

Impact of Igbo Apprenticeship System on the Development of Auto Spare Parts Market in Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Apprenticeship training system is a human resource development scheme that blends learning and training in preparing individuals to set-up, own and run independent businesses. Historically, apprenticeship is the oldest form of training in the world of work and business. This system has been insinuated to be secret of the Igbo being the most industrious tribe in Nigeria. This study examined the impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS) on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market in Anambra State of Nigeria. Questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection. The study adopted the quantitative approach to examine 246 responses carefully drawn from the Nnewi auto spare parts business clusters in Anambra state. Data collected were analyzed using the regression model of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS). Findings from the study revealed that the Igbo apprenticeship system had positive and significant impact on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market in Anambra State of Nigeria. The study recommended that the government of Nigeria and Africa by extension should adopt the practice of the Igbo man apprenticeship system as a strategy for the development of Nigeria and African in general.

KEYWORDS: Igbo, Apprenticeship System, Development, Auto Spare Parts, Nnewi

1. INTRODUCTION

The Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria is known for success in business and entrepreneurship. The nexus between entrepreneurship and favourable economic outcomes is well acknowledged, and is largely believed to guarantee a collaborative environment for the advantageous association among relevant actors in the business ecosystem of an economy (Vracheva and Stoyneva, 2020). Therefore, bolstering entrepreneurial effort and sustainability has popularly become a *sine qua non* for expanding economic performance globally (Ekesiobi & Dimnwobi, 2020).

Igbo entrepreneurial and business activities remain the backbone of the Nigerian economy (Orugun & Nafiu, 2014). Through an apprenticeship scheme known as “Igba-boi”, this ethnic group have dominated and continued to excel above their contemporaries from other ethnic groups in the country and beyond (Iwara, Amaechi & Netshandama, 2019). Apprenticeship training system is a human resources development scheme that blends learning and training in preparing individuals to set-up, own and run independent businesses (Iwueke, Halima &

Oparaku, 2020). The Igbo apprenticeship system is an “Oga - Nwaboi” relationship, that is a Master-Servant relationship where the master settles the servant at the completion of the apprenticeship period.

According to Onyima, Nzewi & Chikezie (2013):

“The apprenticeship system was brought to the limelight in Nigeria after the Nigerian-Biafran war. Many parents who were left with nothing after the war were forced to send their children (8-20 years) to survive as traders. This was how Igbo settlers after the war rebuilt Onitsha, Nnewi, Aba and most parts of Lagos. In the apprenticeship system, the ‘Oga’ and ‘Nwaboi’ are in agreement for a period ranging from 4-7 years whereby the apprentice is to serve and learn from the ‘Oga’. Usually, the mode of settlement is contained in the agreement”.

Apprenticeship as a method of establishing young people, and training the unskilled, has been very beneficial to the Igbos. Many people achieved excellence in their calling because their “Oga” trained and settled them well. Many notable business moguls in the Nnewi auto spare parts market attribute their success to what they learnt as apprentice. Today, the Nnewi auto spare parts market is arguably the largest spare part market in Nigeria. Admittedly, apprenticeship offers the Nwaboi the opportunity to acquire business acumen, work attitude, how to deal with suppliers and customers, and interaction with other practitioners. It provides contacts/networks and lessens the burden on the Nwaboi’s parents.

However, in recent times, the rate of Small business failures in South East Nigeria has brought to the front burner, the critical role of Apprenticeship Training System in Business development. Business Failure has adverse impact on individuals, organizations and the entire system. Apprenticeship which is intergenerational means of transmitting technical skills and tacit knowledge from the master to the apprentices is gradually declining as a result of various factors like poor mentorship, educational and fund constraints. Consequently, this paper investigates the impact of Igbo apprenticeship system on the development of the Nnewi auto spare parts market. Knowledge from this study could help in the development of other areas of human endeavor. The study is divided into five (5) sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two and three is the review of related literature and methodology respectively. Section four is the analysis of data and discussion of findings while is section five conclusion.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Apprentice refers to a person who learns a job or skill by working for a fixed period of time, for someone who is very good at that job or skill (Apprentice, 2020). An apprentice is therefore one, in most cases, a teenager or young person who elects, or is persuaded to undertake or acquire practical, and in some cases, theoretical knowledge in a specialised area of interest, or occupation he/she would want to go into in future, or earn a living from. Apprentice refers to a person who has agreed to submit himself/herself within a period of time under the tutelage of a master/mistress, with the aim of acquiring practical, hands on, experience, and mastering the

nitty-gritty of a trade, vocation or profession. In some other climes, apprentice is seen somewhat differently, as a young person between the ages of 14 and 24 who is enrolled in and attending school, in case he/she has not completed secondary education, and enrolled in an apprenticeship programme (Apprenticeship Manual, 2013).

