

The Igbo Apprenticeship System and Socio-Economic Development of Contemporary Igbo Youths: An Ethical Reconsideration

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Abstract

This study advances on projecting ethical reconsiderations for the terms of agreement together with the rules of engagement pertinent to the Igbo apprenticeship system, to enhance its relevance in the socio-economic development of the contemporary Igbo youths. The data for this study were collected from personal communications and systematic consultation of the extant literature apposite to the subject matter. The imperative conceptions and deductions were technically outlined exclusively on the survey and fusion of the congregated specifics harmonized through the area culture approach. This study adopts the Incentive Theory of Motivation. Findings posit that the Igbo apprenticeship system has contributed immensely to both human and community development in Igbo societies. However, there appears to be a decline in the practice because of the mischievous dispositions of both the masters along with the apprentices towards the adequate execution of the terms of agreement and the rules of its engagement. This study concludes that the Igbo apprenticeship system is still relevant particularly for the human capacity development of the contemporary Igbo youngsters. Ethical caveats proposed for revitalizing the Igbo apprenticeship system to foster relevance in the socio-economic development of contemporary Igbo youths include among others, the incorporation of practical religiosity; equitable compensation; transparency and accountability; in addition to community engagement. This will equally tackle the restiveness among young people in South-eastern Nigeria, largely stemming from high unemployment rates, which greatly hinder the socio-economic evolution of Igbo youths.

Key Words: Apprenticeship, Socio-Economic, Development, System, Contemporary, Igbo, Ethical Reconsideration.

Introduction

Igbo people are naturally industrious and creative. Afunugo et al (2023a) attest that they are entrepreneurial in nature as well as peripatetic in their zest for reckoning business opportunities. Igbo people have a peculiar mode of sustaining their business empires and investments together with assisting themselves in entrepreneurial specifics. The distinctive medium through which the Igbo people assist themselves in starting up business ventures and acquisition of specific cum eccentric skills of the business in perspective is known as the Igbo apprenticeship system (*Igba Boyi or Boi or Imu Ahia*). Numerous scholars have underscored various gainful features of the Igbo apprenticeship system.

Ezeajughu (2021) and Okwuowulu (2022) affirm that the Igbo apprenticeship system is a viable gateway to Nigeria's dominance in the business world. They assert that it had equally aided in the development of the auto spare parts market in the Eastern parts of Nigeria. Abubakar et al (2019) and Nnonyelu et al (2023) assert that the Igbo apprenticeship system has a long-standing history and is credited with fostering the establishment of new businesses and entrepreneurs. They argue that it ranks as the world's largest business incubation system and emphasize its significant role in promoting indigenous entrepreneurship. The authors also highlight that studies on indigenous entrepreneurship indicate that graduates of the Igbo apprenticeship system demonstrate exceptional skills, and resilience, and achieve positive outcomes in managing their unique business endeavors. Kanu (2019) and Okeke (2023) explicate that the Igbo apprenticeship system captures vividly the focal point in the *Igwebuike* Philosophy which exemplifies "brotherhood" cum "oneness of purpose" including the fact that assistance and win for one is assistance and win for all; a pivotal think home philosophy. They streamline that this scheme has created wealth over the years for the Igbo, thus making them the most successful entrepreneurs in Africa. They underscore that the Igbo apprenticeship system has been a cornerstone of Igbo culture for centuries, serving as a means of bequeathing knowledge, skills, morals, and values from one era to the next.

Okwuowulu (2022) posits that the Igbo apprenticeship system has made significant impacts on the establishment and development of both small and scale enterprises in the Nigerian entrepreneurial landscape. He adds that the scheme equally creates access to trade and informal credit opportunities. Ifechukwu-Jacobs (2022) reiterates that the Igbo apprenticeship system exerts a significant effect on unemployment reduction in the Onitsha metropolis. Anedu (2022) et al, Onu (2023) and Olewu (2023) maintain that the Igbo apprenticeship system is an acclaimed world business incubation model as well as a wealth sustenance scheme in Igbo land. They express that the scheme has positive impacts on the economic, social, and environmental development of South-east Nigeria. All these scholars submit that the Igbo apprenticeship system or scheme is not only paramount in the learning and transferring of skills cum good morals, but also enhances business establishment, and development along with nation building and sustainability.

