

IGWEBUIKE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: TOWARDS A NEW TREND FOR SCIENTIFIC AND WHOLISTIC INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

The organic and departmental nature of reality calls for a method of research that both respects the organicness and departmentalness of reality. It is in this regard that this work introduces the Igwebuike research methodology, in an attempt at widening the scope of research methodologies. It is an indigenous, first because it has its origin in an African word- Igwebuike which literally means "there is strength in number" but speaks more of the philosophy of complementarity. Second, because it appeals to the African spirit while not limiting its use to the African environment or problems. It is a universal principle from a unique world. It puts into consideration not just the universally accepted research conditions but also the local categories that peculiarizes a people. The present work is, therefore, an attempt at developing an indigenous method of research that can help in the search for knowledge in a wholistic and exhaustive way with a view of developing valid knowledge which would be applied in addressing peculiar and universal problems. It has, therefore, discussed research as a basic feature of our humanness; meaning that 'to be' is to want to know and to find solutions to the problems of the human society. The major dimensions of Igwebuike research method is that it is wholistic, begins from the known to the unknown, it is interdisciplinary, complementary and non-dominant. This research method does not in any way see itself as the most important research method, but emphasizes the necessity of a synthesis of methodologies if wholistic solutions to fundamental problems wrecking society are to be found. The complementary method of investigation was adopted for the purpose of this research.

Keywords: Igwebuike, Research Method, New Trend, Wholistic, Complementary, Interdisciplinary

Introduction

Research stems from the English word- 'to search', which means 'to look for'. The prefix 're' emphasizes the need 'to look for again', more carefully, more exhaustively (Anaekwe 2007). It implies going beyond the periphery, going beyond what is common knowledge to discover something profound and fundamental. To research is a crucial aspect of our human reality. This is because in a general sense all of us research- we all develop the keen interest of observing certain situations in life, such as the nature of the universe, the nature of the vegetation around us, the character of human beings, the behavior of animals. These are experiences that are observable by every human person. From these observations, we raise questions about the phenomenon and situations that we have observed. By raising these questions, efforts follow in some circumstances to improve on the state of things.

Going beyond the general sense of research, there is a systematic sense in which the word 'research' can be used. This concept of research goes beyond the ordinary daily

involvements of everyone to a more organized, diligent and systematic search for knowledge with the hope of solving a particular problem. In the systematic sense of the word, Osuala (2005) defines research as:

The process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Research is a most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting progress, and for enabling man to relate more effectively to his environment, to accomplish his purpose, and to resolve his conflicts. (p. 1).

This systematic concept of research is engaged in with a goal or a purpose, suggesting that it is something that someone does consciously and conscientiously. Osuala (2005) focusing on the purpose of research, writes that:

Research is oriented towards the discovery of relationships that exist among the phenomena of the world in which we live. Research is devoted to finding conditions under which a certain phenomenon occurs and the conditions under which it does not occur in what might appear to be similar circumstances. (p. 1).

However, with the peculiarities of societies, questions have arisen as to the need for diverse or indigenous research methods that may be unique to particular issues. The present work attempts at widening the scope of research methodology by introducing Igwebuike research methodology as an indigenous research method. It is referred to as indigenous, first because it has its origin in an African word- Igwebuike, which literally means “there is strength in number” but speaks more of the philosophy of complementarity. Second, because it appeals to the African spirit while not limiting its relevance to the African environment or situations. It is a universal principle from a unique world. The present work is, therefore, an attempt at developing an indigenous method of research that can help in the search for knowledge in a wholistic and exhaustive way with a view of developing valid knowledge which would be applied in improving situations.

Igwebuike as an Indigenous Research Method

The concept *Igwebuike* is a combination of three words. Thus, it can be understood as a word and as a sentence: as a word, it is written thus *Igwebuike*, and as a sentence, it could be written as *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. The first word *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number or population. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is another verb, which means *strength* or *power*. Thus put together, it means ‘number is strength’ or ‘number is power’, that is, that when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force or strength; and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capability (Kanu 2017a,b&c).

