

THE CONCEPT OF IGWEBUIKE IN IGBO KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

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Abstract

Igwebuiké, as a concept in Igbo ideology, is that of strength in numbers, where togetherness in one accord remains the watch word and the spirit of engagement. It aims towards the promotion of a sustainable development and also improvement of economic, social, cultural and political purity within the Igbo-speaking people in comparison with their neighbours of other languages and nationalities. The Igwebuiké philosophy, therefore, becomes the force behind the Igbo indigenous knowledge holders in making their own decisions as it affects their future life endeavours, which define them as a people among others of different cultures. What it implies then is that Igwebuiké application is inherent in self-determination and consistent with socio-cultural and other developmental relativity. Igwebuiké ensures equity and justice in Igbo integration of knowledge through its nature of all hands being on deck.

Keywords: Igwebuiké, Philosophy, Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, Igbo Knowledge

Introduction

According to Posey (1998), there will be nothing ‘new’ if we do not develop new methodologies for dialogue with local knowledge holders. He goes further to say that until indigenous people have political and economic parity with development forces that is only when a positive result will be achieved on indigenous knowledge development.

Looking at the case of Igbo knowledge integration, one can be tempted to ask how indigenous Igbo people can assert their traditional cultural values within their social environment in a way that it will be fair to all concerned. The simple answer to this question is the “**Igwebuiké**” concept.

The concept of “**Igwebuiké**” is a concept that was articulated by Professor Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony. It captures and communicates the Igbo-African world. *Igwebuiké* is the form and symbolic of the Igbo-African mental being and the gateway to Igbo-African philosophy. Beyond the literal understanding of *Igwebuiké* (*Igwe-* number; *bu-is*; *ike-strength*) as “there is strength in number”, it captures the Igbo philosophy of relationality, complementarity and interconnectedness of reality (Kanu 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). It

concatenates Igbo forms, symbolism, signs, media, meaning, anthropologies, universal cosmic truths, functions, semantic powers, physics, phenomena, faculties, and Igbo environ-mentalities, and symbolizes the propositional powers of Igbo knowledge, perception, identity, phenomenism, physics, metaphysics, logic, history of analytic character, speculative mindset and positive provisions for definitions of facts (Kanu 2020).

Parity, in this context, involves equal relations among the indigenous peoples of Igbo extraction, whose knowledge is being integrated with the other worlds, knowing full well that knowledge integration involves the synthesization of multiple knowledge models, or representation into a common one. Knowledge integration has also been studied as the process of incorporating new information into a body of existing knowledge with an interdisciplinary approach (Wikipedia). Integration, therefore, occurs when separate ideas or things are brought together, just like in the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 by Lord Frederick Lugard, the then Governor General of the combined colony of Nigeria.

The *Igwebuiké* spirit of parity is, therefore, seen as the ability of the Igbo indigenous knowledge holders to make autonomous decisions about their future, based on a set of principles derived from their own collective ontology. The Igbo integration of knowledge must be based on people's understanding of the world, rather than from imposed assumptions. Parity of Igbo knowledge integration is inherent in self-determination and consistent with cultural relativity. Parity ensures equity and justice, just like in "*Igwebuiké*", where all hands must be on deck without any pranks.

Igbo Knowledge Integration of Western Education

Western education, no doubt, has come to stay in Igbo cultural milieu. But the issue here is "educational diversification." This is important to meet individual differences as regards interests and abilities. The emphasis here is on specialization.

According to Eliot (1949), education is the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it and enable them to take their part in it. It attempts to pass on to them its culture, including the standards by which it would have them live. In furtherance to the emphasis on education, Okafor (1974) states that education is a process of acculturation by which the individual is helped to attain the maximum activation of his potentialities according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment.

Looking at the two above, one can observe that the *Igwebuike* concept of Igbo knowledge integration has a major role it is already playing. The issue of Western education is at present a collective concern of the Igbos. One can easily observe the community efforts in the establishment of schools and training of individuals. In most Igbo communities, some indigenous people attended various levels of education, through communal efforts, believing that any educated mind among them is a major asset to the community. Through the *Igwebuike* concept, the Igbo communities from 1950s till date still build schools, in order to ensure that Western education does not elude them. They also endeavour to see that their people are educated, by going further to make contributions towards the education of some of their sons and daughters. They as well made earlier donation of lands to the White Missionaries for the establishment of educational institutions, even before the advent of community schools.

