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The Igbo Apprenticeship System (Igba Boyi): A Keystone of Entrepreneurship and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

GODSON, CHRISTIAN OSITA¹

ABSTRACT

The Igbo apprenticeship system has historically played a pivotal role in the lives of the Igbo people and has continued to significantly impact Nigeria, particularly in the aftermath of the war and into the present day. This system, characterized by the fusion of traditional values with contemporary business practices, has played a pivotal role in facilitating skills acquisition, wealth generation, and community empowerment. As Nigeria grapples with complex economic challenges, the Igbo apprenticeship system stands as a compelling exemplar of the potential for indigenous knowledge and practices to underpin sustainable progress. The Narrative-Textual Case Study (NTCS) approach and Development Economics (Lewis1984) theoretical framework were employed to delve into the intricacies of the Igbo apprenticeship system. This work delves into an exploration of the multifaceted impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system, shedding light on its significance as a model for harnessing cultural heritage to propel socio-economic growth with recommendations on how to promote and sustain the system. This research recommends judicial intervention in apprentice settlements to address unforeseen Master-Servant disputes and enhance entrepreneurial skills, while enhancing educational institutions' pedagogical approach to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among young people.

Keywords: *Apprenticeship System, Pivotal Role, Nigeria, Traditional Values, Narrative-Textual Case Study (NTCS), Development Economics, Contemporary Business Practices, Skill Acquisition, Wealth Generation, Community Empowerment, Economic Challenges, Indigenous Knowledge, Sustainable Progress, Cultural Heritage, Economic Growth.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Igbo people, according to Chukwuma & Agbim (2020), are predominantly situated in the southeastern region of Nigeria, encompassing the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Their native language is called Igbo language and the language is spoken in various regions of Nigeria, including the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Benue, Kogi, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, and parts of the Niger Delta region, including areas of Edo and Ondo states.

¹ Department of Business Administration, Christopher University, Mowe, Nigeria.

Additionally, the Igbo language is also spoken in other African countries such as Equatorial Guinea and certain parts of Cameroon (Dossou, & Emezue, 2021).

The Igbo apprenticeship system has long been recognized as a fundamental pillar of entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria. It is a traditional form of vocational training and business development that has been practised for centuries among the Igbos in Nigeria (Kanu, 2022; Onu, & Agu, 2021; Chinweuba, & Ezeugwu, 2017; Nnonyelu, Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo & Onyima, 2023). It involves a young person being placed under the guidance and mentorship of a skilled artisan or businessperson to learn a trade or business. Abba & Ndubuisi (2023), note that the apprentice, known as an "Nwa Boyi" or "Nwa Odibo" in Igbo language, works closely with the "Master", known as "Oga" or "Nna okwu" to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience in the chosen field.

Indeed, the apprenticeship system is highly valued in Igbo culture and plays a significant role in the transfer of knowledge, skills, and wealth among the Igbos. This unique system, deeply rooted in the cultural and traditional practices of the Igbo people, has played a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape and fostering economic growth in the region. By providing a platform for skill acquisition, knowledge transfer, and business mentorship, the Igbo apprenticeship system has not only sustained traditional crafts and trades but has also facilitated the emergence of successful entrepreneurs and thriving businesses of Igbo stock (Iwara, Amaechi, & Netshandama, 2019).

This work aims to explore the historical, cultural, and economic significance of the Igbo apprenticeship system, shedding light on its enduring impact on entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

(A) Literature Review

The Igbo apprenticeship system has been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, reflecting its pivotal role in shaping entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria. A rich body of literature exists, offering diverse perspectives on the historical, cultural, and economic dimensions of this unique system.

- i. Historically, scholars have delved into the origins and evolution of the Igbo apprenticeship system, tracing its roots to pre-colonial and colonial eras. Works by authors such as Kanu (2022), Agama & Ohajionu (2021), Onu & Agu (2021), Chinweuba & Ezeugwu (2017), and Nnonyelu, Nnabuife, Onyeizugbe, Anazodo & Onyima (2023) have offered valuable insights into the cultural and traditional underpinnings of the system, emphasizing its importance in safeguarding indigenous

knowledge and expertise.

Moreover, the economic implications of the Igbo apprenticeship system have been a focal point of academic discourse. Studies by researchers such as Opara (2023); Anago (2023); Kanu(2019); Oyewunmi, Oyewunmi, & Moses(2020) have explored the system's role in fostering entrepreneurship and economic development, emphasizing its contribution to job creation, wealth generation, and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria.

