
Management of Indigenous Knowledge in Public Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is on management of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Delta state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. Literature on relevance of indigenous knowledge was reviewed. The population is one hundred and five (105), Professionals' staff is thirty-nine (39) and Para-professionals staff is sixty-six (66) in the public libraries. The questionnaires were distributed through Google form. Simple percentage method was used. Findings showed that public libraries in Delta state generally have problems with the management of indigenous knowledge (IKM). They have low extent and not involved at all in indigenous knowledge management. Other findings showed that the library staff is not given opportunities for in-service training in indigenous knowledge management (IKM) in Delta state library board. Solutions and recommendations were proffered to this study by the researcher.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, public libraries, Management, Delta, and Staff.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous is the knowledge a community possesses, and experiences generated over a long period of time by people living in that community or communities, and is usually passed on from generation to generation, through word of mouth (Sarkhe, 2016). Indigenous knowledge has emerged as a significant resource in dealing with many research and development issues. However, the increasing number of local and indigenous knowledge and practices documented in research on disasters are yet to lead to increased efforts to translate indigenous knowledge into initiatives that increase communities' resilience against disasters' impacts (Shaw, Uy, and Baumwoll, 2008). Indigenous knowledge has traditionally been regarded as inferior to science and technology which has negatively affected communities' development processes (Agrawal, 1995).

The term "indigenous knowledge" arises from the experiences of many academics and practitioners. Some other terms are found in the literature referring to indigenous knowledge, such as folk, local, rural people's, indigenous technical, and traditional environmental knowledge. Previous research justifies viewing indigenous knowledge not only as underlying technical solutions to daily problems or only information functioning as an early warning but also as containing non-technical insight, wisdom, ideas, perception, and innovative capabilities that deal with physical, environmental, ecological, biological, or geographical phenomena (Gadgil, Berkes & Folke, 1993). In a more precise language, Hornby (2010) opined that indigenous means "belonging to a particular place rather than coming to it from somewhere else". In another development Krishnan (1997) had earlier offered a rather complex but more revealing definition

of indigenous as “people whose livelihood and lifestyle are tied up with the land in the system of mutual reinforcement as a moral contact where social living and negotiation with human, non-human and animate being are basically attained to the sonic and sensual rhythms of the earth. Disciplines of physical, biological and medical sciences, production technology, science and art of humanity/polity/environmental/society management, also social cohesion, sciences as well as spirituality practices are all embodiment of indigenous African society. Indigenous in the African context is an all-inclusive concept that is mostly confined to remote concept but must not be compelled to self-isolation or ghetto mentally. However, literature have shown that research culture was well established in indigenous Africa, for instance, in food science, indigenous research established that consumption of bitter and nature raw food promote functional psycho-physiological health, including boosting of immunity systems. This is line with modern day medical practice, where bitter and natural raw food is recommended for similar health situations.

The term knowledge on the other hand, generally depicts stored information that a person or society draws upon to make sense of a given situation, either in the form of personal or collective memories on externalized in the form of books or other media store in libraries (Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication, 2011). Indigenous knowledge (IK) are found in public libraries as original artifacts but are likely to appear in the form of photographs, video recordings, and textual descriptions of expressions (i.e dance, song, stories). Nigeria for instance has vast original and contemporaneously viable IK civilization that deserves advancement and marketing to the world as unostentatious but economically viable products.

It is pertinent to note that the uniqueness of indigenous knowledge in Nigeria is increasing in demand to invigorate international knowledge generation and discourse. Humanity conscience is the hallmark of indigenous knowledge philosophy, conceptualizations and constructs. Ironically, Nigeria’s IK constructs and education system are embedded in prodigious epistemology. Alas currently neglected by the inheritors. And we must bear in mind that the IK legacy is imperative for assenting authoritatively Nigerian intellectual identity in the global knowledge fraternity. Nnadozie, Nnadozie, Ogugua, Egwin and Ossai-Onah (2015) sees IK as a specialized body of knowledge in a given locality in order to sustain their existence and overcome the challenges associated with the IK nature or original habitant. Global knowledge Partnership (2005) also noted that IK is the locally owned and adopted knowledge of a community where the community is defined as its location, culture, language or area of interest.