This understanding, in terms of complementarity, provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations. As an ideology, *Igwebuike* holds that ‘to be’ is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. ‘To be’ is ‘to be with the other’, in a community of beings. This is based on the African sense of community, which is the

underlying principle and unity of African philosophy (Kanu 2016a&b). *Igwebuike* is, therefore, anchored on the African worldview, which Iroegbu (1994) describes as being characterized by a common origin, common world-view, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny.

The Anthropological Dimension of Igwebuike Research Method- 'To be' is to Research

'To be' in *Igwebuike* philosophy is to be in relation to the other, including the environment. Life is a relationship, and it is only within this relationship that knowledge and life itself is possible. To be a human being, you must relate to your environment- and know the things around you. To be and not know is not to be. Every human being wants to know, meaning that every human being cannot but research. This aspect of our humanity shows itself in the curiosity of a child who is always asking questions, becoming completely absorbed in the search for the truth, trying to make sense out of our complex world, making guesses and testing them, trying to understand his or her limits and the limits of the situations surrounding the child. Since to be is to know, once this liberality to know is restricted, the child loses something of its humanness, and begins to die intellectually and emotionally. If the child is allowed to ask questions without limit, the child takes progressive essential steps in the process of becoming human.

This search for knowledge in the human person is not satisfied with quick, easy and superficial answers to the questions that come up in the mind. To accept just simplified answers, choose mediocrity, give up the desire for excellence and forgo interrogating difficult questions has consequences on the humanity of a person- at that point the person begins to lose something of his humanity. However, whenever a person keeps digging, attempting to know and attain excellence he deepens the realization of his humanity. Thus, parents and teachers who are respectful of the questions students ask, original ideas and suggestions also contribute to the building of the humanity of the students. Torrance (1970) writes that:

Whenever the child learns only to follow the familiar and safe way, whenever the adventure is taken out of learning, whenever a child learns to ask only those questions to which the teacher knows the answer, whenever he learns never to upset existing organizational patterns and procedures, whenever he learns never to see defect in the existing order- he sacrifices some of his humanness. He progresses whenever he dares take the next step from where he is to a new level of functioning. (pp. 6-7).

This is the uniqueness which *Igwebuike* philosophy adds to the concept of research. Research is not just an attempt to find solutions to problems that surround us as human beings; research is an attempt to reach the full potentials of our humanity.

Dimensions of Igwebuike Research Method

There are basic dimensions of *Igwebuike* research method. These dimensions include wholisticness, beginning from the known to the unknown, interdisciplinarity, sympathy or respect for other perspectives and complementarity. These dimensions will thus be discussed in details.

a. Wholistic

Igwebuike approach to the search for knowledge is wholistic. Its wholisticness is anchored on the Igwebuike perspective that all parts of reality are interconnected and that they find Identity, meaning and purpose through connections to the other. This wholisticness is the basis for Igwebuike emphasis on multidimensionality in research. Thus, an investigation of a particular situation or reality should imply the several viewpoints or perspectives so as to arrive at a global and balanced perspective. The result of a wholistic method of research is an integrated education that serves the interest of the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the human person. It is not enough to deal with the psychological dimension while leaving out the spiritual and physical, or the spiritual while leaving out the psychological and physical. To deal with only the physical and leave out the spiritual and psychological is only to scratch the problem of the human person.

