

MANAGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: A CASE STUDY OF ZIK RESEARCH CENTRE IN FESTUS AGHAGBO NWAKO LIBRARY.

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Abstract

The concept of indigenous knowledge aptly applies in Zik Research Centre of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library. This paper x rayed the life and times of Rt. Hon. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe whose name the university bears. It also highlights the development, organization, prospects and challenges of the Zik Research Centre. Zik Research Centre is still in its developmental stage. The Centre has however made considerable effort to acquire several print materials on Zik's belief and skills for promoting indigenous knowledge. These include five books written by him and fifteen books written about him. The collection of the Centre also include newspapers, journal articles and monographs on and about Zik of Africa. The Centre hopes to extend its search to making comprehensive acquisition of both audiovisual materials and transcripts of his numerous interviews. Strategies of how to overcome the challenges of the Centre were made.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Zik Research Centre, Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library.*

Introduction

Prior to the advent of printing with machines, people relied heavily on indigenous knowledge to record human knowledge and activities, which in turn enabled them to live in harmony among themselves as well as within their environments. Indigenous knowledge is as old as man. It is unique in every society and preserved in the memory and practices of each people. It is a body of knowledge owned by a community and it shapes and influences the way of life of members of such community.

One of the foremost African believer and promoter of indigenous knowledge is Rt. Hon. Dr. Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first Nigerian President (1904-1996). Zik of Africa as he is popularly called has been described as multi-talented. He was an erudite scholar, boxer, athlete, orator, seasoned journalist and quintessential politician. He was also described as a national and a reputable African socio-political

philosopher. Zik proposed and copiously canvassed for mental emancipation of the African, heavily criticizing the curriculum of colonial education which he believed undermined the African personality.

In recognition of Zik's contributions and to continue to promote the concept of indigenous knowledge, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, a public university in Nigeria established in 1991, created the Zik's Research Centre as functional part of the Aghagbo Nwako University Library. The centre is charged with the responsibility of collecting and preserving all documents written on and related to the life and contributions of Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Concept of Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

Iyoro and Ogungbo (2013) viewed IK as being unique in every society and usually stored in the memory and practices of the people. *IK* can be seen as

the totality of a people's knowledge transmitted from generation to generation. It is an accumulation of experiences passed down from one period to another within a given society and spans the totality of human knowledge. It is the knowledge that an indigenous community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. Masango (2010) defined *IK* as the totality of all knowledge and practices established on past experiences and observations that is held and used by people. It is knowledge held by the local people gained and transmitted informally, usually by oral rendition. This knowledge includes practical aspects of life and culture such as farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting and many others.

Moahi (2004) further define *IK* as a body of knowledge belonging to communities or ethnic groups, shaped by their culture, traditions and way of life. *IK* is homegrown knowledge that enables communities to make sense of who they are and to interact with their environment in ways that sustain life. It is knowledge that arises from life experiences and passed down from generation to generation through word of mouth in the form of folklore, idioms, proverbs, songs, stories, legends, laws, rites of passage and rituals. Moahi stated that *IK* covers the broad spectrum of life. It thus follows that there are different types of *IK* ranging from peoples' belief, medicine, arts and crafts and so on.

IK is essentially tacit. Nonaka (2006) classified knowledge as being explicit and tacit. Explicit

knowledge is expressed in formal and systematic language and shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, specifications, manuals and others. Tacit knowledge on the other hand, is highly personal and hard to formalize as it is deeply rooted in actions, procedures, routines, commitments, ideals, value and emotions. *IK* being tacit knowledge, resides in peoples' memory hence it is somewhat difficult to record, transfer and disseminate. Moahi (2004) outlined the unique characteristics of *IK* as follows:

- It is **community owned**. No single individual owns it because it is a product of the culture, tradition and way of life of a community.
- It is usually **passed orally from generation to generation**. It is not codified or documented anywhere except in the minds of the community and the community's knowledge custodians such as chiefs, traditional doctors, rainmakers and so on.
- It has a **potential to provide economic returns** either to the community that owns it or to the individuals who may have taken it away from the community for meager economic gain or through some other fraudulent means. It is thus a very valuable resource for the community.