In addition to historical and economic perspectives, the Igbo apprenticeship system has also been examined through the lens of social and cultural anthropology. Ethnographic studies by scholars like Ogbujah(2022); Okeke(2023); Eze (2021) have provided in-depth analyses of the social dynamics, kinship networks, and community relationships embedded within the apprenticeship system, shedding light on its broader societal implications.

Furthermore, the contemporary relevance of the Igbo apprenticeship system has been a subject of recent scholarly attention. Works by authors such as Nnonyelu (2020). Agama & Ohajonu (2021); Opara (2023); Iwara(2020) have explored the system's adaptability to modern economic contexts, its role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and its potential for addressing contemporary challenges in Nigeria's business landscape.

Overall, the literature on the Igbo apprenticeship system reflects a multidisciplinary and multifaceted exploration of its historical, cultural, economic, and social dimensions, underscoring its status as a keystone of entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

(B) Methodology

The Narrative-textual case study (NTCS) approach was employed to delve into the intricacies of the Igbo apprenticeship system, providing a rich and detailed account of its historical, cultural, and economic significance. It leverages internet resources such as e-library, e-learning, and online data to create a vast knowledge repository. This complements conventional research techniques and enables a thorough comprehension of a topic (Abouzeedan and Leijon 2007). According to Agbidi, Iyeke & Ikeoji(2022), the NTCS can serve as a tool for advancing the acquisition of information about current realities and is valuable in addressing sustainable development endeavors. At another level, through in-depth interviews with individuals directly involved in the apprenticeship system, as well as entrepreneurs and business owners who have benefitted from the system, a comprehensive narrative was constructed to capture the lived experiences, challenges, and successes within the apprenticeship system.

Given the focus on entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria, Development Economics theoretical framework was applied for the work. This framework emphasized the role of the Igbo apprenticeship system in fostering human capital development, skill acquisition, and economic empowerment. It allowed for an exploration of how apprenticeship contributes to poverty reduction, income generation, and local economic growth, aligning closely with the theme of socio-economic development. Additionally, Development Economics provided a lens through which to analyze the broader impact of the apprenticeship system on individual and community well-being, making it particularly relevant for this topic.

II. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The Igbo apprenticeship system, known as "Igba boyi" has a rich historical evolution and holds significant cultural and economic importance within Igbo society (Onu, Anoruoh, Ukonu, & Agu,2023); Iwara, Amaechi, & Netshandama, 2019).. The system has evolved over centuries, adapting to changing social, economic, and political landscapes while retaining its core principles. Here are the historical evolution and hallmarks of the Igbo apprenticeship system:

- i. **Pre-Colonial Origins:** The apprenticeship system has roots in pre-colonial Igbo society, where it served as a means of transmitting knowledge, skills, and cultural values from one generation to the next. Craftsmanship, trade skills, and traditional practices were passed down through apprenticeship arrangements (Oyewunmi, Oyewunmi, & Moses, 2020).
- ii. **Colonial Era:** During the colonial period, the apprenticeship system adapted to the disruptions caused by colonial rule and the introduction of Western education and economic structures. It continued to serve as a vital mechanism for economic empowerment and skill development within Igbo communities (Henry& Lloyd, 2019).
- iii. **Post-Independence Era:** Following Nigeria's independence, the apprenticeship system played a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurship, economic self-reliance, and community development. It became a cornerstone of Igbo economic resilience and contributed to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017).
- iv. **Contemporary Adaptations:** In the modern era, the apprenticeship system has adapted to globalization, technological advancements, and changing market dynamics. It continues to provide a pathway for skill acquisition, business ownership, and intergenerational wealth transfer (Kanu,2020).

III. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE IGBO ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of identifying and starting a new business venture or reviving (managing) an existing one, organizing and managing resources (including human), and taking on calculated financial risks in the pursuit of value creation (Lowe & Marriott, 2012). Value creation, in the main, presupposes wealth creation, wealth multiplication, wealth distribution, wealth diversification, wealth domestication, and sustenance. Entrepreneurs are individuals who are willing to take on the challenges and uncertainties of starting and running a business, often with innovative ideas and a strong sense of initiative. Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and development, as it fosters innovation, creates jobs, and contributes to the overall prosperity of a society (Ogunlana, 2018).