A wholistic research would, therefore, bring together, in one combined process, more than one element, subject, method or stream in the research process. For instance, with the recent prevalence of suicide in the society, a person who would like to research on it but focuses only on the psychological dimension of the problem, leaving out the spiritual and the physical realities that could contribute to it, would only present a result that is limited and not integrated. The problem with such a limited result in research is that while it solves the problem from the psychological perspective, it creates another problem. A problem created as a result of ignorance.

b. From the Known to the Unknown

Igwebuike research method begins from the known reality to the unknown. It uses the known as a stepping stone to get to the object of its research, which is the unknown. This method of research is based on the very nature of learning itself. The first step of learning is observation. And a person observes not only with the eyes but the other senses like listening, feeling/touching, smelling, and tasting. These senses are the means by which we experience the external world. Even before a child is born, it already begins to observe. They hear the sound and know the smell of their parents.

What children observe become “known” to them, and it is by comparing what they already know with some other thing unknown to them that they learn new realities. Thus, children learn by comparison, for instance, by comparing a new voice with the voice of the mother. Babies always like to taste and feel things with their mouths, and in this tasting, they are comparing two different realities, and often relate to one based on the taste of the other. Thus, they are moving from the known to the unknown. As children continue to make more comparisons, more information moves into the “known” category.

Saint Paul uses this same principle of moving from the known to the unknown while speaking to the Athenian philosophers at the Areopagus in Acts of the Apostles chapter 17. As he observed the city of Athens, he conversed with philosophers, no wonder, when it was time to begin his sermon, he started by stating the known, “I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” He then uses the known to introduce the unknown, “For as I passed along and

observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown God.'" Paul continued by explaining to them who God is by giving them examples of what God has done.

c. Interdisciplinary

Igwebuike research strongly advocates for an interdisciplinary kind of investigation. This is based on the interconnectivity of reality. By interdisciplinary research it means combining of two or more established or traditional academic disciplines in a process of research. Nisani (1997) defines interdisciplinary as:

Interdisciplinarity is best seen as bringing together distinctive components of two or more disciplines. In academic discourse, interdisciplinarity typically applies to four realms: knowledge, research, education, and theory. Interdisciplinary knowledge involves familiarity with components of two or more disciplines. Interdisciplinary research combines components of two or more disciplines in the search or creation of new knowledge, operations, or artistic expressions. Interdisciplinary education merges components of two or more disciplines in a single program of instruction. Interdisciplinary theory takes interdisciplinary knowledge, research, or education as its main objects of study. (n.p).

Thus, an interdisciplinary research synthesizes perspectives, knowledge, skills, interconnections, epistemologies, etc., thus drawing knowledge from several other professions, technologies and fields like sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, religion, culture, science, etc. It is about creating new knowledge by thinking across boundaries.

The interdisciplinary method of research is indispensable if complex problems must be solved in society. This, may, therefore, involve two or more researchers from different disciplines pooling their experiences, approaches and modifying them so that they are better suited to the problem at hand. The advantages of interdisciplinary method of research include:

- i. It promotes meaningful, purposeful and deeper result in learning experiences.
- ii. It covers areas in more depth because they are considering the many and varied perspectives from which a problem can be solved.
- iii. Critical thinking skills are used and developed as researchers look across disciplinary boundaries to consider other viewpoints and also begin to compare and contrast concepts across subject areas.
- iv. It motivates researchers to pursue new knowledge in different subject areas.
- v. It can lead to greater creativity.
- vi. It allows for synthesis of ideas and the synthesis of characteristics from many disciplines.

- vii. It addresses researchers' individual differences and helps to develop important, transferable skills.
- viii. It expands the room for creativity
- ix. It reduces the possibility of errors which could have been best detected by people familiar with two or more disciplines.
- x. It serves to remind us of the unity-of-knowledge ideal.
- xi. It allows for greater flexibility in research.