Indigenous knowledge is crucial for subsistence and survival and is generally based on accumulations of empirical observations and interactions with the environment. World Bank (1998) observed that *IK* contrasts with the international knowledge system

generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local level decision-making in agriculture, healthcare, food preparation, education, natural resource management and a host of other activities in rural communities.

IK is documented in people's memory, practices and activities. It is embedded in cultural values, customs and traditions. Custodians of IK are mostly elders, traditional rulers, professionals in various vocations, freedom fighters, and activists such as Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

The Legend Called Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904- 1996)

Rt. Hon. Dr Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik of Africa), the Owelle of Onitsha, was the first Premier of former Eastern Region, first Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the first indigenous President of the Nigerian Senate, the first Governor-general of independent Nigeria, the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and a Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (G.C.F.R.). He was born in Zungeru, Niger State (Northern Nigeria) on 16th November 1904 to the family of Obededom Chukwuemeka and Chinwe Ogbenyeanu Azikiwe. Both parents were Igbo, indigenes of Onitsha, in the present Anambra State, South- Eastern Nigeria. The young Nnamdi lived the first eight years of his life (1904-1912) in Zungeru, where he learnt and became conversant with the Hausa language, which shaped his life and more importantly imbibed in him tolerance for differing views and culture from tender age. He had his primary and secondary education at Church

Missionary Society Central School, Onitsha, and Methodist Boy's High School Lagos respectively. He proceeded to the United States of America for his tertiary education. While in America, he studied in various institutions of higher learning. The degrees he obtained include:

- Certificate in Law from Lassalle Extension University, Chicago (1927).
- Bachelor of Arts' degree (B.A) in Political Science at Lincoln University (1930).
- Master of Arts (M.A) degree in Religion and Philosophy at Lincoln University (1931).
- Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Anthropology and Political Science at University of Pennsylvania (1933).
- Certificate in Journalism from Columbia University.

He registered for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science at Columbia University in 1934 but was unable to complete the programme due to financial constraints (Ogene, 1996). It was in recognition of his brilliant academic performances that he was elected a member of many learned associations. They include the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Royal Economic Society, the American Ethnological Society, the American Political Science Association and the Institute of Journalism. He was also elected to the fellowship of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain. Many universities awarded Zik honorary doctorate degrees among them are: Howard, Lincoln and Columbia

Universities (all in United States of America), University of Liberia, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Lagos.

Igwe (2015) noted that Zik was a public figure for virtually the period of his human existence. He was a many-sided and talented personality. He was an erudite scholar, a boxer, an athlete, an orator, a political scientist, a seasoned journalist, a career politician, a widely-acclaimed national, a statesman and a reputable African socio-political philosopher. He could speak the three (3) major Nigerian languages namely; Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Igwe (1992) observed that Zik's upbringing exposed him to various cultures and made him to appreciate that each culture has something valuable to offer.

As a result, Zik is a beholder of indigenous knowledge. Many ardent followers of Zik, regarded him as the Great Zik of Africa, who manifested boldness in the pursuit of justice on any course he deemed to be right. As such he was the father of African independence who was endowed with the political Pan-Africanist vision (Achebe, 2012). The term "Pan Africanism" according to Esedebe (1989) denotes a situation in which the whole of the African Continent is free from the shackles of foreign domination with its leaders free to plan for the orderly progress and welfare of its inhabitants. Zik's Pan-African views impacted positively on many people in different parts of Africa during the anti-colonial struggles across Africa. It is believed that the intellectual works of Zik influenced some other Pan-Africanists such as Julius Nyerere of

Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah (the first president and father of Ghanaian independence), The five main foci of Zik's philosophy of New Africa are: Spiritual Balance, Social Regeneration, Economic Determinism, Mental Emancipation and Political Resorgimento or resurgence (Azikiwe, 1970).

