

Review

Michael Arukwe Ijioma in the History and Development of Contemporary Nigerian Art Abia State University Perspective

Osita, Williams A. Ph.D.

Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, P.M.B 2000, Uturu, Nigeria.

Accepted 18th July, 2019.

The study tries to situate Michael Ijioma as a body of knowledge who has inspired the growth and development of knowledge in the fields of visual arts, geography, estate management, Environmental Resource Management, and others in the faculty of environmental studies of Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria and beyond. Different studies have been carried out in the Sciences, Social Sciences, Computer, Visual arts and others without comprehensive biographical studies of scholars, inventors, academics of note, creative thinkers, writers, technologists and others. Documentations and biographical studies are salient areas of art historical researches in contemporary times, hence the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collation including unstructured interviews were used to achieve the objectives of the study. However, the study highlights Michael Ijioma's personal, national, and international achievements in relation to knowledge, not only in geography, visual arts but faculty of environmental studies, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria. This is followed by conclusion and recommendations.

Keywords: Michael Ijioma, visual arts, geography, estate management, Environmental Resource Management, Uturu, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

History and effective documentation are nothing, but significant paths to knowledge and sustainable national development, particularly, the developed economies. This idea, if well taken, may help redirect the orientation and paths of the developing economies in larger scale. However, knowledge of the past, helps predict today and be in astute position to substantially face tomorrow. Again, proper documentation is needful, particularly, for preservation and restoration of imminent information that may serve as dependable platform on which new generation could adequately rely on for effective existence.

It is for these reasons that one could safely recall or talk about Adolf Hitler, Margaret Thatcher, George Bush, Jerry Rawlings, Aristotle, Plato, Martin Luther King and many others. Documentation becomes a springboard and integral in effective assessment of the past, today and futuristic focus. Biographical study, therefore, is

significant source of documentation, that may illicit and generate Huge information from one generation to another. However, many studies may have been carried out in different areas of endeavor, particularly, geography, mathematics, physics, estate management, urban and regional planning, architecture as well as visual arts and others. However, there may not be comprehensive biographical study of erudite scholars in the faculty of environmental studies of Abia State University, Uturu, who may have contributed immensely to the growth and sustenance of knowledge within the faculty in the last two decades, hence the study.

However, biographical study may be considered a serious research and scholastic venture within the academia, that helps in the promotion of information, knowledge, as well as sustainable national development.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research relies strongly on primary, secondary sources of

data collation as well as participant observation method where the researcher studied and observe the subject for more than a decade. The study includes unstructured interviews to generate information or data without bias. To further achieve the objectives of the study, the research is tackled from four distinctive perspectives, which are;

1. Michael Arukwe Ijioma as An Individual.
2. His Family Background.
3. Educational Background.
4. Achievements / Contributions to Knowledge.

1. MICHAEL ARUKWE IJIOMA AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Michael Ijioma could be considered an artist and climatologist, who has engraved himself in a sand of times. He is a monumental academic icon who has carved out a nich for himself by contributing significantly to the growth and development of departments in the Faculty of Environmental Studies and beyond. Such departments include Fine and Applied Arts, Geography, Architecture, Building, Estate management, Urban and Regional Planning and others. He has shared and contributed to knowledge in each of these areas of discipline and ensures their effective existence in the faculty and the university community.

Michael Ijioma remains in situ an academic architecture whose structural base is unshaken even in the midst of heaviest landslides. Based on his contributions and achievements, one may safely situate him as a structural edifice in the sand of times whose status may not be compared or translated to monetary values. The study shares the view that Michael Arukwe Ijioma has a major attribute of patience and calmness. Again, he is meticulous with words and does play politics with words. He is endowed with cool listening ears that paves way for little and strong details. As his student, he allows individual ideas and opinions expressed without intimidation or imposition of self as a person in position of authority. He is massively, example of humility to the core and significantly humble to constituted authority. He leads by example, this he does by being the first to conclude lectures for semester, examines and submits results of students before others. In the faculty's research forum, particularly, seminars he comes first and goes last and strongly maintains that aim and objectives should be operational with emphasis on clarity. Again, his height and body language epitomize him as a straight-forwarded, disciplined academic of high intellectual pedigree with aura of excellence. The artistry in him as an academic icon is consistently observed in his mode of simplistic dressing. Tall, considerably handsome with good health defining him as strong, energetic, vibrant man of national and international repute.

