)

No. (%) = Number/percentage

The study revealed that the commonest 168 (18.7%) aspect of archaeology taught in GSP 208 was definitions of archaeological concepts; while the least 107 (11.9%) was museums/museum objects (table 1).

Table 2: Teaching and Learning Materials Used in GSP 208

S/No	Respondents	Yes [No. (%)]	No [No. (%)]	Total (%)
1.	GSP textbook (students' handbook) and other recommended books	172 (19.1)	38 (4.2)	210 (23.3)
2.	Term-papers/seminars	128 (14.2)	49 (5.4)	177 (19.7)
3.	Illustrations (pictorial and diagrammatic representations)	112 (12.4)	67 (7.4)	170 (19.9)
4.	Internet materials	144 (16.0)	34 (3.8)	178 (19.8)
5.	E-learning applications	101 (11.2)	55 (6.1)	156 (17.3)
	Total (%)	657 (73)	243 (27)	900 (100)

No. (%) = Number/percentage

A total of 172 (19.1%) respondents considered GSP textbook (students' handbook) and other recommended books as most useful teaching and learning materials used in GSP 208. The lowest 101 (11.2%) suggested e-learning application (table 2).

Table 3: Students' Understanding of Aspects of Archaeology Prior and After the Teaching of GSP 208

S/No	Respondents	Yes [No. (%)]	No [No. (%)]	Total (%)
1.	Good knowledge of aspects of archaeology during GSP 208	182 (20.2)	34 (3.8)	216 (24.0)

2.	Good and wider knowledge of aspects of archaeology after GSP 208 through further research	146 (16.2)	49 (5.4)	195 (21.6)
3.	Had little interest because of archaeological stories, museums and sites	151 (16.8)	52 (5.8)	203 (22.6)
4.	No interest in archaeology (failed GSP 208 at first attempt)	85 (9.4)	56 (6.2)	141 (15.6)
5.	Gained knowledge of archaeology through research before GSP 208	104 (11.6)	41 (4.6)	145 (16.2)
	Total (%)	668 (74.2)	232 (25.8)	900 (100)

No. (%) = Number/percentage

The predominant 182 (20.2%) interviewees are of the view that they had good knowledge of aspects of archaeology during GSP 208; while 85 (9.4%) respondents who failed the course at first attempt has no interest in archaeology (table 3).

Discussion

Deductions from these finds shows that some aspects of archaeology are taught to students in GSP 208, with notable teaching and learning materials, which ultimately results to students' understanding of some aspects of archaeology during and after the course.

In table 1, the study revealed that the definitions of archaeological concepts were the basic aspects of archaeology taught in Nigerian Peoples and Cultures. Our informants (Mr. J.O. Uzuegbu and Mrs. J.U. Ikegwu) are of the view that the aspects of archaeology taught in GSP 208 are fundamentals of archaeology, basic concepts and terminologies used in archaeology. The role of archaeology in nation building is another aspect of archaeology taught to students. Many scholars (Okpoko 2005, Ibeanu 2005 and 2010, Eluyemi 1989, Miller 1980, Clark 1998) have done works on this issue and some of their works have also featured in the School of General Studies Journal and/or Humanities Unit's Journal, which are within the reach of both lecturers and students.

Cultural Resource Management (CRM) is another identified aspect of archaeology taught in GSP 208. This includes material and non-material culture, movable and immovable cultural objects and how these are managed through either modern methods (legislations/regulations) or traditional methods (local laws, sacred sanctions and taboos). As rightly argued by Schnafsmas (1989:38) managing cultural resources is like managing any other resources, and as such, they have to be managed consistently, systematically and conscientiously for humanity. Archaeological sites/finds and museums/museum objects were not left out by respondents as aspects of archaeology taught in GSP 208. Notable archaeological sites like Nok Valley, Igbo-Ukwu, Daima, Iwo Eleru among others are often used to illustrate how archaeologists use material remains to study man's past activities in parts of Nigeria. Objects recovered from

archaeological excavations are preserved and exhibited in museums for public awareness and research purposes. Thus, exposing students to these aspects of archaeology during GSP 208 will no doubt have an overwhelming input of knowledge of Nigerian Peoples and Cultures in students.

The results from table 2 about teaching and learning materials used in GSP 208 revealed that GSP textbook (students' handbook) and other recommended books was highest amongst others. Some School of General Studies (SGS) recommended books are: *Tourism in Nigeria* by Okpoko and Okpoko 2002; *A Survey of Igbo Nation* by GEK Ofomata; *Culture Matter: How Values Shape Human Progress* by Harrison Lawrence *et. al.*; *Sacred Groves and Shrines* by Orjiakor Jacinta; and *Astride Memory and Desire: An Anthology of Nigerian Peoples, Cultures and National Development* by Krydz Ikwuemesi. These books have illustrated the importance of Nigeria's various ethnic groups, their cultural practices, its values and diverse indigenous knowledge practiced among the people as well as how these indigenous knowledge and cultural practice can be harnessed for tourism development. Thus, students of GSP 208 are introduced to a wide array of diverse values, beliefs, customs, and norms exemplified in Nigerian Peoples and Cultures.