With particular emphasis on mental emancipation, Igwe (2015) observed that Zik criticized the curriculum of colonial education which he believed undermined the African personality. This is against the backdrop of the Euro-centric view of Africa as barbaric, uncivilized, and undeveloped; among others; as such the colonial governments in Africa used the machinery of colonial education to impress these sentiments. Ofoegbu (1980) posits that Zik insisted on the need to respect human dignity, which invariably guarantees basic human freedom, including full emancipation. Mental emancipation according to Azikiwe (1970) means freeing of the mind from the bogey of ignorance, misinformation and superstition which are responsible for such psychological states as inferiority complex, lack of self-confidence and hopeless dependence evident in Africa of Zik's time. Zik suggested that mental emancipation can be achieved through a broad educational training which would teach the African youth to have faith in his ability to believe that he is equal to the people of other races of mankind, mentally and physically. Mental emancipation entails a re-education to counter the "mis-education" which the imperialist educational policies had brought to

colonial societies. Zik believed that the education of Africans has been a problem. This is due to the fact that the type of training which the average African receives is in conflict with his indigenous knowledge and tends to alienate him from his indigenous environment. This new training championed by the imperialist is alien and imparts wrong values to them. Zik believed in the dissemination of light to his people, leaving them to find their ways.

Uwechue (1996) described Zik as foremost Nigerian pioneering newspaper proprietor and journalist. His career in journalism started as editor –in chief of *The African Morning Post*, a daily newspaper in Gold Coast then. Zik was prosecuted for sedition by the colonial administration with the writer of an article titled “Has Africa a God” published on Friday, May 15, 1936 edition of the newspaper. The fallout from the incident was a contributory factor to the return of Zik to Nigeria in 1937. On his return to Nigeria, Zik founded *The West African Pilot*, published in Lagos, which he was editor- in- chief from 1937 to 1945. He was also the Managing Director of Zik Press Limited. Zik Press printed and published the following newspapers: *West African Pilot* (Lagos), *Eastern Guardian* (Port Harcourt), *Nigerian Spokesman* (Onitsha), *Southern Nigerian Defender* (Ibadan), *Daily Comet* (Kano), and *Eastern Sentinel* (Enugu), among others.

Zik was not only a true African nationalist but also played a great role in Nigerian politics from the decolonization era to post- independence period. Sule (1997) observed that many scholars and commentators

share the view that Zik was the foremost Nigerian nationalist, especially with his formation of the first true nationalist party in Nigeria, the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC). NCNC also had a training ground at Yaba. Apart from training of some members of the youth wing of the NCNC, Zik extended his hand of followership to his contemporaries such as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi to send their youth for political training. Zik, in all his years of involvement in Nigerian politics was a true patriot and nationalist. He was a major participant in Nigeria's politics for the greater part of his life. During those decades in politics he was committed to the survival of Nigeria as a nation-state.

As a result of bad governance in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, Zik felt that a type of government that could suit the African situation was what he called neo-welfarism; a system combining the good elements of the three popular socio-political ideologies namely capitalism, socialism and welfarism. It is a socio-economic matrix influenced by indigenous African mores (Azikiwe, 1980). Igwe (2015) believes that, Zik used the indigenous African culture of practical work and cohesion to fashion out his neo-welfarist economic ideology based on his understanding of indigenous pre-colonial African economies that flourished and were independent of external influence. Nnamdi Azikiwe was highly influenced by the educational system in the United States, and he inspired and assisted many Nigerians to study in

higher educational institutions in the United States. Among those assisted by Zik to study in the United States according to Ogbeidi (1997) were Bolaji Macarthy, Eyo Ita, Asuquo Idiong, Nwafor Orizu, Mbonu Ojike, Nnodu Okongwu, George Mbadiwe, Ozumba Mbadiwe, Reuben O. Ikejiani; among many others who followed Zik's footsteps to acquire American education. His dream for the establishment of a university in Nigeria materialized when he was the premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The first truly indigenous university in Nigeria, the handiwork of Zik, was University of Nigeria, Nsukka. It was inaugurated on October 7, 1960. The University of Nigeria Nsukka, with the motto "To Restore the Dignity of Man" expressed his view that the colonial situation in Africa, by its denial of political, economic and cultural freedom negated human dignity. This summarizes Zik's view on education, that it should be used to uplift man and his world view.

