

Michael Obi's hopes were fulfilled much earlier than he had expected. He was appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School in January 1949. It had always been an unprogressive school, so the Mission authorities decided to send a young and energetic man to run it. Obi accepted this responsibility with enthusiasm. He had many wonderful ideas and this was an opportunity to put them into practice. He had had sound secondary school education which designated him a "pivotal teacher" in the official records and set him apart from the other headmasters in the mission field. He was outspoken in his condemnation of the narrow views of these older and often less-educated ones.

"We shall make a good job of it, shan't we?" he asked his young wife when they first heard the joyful news of his promotion.

"We shall do our best," she replied. "We shall have such beautiful gardens and everything will be just *modern* and delightful . . ." In their two years of married life she had become completely infected by his passion for "modern methods" and his denigration of "these old and superannuated people in the teaching field who would be better employed as traders in the Onitsha market." She began to see herself already as the admired wife of the young headmaster, the queen of the school.

The wives of the other teachers would envy her position. She would set the fashion in everything . . . Then, suddenly, it occurred to her that there might not be other wives. Wavering between hope and fear, she asked her husband, looking anxiously at him.

"All our colleagues are young and unmarried," he said with enthusiasm which for once she did not share. "Which is a good thing," he continued.

"Why?"

"Why? They will give all their time and energy to the school."

Nancy was downcast. For a few minutes she became skeptical about the new school; but it was only for a few minutes. Her little personal misfortune could not blind her to her husband's happy prospects. She looked at him as he sat folded up in a chair. He was stoop-shouldered and looked frail. But he sometimes surprised people with sudden bursts of physical energy. In his present posture, however, all his bodily strength seemed to have retired behind his deep-set eyes, giving them an extraordinary power of penetration. He was only twenty-six, but looked thirty or more. On the whole, he was not unhand-some.

"A penny for your thoughts, Mike," said Nancy after a while, imitating the woman's magazine she read.

"I was thinking what a grand opportunity we've got at last to show these people how a school should be run."

Ndume School was backward in every sense of the word. Mr. Obi put his whole life into the work, and his wife hers too. He had two aims. A high standard of teaching was insisted upon, and the school compound was to be turned into a place of beauty. Nancy's dream-gardens came to life with the coming of the rains, and blossomed. Beautiful hibiscus and allamanda hedges in brilliant red and yellow marked out the carefully tended school compound from the rank neighborhood bushes.

One evening as Obi was admiring his work he was scandalized to see an old woman from the village hobble right across the compound, through a marigold flower-bed and the hedges. On going up there he found faint signs of an almost disused path from the village across the school compound to the bush on the other side.

"It amazes me," said Obi to one of his teachers who had been three years in the school, "that you people allowed the villagers to make use of this foot-path. It is simply incredible." He shook his head.

"The path," said the teacher apologetically, "appears to be very important to them. Although it is hardly used, it connects the village shrine with their place of burial."

"And what has that got to do with the school?" asked the headmaster.

"Well, I don't know," replied the other with a shrug of the shoulders. "But I remember there was a big row some time ago when we attempted to close it."

"That was some time ago. But it will not be used now," said Obi as he walked away. "What will the Government Education Officer think of this when he comes to inspect the school next week? The villagers might, for all I know, decide to use the schoolroom for a pagan ritual during the inspection."

Heavy sticks were planted closely across the path at the two places where it entered and left the school premises. These were further strengthened with barbed wire.

Three days later the village priest of *Ani* called on the headmaster. He was an old man and walked with a slight stoop. He carried a stout walking-stick which he usually tapped on the floor, by way of emphasis, each time he made a new point in his argument.

"I have heard," he said after the usual exchange of cordialities, "that our ancestral footpath has recently been closed . . ."

"Yes," replied Mr. Obi. "We cannot allow people to make a highway of our school compound."

"Look here, my son," said the priest bringing down his walking-stick, "this path was here before you were born and before your father was born. The whole life of this village depends on it. Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it. But most important, it is the path of children coming in to be born . . ."

Mr. Obi listened with a satisfied smile on his face.

"The whole purpose of our school," he said finally, "is to eradicate just such beliefs as that. Dead men do not require footpaths. The whole idea is just fantastic. Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas."