The reflection so far poses undeniable facts that the Igbo apprenticeship system aids in not just the generic human capacity building and development, but also in the art of nation building. Hence, Uduafemhe (2023) intimates that the success of the scheme is attributed to its ability to promote entrepreneurship, wealth creation and economic growth. Regardless of the great values of the Igbo apprenticeship scheme, it appears to have declined, become unpopular and is almost on the verge of eroding. The bewildering ruminations remain, what brought about the decline in the Igbo apprenticeship system? Is it no longer gainful to the Igbo people? Can the scheme be restored and sustained to its former glory? Will it still be relevant in the contemporary epoch?

In light of these factors, this study suggests reconsidering the ethical implications of the terms and rules surrounding the Igbo apprenticeship system, to emphasize its importance in the socio-economic development of modern Igbo youth. This study is based on the Incentive Theory of Motivation and relies on personal communication and existing literature as primary sources of data. The conclusions drawn are based on a qualitative analysis of data collected using a cultural approach.

Clarification of the Concept

Ekekwe (cited by Ugwu, 2023) describes the Igbo apprenticeship system as a communal enterprising framework where successful entrepreneurs develop others, and over time provide capital and equally introduce as well as hand over some of their distinct customers to the business of the newly established person. Ekekwe, as Ugwu avers, stresses that “the implication is that few businesses grow to become very dominant since they keep relinquishing market share, and in doing so, they accomplish one thing: A largely equal community where everyone has opportunities, no matter how small” (p. 2).

SEREDEC (2023) expounds that the Igbo apprenticeship system, scheme, or model originates from the entrepreneurial drive within the Igbo community, prioritizing hands-on experience over traditional schooling. They posit that ambitious young apprentices seek guidance from experienced business owners, learning essential skills like negotiation and finance through practical training. After completing their apprenticeships, as SEREDEC stipulates, they not only possess valuable skills but also gain access to funding and connections paving their way to success as entrepreneurs. Agozino (2007) expatiates that the Igbo apprenticeship system, also known as the Igbo trade apprentice system is commonly referred to as “*Igba-Odibo*”, *Igba-Boi*, *Imu-Ahia*, or *Imu-Oru*”. Agozino delineates that the model is widely practiced in the South eastern Nigeria, involving both formal and informal agreements among parties. The author maintains that its primary goal is to foster growing entrepreneurial communities within the Igbo population. Thus, by providing vocational training and financial support, the system aims to promote economic growth, stability, and sustainable livelihoods.

Yemi (2021) however, gives an in-depth elucidation on the Igbo apprenticeship system: He stresses that the system is an entrepreneurial philosophy of shared prosperity wherein an apprentice not only serves as an apprentice and mentee but also as a competitor. In the long run, both the mentor or master and apprentice or mentee end up being and remaining successful. Yemi postulates that the Igbo apprenticeship system is divided into three different types, viz:

1. ***Igba Boi***: This is the most common type, where the apprentice lives with the master, learns the trade, and also performs domestic duties for the master’s family. Here the apprentice is equally granted a befitting financial settlement at the end of the training.
2. ***Imu Ahia***: Here, the apprentice seeks to learn a business from the master over a specified period. The apprentice is typically older and may already have some education, possibly up to a tertiary level. Under this type, the master is not obligated to settle the apprentice at the end of the service and training years.
3. ***Imu Oru***: This is similar to *Imu Ahia*, but the apprentice learns a skilled job or artisanry such as painting, welding, tailoring, and carpentry.

Irrespective of the fact that this study reckons all these three types of the Igbo apprenticeship scheme, the one particularly apposite to this study is the “*Igba Boi*” which requires financial settlement at the end of the service cum vocational training which may last between 7 to 10 years. This equally requires an official agreement signed by both parties and their representatives. Yemi (2021) further elaborates on the Igbo apprenticeship system, outlining a sequential progression. Firstly, the master selects a young apprenticeship from the village. Subsequently, the apprentice undergoes an incubation stage during which they learn the intricacies of the business, with a focus on values such as honesty, accountability, and work ethics. Lastly, in the funding stage, the master supports the apprentice in establishing their own business.

