



**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGE (IK) SYSTEM ON CREATIVE ART  
AND MUSIC**

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**Abstract**

*Indigenous knowledge is an area that focuses on the ways of knowing, seeing and thinking that are passed down from generation to generation. It is the culture of people and their way of life as seen in art, religion, law, kingship relationship, dress mode, eating habits, language and customs generally. Of all these, the arts of the people perhaps present more permanent aspects of the culture. Indigenous knowledge is a vital component of culture and has come to play an important role in creative art and music. This paper examines the major concepts of indigenous knowledge, creative arts and music. It exposes sources of indigenous knowledge and the problem of acquiring and disseminating it. The paper then outlines levels of creativity and the characteristics of highly creative individuals. The various ways in which indigenous knowledge enhances creative arts and music were also examined. Finally, recommendations were*

*made on how to promote indigenous knowledge, creative, art and music.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous Knowledge, Culture, Creative Arts, Music

## **Introduction**

Indigenous knowledge is an area that focuses on the ways of knowing, seeing and thinking that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture is a patterned way of life. It is made up of material and non-material parts of the society. It is a basic characteristic of the society. Alegbeleye (2000:2) defines culture as “the way in which people in any group do things, make use of tools, go along with one another and with other groups, the word they use and the way they use them to express thoughts and the way they think”. Culture involves how a man does everything. Knowledge is therefore part of the culture of the people. Indigenous knowledge here can manifest itself in creativity in terms of arts and music which involve people and their way of life as generally practicalised in art, religion, law, greeting mode, dress mode, food types, language and custom. The ability and skills to put or shape things together to form something meaningful is creativity. The ability to think is the most important human faculty that differentiates us from the lower animals. It is considered as the only faculty through which we develop our culture, for without thinking and imagination all other human behaviour attractions would be the same as those of the lower animals. Thinking is the highest human endowment that

makes mankind better poised to address any issue as it arises.

Speech, actions and artefacts are all created by man for his self-development. This human creation - be it in speech, actions and artefacts, includes all the works of art that make up a culture of a people. Culture and art are therefore inseparable. They are twin words that help towards the fulfillment of meaningful life. At this juncture, it is highly necessary to explain some terms. The purpose of this paper is to provide and discuss the impact of indigenous knowledge system on creative arts and music, the benefits, development programmes and the impediments. The study then suggests some ways through which these impediments could be overcome.

### **A Definition of Indigenous Knowledge**

Wodehouse (1980) states that the word “indigenous” usually refers to people, animals, flora, fauna or languages native to a particular land or region. Anafulu (2005) refers to the word “indigenous” as “native” “national” or “ethnic”. Qualifying the word with knowledge of pre-literate people, he states that indigenous becomes ‘popular’ and/or ‘unwritten’. Thus, indigenous knowledge in a wider perspective can be defined as the totality of a people’s way of life transmitted from generation to generation. Indigenous knowledge can also be seen as the local way or means of doing things with the ability and creativity within us and our environment to enhance the total living condition of a particular people.

## **The Sources of indigenous knowledge (IK)**

Mundy and Crompton (1995) identified some sources of indigenous knowledge (IK), which depend on certain factors like age, experience, profession, gender and personality. Communication is very important in (IK), which implies that at least two people are involved; the message has to be passed down in the form of words or other means. It consists of ideas, intentions and the purpose of the sources. This message can be on any subject, such as agriculture, festivals, herbal medicine, meeting and so on. The receiver decodes whatever is communicated and analyses it to form meaning. Other sources of indigenous knowledge are through folk media, local organizations, social gathering, observation, records in form of written, carved, painted information or deliberate instruction.

## **The Problems of Acquiring and Disseminating Indigenous Knowledge**

In Nigeria, where many illiterates abound, as is the case in many traditional communities in developing countries, acquiring and disseminating indigenous knowledge are quite problematic. As suggested by Ijatuyi (2005), the problems include:

- a. The tacit nature of indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is tacit in nature and therefore if it is coded the resultant effect of this is the loss of some of its properties, as it is exchanged through personal communication from master to apprentice, from parent to child, from king to subjects, from

neighbour to neighbour and from priest to parish. It is orally transmitted down from generation to generation. Recording and documenting it pose a great challenge.