"What you say may be true," replied the priest, "but we follow the practices of our fathers. If you reopen the path we shall have nothing to quarrel about. What I always say is: let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch." He rose to go.

"I am sorry," said the young headmaster. "But the school compound cannot be a thoroughfare. It is against our regulations. I would suggest your constructing another path, skirting our premises. We can even get our boys to help in building it. I don't suppose the ancestors will find the little detour too burdensome."

"I have no more words Co say," said the old priest, already outside.

Two days later a young woman in the village died in childbed. A diviner was immediately consulted and he prescribed heavy sacrifices to propitiate ancestors insulted by the fence.

Obi woke up next morning among the ruins of his work. The beautiful hedges were torn up not just near the path but right round the school, the flowers trampled to death and one of the school buildings pulled down . . . That day, the white Supervisor came to inspect the school and wrote a nasty report on the state of the premises but more seriously about the "tribal-war situation developing between the school and the village, arising in part from the misguided zeal of the new headmaster."

■ AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Chinua Achebe

Modern Africa as the Crossroads of Culture 1980

I have always been fond of stories and intrigued by language.—first Igbo, spoken with such eloquence by the old men of the village, and later English, which I began to learn at about the age of eight. I don't know for certain, but

I have probably spoken more words in Igbo than English but I have definitely written more words in English than Igbo. Which I think makes me perfectly bilingual. Some people have suggested that I should be better off writing in Igbo. Sometimes they seek to drive the point home by asking me in which language I dream. When I reply that I dream in both languages they seem not to believe it. More recently I have heard an even more potent and metaphysical version of the question: In what language do you have an orgasm? That should settle the matter if I knew.

We lived at the crossroads of cultures. We still do today; but when I was a boy one could see and sense the peculiar quality and atmosphere of it more clearly. I am not talking about all that rubbish we hear of the spiritual void and mental stresses that Africans are supposed to have, or the evil forces and irrational passions prowling through Africa's heart of darkness. We know the racist mystique behind a lot of that stuff and should merely point out that those who prefer to see Africa in those lurid terms have not themselves demonstrated any clear superiority in sanity or more competence in coping with life.

But still the crossroads does have a certain dangerous potency; dangerous because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits, but also he might be lucky and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision.

On one arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenism, offered food to idols. That was how it was supposed to be anyhow. But I knew without knowing why that it was too simple a way to describe what was going on. Those idols and that food had a strange pull on me in spite of my being such a thorough little Christian that often at Sunday services at the height of the grandeur of "Te Deum Laudamus" I would have dreams of a mantle of gold falling on me as the choir of angels drowned our mortal song and the voice of God Himself thundering: This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Yet, despite those delusions of divine destiny I was not past taking my little sister to our neighbor's house when our parents were not looking and partaking of heathen festival meals. I never found their rice and stew to have the flavor of idolatry. I was about ten then. If anyone likes to believe that I was torn by spiritual agonies or stretched on the rack of my ambivalence, he certainly may suit himself. I do not remember any undue distress. What I do remember is a fascination for the ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads. And I believe two things were in my favor—that curiosity, and the little distance imposed between me and it by the accident of my birth. The distance becomes not a separation but a bringing together like the necessary backward step which a judicious viewer may take in order to see a canvas steadily and fully.

IGBO - RELIGION AND EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Igbo-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>

Religious Beliefs. Although many Igbo people are now Christians, traditional Igbo religious practices still abound. The traditional Igbo religion includes an uncontested general reverence for Ala or Ana, the earth goddess, and beliefs and rituals related to numerous other male and female deities, spirits, and ancestors, who protect their living descendants. Revelation of the will of certain deities is sought through oracles and divination. The claim that the Igbo acknowledge a creator God or Supreme Being, Chukwu or Chineka, is, however, contested. Some see it as historical within the context of centralized political formations, borrowings from Islam and Christianity, and the invention of sky (Igwe) gods. The primordial earth goddess and other deified spirits have shrines and temples of worship and affect the living in very real and direct ways, but there are none dedicated to Chukwu. Ala encapsulates both politics and religion in Igbo society by fusing together space, custom, and ethics (*omenala*); some refer to Ala as the constitutional deity of the Igbo.

