

Indigenous Knowledge Preservation in Nigeria, An Outlook of Public Libraries' Efforts in Kwara State

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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge which has been passed from generation to generation orally is in danger of being lost, unless it is documented formally and preserved. This study examines the preservation of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in Kwara State. The study has generated four research questions and it has adopted survey research design. The population includes 202 staffs of public libraries in Kwara State. Total enumeration sampling was used. The study used self-structured questionnaire as a tool for data collection and frequency counts tables and simple percentages mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The study has found out that indigenous knowledge materials available in the libraries are of local agriculture, traditional medicine, religion and health care, while others like conflict resolution, local entertainments, housing and traditional security system are not as copiously available and there are lapses in the preservation methods. The study recommends that government should make funds available for the running of the public libraries and the libraries should cooperate and work closely with their host communities, most especially the indigenous knowledge practitioners who are custodians of unpublished records.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Public library, Preservation, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Indigenous Knowledge {IK} is the native knowledge of a people in a given community that is unique to them, generated and transmitted by them overtime in an effort to cope with their environment {Nduka and Oyelude, 2019}. However, IK has become an accepted term which includes the expressions, practices, beliefs, understandings, insights and experiences of indigenous groups generated over centuries of profound interactions with a particular territory (Grey, 2016). IK is the innovation and practice of rural communities around the world. In addition, it is developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and the environment. IK deals with total facts that are known or learned from experience or acquired through observation and study and handed down from generation to generation (Adegboyega, 2009). The indigenous people of the world possess an immense knowledge of their environment, based on centuries of living close to nature. Living in and from the richness and variety of complex ecosystem, they have an understanding of properties and animals, the functioning of ecosystem and the techniques for using and managing them.

IK is culture-based and unique to the people belonging to that particular culture. This view is buttressed by the World Bank (2009) observation that the corpus of knowledge and skills that are embedded in a society's culture and unique to it constitute its IK. IK is to be constructed as a coherent entity and, most importantly, significantly different from "western" knowledge. Therefore, in this information age, the preservation of IK has become important because of its compatibility with the preservation of local environment and sustained communities. IK has gained wider acceptance in the present global society and it has generated a lot of concern on the need to preserve and conserve it for the generations yet unborn.

Nakata and Langton (2005) contend that indigenous people become generous in sharing their knowledge resource with libraries and the libraries too must maintain the momentum. This is because many libraries recognize indigenous knowledge as an important source of developmental information. These constitute natural resources, indispensable to the present and future generations. Any loss of such materials is simply irreplaceable hence its preservation becomes not only an academic commitment but also a moral responsibility for library staff.

Libraries are repository of knowledge and cultural heritage. They hold diverse areas of knowledge and aspects of human endeavor both in print-books, journals, atlas and non-print materials-audio-visual, drawings, paintings, records and manuscripts. Such holdings include documentary resources which, consist of mainly replicas of indigenous peoples' culture as depicted by both indigenous and foreign observers. The study of culture is specifically relevant to public libraries because there has been significant restructuring of these institutions, particularly with respect

to the span and scope of services offered (Salihu, 2012). A key function of the public library is the dissemination of its resources of knowledge to serve its clientele. Part of the mandate of public libraries is to document and preserve the cultural heritage of the nation, which includes IK materials (Ogbonna, 2021).

Statement of the problem

Nigeria is going through many changes with the hope of advancing her developmental initiatives to provide better living condition to its inhabitants. Many traditional, cultural and customary resources are being lost due to lack of preservation and general access to IK, causing cultural gaps between generations and denying the continent of the power and knowledge that it has developed for centuries. Some of these IKs are artifacts while others are in oral form. In whatever form they appear, information about them is vital. Those in oral form are transmitted orally from one generation to another in order to keep communal ethics alive. However, because of their orality, some of the IKs are on the verge of extinction. They are unorganized, unkept and in a state of disuse which are susceptible to being damage and lost.

Linked to this is the fact that the possible loss and extinction of the IK would create IK vacuum for present and future generations, and put them in ignorance of their historical past, in the form of cultural values and traditions.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara State. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out the IK materials available in public libraries in Kwara State;
2. investigate the methods adopted in preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara State;
3. identify the challenges in preservation of IK in public libraries.

Research Questions

In order to guide the study, the following research questions were used for the study.