He is fluent and hardly lacks words in his expression of ideas. He encourages freedom in research

and vibrancy for which he is synonymous with. Visual arts run in his family. For this reason, he inspired his younger brother to study Fine and Applied Arts at University of Nigeria, Nsukka with graphics as his area of specialty. His charisma, movement, composure, elegance, ideology and intellectualism, position him as artist of contemporary status who may not believe in art for art sake, but art for expressionism and expressionistic, creative and explorative tendencies.

The study observes and positions Michael Arukwe Ijioma as a realist than impressionist. He believes in realism in his expressionistic ideologies. He may not be a painter of words or on canvass, but a contemporary painter of ideas and knowledge which is a commodity of the academic marketplace. The presence of Michael Arukwe Ijioma is ideological and symbolic in Abia State University, Uturu, particularly, Faculty of Environmental Studies, especially, Department of Fine and Applied Arts. This could be justified by numerous contributions he has made in the growth and development of the entire University.

The study Considers him a distinguished professor, not because he is a professor, but because he has monumentally and colossally distinguished himself as a body and pillar of knowledge at the same time, constitute himself a colossal entity in the field of knowledge beyond climatology and geography to Fine and Applied Arts and others.

2. FAMILY BACKGROUND

The study reveals that Michael Arukwe Ijioma was born in September 1947 in Ndi Okwoina, Amagbo-Ibina, Igbere in Bende Local government area of Abia State by Mazi Joseph (Ogbu-Ukwu) and Madam Abigail Agbocha Onyekaba. He is a member of the Egwuatu (Fearless). Age grade that traditionally retired in 2005. He is a member of the Igbere Welfare Union. His committee was responsible for the Igbere blue print for the development of igbere in 2014. He is married to Elder Ejimole Ijioma and their holy matrimony is blessed with four children.

3. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Today, Michael Arukwe Ijioma is a professor of Geography and Planning with climatology as his major area of specialization.

He started his educational journey in Igbere where he enrolled and completed his primary school education at Igbere central school, Igbere, from there, he left for Boys' Vocational School, Ididep, Cross River State. He also attended Salvation Army Teachers Training College, Akai Eket, Akwa Ibom State in 1967. Between 1972 and 1973 he had obtained London GCE O/L and A/L with Geography and History at Advance

Level (A/L) and English and Mathematics at Ordinary Level (O/L). He proceeded to University of Lagos where he obtained BA (Hons) Geography, M.A Geography and Ph.D. Geography and Planning in 1989.

4. EMPLOYMENT/ACHIEVEMENTS

Michael Arukwe Ijioma did not rise to the top of the academic echelon from the blues or sky. He started from the crucible. He started his teaching as a pupil teacher with the Presbyterian Church at Igberere Central School, Igberere, he rose through the ranks to become a professor in 2000. By dint of hardwork in his career, he served at various levels including;

- Grade two teacher - Enuda Primary School, Abiriba from 1967, 1970-1973
 - Education officer 2 - Federal Government College Kano and Ilorin From 1978-1980
 - He became a graduate assistant - University of Lagos, from 1981-1984, he left University of Lagos for Imo State University, Okigwe, Now Abia State University Uturu in 1984 where he was appointed as a Lecturer II officer from 1984-1990 when he finally became a Senior Lecturer.
 - He became a visiting Lecturer at University of Port-Harcourt between 1994-1995
 - Michael Arukwe Ijioma became a professor of Geography and Planning, Abia State University, Uturu in 2000. He became a visiting professor at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka between 2009 and 2010. He was appointed Dean - Faculty of Engineering and Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu, from 2003 to 2005. He rose to the rank of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Admin) Abia State University, Uturu from 2005-2009. Within the same period, he was a member of Abia State University Governing Council, Uturu, these were the positions he occupied in Abia State University, Uturu, till he retired in 2010 and proceeded to serve the University on Contract appointment from 2011 - 2015. At the moment, Professor Michael Arukwe Ijioma is on adjunct appointment at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Where he also teaches major undergraduates and graduate courses like climatology and applied climatology, environmental impact assessment, resource conservation, environmental pollution, rural development Research Methodology and few others.
- Apart from the above achievements, he undertakes editorial consultancy assignments such as Editor, Journal of Environment, Associate Editor, Journal on the Environment and one-time Associate Editor, Nigerian Geographical Journal. All these to his credit.