The Brazilian characterization of apprentice highlights the different ways apprenticeship is perceived and treated in different societies. International Labour Organization (2017) defines apprenticeship as systematic long term training for a recognized occupation taking place substantially within an undertaking or under an independent craftsman, governed by a written a contract of apprenticeship, and is subject to established standards. Also, (OECD-ILO, 2020) identify apprenticeship as an effective mechanism for a seamless transition for young people to move from school to the world of work. To UNESCO (2015) apprenticeship is defined as a “unique form of vocational education combining job learning and school based training for specifically defined competences and work processes, regulated by law and based on written employment contract with a compensatory payment, and standard social protection scheme.” Usually, certification follows the expiration of training where relevant certificates are awarded to successful apprentices.

The foregoing definitions seem to exclude the type of apprenticeship prevalent in Igboland that are not affiliated to, or derived from Schools, or Colleges. Vareto (2017) looks at “apprenticeship as a job that includes training”. This is too sweeping a definition, as it includes everything in employment circles as apprenticeship, whether it is training on the job, or off the job. In several societies, in Europe and America, emphasis is now on school and work based apprenticeship system, although the current trend is moving towards company based model OECD-ILO (2020) where the industry influences the pattern, character and content of apprenticeship. It is however Gonnon’s definition that seems to mirror, or at least embrace apprenticeship, as it has been practised in Nigerian type societies, where Gonnon, (2011) contends that apprenticeship is a mode of learning that focuses on acquiring specialised skills pursuant to getting young adults ready for work and society. Generally speaking, apprenticeship provides the apprentice specific opportunity “to get a foot in the door for future employment (UNESCO, 2015).

EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

Iwueke, Halima & Oparaku (2020) investigated apprenticeship training system and business sustainability in Anambra state using a population of 1000 respondents from different trades/crafts/business. Questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection while Chi-Square was used to test the hypotheses. Related literatures on apprenticeship and business sustainability were reviewed. Findings revealed that the level of education of the apprentices determines the acquisition of the trade knowledge and also the Masters willingness to mentor the apprentices who must be ready and have the capacity to learn. Therefore, the study recommended that apprentices must possess some levels of education that is basic for effective understanding and comprehension of trade knowledge and secrets. Also the masters must have mentoring skills to bring out the creativity in apprentices, while taking cognizance of business trends.

Nnonyelu & Onyeizugbe (2020) sought to interrogate the practise and direction of Igbo apprenticeship, with particular interest in unraveling the reasons for the declining interest in

apprenticeship generally among Igbo youths in South East, Nigeria. The paper was an exploratory, qualitative research paper premised on desk research encapsulating a comprehensive review of ethnographic and historical records while also utilizing the observation method in informal workplaces and trading sites spread across diverse work settings. The findings indicate that the much talked about Igbo apprenticeship is facing significant challenges, and several factors have combined to demarket Igbo apprenticeship, making it less appealing to unemployed youths, with grave implications for unemployment, wealth creation and poverty reduction. Given the demand of the modern labour market, the paper called for a hybrid model of apprenticeship that introduces in a more systematic manner, elements of traditional structure with a view to improving skill levels, job independence, higher remuneration, active engagement and sustenance of interest of all stakeholders.

Ekesiobi & Dimnwobi (2020) investigated the entrepreneurship practise of the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria. The study intended to deepen entrepreneurial development and employment generation in the country as well as provide empirical support to situate the Igbo entrepreneurship model (IEM) among existing entrepreneurship literature, particularly for research in developing countries. The study adopted a quantitative approach to examine 1187 responses carefully drawn from the Onitsha and Nnewi business clusters in Anambra state. In addition to descriptive demonstrations, the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) technique was employed to estimate the effects of treatment on the treated by pairing treatment and control units with similar attributes on the propensity score and other likely covariates. Specifically, the PSM is used to perform a counterfactual analysis of the effect of the entrepreneurship model on business outcomes by examining participants and non-participants in the IEM. Findings of the study indicated that entrepreneurs who participated in the IEM have higher business survival rate, business growth rate and access to trade and informal credit, while non-IEM entrepreneurs have better access to formal credit source than the IEM graduates.

Kanu (2019) reviewed the Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS), a popular model used in Nigeria, especially by people of the South East. The system recognized as the most successful business incubation platform in Africa and, arguably, in the world. Analysis of literature on IAS showed that complementarily was the secret behind the success of the IAS. The complementarily features of the IAS were identified and a descriptive survey was used to investigate whether integrating the complementarily features into EDP will be helpful in raising successful entrepreneurs. Subjects for the investigation were 92 entrepreneurs whose businesses emerged or benefited from entrepreneurship development programmes in Nigeria and have operated their businesses for at least one year. The subjects, who were selected from South-West Nigeria, responded to a 30-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by 5 experts and pre-tested. The pre-test result produced a Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of 0.87. Data collected in the study were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. Results revealed that integrating the complementarily features of the IAS into EDP will be very helpful in creating more successful entrepreneurs. The study recommended that sponsors and organizers of EDP need better understanding of the IAS and develop capacity to integrate its complementarily features.