Brief History of the Igbo Apprenticeship System

Yemi (2021) posits that the sequence of events that led to the development of the Igbo apprenticeship system started with the Nigerian Civil War between the Nigerian government and the Igbo, who sought to secede from the Nigerian state. The conflict lasted for 30 months, and by the end, many Igbo who had been prosperous before the war found themselves destitute.

After the civil war, a new banking policy emerged, rendering null and void any bank account that had been active during the conflict. Chinua Achebe (cited by Yemi) noted that this policy immediately impoverished the Igbo middle class. Additionally, the indigenization Decree that followed further marginalized the Igbo from the upper echelons of the Nigerian economy.

In an effort to recover from these setbacks, the Igbo developed the apprenticeship system as a means of mutual support and survival in the post-war period. Professor Ndubuisi Ekekwe (cited by Yemi) summarizes it by saying:

The Igbo came out of the Biafra war in 1970, with their assets largely frozen and with little to begin post-war lives. Many Igbo communities started community leagues to build schools and clinics, and elders pushed men to share opportunities to help their brethren. Over decades, that spirit has resulted in enduring economic wealth. (p.3).

Setbacks in the Igbo Apprenticeship System

The Igbo apprenticeship system aided in the socio-economic development of Igbo communities. Its positive impacts are innumerable which includes among others, serving as a source of transference of skills, values, and good morals; in addition to serving as a business incubator, establishment, and development scheme of which the major beneficiaries were the Igbo youngsters, among others. Nonetheless, this scheme suffered a downslide and decline at some point and equally ended up becoming old-fashioned and irrelevant. The reasons for these setbacks were itemized by various scholars.

Okeke et al (2021) point out that the potency of the system is perceived to be waning because of the unwillingness of young men to take up the business of their father and study courses that will promote their growth; the malicious embezzlement and stealing of their masters business funds by the apprentices; sudden dismissal of apprentices without settlement on trump up, falsified charges or flimsy reasons; and unfair cum mischievous settlement at the end of the tenure of apprenticeship service. Adekola (2013) states that one of the major challenges of the Igbo apprenticeship system is that, it is generally perceived to be meant for individuals who are academically poor or unsound and those whose parents are equally poor. This discourages youths from engaging in the scheme because everyone is striving to prove an unknown point. T. Abu (personal communication, March 10th, 2024) establishes that, even though the fact that the Igbo apprenticeship system is worthy of appreciation, cognizance of the fact that the system is somehow oppressive as masters go to the extent of accusing their apprentices of eloping with their money and even sleeping with their wives or having affairs with their daughters just to dismiss them dishonourably without settlement, should be emphatically underscored as one of the scheme’s pitfalls.

Yesufu (2024) claims that the Igbo apprenticeship system makes other ethnic groups in Nigeria to hate the Igbo’s since it is a source through which the Igbo makes money and equally establishes one another. While this issue is not substantial enough to directly cause the decline of the program, E. Edeh, T. Afunugo, I. Mgbaji, T. Anowi, and A. Anowi (personal communication, April 5th, 2024) agree that one of the contributing factors to the deterioration of the Igbo apprenticeship system is the exploitation of apprentices by some masters for the purpose of ritual sacrifices in pursuit of financial gain. Additionally, it is reported that some masters engage in nefarious rituals to steal the destiny of their apprentices. Although one may perceive this as superstitious, however, cases pertinent to this abounds in various Igbo communities of young apprentices that died mysteriously as well as some that were even settled with huge capitals but their business collapsed within a year. For example, Olukoya (2001), Olukoya (2003), Orekhie (2023a), Orekhie (2023b), Osewa (2024) and personal communication with V. Mbachi, I. Egbuonu, and B. Ogaraku on February 7th, 2021, all emphasize the potential for children’s futures to be

jeopardized and the exploitation of human beings for ritualistic financial gain, despite Oluoma's (2023) dismissal of such ideas associated with money-making rituals: Delineating them as superstitious.

