

Effect of Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System on Unemployment Reduction in Onitsha

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Abstract: *The study examined the effect of igbo trade apprenticeship system on unemployment reduction in Onitsha. The specific objectives were as follows: Ascertain the impact of apprentice skill acquisition on unemployment reduction in Onitsha: Ascertain the impact of apprenticeship training system, on unemployment reduction at Onitsha. The research is anchored under the Skill Acquisition Theory were adopted in this study. Primary sources of data were used and the instrument employed in collecting information from the population was through structured questionnaire. The method of analysis used was percentage table and correlation analysis for testing of the research hypotheses. The population of the study was 3085 boss, who has been in the business for more than 10 years and a sample size of 592 was determined using Gorg & Ball formula. The research adopted sampling techniques were purposive sampling. From the analyses tested, the study found that: Apprentice skill acquisition has significant effect on unemployment reduction at Onitsha: Apprenticeship training system has significant effect on unemployment reduction at Onitsha: The study recommended that: Small business sustainability, apprentices should undergo appropriate traditional business training to obtain necessary skills and experiences. On the part of the masters (Ogas), they should ensure timely settlement of their diligent apprentices. Stakeholders should equally support successfully graduated apprentices to gain a foothold in their new business.*

Key words: *Igbo trade apprenticeship, unemployment reduction, apprentice skill acquisition, apprenticeship training system*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Igbo Apprenticeship programme has been given different explanations by several schools of thoughts and scholars (Nzewi, Onwuka, & Onyesom, 2017). The programme involves more of appealing individual or a person that have determine to embark and learn a particular skill or job by working for a fixed period, for someone who is very good at that job or skill (Inyang, & Agwadu, 2017).. The Apprentice can be a teenager or young person, male or female that embarks on learning or receiving practical training skills, and also occasionally theoretical knowledge in a specialized area of vocation, trade or occupation he/she has chosen to trade on for a period of time. And for apprenticeship, some have advised that it an operative mechanism for easy learning shift for young people to move from school base approach to the world of work or other tasks associated with such (Olulu, & Udeorah, 2018).

The other way round, the apprenticeship generally has been labeled as devoted and enabling form of vocational education (technical, vocational, or artificial intelligence) combining both job learning and school based training for specifically defined competences, skills, capacities and work processes (Olusegun, & Olanrewaju, 2017). This is regulated by law and based on written

patterns of employment and contract with a reward system or payments, and standards that operates with social protection scheme. More often, issuance of certificate and dedicated recognition follows the expiration of training where relevant certificates, licensing are awarded to successful apprenticeship fellows. A careful look at the following clarifications of apprenticeship by some means does not speak directly to the Igbo style of apprenticeship program, however, certain elements and features are shared in them. The Igbo type as it is currently does not have any affiliation to schools, universities or colleges, though this is where we aim in the nearest future from now. The Igbo apprenticeship model and programme is the brain behind the existing and consistent operations of small scale businesses across Igbo land (Diyoke, 2014). The Igbo Apprenticeship activities have been experimental to be a sine qua non for the economy of Nigeria and the quality of life of the people at both rural and urban settings. Apprenticeship is a system for training a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training. Apprenticeships can also enable practitioners to gain a license to practice in a regulated occupation (Fajobi, Olatujoye, Amusa, & Adedoyin. (2017)..

Most of their training is done while working for an employer who helps the apprentices learn their trade or profession, in exchange for their continued labor for an agreed period after they have achieved measurable competencies. Apprenticeship lengths vary significantly across sectors, professions, roles and cultures. In some cases people who successfully complete an apprenticeship can reach the "journeyman" or professional certification level of competence. Olulu & Udeorah (2018) posits that apprenticeship may be considered as a system of learning whereby an individual trained in a professional skill in a practical way through a structured program of on-the-job training. It usually involves acquiring knowledge, mechanical skills and the development of an attitude or discipline for a particular job.