Rufai, Assim & Iroh (2019) in their view sought to modernize this system. Literatures were reviewed pertaining the origin, diversity, success and limitations of the apprenticeship system in

general and Igbo apprenticeship system in particular. Having identified the gaps and loopholes of the system, a suitable educational model was proposed combining general and apprenticeship education. Recommendations were also provided based on international best practices. It was discovered that the system has become unattractive to the youths. Amongst others, it was recommended that the system should be reviewed such that it creates an innovative ecosystem. They aimed at facilitating the improvement of the Igbo-Apprenticeship system in Nigeria.

Anigbogu, Onwuteaka & Okoli (2019) examined the Igbo man perspectives of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria: Implications to economic growth using the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and the regression model of the Ordinary Least Square (OLS). A total sample of four hundred and eighty two (482) SMEs owners of Igbo extraction were the respondents of this study. From the result of the PCA, the principal components that serves as motivations for apprenticeship by Igbo entrepreneurs is the cash infusion giving to apprentice as start-up capital. Secondly, the principal components form the Igbo man perspectives of factors influencing entrepreneurial development is tolerance for risk and thirdly, the principal components from the challenges in the Igbo man apprenticeship system is that apprentices sometimes steals from their masters and adds to their start-up capital. Regression results revealed that all the three coefficients (The motivations for apprenticeship by Igbo entrepreneurs; Igbo man perspective of factors influencing entrepreneurial development; and challenges in the Igbo man apprenticeship system) have significant effect on entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria. The study recommended that the government of Nigeria and African by extension should adopt the practice of the Igbo man apprenticeship system and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria as a strategy for the development African entrepreneurship. This is because of its sustainability in SMEs development and poverty reduction among the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria among others.

Kanu (2019), investigated the relationship between Igwebuiké philosophy and the socio-economic categories of Igbo reality, with particular reference to the Igbo apprenticeship system anchored on the Igbo social structure of reality, the Igbo think home ideology and the Igbo spirit of resilience. Using the philosophical idea of Igwebuiké, this piece has established the centrality of Igwebuiké in the Igbo apprenticeship system that has created wealth over the years for the Igbo, making the Igbo the most successful business men and women in Africa. The beauty of it is its simplicity. It is a system that does not take equity or require raising huge capital. It is driven by a human-platform and it works based on the Igwebuiké philosophy that understands the other as a part of me, and thus making me responsible for the other. Beginning with the question of who the Igbo is, this paper studied and unveiled the various dimensions of the Igbo apprenticeship system and the human platform or network that underlies its efficacy. For the purpose of the research, the Igwebuiké indigenous method of research was employed. While establishing that Igwebuiké philosophy is at the heart of the Igbo apprenticeship system of commerce, the paper argues that there is the need for the government to invest in this incubator system for the creation of wealth and for the tackling of the problem of unemployment.

Iwara, Amaechi & Vhonani (2019), The Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria is known for success in business and entrepreneurship. Through an apprenticeship scheme known as Igba-boi, people from this ethnic group have dominated and continued to excel above their contemporaries from

other ethnic groups in the country and beyond. This article profiles the “Igba-boi” scheme and comes up with a model on how to improve it. A survey research design grounded on a qualitative method was used. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify individuals with in-depth knowledge about this approach for one-on-one interview and focus group discussion in selected regions of Nigeria. Findings reveal the approach involves three main stages: the talent identification, the learning stage and the settlement/start-off stage. The parents/guidance helps identify their children’s entrepreneurship ambition and provide capacity building such as sourcing a mentor. The child indicates interest of entrepreneurship and accepts to pursue the career at early stage. Potential mentor/entrepreneur takes the child through the training process and in the end provides support to establish and individually innovation. In light of discrepancies during settlement of apprentices after a successful completion of training, the study recommended legal involvement in the process. It will be appropriate for the government to use the approach as a resource for entrepreneurship capacity building. The approach should be improved as pedagogy in institutions of learning to spur entrepreneurship spirit amongst the youths.

Chinweuba & Ezeugwu (2017) analytically investigated the peculiar sources, circumstances and skills that are the fulcrum of increasing socio-economic performance of the Igbo people. The study finds that entrepreneurial performance of the Igbos is underscored by their economic culture and value, which are highly existential in their traditions and belief system. These are however fostered by the long years of marginalization by successive Nigerian governments, as well as other prominent factors in pre and post independence Nigeria. The research concludes that with this progressive rate, Igbo people will in time be a force to reckon with in the socio-political and techno-economic sector of Nigeria and Africa at large.