The past decade witness an increasing political interest in public libraries and their role in preservation and shapers of indigenous knowledge. Public library is one of the institutions with the mandate for reaching the overarching goal of reducing human poverty. Hence, UNESCO public library manifesto (1994) describes the public library as the local center of information which provides access to all kinds of knowledge and information. The manifesto further notes that the library services and collections must include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials (Plockey, 2014). The place of IK in promoting teaching, learning, research and intellectual freedom cannot be overstressed, hence public libraries needed to skillfully catalogue, digitize and display IK so that the public can access them. Significant catalyst in the growth of democracy is access to information which enabled citizens to exercise their democratic rights and equip them to play an active role in their society. The public

library has a critical role to play in the nurturing and management of IK to meet the future needs of their patrons.

Academic concern about indigenous knowledge dates back, at least, as far as the first intensive fieldwork by anthropologists, but only in recent years has the possibility of using such knowledge as a basis for development activities been entertained. Some of the best pioneering works on indigenous knowledge at international level can be attributed to the efforts made by scholars like Michael Warren, Paul Richards, David Baker, Michael Howes, Oswald Welner and a host of others. In Nigeria, they include J.S. Oguntoyinbo, A. Faniran, O. Areola, M.A.A. Osunade, David Atte, Oguntunji Titilola, L.T. Ajibade to mention but a few. Their efforts have been geared towards establishing the basis for the utility of indigenous knowledge. Ajibade (2002) and several others have also emphasized the relevance of utilizing indigenous knowledge.

In order to establish the relevance of indigenous knowledge in developmental efforts, several authors have given their observations in several studies. To this end, its relevance can best be appreciated through the presentation of the following examples. Ajibade (2002) citing Howes and Chambers (1979) for instance, observed that indigenous knowledge can be used either to economize on the use of scarce trained scientific manpower, or to extend the range of observations upon which science can draw. To them, instances where this has happened are few, but suggest a considerable potential. Indigenous knowledge is particularly relevant in resource conservation according to Ajibade (1999) because indigenous societies have profound and detailed knowledge of the system and species with which they are in contact for generations.

He submits that indigenous natural resource management techniques are not primitive, destructive or ineffective contrary to the belief of many policy makers and western scientists. They are considered as being sophisticated, scientifically valid, productive and appropriate. This fact is particularly true of indigenous knowledge for the amazing technological advances and organizational skills of homosapiens in the last three centuries, Baba (1994), gave the impression that man had won the context. This is however within his respective culture, if this is the case, and then man's views must be respected in any developmental efforts.

The relevance of indigenous knowledge is further buttressed in the work of Rene Reusen and Jan Johnson (1994) where emphasis is being placed on the need to link modern ideas with the traditional or local ideas. In their view, it is believed that for the development of artisanal fishing port, the government field officers who traditionally deal with document production, statistics, quarrels, licenses, taxes, etc., need to do more to support local initiatives. In other words, they need to have a truly detailed and systematic knowledge of the artisanal fishery ports of the local level particularly in the area of how people work, what the economic producers see as their most important problems and what they would like to do about them.

Ajibade (2002) Cited Pine, et.al. (1992). Mishra (1989) witnessed the use of indigenous knowledge in curing certain diseases in North India; works more slowly but is more thorough and effective than western pharmacology. Modern science has confirmed the veracity of some indigenous knowledge. For instance, Cucurbit leaves have been found (at Iowa State University) to have some chemicals that help to lower cholesterol. The leaves of alliums species (onion, garlic, etc.) have been found to prevent ulcer.

In spite of the overwhelming support for indigenous knowledge globally, there are indications that IK in Nigeria are going into extinction. Sen (2005) is of the view that the scientific community is worried about the loss of bio-diversity of species and ecosystem and the future implications of that for the whole planet is glaring. IFLA (2004) had earlier issued a draft statement of indigenous knowledge acknowledging the disruption of IK throughout history.