1. What are the IK materials available in public libraries in Kwara State?
2. What are the methods adopted in the preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara state?
3. What are the challenges of the preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara?

Concept of indigenous knowledge

IK contrasts, with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. Anaeto et al (2013) opine that IK is a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generation of living in close contact with nature and such evolves in the local environment and adapted to the requirement and conditions of local people. IK appears mainly in the form of their value, belief, myth, taboo and superstition. As pointed by Adesiji et al (2014) most indigenous people have traditional songs, stories, legends, dreams, village meetings, taboos, methods and practices as means of transmitting specific human elements from generation to generation. Ugboma (2014) opine that the practice of IK is central to Africa's development in all ramifications. This implies that these traditional practices manifest in all peoples and cultures across the world. Values as a form of IK encapsulates what the people consider as right or wrong, thereby indicating what is important or otherwise to them (Das gupta & Saha, 2009).

Belief is another form of IK, belief propagates through society as statements or propositions are accepted by the recipients, often as the result of a communicative act. Pouring libations to appease the gods, makings sacrifices before the commencement of each farming season and the creation of totems. Another aspect of beliefs as narrated by Oluwaseun (2017) is on the issues of python. Eastern Nigeria worships python to the extent that if killed mistakenly by someone or not, the wrath of the community, where the incident takes place is always brought on the person. Such person who commits the crime is compelled to give the snake a befitting burial like that of human being.

Magni (2016) has indentified taboos as another form of IK. A taboo, according to Hornby (2010), is a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular things. Obi (2010) views taboo as a behaviour which members of a particular community finds unacceptable because they may see such as offensive or embarrassing. To him, the taboos that run through communities of the world are incest and murder. Again, amongst the Igbo ethnic group, it is a taboo for a woman to break kola nut when there is a man in the setting.

Perseveration of Indigenous Knowledge

According to Warren (2012), the loss of IK will impoverish society because just as the world needs genetic diversity of species, it needs diversity of knowledge system. The rapid changes in the way of life of local communities has largely accounted for the loss of the IK. Younger generations underestimate the utility of IK systems because of the influence of modern technology. Modern projects cannot offer sustainable solutions to local problems without integrating local knowledge (Warren, 2011). To ignore people's knowledge is almost to ensure failure in

development. The use of IK is now considered one of the cornerstones that can guarantee the survival of the economics of the developing world in the wake of scarce resources and reduced donor funding. As Atte (2019) rightly notes in the face of dwindling resources available to African countries, even the richest and most benefiting governments cannot provide all the needs of the people. It has been suggested that IK and the technical expertise developed their form, which can become vital tools for rural development. Since IK is essential to development, it must be gathered, organized and disseminated in the same systematic way as Western knowledge. The main challenges to the management and preservation of IK are issues related to methodology, access, intellectual property rights, media and formats in which to preserve it. Underlying these challenges is the question as to whether to use the Western paradigm for collecting and preserving IK or not.

The merits and demerits of the debate surrounding the methodologies of preserving IK are however beyond the scope of this discussion. In any case, library and information professionals tend to organize what has already been collected. Collectors of IK and designers of knowledge management systems have demonstrated that knowledge neither eludes nor defies cognitive narratives. It is important that the IK should be preserved and integrated into existing knowledge management systems for the benefit of the society.

Methods of Preserving IK

In Nigeria, IK preservation is done by recordings interviews of resources person and create microfilm records while camera is used to capture indigenous information and people (Anyira, Onoriode & Nwabueze, 2010). In some notable communities in Nigeria, indigenous knowledge has been transferred “from one generation to another through ancient drums, songs, and storytelling”(Christopher, 2015). According to Okore, Ekere, Eke (2009) indigenous knowledge preservation methods include documentation, digitization, video recording, and providing internet access.

Okore, Ekere, Eke (2009) and Christopher (2015) opine that libraries can facilitate preservation and promotion of IK in many ways for its increased accessibility including documenting IK stories by recording into audio tapes and videos, to publish IK into books or journal materials that cannot be preserved through documentation, which can be converted into artefacts to be preserved. Libraries can also provide a current awareness service through mass education, where sons and daughters of a community can be aware of their forefathers' knowledge.