The Igbo people are renowned for their entrepreneurial spirit and successful apprenticeship system. This has led to the growth of Igbo businesses across the country and beyond. The Igbo culture places a strong emphasis on commerce, with children being introduced to business practices from a young age. The apprenticeship system, a structured form of mentorship, provides young individuals with trade, business ethics, and management skills. After the apprenticeship, the mentor, known as the "Oga," sets up the apprentice with seed capital and tutelage, promoting business growth (Iwara, 2020). Igbo entrepreneurs often benefit from strong community networks, resilience, adaptability, diversification, entrepreneurial practical education, a competitive spirit, global influence, and emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency. Despite challenges like access to larger capital markets, political instability, infrastructural deficits, and ethnic biases, the Igbo people have become a formidable force in entrepreneurship and apprenticeship.

The Igbo entrepreneurial spirit is characterized by a strong emphasis on trade, commerce, and business acumen (Nwagu, 2023; Onwuaturgwu, 2023). Despite the challenges faced by the Igbo people during and after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), their entrepreneurial spirit played a crucial role in navigating the post-war period (Mbara & Gopal, 2021). More than one million ethnic Igbos and other Easterners lost their lives throughout the thirty-month-long conflict. According to Agbo, Okoye, Uwaegbute, & Agbo, C. O. (2021); Korieh (2013), the war's enormous civilian casualty toll had a devastating effect on the Igbo people and is considered the first black-on-black genocide in postcolonial Africa. Many Igbo individuals and communities demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness by rebuilding their businesses and engaging in trade and commerce to restore their livelihoods and economic stability. The Igbo entrepreneurial spirit also contributed to the rapid recovery and development of the region, as

entrepreneurial activities played a significant role in revitalizing the local economy and fostering social and economic progress (Okwuosa, Nwaoga, & Uroko, 2021).

Okwuosa, Nwaoga, & Uroko (2021) further noted after the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, the Nigerian government implemented a decree which limited the amount of money that Igbo businesspeople and individuals could recover from their bank accounts left behind during the war. Also, all Igbo properties in Rivers State were seized as abandoned properties till date. Korieh (2018, noted that Following the end of the conflict, the Igbo were subjected to punitive damages. As an instance, Igbo business owners were banned from operating in Port Harcourt. This resulted in the deprivation of several Igbo people from attaining a successful reintegration after the war. The Banking Obligation (Eastern States Decree), according to Okwuosa, Nwaoga, & Uroko (2021), mandated that banks in the Igbo area provide a fixed payment of 20 pounds to all account holders, regardless of the amount they had deposited before to the conflict. These developments had a significant impact on Igbo businesspeople, many of whom had substantial assets and businesses that were abandoned during the war.

Despite the limitations imposed by the government, the Igbo entrepreneurial spirit played a crucial role in navigating the post-civil war challenges. Here are some key aspects of the Igbo entrepreneurial spirit and how it helped them overcome these challenges:

- i. **Resilience and Adaptability:** The Igbo people are known for their resilience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In the aftermath of the war, many Igbo businesspeople demonstrated resilience by rebuilding their businesses from the ground up, often in new locations or under different circumstances. They adapted to the new economic and social landscape, finding innovative ways to revive their enterprises and regain their financial stability.
- ii. **Entrepreneurial Ingenuity:** Igbo businesspeople are known for their entrepreneurial ingenuity and creativity. In the face of post-war challenges, many individuals demonstrated resourcefulness by diversifying their business activities, exploring new markets, and developing innovative strategies to overcome the limitations imposed by the government's policies. This entrepreneurial spirit enabled them to find new opportunities and rebuild their economic livelihoods.
- iii. **Community Support and Collaboration:** The Igbo entrepreneurial spirit is deeply rooted in community support and collaboration. Many Igbo individuals and business owners received assistance from their communities, including financial support, resources, and networking opportunities. This collaborative approach helped to

rebuild businesses and create new economic opportunities, leveraging the collective strength of the community.