EXTERNAL MODERATION

As part of his achievements, Michael Arukwe Ijioma, is a professor of Geography and Planning (Climatology) Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu, he has taken part in different external moderations of different institutions for example, he was the External Examiner B.Sc. M.Sc. and Ph.D. - University of Port-Harcourt, 1989/1990, 2000/2001, 2001/2002. External Examiner, for M.Sc., Ph.D. programmes at Imo State University, Owerri, for the following academic years - 2003/2004, 2004/2005, 2005/2006. He was also external examiner, for Alvan Ikoku College of Education, 2004-2006. Also to his credit - External examiner B.Sc. Ahmadu Bello University, (ABU) Zaria - 2009.

However, these achievements notwithstanding, he has numerous publications to his credit both in national and international Journals. However, he contributed and still contributes to the development of the wider society in several other vital ways. These he has achieved through professional bodies and community services. For example, Michael Arukwe Ijioma served as a commissioned officer in the 4th battalion, 6th Brigade of the Biafran Army from 1969-1970 with the rank of a lieutenant. It must be mentioned here, that he belongs to different professional bodies and organizations through which he extends his versatile hands of fellowship to the universities and communities at large. These bodies/organizations as noted by the study include;

1. Nigerian Geographical Association. (NGA)
2. Nigerian Environmental Study-Action/Team (NEST).
3. Nigerian Environmental Association (NEA).
4. Nigerian Participating Rural-Appraisal Network (NIPRANET).

However, outside these professional bodies, Michael Arukwe Ijioma was a member of comprehensive Accreditation of Academic Programmes in Nigerian Universities between 2005 and 2006.

He was also a member of experts on climate change for preparation of Nigeria 2nd National Communication, 20th-25th January 2008 in Abuja, Nigeria. Again, Michael Ijioma was a member of a panel to interview candidates seeking appointment into the department of geography and planning, University of Jos, (2008). He was a member of Task Force on Climate Change Scenario Development Team (2000) in Abuja.

Significantly, Michael Arukwe Ijioma inspired the development and growth of Fine and Applied Arts in Abia State University from 1989 till date. Historically, the department of Fine and Applied Arts started as a unit in 1989/1990, under the department of architecture and it produced its first batch of graduates in 1991 with Osita, Williams and Osonwa Ifeoma as the pioneer students and graduates of the department (Fine and Applied Arts).

The study shares the view that Michael Arukwe Ijioma believes in radical approach to environmental development, and that development could be centered on human beings and harnessing their potentials in contributing to national development. This implies, therefore, that there is need for everyone to imbibe the spirit of creativity and imagination which are integral parts of Fine and Applied Arts, Architecture, Geography and others. The study shares the view that creativity inspires technology as well as sustainable national development, which he has impeccable knack and aura for, and to a greater degree, demonstrates interest and promotion of creativity and imagination within the faculty of environmental studies, of Abia State University, community and beyond.

Michael Arukwe Ijioma's position in view of human and national development is in line with the view of Ikwuegbu (2010:140) that development of human beings through creativity-based curricular provided by Fine and Applied Arts will help in actualizing human development as the core of any national development strategy, rather than focusing on science or economic growth alone, which may not be same thing as sustainable national development.

Creativity and imagination may not be divorced completely from sustainable national development hence the introduction of Fine and Applied Arts in the Nigeria's tertiary institutions including Abia State University, Uturu. Creativity is significant, as it is the ability to generate innovative ideas and manifest them from thought into reality.