Onyima, Nzewi & Chiekezie (2013) investigated the effects of apprenticeship and social capital on new business creation process of Igbo entrepreneurs in Wukari Taraba State. The high success rate of apprentice turned entrepreneurs and increasing attachment of these entrepreneurs to their ethnic based union were the reasons that gave rise to the study. 40 businesses located in Wukari Local Government Area that were established by Igbos were randomly selected and questionnaire method was the mechanism applied in generating responses. Findings revealed that while apprenticeship had significant effects on pre-founding activities- when the business was taking off, social capital became important when the business had been established. Apprenticeship had significant effects on business idea generation, idea modification, business location and financing while social capital served as source of insurance services and access to information. The study recommended that apprenticeship practice should be revived and modernized and also that ethnic based unions should be given legal recognition and restructured to play both social and economic roles

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey research design. A sample size of 246 was taken from the total population of the auto spare parts dealers at the Nnewi auto spare parts market using the Adams and Schvaneveldt (1985) formula for determining the sample size of an unknown population. The data were primary in nature and were collected through the use of questionnaire. The copies

of the returned questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the pattern of data. The hypothesis was tested using the Ordinary Least Square Regression Analysis. The signs and significance of the regression coefficients were relied upon in explaining the nature and influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable as to determine both magnitude and direction of impact. The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance. The model adopted in the study, following the general regression model was specified as follows:

$$\text{NASPM} = a_0 + a_1\text{IAS} + \mu$$

Where: NASPM = Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market

- IAS = Igbo Apprenticeship System
- a_1 = Coefficient of the independent variable
- a_0 = Constant
- μ = Error Term

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Before the analysis, the hypothesis is stated in both Null and Alternative forms as follows:

H_0 : The Igbo Man apprenticeship system has no positive and significant impact on the development of the Nnewi auto spare parts market.

H_1 : The Igbo Man apprenticeship system has positive and significant impact on the development of the Nnewi auto spare parts market.

THE REGRESSION RESULTS

METHODS=Ordinary Least Square (OLS)

RESIDUALS= DURBIN

DF= 1159

Dependent Var.= NASPM

Independent Var.= IAS

Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------------|------|
| Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market | 4.6224 | .48677 | 1160 |
| Igbo Apprenticeship System | 158.7966 | 56.13525 | 1160 |

Source: Researcher's output (Spss 23)

Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .742 ^a | .857 | .816 | .117 | .009 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Igbo Apprenticeship System

b. Dependent Variable: Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|------|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 32.096 | 1 | 32.096 | 153.254 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 242.521 | 1158 | .209 | | |
| | Total | 274.617 | 1159 | | | |

- a. Dependent Variable: Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Igbo Apprenticeship System

Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.152 | .040 | | 102.941 | .000 |
| | NASPM | .203 | .000 | .342 | 12.380 | .000 |

- a. Dependent Variable: Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market

$R = 0.742$
 $R^2 = 0.857$
 $F = 153.254$

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The correlation coefficient (R) which has the value of 0.742 indicates that the linear correlation is positive and strong between the dependent variable and the independent variable. R-square is the coefficient of determination of the correlation which has the value 0.857 i.e 86% approximately. This means that 86% of the total variation in the dependent variable, Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market was explained by the independent variable, Igbo Apprenticeship System.

In the analysis, the p-value (0.001) is less than α -Level (0.05). Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Igbo Apprenticeship System has significant effect on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market. The coefficient of 0.203 and the t-value of 12.380 also show that the impact is positive. Therefore, the Igbo Apprenticeship System has positive and significant impact on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market.

5. CONCLUSION

An Igbo entrepreneurial and business activity is arguably the backbone of the Nigerian economy. Through an apprenticeship scheme known as “Igba-boi”, the Igbos have dominated the business environment and continued to excel above their contemporaries from other ethnic groups in the country and beyond. The apprenticeship system was brought to the limelight in Nigeria after the Nigerian-Biafran war. Many parents who were left with nothing after the war were forced to

send their children (8-20 years) to survive as traders. This was how Igbo settlers after the war rebuilt Onitsha, Nnewi, Aba and most parts of Lagos. Despite other towns mentioned, Nnewi seems to have attained an enviable height in the development of the Nnewi auto spare parts through the apprenticeship model.

The study examined the impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS) on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market in Anambra State of Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that the Igbo apprenticeship system had positive and significant impact on the development of the Nnewi Auto Spare Parts Market in Anambra State of Nigeria. By implication, the apprenticeship system has contributed in no small way to the development and sustenance of the auto spare part market at Nnewi. Consequently, the study recommended that the government of Nigeria and Africa by extension should adopt the practice of the Igbo man apprenticeship system as a strategy for the development of Nigeria and African in general.

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