- iv. **International Trade and Networking:** The Igbo entrepreneurial spirit extends beyond local and national boundaries, with many businesspeople engaging in international trade and networking. Despite the challenges of the post-war period, Igbo entrepreneurs leveraged their international connections and trade networks to access new markets, source goods and materials, and expand their business activities beyond the immediate constraints of the domestic economy.
- v. **The Igbo apprenticeship system:** This system allows “Masters” to pursue business opportunities outside their immediate environment, while apprentices gain hands-on experience and demonstrate their capabilities. This fosters a sense of community, trust, and collaboration, allowing business owners to expand networks and opportunities while ensuring the continuity and growth of their businesses.

Overall, the Igbo entrepreneurial spirit, characterized by resilience, adaptability, community support, ingenuity, international networking, and the apprenticeship system played a pivotal role in navigating the post-civil war challenges. Despite the limitations imposed by the government, many Igbo businesspeople were able to rebuild their enterprises, contribute to economic recovery, and sustain their entrepreneurial endeavors, ultimately contributing to the revitalization of the Igbo economy and society.

IV. IMMUTABLE BENEFITS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

- i. **Skill Transmission and Preservation:** The apprenticeship system is a vehicle for preserving traditional skills, craftsmanship, and indigenous knowledge, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices and trades within Igbo society.
- ii. **Entrepreneurial Development:** It fosters a culture of entrepreneurship and self-reliance, empowering individuals to establish and manage their businesses, contribute to local economies, and create employment opportunities.
- iii. **Social Cohesion and Community Support:** The system promotes social cohesion and community support, as apprentices receive guidance, mentorship, and practical assistance from their masters and the broader community.
- iv. **Wealth Creation and Redistribution:** It facilitates the accumulation and redistribution of wealth within Igbo communities, as successful apprentices reinvest in their communities and support the next generation of apprentices.

- v. **Adaptability and Resilience:** The apprenticeship system has demonstrated adaptability and resilience, enabling Igbo individuals and communities to navigate economic challenges, conflicts, and periods of instability.
- vi. **Cultural Identity and Pride:** It reinforces cultural identity and pride, as apprenticeship traditions are deeply rooted in Igbo heritage and contribute to the preservation of cultural values and customs.
- vii. **Economic Impact:** The system has a significant economic impact, contributing to the development of local industries, trade networks, and the overall economic vitality of Igbo land and beyond.

The Igbo apprenticeship system's historical evolution and enduring significance reflect its role as a dynamic and integral component of Igbo culture, economy, and social fabric. It continues to shape the livelihoods and aspirations of individuals and communities, embodying the resilience and ingenuity of Igbo entrepreneurship and craftsmanship.

V. OPERATIONAL DETAILS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

The Igbo Apprenticeship Scheme is a traditional system in Igbo culture that involves the recruitment and training of apprentices in various trades and crafts. Here are the operational details of the Igbo Apprenticeship Scheme:

- i. **Recruitment of apprentices:** Apprentices are typically recruited from within the family or community, often based on family connections or recommendations. Sometimes, individuals may approach a “Master” (Oga) to request to become an apprentice
- ii. **The role of the “Master” (Oga) and the apprentice (Nwaor Boyi or "Nwa Odibo"):**

The “Master” (Oga) is responsible for training and mentoring the apprentice in the chosen trade or craft while the apprentice (Nwa Boyi or "Nwa Odibo") is expected to learn from the “Master” (Oga) and assist with various tasks.

- iii. **Duration and stages of apprenticeship:** The duration of apprenticeship varies depending on trade or craft, but it typically lasts for several years. The apprenticeship is often divided into stages, with the apprentice gradually taking on more responsibilities and learning advanced skills as they progress.
- iv. **Terms of engagement and responsibilities of each party:** The master is responsible for providing training, guidance, and sometimes accommodation and food for the apprentice. The apprentice is expected to show respect, diligence, and a willingness

to learn from the “Master” (Oga)

- v. The "settlement" process (Igba-Boyi or "Igba Odibo") upon completion of apprenticeship: Upon completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice is expected to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a settlement process. This involves showcasing their work to the community and potentially receiving financial or material support to help them establish their own business or workshop.