Nelson (2020) laments that the evils as well as the deplorable aspects in the Igbo apprenticeship system involves, mentees living with their masters under harsh conditions; and the fact that all agreements were made orally without adequate official documentation. Thus, more often than not, the apprentices stay so long up to 20 years before settlement or even without settlement at the end of the experience; courtesy of lack of official documents to put such master's evil excuses in-check. Adegbite (2021) incorporates that one of the key issues that made the Igbo apprenticeship system to be faulty is that there were no record of an Igbo girl or lady that passed through the system to become established. He claims that the system marginalizes women, and detests their enrolment and engagement in the scheme. Olewu (2023) in his own view asserts that the Igbo apprenticeship system in contemporary times had witnessed a decline in popularity, though it remains intact. He stresses that the shortfalls of the scheme is courtesy of the fact that it is predominantly engaged by individuals under 18 years old, with concerns arising about its potential to facilitate exploitation of minors. Moreover, the vulnerability of children, coupled with factors such as their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, limited education, familial connections to the apprenticeship arrangement, and the informal nature of initiating such relationships; collectively contribute to a heightened risk of child rights violations within the scheme.

Okonkwo (2022) bemoans the near extinction of the Igbo apprenticeship system, attributing it to the societal moral and ethical decline. He equally deplores that this decline encompasses the erosion of core values such as honesty, discipline, diligence, and hard work, alongside a prevalent lack of patience among today's youth to acquire essential skills. Ekekwe (2019) from an economist view point supplements that the major defect in the Igbo apprenticeship system is its inability to foster the creation of large conglomerates or dominant brands. Instead of prioritizing the accumulation of markets share and individual wealth, the author stresses that the system focuses on redistributing opportunities and resources among community members. Ekekwe maintains that this approach limits the potential for businesses to scale up and address significant challenges at the upstream level, such as research and development or infrastructure investments. Consequently, while the system effectively promotes community well-being and reduces poverty and inequalities at the local level, it may hinder the emergence of large-scale enterprises capable of tackling broader societal issues.

Mefor (2022) enumerates that one of the paramount downside of the Igbo apprenticeship system is that it killed education and appeal for it in the south-east zone of Nigeria. It actually birthed illiterate billionaires. Hence, youngsters of today are only interested in making quick-wealth. Succinctly, the Igbo apprenticeship system is a lucrative and remunerative scheme. However, the various downslides as reflected so far which equally contributed to its set-back and near-erosion needs to be ethically addressed in order to unearth morally sound solutions to resuscitate the system.

Socio-economic Development Deficit among Contemporary Igbo Youths and its consequent Absurdities.

Olawoyin (2018) reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate rose from 18.8% in the third quarter of 2017 to 23.1% in the third quarter of 2018. Adesina (2022) noted that 40% of Nigerian youths are unemployed. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, as cited by Mortell (2023), the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 8.6% in the third quarter of 2023, up from 7.2% in the previous quarter. On average, the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria was 22.97% between 2014 and 2023, with a peak of 53.4% in the fourth quarter of 2020 and a low of 6.9% in the first quarter of 2023. Oyedele (2022) highlighted that, based on a review of data from the third quarter of 2018 to the fourth quarter of 2020; four out of ten people in Southeastern Nigeria are unemployed.

Unemployment is a major stimulant of socio-economic development deficit. The general rate of unemployment in Nigeria especially that of the youth unemployment rate is startling. The resultant effects is that the youths become hopeless; discouraged; aggressive and violent; resorts to evil and mischievous alternatives; become callous, detached and insensitive; as well as evolve into unpatriotic and seditious stance. At this frequency, those youngsters can do negative things unimaginable. Unemployed youngsters cannot wield their personal or family financial responsibilities. A good number of youngsters that acquired skills lack the capitals to actualize their dreams of establishing a small firm. They still feed from hands to mouth. Such youths cannot even lend any aid in the community development art that requires financing. Aggressive youths in Igbo land owing to unemployment resorts to executing series of nefarious and criminal acts. Nnam (2014), Obianeri (2022), and M. Onwe, I. Emmanuel, T. Anakputa and D. Okenna (personal communication, April 5th, 2024) attest that the accelerated kidnapping and insecurity in the south-east, Nigeria is as a result of the high rate of youth joblessness. Egwuatu (cited by Obianeri) consequently calls for the revival of the Igbo apprenticeship system; reiterating that it will aid in reducing the vigorous and rapid youth unemployment in Igbo land. The veracity stands that the Nigerian

government or the Anambra state government might not have the capacity to tender employment opportunities to all the youth.