The Igbo concept of personhood and the dialectic between individual choice/freedom and destiny or fate is embodied in the notion of *chi*, variously interpreted as spirit double, guardian angel, personal deity, personality soul, or divine nature. Igbo have varied accounts of myths of origin because there are many gods and goddesses. According to one Igbo worldview, Chukwu created the visible universe, *uwa*. The universe is divided into two levels: the natural level, *uwa*, or human world, and the spiritual level of spirits, which include Anyanwu, the sun; Igwe, the sky; Andala (or Ana), the earth; women's water spirits/goddesses, and forest spirits. Through taboos, the Igbo forge a mediatory category of relations with nature and certain animals such as pythons, crocodiles, tigers, tortoises, and fish.

Religious Practitioners. There are two different kinds of priests: the hereditary lineage priests and priests who are chosen by particular deities for their service. Diviners and priests—those empowered with *ofo*, the symbol of authority, truth, and justice—interpret the wishes of the spirits, who bless and favor devotees as well as punish social offenders and those who unwittingly infringe their privileges, and placate the spirits with ceremonial sacrifices.

Death and Afterlife. The living, the dead, and the unborn form part of a continuum. Enshrined ancestors are those who lived their lives well and died in a socially acceptable manner (i.e., were given the proper burial rites). These ancestors live in one of the worlds of the dead that mirrors the world of the living. The living pay tribute to their ancestors by honoring them through sacrifices.

RELIGION

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Igbo_People#Religion

The Igbo are a profoundly religious people who believe in a benevolent creator, usually known as Chukwu, who created the visible universe (*uwa*), and is especially associated with rain, trees and other plants. According to the traditional religion of the Igbo, there is no concept of a gender type such as “man” or “woman” associated with the supreme deity Chukwu.

The Igbo believe in the concept of *Ofo* and *Ogu*, which is a governing law of retributive justice. It is believed that *Ofo* and *Ogu* will vindicate anyone that is wrongly accused of a crime as long as “his hands are clean.” It is only the one who is on the side of *Ogu-na-Ofo* that can call its name in prayer, otherwise such a person will face the wrath of *Amadioha* (the god of thunder and lightning). Tied to redistributive justice, Igbo believe that each person has their own personal god (“*Chi*”), which is credited for an individual's fortune or misfortune.

Apart from the natural level of the universe, they also believe that another plane exists, which is filled with spiritual forces, called the *alusi*. The *alusi* are minor deities, and have the capacity to perform good or evil, depending on circumstances. They punish social offenses and those who unwittingly infringe upon the privileges of the gods. In order to commune with the spiritual level of the universe, diviners exist to interpret the wishes of the *alusi*. The *alusi* can also be reached through the priesthood, which placates them with sacrifices. Either a priest is chosen through hereditary lineage or is chosen by a particular god for his service, usually after passing through a number of mystical experiences.

COLONIAL PERIOD

The 19th-century British colonization effort in present-day Nigeria and increased encounters between the Igbo and other ethnicities near the Niger River led to a deepening sense of a distinct Igbo ethnic identity. The Igbo proved decisive and enthusiastic in their embrace of Christianity and Western education. Due to the incompatibility of the Igbo decentralized style of government and the centralized system including the appointment of warrant chiefs required for British indirect rule, British colonial rule was marked with open conflicts and much tension. Under British colonial rule, the diversity within each of Nigeria's major ethnic groups slowly decreased and distinctions between the Igbo and other large ethnic groups, such as the Hausa and the Yoruba, became sharper. Colonial rule transformed Igbo society, as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*.

“Dead Men's Path” was first published in 1953; *Things Fall Apart* in 1958.

THE JIGSAW METHOD

When researching a topic, like the causes of the Second World War, each member of a group is allocated an area for which they need to become the *'expert'*, such as 'the impact of the Treaty of Versailles', or 'issues with the dissolution of Austria-Hungary' for example. With five or six **'Home'** groups identified, the **'experts'** then leave that group to pool their expertise on one topic; they question one another and combine research, ideas, and knowledge. Then, each **'expert'** returns to their *'home'* group to share their findings. It is a skillful way of varying group dynamics and scaffolding learning.