VI. INCIDENCES OF WICKED “MASTERS OGA” AND APPRENTICES

Several incidents can potentially emanate from a wicked “**Masters**” or a disobedient and dubious apprentice within the apprenticeship system. Here are some likely scenarios for each:

(A) From a Wicked (“Master (Oga)”):

- i. **Exploitation and Abuse:** A wicked master may exploit and mistreat apprentices, subjecting them to long hours, unsafe working conditions, or inadequate compensation.
- ii. **Withholding Knowledge and Skills:** The master may intentionally withhold essential knowledge and skills from the apprentice, hindering their learning and professional development.
- iii. **Discrimination:** The master may discriminate against apprentices based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, or social status, creating a hostile or unfair working environment.
- iv. **Unfair Treatment:** Wicked masters may engage in unfair or unethical business practices, exposing apprentices to dishonest dealings or compromising their integrity.
- v. **Psychological or Emotional Harm:** The behavior of a wicked master can lead to psychological or emotional harm for the apprentice, causing stress, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy.

(B) From a Disobedient and Dubious Apprentice:

- i. **Neglect of Responsibilities:** A disobedient apprentice may neglect their duties and responsibilities, leading to substandard work or unfinished tasks.
- ii. **Theft or Misappropriation:** A dubious apprentice may engage in theft or misappropriation of resources, materials, or funds belonging to the master or the business.

- iii. **Deception and Dishonesty:** The apprentice may engage in deceptive practices, such as misrepresenting their skills or qualifications, or providing false information to clients or customers.
- iv. **Damage to Reputation:** The actions of a dubious apprentice can damage the reputation of the master or the business, leading to loss of trust and credibility within the community.
- v. **Conflict and Disruption:** Disobedient behavior can lead to conflict and disruption within the apprenticeship relationship, affecting the overall functioning of the business or trade.

(C) Some Likely Panaceas to Master-Servants Disputes:

Addressing the potential incidents of cases of dubious or disobedient apprentices and wicked bosses or masters requires a proactive approach to promoting ethical conduct, fostering mutual respect, and establishing clear expectations and guidelines within the apprenticeship system. It is essential to address misconduct and mistreatment while also promoting accountability and professionalism among both masters and apprentices. Hence, dealing with cases of dubious or disobedient apprentices, as well as wicked bosses or masters, within the apprenticeship system requires a balanced approach that prioritizes fairness, accountability, and the protection of rights. Here are some strategies for addressing these issues:

- i. **Legal Awareness and Advocacy:** Educate apprentices and masters about their rights and responsibilities within the apprenticeship relationship. Encourage the use of legal channels to address disputes and ensure that both parties understand the legal implications of their actions.
- ii. **Mediation and Conflict Resolution:**** Establish mechanisms for mediation and conflict resolution to address disputes between apprentices and masters. This can involve the involvement of community leaders, elders, or trained mediators to facilitate dialogue and find mutually acceptable solutions.
- iii. **Regulatory Oversight:** Implement regulatory oversight to monitor apprenticeship agreements and ensure compliance with labor laws and ethical standards. This can help prevent exploitation and abuse within the apprenticeship system.
- iv. **Support Services:** Provide access to support services for apprentices who experience mistreatment or unfair practices. This can include counseling, legal aid, and advocacy to protect the rights of apprentices.

- v. **Community Engagement:** Foster a sense of community responsibility for upholding fair treatment within the apprenticeship system. Encourage community members to intervene in cases of misconduct and support the resolution of disputes.
- vi. **Training and Ethical Guidelines:** Offer training and guidance on ethical conduct and professional behavior for both apprentices and masters. Establish clear ethical guidelines and expectations to promote respectful and fair interactions.
- vii. **Documentation and Reporting:** Encourage the documentation and reporting of cases of misconduct or abuse within the apprenticeship system. This can help track patterns of behavior and inform interventions to address systemic issues.
- viii. **Empowerment and Advocacy:** Empower apprentices to advocate for their rights and well-being. Provide them with the knowledge and resources to assert themselves in cases of mistreatment or unfair treatment.
- ix. **Enforcement of Standards:** Enforce standards of conduct within the apprenticeship system, holding masters accountable for their treatment of apprentices and ensuring that apprentices fulfill their obligations within the apprenticeship agreement.
- x. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Approach cases of misconduct within the apprenticeship system with an understanding of cultural nuances and traditional practices, while also ensuring that fundamental human rights are respected and upheld.

With strategic implementation of the aforesaid, the apprenticeship system can work to address cases of misconduct and mistreatment, fostering a fair and supportive environment for both apprentices and masters. It is essential to balance the preservation of cultural traditions with the protection of individual rights and well-being.