Orugun & Nafiu (2014) opines that apprenticeship offers a ranking of opportunity to obtain critical skills businesses needed to flourish, placing apprenticeship as the seedbed of entrepreneurship. He further stated that, the combination of these attributes, the business and entrepreneurial activities of the Igbos continue to be the backbone of commerce and manufacturing in the Nigerian economy. The apprenticeship practice is in three categories viz; the traditional model, the informal model and the modern apprenticeship model. The traditional model involves the transfer of family skill to the next generation of members, while the informal model though traditional in nature, have non-family members engage in the apprenticeship scheme. The modern apprenticeship scheme involves training of participants in vocational skills, well-structured programme of learning, fixed working/training hours and combination of vocational training with educational programmes. In Nigeria, the practice of apprenticeship is popular among the Nupes, Igbos, Fulanis and other tribes that have specialised skills which they pass on from generation to generation. Trades in apprenticeship category in Nigeria include; blacksmith, welding, trading, block molding, motor mechanics and repair, barbing, electronics repair, wood carving amongst others.

Expatriated further apprenticeship may also take the form of helping new employees to relate their previous education to the requirement of their new job. Apprenticeship also incorporates a system of guidance and counseling as most apprentices are required to live with their masters so as to acquire through a process of acculturation the necessary altitude, diplomacy and decorum

required for the job. It is the combination of these depositions that make graduates of apprenticeship training entrepreneurs instead of job seekers (Anyanwu, 2011; Craig and Bittel, 2017; Akande, n.d). The apprenticeship system practiced among the Igbo ethnic group is arranged in such a way that the apprentice lives with his master so as to acquire through a process of acculturation the necessary attitude, diplomacy and decorum required for the trade or skill acquisition, usually for an agreed number of years after which the master settles the apprentice by setting up a business for him, that is provision of startup capital and the required guidance up until certain level of business maturity. Analysts have described the Igbo apprenticeship system that governs their entrepreneurship development as the largest business incubator platform in the world. It is the combination of these dispositions that make graduates of Igbo apprenticeship scheme entrepreneurs instead of job seekers. It is therefore imperative to carry out the study of this magnitude to substantiate the assertion

The Igbo apprentice system is a leeway of their entrepreneurial make-up where a tactical training process is exploited to train mostly young men of igbo stock into entrepreneurial ventures by established entrepreneurs locally known as Oga, (Ejo-Orusa2019). This venture can be a trade, an enterprise or a vocation, in some cases serving also as a domestic help. The Ogas are former apprentices that had served and were settled with seed capitals to begin their own enterprises (Alike & Umunze 2019). This system is informal and has unstructured training programs to learn and master skills required to embark on own enterprise Dishonesty on the part of the Master or the apprentice has tended to dent the good intentions of the Nwaboi apprenticeship system.

Myraids of problem confront this apprentice system, one of which has been observed that towards the expiration of the agreed apprenticeship period in some cases that Masters accuse the apprentices of frivolous crimes and send them away just to avoid their contractual obligations and thus deprive them of the settlement entitlements. The traditional apprenticeship system in Nigeria involves hardship, discipline and loyalty especially on the part of the apprentice (Adekola& Ezekiel, 2013). This is the case particularly where payment is not made by the apprentice. The apprentice is therefore expected to serve the Master in different capacities in domestic duties as a ‘houseboy’. Yet again is the inadequate legal framework to guide the system. This is possibly the most critical challenge of the Nwaboi apprenticeship system. Although the Contract of Apprenticeship in Nigeria is regulated by the Labour Act 2004, it has been contended that the system is a far cry from what is obtainable in other countries in terms of mode of operation, regulation, rewards, structure and implementation.

Objective of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to investigating the effect of Igbo trade apprenticeship system on unemployment reduction in Onitsha Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the impact of apprentice skill acquisition on unemployment reduction in Onitsha
2. Ascertain the impact of apprenticeship training system, on unemployment reduction in Onitsha

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated that guide the objectives of the study and strengthen the analysis:

Ho: Apprentice skill acquisition has no significant effect on unemployment reduction in Onitsha
Ho: Apprenticeship training system has no significant effect on unemployment reduction in Onitsha

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Skill acquisition theory

The fundamental claim of Skill Acquisition Theory, as per Dekeyser (2007), "is that the learning of a wide variety of skills shows an exceptional similarity in development from introductory representation of knowledge through starting changes in conduct to eventual fluent, unconstrained, to a great extent, and profoundly gifted behaviour, and that this phenomena can be accounted for by a lot of essential principles regular to acquisition of skills". Overall, as referenced by Speelman (2005), skill acquisition can be considered as a particular type of learning, where learning has been characterized as "the representation of information in memory concerning some natural or psychological event". Thusly, as indicated by him, skill acquisition is a type of learning where "skilled behaviours can become routinized and even programmed under certain conditions". What's more, as a general theory of learning, it guarantees that adult starts learning something through largely unequivocal procedures, and with subsequent adequate practice and exposure, move into verifiable procedures. Subsequently, the study is hinged on this theory.