Internet and internet materials are other sources of information for students. Information on the internet is easily assessed by students through dial-up, point-to-point and Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) connections. Students with personal computers are connected to the University wireless in order to access the internet; while those that are not privileged to own a computer can source information from the internet through cyber café (Afrihub, UC Network, Ben cyber café etc.). As rightly argued by Zhenhua (2000) the internet widely recognized as an extremely valuable marketing tool, offers substantial advantages over traditional means of communication; reduces costs of information exchange; increases speed of information transfer and retrieval; increases customer involvement in and control of transactions; and greater flexibility of using the market mix. A total of 144 (16.0%) of respondents accepted internet materials as valuable teaching and learning materials during GSP 208.



Plate 3: School of General Studies Programme Lecture Room



Plate 4: Newly Installed Smart-Board with Overhang Projector

Students are given the opportunity to research on a chosen topic and report their findings in a ‘term-paper’ format. Seminars on the other hand, gives them the opportunities to exchange ideas in seminar presentation format or groups discussions with a view to giving the students the opportunity to discover their individual potentials as well as an avenue for grading students’ performance often used as part of continuous assessments. Thus, seminars and term-papers are important teaching strategies in GSP 208 and 128 (14.2%) respondents shared this view. About 12.4% of the respondents also believed that pictorial and diagrammatic representations of archaeological sites, artifacts among others helps them to easily understand the course; while e-learning applications such as smart-board, blackboard, mobile learning etc. are good ways of teaching and learning and are student friendly.

As revealed in table 3, 182 (20.2%) respondents accepted that they understood aspects of archaeology during the course (GSP 208). This has automatically impacted in

them the interest in cultural heritage and its preservation. 16.2% of our respondents are of the view that they had wilder knowledge of aspects of archaeology after GSP 208 through further research. About 52 (5.8%) of our respondents disagreed that archaeological stories, museums and sites were the reasons why they had little interest in archaeology. However, 85 (9.4%) of respondents that failed GSP 208 at first attempt had no interest in archaeology; while 6.2% of respondents disagreed. Also, those that gained knowledge of archaeology through self-effort before GSP 208 were 11.6% of our respondents. To this group, they came across the concept in both primary and post-primary schools. Other ways through which they learned of archaeology are through documentaries of archaeological discoveries in television and radio, newspapers and the internet.

Finally, in the words of Corfe (1970) the introduction of archaeology into our schools is likely to encourage teachers to pull on their boots and leave the confines of the classroom in search of history in the field. Through their experience, archaeology could open the eyes and minds of students to awareness of their surroundings and of the past about us. Thus, by taking students to the field, teachers will not only impart the practical aspect of the subject, but will also expose or arouse students' interest and attention in the disciplines. GSP 208 can promote archaeology generally (through aspects of archaeology thought) if maximum attention is given to the provision of good quality teaching and learning facilities like museums, artifacts, laboratories, excavation sites and more trained personnel. Archaeology is a study that is interrelated with various fields like Geology, Anthropology, History, Geography, Physics etc. and these disciplines' contributions to the understanding of archaeology can never be over emphasized.



Plate 2: A Cross Section of Students during Lecture Hours

Recommendations/Conclusion

It is pertinent to recommend ways of improving the teaching and learning of aspects of archaeology in GSP 208. These recommendations when implemented would ensure increased public awareness of archaeology value to national development as well as increase students' interest in archaeology through GSP 208. As a matter of necessity, federal and state government in conjunction with the university authority should provide

teaching and learning materials like textbooks, slides/projectors, internet facilities, black-boards, smart-boards, mobile learning devices etc. to SGSP and extend same to various faculties. These would ensure improved teaching and learning standard in UNN inline with international best practices.

Students should be encouraged to adopt positive and friendly attitude towards the learning of aspects of archaeology thought in GSP 208, which directly help in heritage conservation. It is our undoubted believe that students' knowledge of cultural values would help in preserving the material and non material aspects of culture both within and outside academic environment. Again, it should be noted that some scholars (Andah 1982; Okpoko 1986; Afigbo 1986 and Itanyi 2002) had earlier clamored for inclusion of archaeology into primary and post-primary school curriculum; however, we on the other hand advocate for increased aspects of archaeology taught in GSP 208. This would ensure that the overall value of heritage resource management are inculcated into students and thus, contribute to heritage resource management in Nigeria.

This paper has been able to appraise the teaching and learning of archaeology in UNN through GSP 208 in SGSP. The paper identified aspects of archaeology taught, teaching and learning materials used, and students' understanding of the course prior and after the teaching of GSP 208. It was observed that all the aspects of archaeology taught in GSP 208 are relevant and enables students' understanding of the roles of archaeologists. Thus, students' understanding of aspects of archaeology in GSP 208 are proper especially when the lecturers handling these aspects of archaeology in GSP 208 are graduates of archaeology and tourism department and have parallel appointment with base department.

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