d. Sympathetic and Non-Derogatory

The sympathetic, non-derogatory or non-dominant model of Igwebuikere research method has great focus on the encounter between the African culture and religion with the west. The encounter was non-sympathetic, dominant and derogatory to the African culture and religion. With particular reference to the Igbo experience of western missionaries, Jordan (1949) and Okonkwo (2002) observe that they referred to the Igboland they had come to evangelize as the citadel of Paganism and the domain of the Lord of Hell. Isichei (1970) noted that the missionary Priest Rev. Fr. Lutz advised his colleagues during this early missionary ventures to note that this portion of 'Dark Continent (Africa)' was cursed and engulfed by the power of the devil. According to Okonkwo (1998ab&c), such missionary postures created more damaging effect on the Igbo surface and depth grammar which has until the present age, made the message of the Gospel to a large extent in Igbo land 'tongue-independent' as an 'Engli-Igbo-Church'. Uzukwu (1988) described this missionary frame of mind as oppressive and dominant and confirms such frame of mind that portrayed the Igbo religious language, culture and worldview as inferior and as such was due for replacement. They identified everything "good to be white" and everything "bad to be black" (Nkrumah, 1981).

The sympathetic and non-derogatory method of research connects with the Pauline method of getting to the Athenians. Although he was so exasperated at the sight of Athens, an idol-ridden pantheistic city and people, he –Paul the missionary *per excellence*, did not *prima facie*, condemn neither the idols nor the people as in the cases cited in the above Igbo missionary missing links. Paul's sympathetic, non-dominant and non-derogatory approach created a free and natural ground for his mission. He went further with a secular wisdom and intellection and called the 'idol-ridden-pantheistic Athenians-a God-fearing and extremely scrupulous people in religious matters (Act, 17:23). Paul did not gloss-over their religious and cultural values but rather showered understanding to them in their freedom and accord with their lives and the laws of nature which he perfectly signed off with the Greek concept-*kata physin*. St. Paul after his polite and humane method of meeting with foreigners – the gentiles, he still was vehement and firm in his solemn proclamations (Okonkwo 2019).

e. Complementarity

Igwebuikere research method understands the search for knowledge as a project carried out by a community of inquiry. This is done in relation to the other

person. The other person's perspective sharpens your own perspective and thus complements what is lacking in your own perspective. Every researcher must maintain connection with the resources that are outside of him. The support and stimulation of the group has a way of improving on the quality of knowledge that is arrived at. Torrance (1970) writes that:

One becomes human by making use of the energy available from outer sources to become a better integrated personality, to interact at a deeper level with the environment, and to achieve greater fulfillment of his potentialities. One loses his humanness when he is estranged, isolated, rejected, and cut off from the sources of information, inspiration and spiritual strength. (10).

To keep away from the complementary power of other persons and the other sources of knowledge is to limit one's research. This is very important, for as Golden (1970) points out: "No one earns a perfect grade on the test of humanity. The human index merely registers differences of degree, and always involves something lacking" (p. 15). He writes further: "We become human to a degree but never absolutely. This is always an incomplete process. It always involves something lacking" (p. 15). Through complementarity, that which is lacking is completed and every missing link in knowledge is bridged.

Conclusion

Ancient studies explained reality in terms of an organic reality as is seen in the writings of the Greeks, however, modern research is beginning to see reality in terms of compartments and departments, without necessarily rejecting the interconnectedness of reality. This, therefore, calls for a method of research that respects both the departmental and organic nature of reality. It is in this regard that this piece studies the implications of Igwebuiké philosophy for academic research. Thus, the foregoing began by discussing Igwebuiké as an indigenous research methodology that understands research as a basic feature of our humanness. To be is to want to know and to find solutions to the problems of the human person. The major dimensions of the Igwebuiké research method is that it is wholistic, begins from the known to the unknown, it is interdisciplinary, complementary and non-dominant. This research method does not in any way see itself as the most important research method, but emphasizes the necessity of a synthesis of methodologies if wholistic solutions to fundamental problems reeking society is to be found. This synthesis of methodologies is also indispensable if research must arrive at the development of generalizations, principles or theories that would be helpful in making predictions about future occurrences. If the researcher's observations and descriptions must be accurate, a wholistic approach is indispensable.

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