Libraries can create an environment for face-to-face forums. For example, organize talk-shows involving traditional rulers, elderly people and professionals in various vocations from different subject-areas. Information collected during these

talks can be edited and be made available in videos, CDs or DVD. Libraries can also sponsor competitions on documentary of indigenous technology, traditional songs and cultural attire. Entries can be made in audio, video or print format and this collection of IK made during such activities could be processed and made accessible to users of the library.

Libraries can invite adults to tell stories to children about their community in the library to document it (Okore, Ekere, Eke 2009 ; Christopher, 2015). Thus, there are several techniques; audio-tapes, CDs, books, journals, artefacts, talks-shows, story –telling and most recent web-based platforms, that can be used and are already being used by many libraries in order to capture, preserve and make IK more accessible.

Sources of Indigenous Knowledge

In tracing the sources of IK, old people must generally be mentioned. Elders observe experiment and amass unique knowledge in the course of their lifetime. They are repertoire of experiences and wisdom in different areas of human behaviour. Knowledge of morals, local midwifery techniques and culinary skills reside in some wizened old women in rural communities. For instance, an example cited by the World Bank (2009) on indigenous postpartum, maternal and child health care rites in Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria stated that during a four-week period after birth called “Omugwo” the mother and the child are secluded and relieved of all other chores. They are cared for by the grandmother of the new born. The new mother is given a stimulating hot soup made with dried fish, meat, yam, plenty of pepper and a special herbal seasoning called “Udah” which makes the uterus contracts and thus helps in expelling blood clots. The diet helps to restore blood lost during childbirth, restores energy, facilitates the healing of wounds, restores normal bodily functions and promotes lactation. For a first time mother, the time is spent learning parental and housekeeping practices from her mother.

Interestingly, Abah et al (2015) observes that it is some of this deep-rooted IK in health care that accounts for the clamour for supremacy between orthodox and unorthodox medicine. They also note that some aspects of IK about medicine have been adapted and refined by orthodox doctors, scientists, pharmacists and pharmaceutical companies to produce synthetic drugs. Thus, they argue that with such records of effectiveness of the traditional health care system which has relied solely on the IK will only be wise for the western world to seek synergy with the existing knowledge rather than operating in isolation IK can be sourced or obtained from any knowledgeable community member. The town crier and palace officials are privy to certain classified information and this makes them very important sources of IK (Obi, 2010). Other sources include musicians, extension workers,

head-masters and teachers of local schools, the local clergies, herbalist/native healers (including traditional bone setters), craftsmen, petty-traders, fishermen, village wine tappers and labourers.

Challenges Confronting the Preservation of IK in Libraries

According to Lawas and Luning (2006), the collection of IK is laborious, time-consuming and costly. Thus, proper storage and management must be ensured if the information is to be made available and accessible for the benefit of humankind. For instance, as a result of inadequate management, most of the indigenous information accumulated by colonial district officers and early missionaries cannot be located in many archival institutions in Africa. The major challenges to the preservation of IK identified by which collection development policies, accessibility, storage and preservation media, and intellectual property rights.

National policies are essential to the documentation of IK and the lack of these policies remains a challenge to Nigeria. In some other countries, centres for IK have been established and networks have been more intensified, e.g. the Centre for IK for Agriculture and Rural Development of Iowa State University, USA, and the National Research Council of South Africa. So far, Nigeria is yet to provide an enabling environment for IK system documentation and communication to thrive. Other factors that affect IK in libraries in Nigeria include but are not limited to the following: The presence of a handful of experienced and qualified documentalists in the field of IK in Nigeria has been a serious impediment in the exploitation of the potential of IK.

Soh and Omar (2012) have observed that abstracting is tedious and not many people may be interested in working in that department. If a qualified scientist is employed to do this job, he needs to be given additional training as a documentalist. For instance, if a librarian-documentalist is employed in this job, he needs to be encouraged to increase the basic knowledge relevant to the subject area so that he would be familiar with the practices and technical language in that particular field.