In all contestations and interrogations, the study, situates Michael Arukwe Ijioma as creative and embodiment of creativity, imagination and knowledge which are monumentally exemplified by his illustrative and magnificent achievements within academia and the wider society, the study may be safe to situate Michael Arukwe Ijioma as a Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA). This is because of his numerous contributions and Knack for imagination, creativity, development and success which he painstakingly, eruditely and creatively achieved by moving the bounds and horizons of knowledge as well as Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Environmental Studies and Abia State University, which in all considerations is a centre and embodiment of excellence today.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, Michael Arukwe Ijioma could be described as creative, dynamic, inspirational and a motivational professor of geography and planning with climatology as his major area of interest. He is colossally endowed with huge level of intellectualism with a free flow of monumental academic aura. He has immeasurably contributed and contributes to knowledge and development of humanity in contemporary times. He is a cerebral professor that proffers dependable solutions to

problems in the faculty of environmental studies and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study observes Michael Arukwe Ijioma as an outstanding academic of national and international repute, whose wealth of knowledge and experiences could catapult new generation of academics into research oriented status or platforms thereby advancing knowledge and sustainable national development. In view of these therefore, the study recommends that Michael Arukwe Ijioma should be preserved as a body of knowledge, encouraged and motivated to further enhance performance and inspire his inspirational pedigree for futuristic focus.

In view of his academic and research inputs to the faculty, the university and the wider society, the study also recommends that a comprehensive Faculty of Environmental Studies library be built in his honor, by the University and the government and named after him while he is still serving the University. This may to a greater degree, serve as a stepping stone to inspire other promising and distinguished professors of the Faculty to work harder and encourage others as well as national productivity. This, may have informed the opinion of Chima (2018) in his inaugural lecture where he ideologically emphasizes "*Water, Water Everywhere But not Enough*" there are many Professionals, Lecturers, Professors and distinguished professors, yet not enough, if adequately inspired, motivated and necessary challenging environment provided, the world, particularly, the developing economies will advance beyond where they are at the moment.

REFERENCES

- Adams, L. S. (1996). *The Methodology of Art: An Introduction*, Oxford: West View Press.
- Ayakoroma, B. F. (2011). *Arts, Culture, Language and National Integration*, Abuja: National Institute for Cultural Orientation Press.
- Barrett, T. (1994). *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*, California: Mayfield Publishing Co.
- Chima, G. N. (2018). "*Water, Water Everywhere But Not Enough*" 37th Inaugural Lecture, Abia State University, Uturu, Aba: Abia State University Press.
- Hornby, A. S. (1995). *Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ijioma, M. A. (2018). *The Profile of Elder (Prof.) Michael Arukwe Ijioma* Unpublished note, Department of Geography and Planning, Faculty of

Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu.

Ikwuegbu, F. N. (2010). "Creativity and Imagination: Sine Qua Non for Sustainable National Development". *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 1, Enugu: Association for Promoting Nigerian Languages and Culture (APNILAC), San Press Ltd.

Oloidi, O. (2011). *The Rejected Stone: Visual Arts in an Artistically Uninformed Society*. University of Nigeria, Nsukka Inaugural Lecture Series.

INTERVIEWS

Alozie, M. (2018). Interview on Michael Arukwe Ijioma on 10th July, 2018, in his office, Department of Geography and Planning, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu. **Occupation/Rank**, Civil Servant and Senior Lecturer.

Azubuine, C. E. (2018). Interview on Michael Arukwe Ijioma on 3rd July, 2018 in his office, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu. **Occupation/Rank**, Civil Servant and Senior Lecturer.

Ike, F. (2018). Interview on Michael Arukwe Ijioma on 6th July, 2018 in his office, Department of Geography and Planning, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu. **Occupation/Rank**, Lecturer/Head of Department Geography and Planning, ABSU.

Nkemdirim, V. U. (2018). Interview on Michael Arukwe Ijioma on 4th July, 2018 in his office, Department of Geography and Planning, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu. **Occupation/Rank**, Civil Servant/Lecturer.

Uzoanya, S. U. (2018). Interview on Michael Arukwe Ijioma on 10th July, 2018, in his office, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Abia State University, Uturu. **Occupation/Rank**, Civil Servant and Senior Lecturer.