Other factors like illiteracy, insecurity, bad governance, high poverty level and ethnic cum religious bigotry can foster socio-economic development deficit of the youths. Omede et al (2023) suggest that the Nigerian government should take measures to better protect its citizens from exploitation within the Igbo trade apprenticeship system. They propose the implementation of legislation to regulate and prevent such abuse while maintaining the positive aspects of the Igbo apprenticeship system, which is seen as contributing to poverty reduction in Nigeria's southeast. Economic and social advancement shortfall of the youths in Igbo land equally results in high indiscriminate consumption of hard drugs; adoption of youths as political thugs; ritual cum despicable murders and killing spree and related atrocious and illegal acts as Okoli et al (2021) and Emeruwa (2022) elucidate. This triggered the Igbo youth movement and the Ohanaeze youth council (OYC) as recorded by Ugwueze (2014) and Aroh (2021) respectively, to call on south eastern governors to tackle the spate of killings of innocent citizens and destruction of properties allegedly perpetrated by armed youth gangs sponsored by politicians in the zone.

Social and economic advancement deficit among the Igbo youngsters is a very disturbing and topical issue that demands proactive and concerted efforts to address especially as it leads to youth discontentment. Unemployment which fuels these anomalies can be controlled by the Igbo apprenticeship system. The fact is that youths fall within the range of people with uncommon vigor, energy and technological competence. One can reckon the implications of youth restiveness. Ofoma (2022) similarly deliberates that unemployment in the southeast is significantly correlated with various manifestations of youth restiveness; including kidnapping, vandalization of public facilities, and violent attacks against security personnel. Osita et al (2022) rounds up by affirming that skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education are panaceas to youth unemployment in Anambra state. The Igbo apprenticeship system can go a long way in expediting as well as enabling this perspective towards reality.

The Incentive Theory of Motivation

Smith (1996) stipulates that the incentive theory of motivation was developed by Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990), known as B.F. Skinner, an author, inventor and behavioural psychologist. He is best known for his work with incentive theory of motivation and operant conditioning (behaviour reinforcement through punishment). O'sullivan (2023) expounds that this theory posits that individuals are driven to perform specific actions in pursuit of rewards. These rewards, such as money or recognition, serve as external motivators that influence their behaviour. He clarifies that this theory which has been studied by psychologists and leadership teams since the early 1900s, suggests that positive incentives play a crucial role in motivating people.

Sincero (2012) expresses that the Incentive Theory of Motivation advocated by B.F. Skinner, emphasizes the role of positive reinforcement in motivating behaviour. She highlights that the theory proposes that individuals are more likely to repeat actions that are positively reinforced, while they tend to avoid actions associated with negative reinforcement. Thus unlike some other motivation theories, the Incentive theory sees stimuli as attracting individuals toward them; rather than merely prompting individuals to reduce or eliminate them. Incentives in businesses as Sincero captures, can take various forms, such as additional benefits, remuneration, or job promotions, which are provided to employees to recognize their achievements or encourage them. She summarizes that both monetary incentives and non-monetary rewards like job promotion, security, pride of accomplishment and job satisfaction, play crucial roles in motivating employees, as promoted by the Incentive Theory of Motivation.

Kendra (2023) and Chase (2023) emphasize that in the Incentive Theory of Motivation, rewards must be obtainable in order to be motivating. Hence, they streamline that people are pulled toward behaviours that lead to outside rewards and are repelled by actions that lead to negative consequences. Applying this theory to the Igbo apprenticeship system, it implies that youngster's will totally be discouraged to engage in such scheme when it is not rewarding or the settlement is not sincerely executed. Igbo youths will not be opting for the apprenticeship scheme if the regimens are so difficult that it is not realistically achievable. This implies that the masters or mentors in the Igbo apprenticeship scheme must ensure that they settle their mentees or apprentices adequately at the end of the years of training and service. The resuscitation and survival of the Igbo apprenticeship system depends largely on the appropriation of these theoretical proposals in the basic fundamentals of the scheme. It has already been realized in this study that one of the major reasons for the decline in the Igbo apprenticeship system is poor motivation and settlement.