The need for the preservation and transmission of IK to future generations and its protection from further erosion calls for a holistic approach. Researchers have shown that there is paucity of documented empirical evidence on the management of indigenous knowledge and the rate at which this class of knowledge are managed by public libraries and also used by the society calls for concern in Delta State. However, the usefulness of IK equally explains the increasing research interest by scholars of diverse background. Therefore empirical studies on management of IK and their rate of use by scholars need to be carried out. Such a study will provide empirical information useful for the management and acquisition of IK in public libraries in Delta State and Nigeria in general.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of indigenous knowledge (IK) available in public library in Delta State?
2. To what extent are public libraries involved in the management of IK?
3. Is library staff given special training to manage IK in public libraries?
4. Is there a section for IK in your public library?
5. What are the challenges faced in the management of IK in public libraries?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. A research is said to be survey when it focuses on a given population parameter when data is collected and analyzed and the information gathered can be generalized (Aina, 2002). This, survey design was considered suitable in order to investigate the management of indigenous knowledge by public libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. The population of the study is one hundred and five (105) public library staff, in different cities, town and villages in Delta state. Professionals' staff is thirty-nine (39) and Para-professionals staff is sixty-six (66) in the public libraries. These are Delta State Library Board staff strength. The questionnaires were distributed through Google form (online).

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the types of IK available in public libraries in Delta State?

Table 1: Availability of indigenous knowledge in public libraries

Types	Available	Not Available
Local drawings	✓	
Local costumes		✓
Local music	✓	
Superstitions (literature)		✓
Literature on local food	✓	
Literature on local festivals	✓	

Types	Available	Not Available
Literature on traditional ceremonies	✓	
Artworks and crafts		✓
Interactions on morals	✓	
Local farm implements		✓
Local midwifery		✓
Interaction on petty trades		✓
Ancient drums		✓
Storytelling hours	✓	
Cultural displays		✓
Literature on local languages		✓
Literature on cultural values		✓

The Table shows available and non- available IK in Delta state library board. Local costumes; superstitions (literature); artworks and crafts; local farm implements; local midwifery; interaction on petty trades and cultural displays are not available in the public libraries in Delta state. Public library is supposed to be the pivot upon which local information and knowledge infrastructure revolves.

Research Question 2: To what extent are public libraries involve in the management of indigenous knowledge?

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage table of the extent to which public libraries manage IK

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High extent	7	6.7
Low extent	49	46.7
Moderate extent	12	11.4
Not involved at all	37	35.2
Total	105	100%

The Table shows that public libraries in Delta state and Nigeria in general have failed to manage indigenous knowledge (IK) for sustainable development. Low extent and not involved at all in the management of indigenous knowledge top the ranking. The implication of this is that public libraries in Delta and Nigeria in general have reduced themselves to the management theory and practice of the developed countries. Hence, little attention is given to the management of indigenous knowledge (local tradition) because they tend to be viewed as primitive and unscientific and hence methods were not developed by public libraries to manage them for sustainable development. Muswazi and Mabawonku in Sarkhel (2016) opined that "management of IK encompasses a set of interrelated activities concerning the identification, collection, codification, documenting, organizing, preservation, transfer, linking, application, dissemination and sharing of knowledge on indigenous community livelihoods and ecosystems, for sustainable development.

Research Question 3: Is library staff given in-service training to manage IK in public library?