Empirical Review

Ezeajughu, (2021) examined the Igbo man perspectives of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria. Through an apprenticeship scheme known as Igba-boi or Nwaobi which is by far the most entrenched and vibrant entrepreneurship promotion vehicle in Nigeria, people from this ethnic group have dominated and continued to excel above their contemporaries from other ethnic groups in the country and beyond. This paper analytically investigates 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.

Okeke and Osang (2021) examined Igbo apprenticeship scheme in Anambra state. Its potency as it were, as it is and will be. The principal motivations of the scheme are the seed capital and mentorship given to the apprentices at the end of their indentureship and generation of employment in the state. But, the potency of the scheme is perceived to be waning. The study therefore seeks to interrogate the perceived decline of the potency of the scheme, utilising the observation method in informal workplaces and trading sites spread across the state. The study discovered that, the unwillingness of young men to take up the businesses of their fathers, study courses that will promote their growth and malicious stealing of their masters money by the apprentices are key factors that led to the decline of the scheme's potency. and the study therefore recommended that young men should key into family businesses so as to promote the

heritage of business sustainability being transferred from generation to generation. Again, there should be a well- defined contractual agreement rather than oral agreement between the masters and the intending apprentices so as to protect the job creation intent of the scheme.

Ejo-Orusa, (2019) assessed reinventing the ‘nwaboi’ apprenticeship system: a platform for entrepreneurship promotion in Nigeria (he Nwaboi Apprenticeship System is by far the most entrenched and vibrant entrepreneurship promotion vehicle in Nigeria and it plays a major role in the growth and development of micro, small and medium scale enterprises. Their studies concludes that the Nwaboi Apprenticeship System has the potential to significantly increase the level of entrepreneurial metabolism and to stimulate the rate and pace of new venture creation and thus a viable platform for entrepreneurship promotion in Nigeria.

Adesola (2019) examined the relationships between the compensation-tied apprenticeship practice and employment generation among the Ibo businessmen in Osun state. The findings of the study revealed that majority 92% of the apprentices that are trained under this method of compensation-tied apprenticeship continued in the business they learnt while only 24% of those that learnt under other forms of apprenticeships continued in the business. The p-value of (0.0001) as against P-value of 0.00062 showed that compensation- tied apprenticeships are more reliable and viable in reducing unemployment rates in the study area. The study therefore concludes that compensation-tied type of apprenticeships would reduce unemployment palaver if given adequate attentions. In Nigeria

Fajobi, Olatujoye, Amusa and Adedoyin (2017) Seeks to understand the importance of apprenticeship training to development in Nigeria, factors responsible for decline in apprenticeship development and career implication for youth engaging in apprenticeship. The study engaged both Parson functional perquisite postulate and Modernization theory in advancing understanding on the subject matter. Findings from this study revealed Nigerian economy cannot develop until apprenticeship is encouraged among the youths.

Anigbogu, Onwuteaka, and Okoli (2019) examined the Igbo man perspectives of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in southeast Nigeria: 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 recommends 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.

Emejulu, Idigo and Onyekwelu (2020) examined the causes of this dying trend in Southeast and proffer solutions. The concept of apprenticeship was examined, along with the unique Igbo apprenticeship system. Also, the role of apprenticeship in skill acquisition and job creation was examined. This study adopted a survey research design. The study area is southeast Nigeria, with the study covering five states of the region. The population was 500. The source of data for the

study was a structured questionnaire. The method of data analysis was purely descriptive; using a combination of mean and frequencies. The study concluded that the unprecedented unemployment statistics in Nigeria can only get worse in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic, and therefore the need to encourage youths to embrace apprenticeship as a viable way forward.

Nkemdili, (2020) interrogate the practice and direction of Igbo apprenticeship, with particular interest in unravelling the reasons for the declining interest in apprenticeship generally among Igbo youths in South East, Nigeria. 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.