- Jigsaw is a grouping strategy in which the class members are organized into "jigsaw" groups.
- The students are then reorganized into "expert" groups containing one member from each jigsaw group.
- The expert group members work together to learn the material or solve the problem, then return to their "jigsaw" groups to share their learning.
- In this way, the work of the expert groups is quickly disseminated throughout the class, with each person taking responsibility for sharing a piece of the puzzle.
- Jigsaw is an efficient way for students to become engaged in their learning, learn a lot of material quickly, share information with other groups, minimize listening time, and be individually accountable for their learning.
- Since each group needs its members to do well for the whole group to do well, Jigsaw maximizes interaction and establishes an atmosphere of cooperation and respect for other students.

JIGSAW GROUPS		
Group One	Group Two	Group Three
Nucleus (Kathy)	Nucleus (Susan)	Nucleus (Jose)
Mitochondria (Jorge)	Mitochondria (Randy)	Mitochondria (Gail)
Cell Wall (Sara)	Cell Wall (Andy)	Cell Wall (Chris)

EXPERT GROUPS		
Group One Nucleus	Group Two Mitochondria	Group Three Cell Wall
Kathy	Jorge	Sara
Susan	Randy	Andy
Jose	Gail	Chris

PRE-COURSE SURVEY

<https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/strategic-resources-digital-publications/managing-classroom/developing-pre-course-survey>

Instructors may want to include a few pre-course survey questions to get to know their students as learners:

- What do you want to get out of this course?
- What would you like me to know about you and the circumstances under which you are learning this semester?
- What should I know about you that would help me help you learn better?
- Where do you do your work? Where do you read? Where do you watch videos?
- In a few sentences, what is one of the most memorable/exciting/interesting things you learned last semester?
- When was the first time you remember becoming interested in the subject of this course? Why?
- Tell me one thing that you have found helpful in learning and studying that seems unique among your friends.
- What are three of the factors you imagine will be most impactful on your ability to participate fully in the course this semester?
- Do you have concerns about being able to participate fully during our class time?
- How do you enjoy learning?
- When was the last time you had any interaction with this subject matter? What is your reason for taking this class now?
- What are you most excited about in this course? What are you most worried about?
- What is the most important thing you hope to learn from this course?
- How do you feel you learn best? How do you know?

Instructors may also want to consider a few questions to get to know students as humans:

- What do you prefer to be called?
- What are your pronouns, if you feel comfortable sharing?
- What do you like to do when you are not focused on school (e.g. personal hobbies, Yale extracurriculars, etc.)?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

SCAFFOLDING: 8 KEY FEATURES

A combination of Applebee and Langer (1983) five features
and Puntambekar and Hübscher (2005) four features.

Intentionality: The task has a clear overall purpose driving any separate activity that may contribute to the whole.

Appropriateness: Instructional tasks pose problems that can be solved with help, but students cannot successfully complete them independently.

Structure: Modeling and questioning activities are structured around a model of appropriate approaches to the task and lead to a natural sequence of thought and language.

Internalization: External scaffolding for the activity is gradually withdrawn as the patterns are internalized by the students. (Applebee & Langer, 1983, as cited in Zaho & Orey, 1999, p. 6)

Intersubjectivity: The first component necessary for instructional scaffolds to be effective involves the joint ownership of the task between the student(s) and teacher.

This requires that the task be defined and redefined by the student(s) and teacher such that the student(s) begin to understand the task from the perspective of the more knowledgeable other. As Wood and colleagues (1976) noted, this involves "making it worthwhile for the learner to risk the next step" (p. 98).

Ongoing diagnosis. The teacher must continually know what the learner understands and needs to learn.

This requires a deep understanding of the task, including the subtasks required for mastery, and a keen level of knowledge about the individual learner.

Dialogic and interactive. A third feature of learning scaffolds relates to the conversation that the student(s) and teacher have as part of the learning situation.

This is not a time for a monologue but rather a dialogue in which the teacher monitors student understanding and progress. It requires a feedback system in which the teacher regularly checks for understanding and collects assessment information.

Fading. The final theoretical feature requires that the teacher fades the support provided to the learner(s). In Vygotskian terms, this occurs when the learner has reached *internalization*. Vygotsky (1978) hypothesized that cognition first occurs between people (interpsychological) before moving to intrapsychological (within oneself).

Without fading, this internalization process cannot happen; students become "prompt-dependent," not independent.