- b. Indigenous knowledge is fundamentally oral. IK is acquired, stored and transmitted orally through participating because of heavy dependence on oral education as a way of exchanging IK. However, it should be noted that there is a limit to the capacity of human memory (Haywood. 1995). This can consequently lead to loss of part of IK with the passage of time.
- c. High wastage and replacement rate along the line. Part of indigenous knowledge may be terminated as a result of death of one or more sources of it. The monuments of the Nigerian communities are mainly oral traditions, which die along with the old men and women of such communities. This is evident in the south western Nigeria, especially with regard to the old wood carvers who are fast disappearing from the society.
- d. Memory dependence of IK. Since IK is heavily dependent on memory, an inevitable factor is the issue of memory decay, which may set in over quite short period of time. Haywood (1995:7) asserts that “almost everything we do in a day will be forgotten within a few weeks and as the ability to retrieve a memory decays exponentially, more than 85% of experiences of our experiences will have slipped out of minds within a month”. In Nigeria or in other traditionally oriented societies, there is no development towards augmenting their memory or

helping busy rural people in the area of any pocket-sized devices, as it is the case in modern international societies preoccupied with international knowledge. Words are thought of as fleeing and vanishing. They are 'winged' and fly away in sounds. Therefore, memories of traditional society need to be assisted in terms of recording.

- e. Problems of documentation: Documentation is another problem facing indigenous knowledge in Nigeria. In other lands across developing countries, there is the uneven documentation of indigenous information. Alegbeleye (2000) expatiates that some countries like Zambia, Jamaica and Cayman Island in the Caribbean Sea have a fairly good access to indigenous information. Oral history and traditions since 1977 are tape recorded in Zimbabwe. In Jamaica in 1981, the government created cultural heritage, a memory bank solely for the preservation of culture of which IK is characteristic. In the Cayman Islands, interviews of older people consisting of IK on indigenous information are also tape recorded and kept in a memory bank. This was eventually merged with their national archives. But such efforts rarely exist in Nigeria.
- f. No concretized or organized national programme. In Nigeria, IK is yet to be fully appreciated, so there is no concretised or organised national programme for it to be collected, organised, documented and used.
- g. Non availability of a locally published journal exclusive by for indigenous knowledge. There is no journal that is exclusively on IK in Nigeria and even globally there is hardly any.

## **Creative Arts**

Microsoft Encarta (2008) sees creativity as the ability to use the imagination to develop new ideas and skills more especially in an artistic context. It is a capacity to have new thoughts and to create expressions which are different from any other. On the other hand, creativity is a basic element in human endeavours, such as art, music, literature and performance. The Italian philosopher, Benedetto's aesthetic theory was based on the belief that art, as a form of creativity, is a more revealing criterion than the sciences and that beauty in art depends on the successful translation in communicable form of a fundamental perception in the mind of an artist. Creativity expresses itself in all facets of life, whether cognitively, intellectually, socially, economically, politically and so on as manifested in multi-dimensional areas as found in music, art, dance, business, theatre, etc.

Shuaibu (1996) defines creativity as a concept that involves experiencing life in one's own way, and drawing upon one's own resources and capabilities. According to Microsoft Encarta (2008), art is the product of creative human activity in which materials are shaped or conveyed in form of an idea, emotion or visually interesting form. It can be referred to as visual works that combine different materials or forms. Art can be thought of as a continued process of creativity. To the child, art is a dynamic and unifying activity, while to the adult art is usually concerned with the area of aesthetic or external beauty. Art can be seen as the highest form of human expression and a reflection of the society that creates it. Each work of art bears a testimony to the

individual that creates it and when this individuality is expressed, the art is said to be original. We come across works of art in our day to day life.

Art has also been defined as the ability to create an object in its finest form. The important thing here is the ability to do something provided that the thing done is created. Creativity is not just doing or making something; it is originating something. Originating something carries along with it the personality or individuality of the person involved.