Method

Survey research method is used and the population are the staffs of public libraries in Kwara State. The public libraries include: Kwara State Library Board, 91, National library, 39, Afolayan Memorial library, 9, Mustapha Akanbi library, 15, Offa Township Library, 14, Tunde Idiagbon Library, 21 and Shola Saraki library, 13, staffs and the total number is 202. Total enumeration sampling is used and the study has used self-structured questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The questions are divided into four (4) sections, which include section A: demographic information of

the respondents. Item in sections B to F used a four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Tables 1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Gender	Male	125	61.88
		Female	77	38.11
2	Marital Status	Single	4	1.98
		Married	198	98.01
3	Age	20-30	28	13.86
		31-41	83	41.09
4	Education Qualification	SSCE	8	3.96
		OND/NCE	125	61.88
		HND/B.Sc./BA/BLIS	48	23.76
		M.Sc./MLIS	21	10.40
5	Years of Experience	0-5yrs	121	59.90
		6-10yrs	52	25.74
		11-20yrs	20	09.90
		21-yrs above	9	04.46

Source: Author's Field Work, (2021)

Table 1 shows that 61.88% are male and 38.11 are female. This is against the notion that librarianship is a female profession. 98.01% of the respondents are married, and 1.98% are single. Distribution by age shows 31.86% are between the ages of 20-30yrs, 41.09% are between 31-41yrs, and 45.05% are 42yrs above. Regarding the educational qualifications of the respondents, 3.96 are holders of SSCE, 61.88 are holders of OND/NCE, 23.76% are HND/BSC/BA/BLIS. It also shows that 10.40% are holders of Masters degree. This shows that most of the staffs have lower qualifications. The result also reveals that about 60% of the respondent have spent less than 5 years in the library while 25.74% have spent less than 10 years, 9.90% have spent less than 20years and 4.46% have spent less than 30 years. This implies that members of staff in the public libraries in Kwara State are young in the profession.

R Question One: What IK materials are available in your library?

Table 2: IK materials available in the library

S/N	Materials	SA %	A %	D %	SD %
1	Material on local agriculture are available in our library	121(59.90)	53 (25.74)	9 (4.46)	20 (9.90)
2	Conflict resolution materials are available in our library	8 (3.96)	21(10.40)	48(23.76)	125(61.88)
3	Materials on traditional economy are available in our library	84 (41.58)	81 (40.09)	7(3.47)	30(14.85)
4	Materials on local entertainment are available in our library	49(24.26)	50(24.75)	51(25.25)	52(25.74)
5	Materials on IK games and sports are available in our library	47(23.27)	48(23.76)	53(26.24)	54(26.73)
6	Materials on traditional housing are available in our library	7(3.47)	30(14.85)	81(40.09)	84(41.58)
7	Materials on medicine and health care are available in the library	124(61.38)	48(23.76)	21(10.40)	89(3.69)
8	Materials on traditional religions are available in our library	54(26.73)	53(26.24)	47(23.27)	48(23.76)
9	Materials on traditional security are available in our library	49(24.26)	50(24.75)	51(25.25)	52.(25.74)

Source: Author's Field Work,(2021)

Table 2 shows that 85.64% agree that materials on local agriculture are available in their libraries, 14.30% disagree. 14.09% disagree that conflict resolution materials are available in their libraries, 85.63% agree. It becomes evident from the table that 81.67% agree that there are materials on traditional economy in the libraries while 18.32% disagree. Similarly, 49.01% agree that materials on local entertainments are available in the libraries and 59.99% disagree. 47.03% agree that there are materials on the indigenous games and sports in the libraries while 52.97% disagree. Also, 18.32% agree that materials on traditional housing are available in the libraries while 81.67% disagree.

Furthermore, 84% agree that IK materials on medicine and health care are available in the libraries and 14.09% disagree. 52.79% that IK materials on religion are available in the libraries while 47.03% disagree. 49.01% of the respondents agree that there are materials on local security in the libraries and 50.99% disagree. The finding implies that there are more materials on agriculture, medicine and health-care, but materials on traditional housing are found to be low in quantity in the public libraries.

R Question Two: What are the practices adopted in the preservation of IK materials in public libraries?

Table 3: Practices adopted in the libraries to preserve IK

Materials	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Protect intellectual property rights	54(26.73)	53(26.24)	47(23.27)	48.(23.76)	2.56	1.124
Record IK materials	53(26.24)	54(26.72)	47(23.27)	48(23.76)	2.52	1.119
There is a section for IK collection	52(25.74)	51(25.25)	50(24.75)	49(24.26)	2.52	1.121
Create microfilm records of IK materials	49(24.26)	50(24.75)	51(25.25)	52(25.74)	2.48	1.121
Make the communities aware of the values of IK	20(9.90)	9(4.46)	52(25.74)	121(59.90)	1.64	.958
Converts some materials on IK in artifacts	8(39.96)	21(10.40)	48(23.76)	125(61.88)	1.54	.834
Records interviews of resources person	9(4.46)	00	72(35.64)	121(59.90)	1.49	.721
Published IK in books or journals	00	00	81(40.10)	121(59.90)	1.40	.491