VII. CHALLENGES OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

The Igbo apprenticeship system, while highly esteemed and deeply ingrained in Igbo culture, faces several challenges in the contemporary era. These challenges have emerged due to shifts in societal, economic, and educational dynamics. Some of the key challenges include:

- i. **Changing Social Dynamics:** The traditional family structures and community dynamics that historically supported the apprenticeship system have evolved. Changes in family sizes, migration patterns, and urbanization have impacted the traditional apprenticeship model.
- ii. **Educational Attainment:** With the emphasis on formal education, many young individuals may opt for academic pursuits over apprenticeship, leading to a decline

in the number of individuals entering the system.

- iii. **Quest to make money by quick means by the youths:** The Igbo apprentice scheme is under threat from some youths' illegal activities like drug dealing, internet fraud, and kidnapping, threatening its core values, reputation, and legal troubles.
- iv. **Globalization and Modernization:** The influx of modern industries and global business practices has led to a shift in career aspirations among the younger generation, potentially diminishing interest in traditional apprenticeship trades.
- v. **Regulatory and Legal Challenges:** The lack of formal recognition and regulation of apprenticeship agreements may expose apprentices to exploitation and unfair treatment. There is a need for legal frameworks to protect the rights of apprentices and ensure fair practices.
- vi. **Technological Disruption:** The rapid advancement of technology has transformed various industries, potentially impacting the relevance of traditional apprenticeship trades. The system must adapt to incorporate modern skills and technological competencies.
- vii. **Economic Shifts:** Changes in market demands and consumer preferences may affect the viability of certain traditional trades, posing challenges for apprentices seeking to establish businesses in these sectors.
- viii. **Gender Dynamics:** The traditional apprenticeship system has historically been male-dominated, and there is a need to address gender inclusivity and encourage the participation of women in apprenticeship programs.
- ix. **Youth Migration :** The allure of urban centers and opportunities in other regions may lead to a decline in the number of young individuals willing to engage in apprenticeship within their local communities.
- x. **Skills Mismatch:** The skills taught within the apprenticeship system may not always align with the demands of modern industries, leading to a potential mismatch between the skills acquired through apprenticeship and the skills required in the contemporary job market.
- xi. **Entrepreneurial Challenges:** While the apprenticeship system fosters entrepreneurship, apprentices may face challenges in accessing startup capital, navigating business regulations, and competing in a rapidly changing business environment.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including efforts to modernize the apprenticeship system, promote its relevance in contemporary industries, provide legal protections for apprentices, and integrate technological and business management skills into the traditional apprenticeship curriculum. Additionally, promoting awareness of the cultural and economic value of the apprenticeship system and fostering partnerships with educational institutions and government agencies can help ensure its continued vitality.

Findings and Discussions: The Narrative-textual case study (NTCS) revealed a multitude of insights into the Igbo apprenticeship system, shedding light on its enduring impact on entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria. The findings and discussions can be summarized as follows:

- i. **Preservation of Traditional Crafts and Skills:** The case study highlighted how the apprenticeship system has played a pivotal role in preserving traditional crafts and skills that are integral to Igbo culture. Through the mentorship of master craftsmen, apprentices have learned age-old techniques and practices, ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage.
- ii. **Entrepreneurial Empowerment:** The Narrative-Textual Case Study (NTCS) underscored the system's role in empowering entrepreneurs and fostering a culture of enterprise. By providing aspiring business owners with hands-on training, mentorship, and access to networks, the apprenticeship system has been instrumental in nurturing a new generation of entrepreneurs who contribute to the socio-economic fabric of Nigeria.
- iii. **Community Cohesion and Social Capital:** The case study revealed how the apprenticeship system has strengthened community cohesion and social capital within Igbo society. The relationships forged between apprentices, master craftsmen, and business owners have not only facilitated knowledge transfer but have also created a supportive ecosystem where individuals collaborate and share resources for mutual benefit.
- iv. **Economic Resilience and Adaptability:** Through the narratives of entrepreneurs and business owners, the case study demonstrated the economic resilience and adaptability of the apprenticeship system. Despite evolving economic landscapes, the system has demonstrated an ability to adapt to modern contexts, fostering innovation and sustainable business practices.