Ethical Imperatives for Reviving Igbo Apprenticeship System towards the socio-economic Development of the contemporary Igbo youths

Distinct scholars in their peculiar researches made proposals on how to improve on the Igbo apprenticeship system. Rufai et al (2021) propose the combination of general and apprenticeship education into a suitable educational moral; implementing recommendations based on international best practices; and creating an innovative ecosystem within the apprenticeship system to make it more attractive to the youths, as that which will improve the survival rate of the Igbo apprenticeship system.

O. Okafor, C. Udegbonam, V. Anagboso and E. Ibegbu (personal communication, April 30th, 2024) submit that addressing demarketing through awareness campaigns and showcasing success stories; creating appeal to unemployed Igbo youths through modernization and adaptation to current needs; developing a hybrid model Igbo apprenticeship scheme that blends traditional methods with contemporary education; integrating apprenticeship into educational systems to attract younger generations; establishing legal frameworks and support systems for apprenticeship programs; and providing government oversight, consistent initiatives, and infrastructure development for the Igbo apprenticeship system, will facilitate the revival and relevance of the Igbo apprenticeship system.

In view of all the submissions underscored in this study by various authors and disciplines, this work proffers the following ethical imperatives for reviving the Igbo apprenticeship system in order to be significant and also be contributing in the social and economic development of the contemporary Igbo youths:

- **Incorporation of practical religiosity into the Igbo apprenticeship system:** Afunugo et al (2023a) and Afunugo et al (2023b) delineate that the Igbo people abinitio integrate their religious consciousness into their business inclinations and endeavours. Similarly, the core religious awareness of the Igbo people should be incorporated into the regimen of the Igbo apprenticeship system in a practical approach. This will keep instilling the sense of sincerity and dignity on both the mentors and mentees involved in the scheme to avert harbouring of any form of mischievous concupiscence and illegalities. It is not enough to claim high religiosity in theory; it should be a practical reality. Religious beliefs ought to be producing discipline and sound morality in the lives of its adherents. The religious functionaries and clerics of both parties should be involved in the making of agreements under the Igbo apprenticeship system.
- **Imbibing the propositions of the Incentive Theory of Motivation as a culture in entrepreneurial engagements:** This study realized that the Incentive Theory of Motivation proposes that gainful rewards at the end of any given task motivates individuals to largely engage and be determined in such relative tasks. Relatively, mentors, mentees and all parties associated in the Igbo apprenticeship system should always put the two dimensional aspects of rewards in perspective as they engage in the scheme's undertakings. Apprentices should be honourably rewarded at the end of their training years as this will keep motivating other Igbo youths to engage in the scheme. Additionally, both mentees and the masters must underscore that there is a supreme being that rewards people for their deeds at the end of life on earth. Besides, everyone must lay detailed accounts of their life before the Supreme Being at the end of life on earth.
- **Community involvement and participation:** The local community including the traditional rulers, high chiefs and traditional peacemaking Task Forces should be engaged in decision-making processes related to apprenticeship programs to ensure that the needs and interests of all parties involved in the scheme are duly considered. This will tackle abuse of youngsters involved in the scheme along with the fraudulent and mischievous activities of mentees towards their masters.
- **The entire Igbo community should perceive and conceive Igbo apprenticeship system as one's civic responsibility including their duty in corporate citizenship cum community stewardship:** This will keep enthroning the tenets of patriotism along with "brotherhood" in the basic mindset of all parties involved in the scheme. This will also serve as incentives plus initiatives for businesses and employers participating in the Igbo apprenticeship system to fulfill their social responsibilities by contributing to the overall development of the community and supporting initiatives that benefit youths beyond the apprenticeship period. Thus all and sundry within the Igbo enclaves will start adopting sincere approach towards the Igbo apprenticeship system bearing in mind that it contributes positively in the art of nation building.
- **Respect for cultural traditions and heritage:** Respecting cultural traditions coupled with preserving the cultural heritage cum values embedded within the Igbo apprenticeship system will go a long way in addressing any practices that may be harmful or exploitative. Insisting and emphasizing on the core Igbo values of "*Onye aghana nwanne ya*" (do not forsake your brother), "*Ibu anyi danda*" (joint bearing of burdens), and "*Anyi bu otu*" (we are one); will keep reminding and constraining parties involved in the Igbo apprenticeship scheme that there is no room for foul play.