Source: Author's Field Work (2021)

Table 3 shows that 52.97% of the respondents agree that the libraries protect intellectual property rights of IK materials while 47.03% disagree. It is also revealed that in the table that 52.92% disagree that the libraries record IK materials and 47.03% disagree. Similarly, 50.99% of the respondents agree that there are sections in the libraries that are for materials collection while 49.01% disagree. 49.01% of the respondents agree that the libraries create microfilm records of IK materials, 50.99% disagree. Also, 14.01% of the respondents agree that the libraries make the communities aware of the value of the IK materials, 85.64% disagree

Furthermore, 50.36% of the respondents agree that libraries convert some materials on IK in artefact, 85.64% disagree. 4.46% of the respondents agree that libraries record interviews of resource persons while 95.54% of the respondents disagree. 99.93% of the respondents disagree that the IK materials are published in books or journals. It can be deduced from table 5.5 that the practices adopted to preserve IK in the public libraries in Kwara state are protected of intellectual property rights (mean=2.52), and creating microfilm records of IK materials (mean=2.48).

Importance to it, 85.64% of the respondents strongly agree that IK materials are in tacit form and very difficult to process, 14.36% strongly disagree. 99.55% of the respondents strongly agree that electricity is among the major problems in the libraries and none of the respondents disagree with it.

Furthermore, 85.64% of the respondents strongly agree that there is a lack of support from the communities, 14.36% strongly disagree. 95.05% of the respondents strongly agree that lack of fund hinders preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara state, 4.46% strongly disagree. It implies that there is a lack of fund in running of all the libraries. Furthermore, 57.41% lack of skilled personnel in the preservation of IK in public libraries in Kwara state, 43.06% strongly disagree. Similarly, 54.95% of the respondents strongly agree that there is a lack of awareness on the preservation of IK materials, and 45.05% strongly disagree. This implies that there is lack of awareness on both the libraries and the general public. 85.46% of the respondents strongly disagree that language barriers is a challenge in preservation of IK materials. 56.96% of the respondents strongly agree that preservation of IK is time consuming, 43.06% strongly disagree.

However, 55.92% of the respondents agree that some IK materials possess spirits, 43.56% strongly disagree. It is evident as shown in the Table that preservation of IK materials in the public libraries in Kwara State faces many challenges.

Discussion of Findings

The study has found out that IK materials on local agriculture, traditional medicine, health care and traditional religion are available in the public libraries but others like Conflicts resolution, local entertainments, games and sports, housing and traditional Security systems are not in good quantity. This agrees with the findings of Warren (2012) who reports that IK contributes significantly to crop production of farmers. Magni (2016) also supports that IK has played a vital role in agriculture, animal and human health. The findings of the study also reveal that there are lapses in the preservation practices as majority of respondents have disagreed with most of the practices. It has also been discovered that IK is not effectively preserved in public libraries. The findings agree with the submission of Magni (2016) that libraries have not been particularly active in managing IK. The findings also support the findings of Atte (2009) who has undertaken a study of different way of knowing tool and strategies for managing IK. He has found out that information professionals work with indigenous communities to develop unique solutions that meet local needs. The study has established that inadequately trained-staff (skilled personnel), linguistic problem/language, language barrier are some of the severe challenges that influence IK preservation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that IK is represented in the libraries, but librarians make no attempt to put into a cultural context indigenous claims for greater

preservation of IK. Cultural materials lay only superficial angles of core objectives of the public libraries, intellectual freedom, diffusion of knowledge, research and learning and preservation of cultural heritage. The preservation of IK resources leaves much to be desired. The study has uncovered the deplorable state of some of the materials in libraries. The preservation has not received the needed attention it deserves. It wallows in pool of challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parent institutions should make enough funds for the running of the public libraries.
2. Libraries should cooperate, and work closely, with their host communities, most especially the IK practitioners, who are custodians of unpublished records.
3. The management board of the libraries should mandate the librarians, working in public libraries to acquire the necessary skills and training to assist in the collection, documentation and the preservation of IK in their respective communities.

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