That is actually the concept of *Igwebuike* in the Igbo Western education knowledge integration. The “**Igwebuike**” spirit of oneness helped so much in this direction, even till date. Western education is still very important to the majority of the Igbos that the issue of scholarship award is still common among the people, just to make sure that those who cannot afford Western education on their own can benefit from such awards.

Going through studies and researches on “**Igwebuike**” concept of the traditional Igbo attitudes and values with a view to formulating educational procedures responsive to the good in the Igbo background have inescapably brought into sharp focus the importance the Igbos attach to educational realities. They have quite acknowledged the fact that Western education is an integral and prevailing factor among the people.

Igbo Knowledge Integration of Christianity

Christianity is agreeable to Igbo culture – a culture of deep spirituality, maximized religious values and quite theocentric in outlook. This fact was very evident in the early centuries when parts of Igbo land first came in contact with the Christian religion. Christianity, therefore, is an excellent example of what nascent Igbo should incorporate into her cultural fabric.

However, distinction must be made between Christianity as practiced by discrete individuals and groups and Christianity in its essential substance. In the words of Okafor (1974), over the centuries, certain individuals and groups did, in fact, run into behavioural mud water in the practice of Christianity; but still over the

centuries, many individuals and group did succeed in exemplifying in their lives the perfection that was essentially embedded in Christianity. Okafor also goes further in his work to remind us of the fact that, that many do not measure up to the ideal does not remove the validity or the reality of the ideal. In spite of individual failures, Christianity still remains the most civilized of all religions. It remains the religion better than which none can be found.

Looking at its nature, one can observe that Christianity remains that unique religion, which by all means holds the greatest potentialities of meeting up with the dilemmas and challenges of the modern Igbo race. It is so simply because of the fact that Christianity puts into consideration a mysterious combination of the essentials of the traditional Igbo religions and those principles which constitute the badge of civility to contemporary man.

In comparison with the Christian religion, the Igbo traditional religion also accommodates certain Christian doctrines like forgiveness, patience, brotherhood, blessing of the peace-makers and the merciful, kindness, malice towards none, charity, etc. All these and others are agreeable to the Igbo man. They not only touch at the heart of the traditional Igbo religion but also reveal any imperfections that might be present in them.

The Igbo man, in his “**Igwebuiké**” spirit, accepted the Christian religion holistically and has been making concerted efforts to enroute Christianity into the cultural norms of the Igbos. This is being achieved through communal efforts, just like in the case of Western education. The Igbo communities have invested much in the building and establishment of churches of different denominations, with a good number of Igbo sons and daughters going into various religious professions. Prayer itself has become a central survival strategy of the Igbo people.

Conclusion

It will be totally wrong and a great social misgiving for one to think that there is nothing good, admirable or worth preserving in the Igbo of the old. There are a lot of things that are quite good, highly admirable, and worthy to be preserved in the Igbo traditional knowledge norms. Same is also applicable to that of the other worlds. Every group of people is naturally endowed or structured with some characteristic assets and blessing. Taking into consideration the fact that humans are structured as a community of brotherhood, which makes the assets of any sector of humanity a common property for all to share. As such, there must be a kind of unity in diversity. Just as Whitehead (1982) states that a diversification

among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the odyssey of human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies; they are god-sends. Whitehead goes further to explain that men require of their neighbours something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention and something great enough to command admiration.

As a result of speedy communication of development in these contemporary times, the world has been brought closer, together than it has ever witnessed. This has also made the issue of knowledge integration quite imperative. One sector of the global arrangement, therefore, must influence another socially, politically and economically, as well as in their different cultural norms.

In a situation like these, the Igbos, propelled by their “**Igwebuike**” philosophy, need a proper integration of their knowledge with other nationalities of the world. They are expected to conform to what Okafor (1974) described as judicious selective integration of culture. The old norms of knowledge must be treated with respect, as a legacy for the newer ideas. But it must also be refined, given new meaning, expression and direction. Anything undesirable in the old knowledge must be dropped as history of the old, so as to pave way for the new normal.

To cope with the present challenges, the Igbos must approach their plan of action with every atom of definition. They should not allow the mystical past to conscript them, nor allow themselves to be consumed by the indecision of the present. They should be clear about the present situation, and avoid building castles in the air. In the best “**Igwebuike**” team spirit, the Igbo should collectively be realistically guided in their cultural spectrum.

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