- **Adequate remuneration:** Mentees or masters must ensure that apprentices are properly and equitably compensated at the end of their service and training. This along with providing of fair wages were applicable, suitable compensation for apprentices work and ensuring that apprentices are not exploited or unpaid will contribute in sustaining the scheme.
- **Just and equitable treatment:** Ensuring fairness in the selection process for apprenticeships, avoiding favouritism or discrimination based on factors like tribalism or family ties and breach of confidentiality will also contribute in resuscitating the Igbo apprenticeship scheme.
- **Transparency and accountability:** Transparent mechanism for monitoring and accountability should be established for the Igbo apprenticeship system targeted at preventing abuses of power or exploitation within the scheme.
- **Education and skill development:** It is pertinent to ensure that apprentices receive adequate training, education, and skill development opportunities to enhance their long-term socio-economic prospects.
- **Collaboration of the State constituted authorities:** The legal luminaries, law enforcement agencies and the state governments within the Igbo enclaves should participate and also exert concerted efforts in the making of regulations guiding the Igbo apprenticeship system. This study highly commends the efforts being made by the Anambra State Assembly in passing bill for law to regulate Igbo apprenticeship system as Chigbata (2024) and Chibundu (2024) stipulate.

Appropriation of the highlighted ethical considerations in the Igbo apprenticeship system will strengthen the scheme to better support the socio-economic development of Igbo youths while preserving its cultural significance.

Conclusion

Humanity progresses by offering assistance and supporting each other's growth. The younger generation represents the future of our societies, and we should spare no effort in nurturing and empowering them. It is crucial to prioritize initiatives that contribute to their social and economic development, particularly by focusing on the moral and financial strengthening of the Igbo apprenticeship system to bolster the skills and potential of Igbo youths.

The governors of the South-eastern states of Nigeria and the *Ohaneze ndi Igbo* should collaborate closely to address the issue of secret cultism, gangsterism, thuggery, and related criminal activities that proliferate in the streets, especially among unemployed and disoriented Igbo youths.

The Nigerian government must underscore that once the youths of the nation are lost to restiveness resulting from unemployment, the nation simply goes down the drain. They must grapple with unemployment as a matter of exigency.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered pertinent to reviving the Igbo apprenticeship system in order to kick start support for youth capacity building and economic advancement:

1. Igbo elders forum and community leaders should always organize open and close programs directed at offering counseling services to help youths navigate challenges, build resilience, imbibe sound morality, and start appreciating the Igbo apprenticeship system.
2. Experienced business owners should be encouraged to share their expertise through workshops, webinars, or mentorship sessions. This knowledge sharing venture should be facilitated throughout Igbo land as it will equally serve as a platform to showcase successful youth ventures in order to inspire others and demonstrate the potentials of youth-driven initiatives.
3. Igbo youngsters that benefited from the Igbo apprenticeship scheme should develop and foster the culture of gratitude. All Igbo individuals ought to equally develop the culture of gratitude. Businesses should be encouraged to express appreciation for support received by assisting others in their entrepreneurial journey. This can equally serve as a motivating factor for other more opportune business tycoons to continue in the business of establishing other youngsters via the Igbo apprenticeship scheme.
4. Younger generation in the Igbo enclaves should be enlightened on the importance of the Igbo values, traditions, and community spirit through storytelling, cultural events and educational programs. This will enliven their knowledge pertinent to the Igbo apprenticeship system. The scheme will equally wield future prospects via such ventures.
5. The principle of "I am because we are" (*ubuntu* philosophy), should be reinforced to underscore the interconnectedness and mutual responsibility within the community.
6. Acts of kindness from philanthropists should always be celebrated. It is obvious that celebration of good deeds propels people to continue in such regards. Individuals and groups that exemplify the spirit of

brotherhood and communal assistance should be recognized and celebrated. This will always inspire others to follow suit.

7. Regular gatherings, festivals, and communal activities that foster sense of belonging and unity among the Igbo people should always be organized. This aids in strengthening community bonds. Traditional customs, rituals, ceremonies cum general cultural practices should be integrated into community events to always reinforce cultural identity and solidarity. The Igbo apprenticeship system has evolved to an Igbo culture since it signifies a paramount aspect of “brotherhood” which the Igbo people are widely known for.

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