Adoga and Ohajionu, (2021) examined Igbo Apprenticeship System, anchored on the Theory of Experiential Learning (TEL), can enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and practice in Nigeria and other emerging economies. The proposed adapted IAS significantly reduces rate of startup failures, increases rate of business startups and ultimately, facilitates national economic growth and development. These arguments are not simply based on the observable evidence of the socioeconomic impact of the IAS among the Igbo ethnic group, but also on grounded theory of learning (Experiential Learning Theory) and emerging evidences from empirical studies in entrepreneurship education and practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive survey research design. The justification for adopting the survey research design is because it scientifically explicates phenomena and their relationships in an actual environment with a specified time. The survey research design depends on sample of respondents drawn from the population and a considered representative of the population.

The area of this study is Anambra state, which is in southeastern Nigeria. The population of interest therefore consists of all the successful business owners in main market Onitsha. Thus the number of boss is three thousand and eighty-five (3085). The sample sizes of (597) were determined by using the Borg & Gall formular of (1973). Primary sources of data were used by the researcher to generate data directly from respondents without relying on pre-existing data sources. The primary source of data used in this study was generated mainly with the aid of a structured questionnaire administered to respondents. Questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study. The survey instruments were arranged on issue-based structured pattern that have sub-elements of the stated research question, in other to ensure completeness. Meanwhile percentage table and correlation analysis will be used to analyses the collected data from the sample respondents.

4. PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

The study sought to establish the effect of Igbo trade apprenticeship system on unemployment reduction in Onitsha. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. This chapter presents the findings of the study and also discusses the results of the study. This section presents the questionnaires issued and the ones that were returned to the researcher for analysis. However the number of questionnaires distributed was five hundred and ninety-two (592), whereas five hundred and seventy-seven (577) filled well and returned in good condition. The number of returned questionnaire will be used for the analysis of the study

Table 4.1: Respondents’ Demographic Variables

4.1.1 Gender

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male | 451 | 75.5 | 78.2 | 78.2 |
| | Female | 126 | 21.1 | 21.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 577 | 96.6 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Survey 2022

The above table reveals that the four hundred and fifty-one (451) of the respondents which represents 78.2 persons were male respondents, while one hundred and twenty-six (126) respondents which represent 21.8% were female respondents. By implication, male respondents were more than female respondents by 56.1 respondents in our selected population sample for this study. The implication of this is to enable us to know the number of female and male that successfully returned their questionnaire

4.1.2 Status

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Married | 384 | 64.3 | 66.6 | 66.6 |
| | Single | 193 | 32.3 | 33.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 577 | 96.6 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Survey 2022

In the table above, out of the five hundred and seventy-seven (577) respondents, three hundred and eighty-four (384) of the respondents were married, while one hundred and ninety-three (193) respondents which represent 33.4 percent are single. It is therefore glaring that the majority of the respondents are married as at the time of this study. Thus marital status table help us to know the number of single, and married, and respondents that answered the distributed questionnaire

4.1.3 Level of Education

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | WAEC/NECO | 123 | 20.6 | 21.3 | 21.3 |
| | BSC/HND | 177 | 29.6 | 30.7 | 52.0 |
| | MSC/MBA | 198 | 33.2 | 34.3 | 86.3 |
| | PHD | 79 | 13.2 | 13.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 577 | 96.6 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Survey 2022

The table above indicates that one hundred and twenty-three (123) respondents which representing 21.3% percent maintain to acquired WAEC OR NECO while 30.7% percent of the respondents which represents one hundred and seventy-seven (177) have BSC/HND. However one hundred and eighty-nine (189) respondents which represent 34.3 percent either have MSC or MBA. More so, seventy-nine (79) respondent which represents 13.7% have acquires phd. This as the one of demographic item helps us to identify the education qualification of the respondents.

4.1.4 AGE

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 18-25 | 313 | 52.4 | 54.2 | 54.2 |
| | 26-33 | 132 | 22.1 | 22.9 | 77.1 |
| | 34-40 | 31 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 82.5 |
| | 41-50 | 37 | 6.2 | 6.4 | 88.9 |
| | 51-ABOVE | 64 | 10.7 | 11.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 577 | 96.6 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 4.3 above depicted the age bracket of the respondents. The distribution shows that 54.2% of the respondents are between the age brackets of 18 to 25 years while 22.9% respondents are within the age bracket of 26-33 years. On the same note, 5.4% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 34 - 40 years. On the same note, 6.4% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 41 - 50 years, while the remaining respondents representing 11.1% are within the age bracket of 51 years and above.