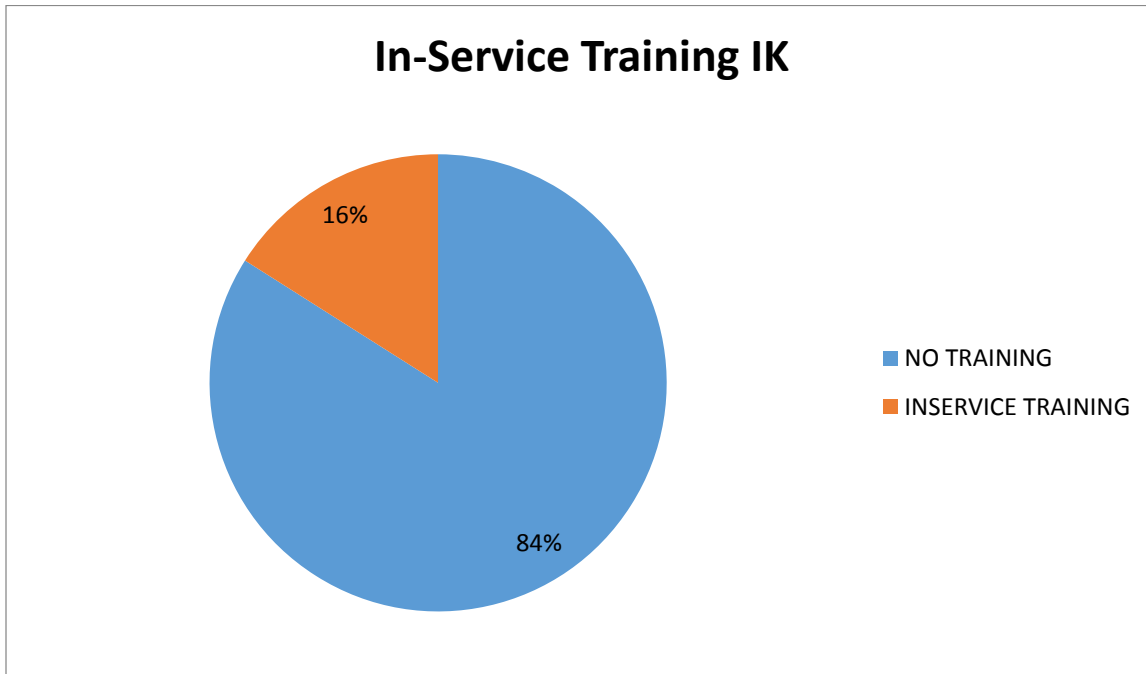


Fig. 1: Chart showing in-service training to manage IK

The chart shows that in-service training on indigenous knowledge management (IKM) in public libraries in Delta state is nothing to write home about. Therefore, activities of IKM which includes identification, collection, codification, documenting, organizing, preservation, transfer, linking, application, dissemination and sharing of knowledge on indigenous community livelihoods and ecosystems, for sustainable development are hampered. Against the background that most components of IK are not easy to reproduce, there are largely unrecorded as they reside in the memories of the gatekeepers who for lack of basic education and training do not have what it takes to harness the potentials of IK. Given the holistic socioeconomic and spiritual dimensions of AIKs, its methods of discovering, knowing and experimentation are largely communitarian and that the mode of transmission is oral and collective (Emeagwali, 2003). It is therefore, clear that these librarians who have no access to in-service training automatically becomes incompetent in the management of IK.

Research Question 4: Is there any section for IK in your library?

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage table showing availability of IK section in public libraries

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Large section for IK	Nil	Nil
Inadequate section	Nil	Nil
No section	105	100
Undecided	Nil	Nil
Total	105	100%

The table shows that there is no section for IKM in Delta state library board. The Western domination of knowledge and marginalization of Africa systems of knowledge continue to be an academic challenge that calls for a comprehensive evaluation, rigorous planning and watchful implementation of policies that ensure the recognition and provisions of space for the local in the existing political, economic, culture, and pedagogical domains (Osman, 2016).

Research Question 5: What are the challenges faced in the management of IK in public libraries in Delta State?

Table 5: Challenges face in management of IK in public libraries

	Frequency	Percentage
Death of respect and appreciation for IK	8	7.6
Verge of extinction	2	2
Implicit nature of IK	9	8.6
Poor funding of public libraries	39	37.1
Negative impact of globalization	11	10.5
Difficulty in replicating IK	5	4.8
Uneven distribution of IK	8	7.6
Librarians attitude towards IK	4	3.8
Poor management	19	18.1
Total	105	100%

The table shows that poor funding, poor management, negative impact of globalization, uneven distribution of IKM, Death of respect and appreciation for IKM and Implicit nature of IKM are the major problems of management of knowledge indigenous in Delta state library board. It can be concluded here that the passive response of public library and information professionals in general posed a serious challenge to the management of IK in Delta state public libraries and Nigeria in general.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The finding of this study revealed that indigenous knowledge is poorly managed in public libraries in Delta state. Public libraries generally have not done much in the management of indigenous knowledge (IK). Though they are aware of the importance of IK in the development of the society, but have failed to map out strategies for the collection, promotion, preservation and management of IK. Other finding showed that they are no in-service training for library staff. However, major obstacles to the management of indigenous knowledge in Delta state public libraries includes poor funding, uneven distribution of IKM, negative impact of globalization, Death of respect and appreciation for IKM and Implicit nature of IKM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should provide funds for the purchase of IK in Delta state public libraries.

2. Librarians should be properly trained on management of IK.
3. Awareness on IK should be created, beside involvements of public libraries as custodians of the knowledge, resourceful references are equally important.
4. It is logical and in consonance with natural justice that IK are well manage to create conditions in which the highest values of IK assist in shaping science and technology policies and encourage benefits sharing for indigenous innovations.
5. Finally, the western-indoctrinated public libraries do not need to change what they usually do but as knowledge generating and disseminating bodies, they are obligated to start learning to think and look differently at what they do.

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