### **The Characteristics of Highly Creative Individuals**

Considering what creativity is all about, it is also necessary to identify individuals with creative abilities. Ahmed and Obadiah (2007) identify some creative traits that could be used to identify the personality and behaviour of the potentially creative students. However, the behaviour patterns of the creative persons have been summarized depending on the thoughts and situations that engender them to create. These are:-

1. Creative persons are original: This statement may seem boring to the reader, especially if creativity is conceived as an ability that should be quite different from the usual expected response to a given problem. It should, however, be quite different from the usual, expected response to a given problem. It should therefore be understood that creativity involves three major phrases: a response that is novel, an answer that is not statistically frequent and response that must be adaptive to reality.

2. Creative persons are independent in judgment and in action: They do not offer explanations for their actions. They are strongly self-motivated to attend to issues that give them concern and which of course call for independence.
3. Creative persons want to meet challenges and attempt difficult tasks: - Creative people are adventurous and willing to take risks. They also like to be different and carefully test the limits of their abilities, situations, materials and methods.
4. They display a great deal of curiosity about things. Creative persons constantly ask questions about anything and everything; they may have broad interests in many unrelated areas.
5. Creative people exhibit heightened emotional sensitivity: They may be very sensitive to beauty and visibly moved by aesthetic experiences.
6. They display a keen sense of humor: They see humor in situation that may not appear to be humorous to others. Sometimes their humor may appear inappropriate, bizarre and irrelevant to others.

## **Music**

Music is the art of making a sweet combination of sounds in a harmonious pattern. It is a combination of sounds in rhythm and harmony. It is the use of instruments to produce sounds that are meaningful and pleasing to the ears. Music can be said to be as old as man. Man's desire to express his feelings and ideas brought about music. This was found out at that early

stage to be important to man's existence and especially in his interaction with nature and other beings.

Music globally is seen as part of culture. We are aware that culture encompasses all the facets of human existence. So, one can say that music is central to living (life) from the day man is born to the day man dies. Changes through development and advancement have greatly affected music. Music moved from simple and primitive to modern. Foreign or Western music has a great influence on both African and Nigerian music. Western musical sounds and instruments can be seen blended with traditional music sounds and instruments, for example, Juju music and highlife. The music becomes universal and is enjoyed and accepted the world over.

### **The Purpose of Music**

African and Nigerian music have the following purposes,

- i. Religion: - Religious songs/music which could be traditional or modern are used for the purposes of worship.
- ii. Social Songs: - These could be harmonious or abusive. They can be seen in festivals, rituals, rites and ceremonies. The use of elaborate costumes, dance, songs, and instruments are emphasized. Inspiration is drawn from religion and politics like chieftaincy and rulership.
- iii. Recreation: - Music is for relaxation and entertainment.

## **Music as Creative Art**

Music is organized and meaningful sounds that are pleasing to the ear and appealing to the heart and mind. Music involves acting and body movement. The backbone of every successful music is creativity. The whole issue in music calls for creative thinking and acting. According to Ohwofosa (2008), the components of music are songs, dance, mime instruments, costume and drama. Music is said to be appealing when there is a repetition element, a change in key, the use of dynamic variation, accompaniment, limitation, communication expression, the shortening or lengthening punctuation of rest, pause and accentuation, etc. Creativity as far as music is concerned can rely on a number of factors some of which are indicated below:

1. **Motivation:** If the people have no desire to utilize their creativeness they will not be creative. Musicians are actually supposed to be creative and not just repeating what others have done in toto.
2. **Personality:** People's unique inclination and differences decision making make their choice of creativity unique and thus the decisions made in creating something will be different with each person.
3. **Parental Guidance:** Parents provide the crucial link for learning between birth and maturity. Therefore, their learning and partly their creativity and intelligence will depend on how far the parents, in particular, encourage these unique qualities to be manifested in their offspring.

Creativity is said to be balanced when it involves three forms of thinking namely synthetic ability, analytical ability and practical ability.