4.1.5 Years in service

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 1-10 | 293 | 39.0 | 50.8 | 40.4 |
| | 11-15 | 161 | 27.0 | 27.9 | 68.3 |
| | 16-20 | 80 | 13.4 | 13.9 | 82.1 |
| | 21-above | 43 | 7.2 | 7.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 577 | 96.6 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Survey 2022

The table above indicates that two hundred and ninety-three (293) respondents which representing 50.8% percent maintain that they have been in the services for 10yres or less while 27.% percent of the respondents which represents one hundred and sixty-one (161) have work in

the local government for over 15yrs. However eighty (80) respondents which represent 13.9 percent either have work for 16-20 years. More so, forty-three (43) respondent which represents 7.3% have work between 21-above. This as the one of demographic item helps us to identify the number of years the respondent has work for.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one

Ho: Apprentice skill acquisition has no significant effect on unemployment reduction in Onitsha

| | | ORP | CC |
|---------------------|----|-------|-------|
| Pearson Correlation | SQ | 1.000 | .190 |
| | CC | .190 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | SQ | . | .000 |
| | CC | .000 | . |
| N | SQ | 577 | 577 |
| | CC | 577 | 577 |

Sources: SPSS Output

As presented in Table above there was a positive relationship between Apprentice skill and unemployment reduction ($r=0.190$; $p<0.05$). This suggests that Apprentice skill positively affect unemployment reduction in Onitsha. This implies that the issue of the interrelation between Apprentice skill and unemployment reduction in Onitsha is brought out clearly in this study.

Hypothesis Two

HO₂ Apprenticeship training system has no significant effect on unemployment reduction in Onitsha

| | | ORP | CT |
|---------------------|----|-------|-------|
| Pearson Correlation | SQ | 1.000 | .045 |
| | CT | .045 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | SQ | . | .139 |
| | CT | .139 | . |
| N | SQ | 577 | 577 |
| | CT | 577 | 577 |

Sources: SPSS Output

As presented in Table above there was a positive relationship between Apprenticeship training and unemployment reduction ($r=0.45$; $p<0.05$). This suggests that Apprentice skill acquisition has no significant effect on unemployment reduction in Onitsha. This implies that the issue of the interrelation between Apprentice skill and unemployment reduction is brought out clearly in this study.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The technique which best improve steadiness is the pre-settlement business because of ready-made shops and the current customers which oblige as a ready market for the apprentice that are settled with that approach. The approach has advantage of stock and location, it also help in breeding new entrepreneurs. It is clear and clearly stated that, new entrepreneurs will occur with pre- settlement business and the case of leaving the business to start another one is minimized with this process. It is therefore a essential subject of debate to fashion-out the modus operandi of inspiring compensation-tied apprenticeship that will see to the realization of the system and as such vicious circle of poverty will lessen in Nigeria economy. This process will serve as a compliment to programme like Poverty Alleviation Programme and Poverty Eradication Programme since unemployment case in Nigeria is a multi-dimensional in nature and as such need multi-disciplinary cure/solution.

From the review of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), it is clear that the scheme delivers a confirmed model which can be modified and joined as the practice element of entrepreneurship so as to improve the outcomes of these programmes, leading to job and wealth creation as well as growth and development of the countries. Adopting the proposed adapted IAS as the practice element of unemployment reduction in emerging economies will significantly lessen rates of startup failures, increase number of successful startups, enable greater number of job creation and catalyze general economic growth and development in the developing countries.

This study has thrived over the years in bringing to the attention the different roles apprenticeship and social capital play in business development as well as the stages when they are needed. The entrepreneurial performance of Igbo people from ancient to contemporary times is dynamic and continuous. But Igbo entrepreneurs have been efficacious because of their training of right business approach and efficiency. These practices are nevertheless drove by their worldview, economic value and other indispensable historical factors. Igbo entrepreneurs have not only dominated Nigerian economy but that of Ghana, Niger, Togo, Gambia, Mali, Cameroun, China, South Africa, to mention but a few. It is thought-provoking to know that the process of entrepreneurial growth includes the entrepreneurs, families and the whole society who encourage entrepreneurship beliefs.

5.2 Recommend

- i. Small business sustainability, apprentices should undergo appropriate traditional business training to obtain necessary skills and experiences.
- ii. On the part of the masters (Ogas), they should ensure timely settlement of their diligent apprentices.
- iii. Stakeholders should equally support successfully graduated apprentices to gain a foothold in their new business.

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