The Great Zik of Africa has joined his ancestors, but he remains one of the best intellectual and proactive leaders ever produced by Africa in the twentieth century. As a result of his contributions to nation building, the Nigerian government has named many institutions and physical structures after him among them are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria was established as an offshoot of the defunct Anambra State University of Technology (ASUTECH). ASUTECH was a state-owned multi-campus university, with

campuses in Abakaliki, Awka, Enugu and Nnewi. In 1991, following the splitting of the old Anambra State into Anambra and Enugu States, the Awka and Nnewi campuses of the former ASUTECH became Anambra State University, owned by the new Anambra State government. Later on, progressive events culminating in the approval by the Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe that the university should be named after him at the request of the then state government. This led to the renaming of the university as Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK). On November 26th 1991, the university was taken over by the Federal Government of Nigeria (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, 2011). It is worthy to note that Zik, during his lifetime did not allow any other university to be named after him except this university even when he founded University Nigeria Nsukka. In order to highlight and preserve the legacies of Zik in the University, the present University Librarian, Rev'd Professor Obiora Nwosu created Zik's Research Centre as a department in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Awka in August, 2015.

Zik Research Centre, in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Research centre generally have a narrower scope of research interest. They are typically focused on a specific issue, project or policy and usually sponsored by individuals or organizations. Zik Research Centre is a department in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, dedicated to document the lives and times of Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi

Azikiwe. The main goal of the centre is to procure and make available all literary information on Zik geared toward perpetuating Zik's legacies.

Objectives of the Centre

1. To assemble all publications both print and non-print written by Zik. Zik's literal works and philosophy of the new Africa have remained indelible and the younger generation should be encouraged to read his works.
2. To assemble all publications written about Zik. Intellectual output of Zik should be proactively harnessed and utilized so as to restore the true dignity of the African in this era of globalization.
3. To assemble documentaries on Zik.
4. To organize annual conference on Zik.
5. To make available these documents for public use.

Nature of Holdings at Zik Research Centre

Presently, information resources at the Centre are arranged as follows:

- **Print Resources:** Books, manuscripts, journals, magazines, government white papers, parliamentary debate and Speeches.
- **Non-print Resources:** Presently unavailable.

Presently the Research Centre has five (5) books written by Zik and fifteen (15) books written about him. Other collections are three (3) journals and some parliamentary debates. At present, non-print documents such as video tapes, discs, magnetic tapes, CD-Rom, computer slides have not been acquired at the Centre.

Major Arrangement of the Holdings

The holdings in Zik Research Centre are arranged into two broad categories namely: **(1) works by Zik and (2) works about Zik**. These include works by both foreign and Nigerian authors, institutions, agencies and press releases.

Sub Arrangements: The collections in the Centre are arranged subject by subject for example; culture and tradition, education, journalism, philosophy, Political Science, politics and sports.

Classification of the Holdings

Materials acquired are classified using American Library of Congress Classification Scheme. Users can access the materials using catalogue cards which are arranged by Author, Title or Subject as presently practiced in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library. In due course, the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) will be adopted.

Physical Sections (Demarcation)

The Centre will have different sections for Books, Serials, Audio visual/ICT and Reading/Research areas.

Challenges of Zik's Research Centre

The centre is faced with a number of challenges. Some of them are:

- Difficulties in locating and acquiring special documents relating to Zik while in government. There are administrative bottlenecks placed on the access and acquisition of these highly classified documents.
- Limited financial resources for the acquisition of

information resources for the Centre.

- Inadequate physical facilities such as shelves, reading tables and chairs for researchers.
- Lack of high-capacity computers and accessories, photocopiers and other ICT materials for acquiring and storage of data/information.
- Lack of training for the personnel that are working in the Centre.
- The Centre is presently under staffed.

Strategy For Improvement

- The University can intervene in the administrative bottlenecks placed on access and acquisition of special documents on Zik.
- Funding of the Centre can be improved when public spirited individuals and philanthropists, as well as non-governmental organizations get involved in the development of the Centre.
- Staff of the Centre should be trained and retrained if the set objective will be realised.

- All needed facilities to enhance the management of the research centre should be procured and maintained.

Conclusion

The establishment of Zik Research Centre in 2015 is a major development in Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library and indeed Nnamdi Azikiwe University. It is focused on the procurement and preservation of Zik's legacies including his policies in governance, support for social welfarism and mental emancipation of the Africans as well as his love for indigenous knowledge.

The Centre holds a lot of prospects if it is well developed. At present, it is grappling with teething problems such as lack of access to specialized documents, inadequate funding to acquire relevant documents and information, limited physical facilities and other essential resources. These challenges can be overcome when the outlined recommendations proffered put into practice.

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