In conclusion, the narrative-textual case study provided a nuanced and multifaceted

understanding of the Igbo apprenticeship system, highlighting its role as a keystone of entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria. The findings and discussions underscored the system's cultural significance, entrepreneurial impact, and resilience, emphasizing its potential as a model for sustainable economic development rooted in indigenous knowledge and practices.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the Igbo apprenticeship system has demonstrated its pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurship and driving socio-economic development in Nigeria. Its unique blend of traditional values and modern business practices has contributed to skill acquisition, wealth creation, and community empowerment. As Nigeria seeks to address its economic challenges, the Igbo apprenticeship system serves as a valuable model for leveraging indigenous knowledge and practices to achieve sustainable progress. Embracing and supporting this system can further propel Nigeria's economic growth and contribute to the preservation of its rich cultural heritage. Therefore, to support the future growth of the apprenticeship system in Igbo land and Nigeria as a whole, several recommendations can be considered:

- i. **Integration with Formal Education:** Foster collaboration between the apprenticeship system and formal educational institutions to create pathways for apprentices to earn recognized qualifications and certifications, as well as to integrate modern skills and knowledge into traditional trades.
- ii. **Technology Integration:** Embrace technology to modernize apprenticeship training, incorporating digital skills, e-learning platforms, and digital business tools to equip apprentices for success in contemporary industries.
- iii. **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:** Establish legal frameworks to protect the rights of apprentices, formalize apprenticeship agreements, and ensure compliance with labor standards and business regulations.
- iv. **Financial Support:** Provide access to financial resources, startup capital, and funding opportunities for apprentices to establish and grow their businesses, fostering economic empowerment and sustainability.
- v. **Quality Assurance and Standards:** Implement quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that apprenticeship programs meet industry standards, safety regulations, and ethical practices, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the system.
- vi. **Promotion and Awareness:** Launch public awareness campaigns to highlight the

cultural and economic value of the apprenticeship system, promoting its benefits and encouraging participation among the younger generation.

- vii. **Gender Inclusivity:** Encourage the participation of women in apprenticeship programs and address gender disparities within the system, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for skill development and entrepreneurship.
- viii. **Research and Documentation:** Support research initiatives to document the impact and effectiveness of the apprenticeship system, providing valuable insights for its continuous improvement and adaptation to modern challenges.
- ix. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between government agencies, educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and community organizations to collectively support the growth and sustainability of the apprenticeship system.
- x. **Cultural Preservation:** Recognize and celebrate the cultural significance of apprenticeship traditions, preserving traditional craftsmanship and skills while adapting them to contemporary business practices.

Methodical implementation of these recommendations, the apprenticeship system in Igbo land and Nigeria can evolve to meet the needs of a changing society and economy, ensuring its continued relevance and impact in the development of skilled entrepreneurs and business leaders.

(A) Further research

- i. **Long-term Economic Impact:** Future research could focus on conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term economic impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system on individuals, communities, and the broader Nigerian economy. This could involve tracking the career trajectories and business outcomes of apprentices over extended periods to understand the sustained effects of their participation in the system.
- ii. **Gender Dynamics:** Exploring the gender dynamics within the Igbo apprenticeship system would be valuable, particularly in understanding the roles and experiences of female apprentices and entrepreneurs. Investigating how gender influences access to opportunities, mentorship, and business success within the system could provide insights into gender-specific challenges and opportunities for empowerment.
- iii. **Modern Adaptation:** Given the evolving nature of the Nigerian economy, research could investigate how the Igbo apprenticeship system is adapting to modern

industries, technologies, and global market trends. Understanding how the system is integrating with contemporary business practices and addressing emerging economic challenges would be crucial for its continued relevance and effectiveness.

- iv. **Policy Implications:** Research focusing on the policy implications of the Igbo apprenticeship system could provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders. This could involve assessing the regulatory environment, identifying barriers to expansion, and exploring policy interventions that could support and enhance the system's contribution to entrepreneurship and socio-economic development.
- v. **Comparative Studies:** Comparative studies with other traditional apprenticeship systems within Nigeria or in other countries could offer valuable cross-cultural insights. Understanding similarities, differences, and best practices across different systems could inform strategies for preserving and leveraging traditional apprenticeship models for economic development.
- vi. **Social and Cultural Impact:** Research exploring the broader social and cultural impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system on identity, community cohesion, and intergenerational relationships would provide a holistic understanding of its significance beyond economic outcomes.

By delving into these future research areas, scholars can further enrich the understanding of the Igbo apprenticeship system and its role as a keystone of entrepreneurship and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

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