### **The Role of Creative Art and Music in Nigeria**

The role of creative art and music is seen in the all-round development of the Nigerian citizen. It helps the citizen to:

- (i) Develop the ability to adapt to his changing environment
- (ii) Inculcate national consciousness and unity
- (iii) Make good citizens capable and willing to contribute to the development of the society.
- (iv) Inculcate right types of values and attitudes.

Other areas of development include the means to acquire language for expressing ideas, feeling, emotions and needs. Creative art and music is also used for expression of feelings and public entertainment especially in the celebration of rites of passage.

### **The Impact of Indigenous Knowledge System on Creativity**

The impact of indigenous knowledge system on creativity is very critical for it serves as a pivot upon which exogenous knowledge can be placed in traditional societies for the purpose of learning. As indigenous knowledge is basically on culture of a locality, that is learning that has been handed down from generation to generation through socialization, moonlight play, folktales, drama, music, artefacts etc. Through all these

we are able to inculcate national consciousness and unity, learn other people's culture and know how to live with them. The production of all these artifacts may be through team work involving members of one's family or an individual business which is carried out throughout one's life time. For instance Ben Enwonwu, the famous artist, learnt carving from his father when he was young and died as a professional carver. Creativity in art varies from place to place in terms of style, method, work and instrument. For instance, textile, tie and dye and Batik from Yoruba land are well known. They are done by women in Ibadan and Abeokuta. Applique clothes are used for various purposes - masquerade, costume, rituals, ceremonies, dance costume, royal costumes and military tunic (coat). Bakinba of Zaire and Oshogbo are centres for Batik. Examples of Nigerian Batik makers are seven-seven and Jacob Afolabi (Inyana, 2000)

In Nigeria, there are many artifacts in different places. In Ife, they have numerous works in terracotta and bronze. The naturalism of their sculpture was a creative work done out of observation of forms and skills of Oba's courtship. Igboukwu in Anambra state is known for their bronze works dating back to 1494 AD. Most of their works are skilful metal work brilliantly cast and forged in bronze using insects and reptiles as decorative motifs. NOK art located at Zaria was said to be the oldest of Nigerian arts. Their works are stylish and the representation of the human figure varies the height from 15 meters to 10 cm. Their works are mostly in terracotta. Sokoto is the home for leather works, we have also

Mbari of Owerri in Imo state, Ibibio in Akwa-Ibom state, Esie stone in Kwara state, Tsoede bronze in Nupe.

Creativity in music as a result of indigenous experience may be played live or part of dramatic work or dance. Music is used during wars in the ancient times. It is part of life. We can't do without art and music because they are in our blood. We come across it them everyday in our life whether local art/music or modem art/music. They are part of our culture.

### **Recommendations**

A nation's level of development depends largely on how creative its people are. The implication of this statement is that creativity should be given the attention it deserves in our institutions of learning to encourage effective national growth and development. To realize this,

1. More priority should be placed on our mother tongue/culture. Our children should be able to learn how to speak indigenous languages and government should make it compulsory that everyone should study one Nigerian language at secondary school level apart from his/her own.
2. The basic principles of creative art and music should be introduced in primary schools, so that pupils will start getting to learn art/music by the time they enter into secondary schools.
3. At the senior secondary schools, creative art should cease to be made optional.
4. It is generally believed that good education is two-dimensional, involving the acquisition of knowledge,

on one hand, and the development of aesthetic skill, on the other. It is therefore very necessary that federal government should intensify and diversify schools, so that at the end, people can stand on their own and be able to employ others. This will inevitably prevent them from the unending search for white collar jobs. Creative arts and music education can help the government to achieve this laudable objective.

## **Conclusion**

Indigenous knowledge, as we have observed, is the cornerstone of every culture. This implies that, right from childhood, especially during the socialisation process, children should be exposed to all the aspects of their community life, so that they may not be found lagging behind in various fields of activities. This will inevitably make the person a positive, contributory member of the society. Vocational skills, such as art and music, could be developed early and when re - enforced at later years could boost the citizen's contribution to the overall societal development.

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