



Human Capital Development through Apprenticeship System: the Igbo way of Wealth Distribution

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Abstract: The paper titled "Human Capital Development through Apprenticeship System: The Igbo way of Wealth Distribution" focuses on the assessment and measurement of the human capital stock among the Igbo speaking people of Eastern Nigeria. The paper aims to explore the effectiveness of the Igbo apprenticeship system and how it has contributed to improving their human capital. The apprenticeship system has distinguished the Igbo people both socially and economically and has been an integral part of their development efforts. The Igbo people understand entrepreneurship as a potent economic force that can spur development and growth at the individual level. They have utilized this understanding in their apprenticeship system, which serves as a training ground for individuals to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed to become successful entrepreneurs. As human capital increases through this method of training, it is conjectured that employment growth elasticity decreases, resulting in a less labor-intensive economy and higher economic growth not only for the Igbo people but for the nations of the world where they spread. The paper is based on the Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory, which postulates that apprentices not only learn skills through observation and practice but also develop meta-cognitive skills, problem-solving strategies, critical thinking abilities, and the ability to stand on their own. The paper utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data to support its argument. The findings of the paper show that the apprenticeship system of the Igbo people has made them a force to be reckoned with in the socio-political and techno-economic sector of Nigeria and Africa at large. Their resilience and entrepreneurial ingenuity have enabled many of them to become successful business owners and employers, contributing significantly to the development and growth of Nigeria's economy. Therefore, the paper recommends that the Igbo apprenticeship model should be emulated by other ethnic groups in Nigeria. rather than seeing the Igbo people as rivals in business, other ethnic groups can learn from their successful apprenticeship system and replicate it in their communities, thereby contributing to the development and growth of the Nigerian economy. Overall, the Igbo apprenticeship system is recognized as a significant contributor to human capital development and should be celebrated and promoted.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, Cultural System, Human Capital, Human Capital Development and Wealth Distribution.

Introduction

There are different ways in which people can invest in their future economic well-being, but our focus on this paper is the apprenticeship system. It is pertinent to note that while some activities such as dining have an impact on present consumption; other activities like on-the-job training and apprenticeship primarily affect future earnings. The wisdom for future earnings therefore, highlights the importance of investing in the human capital, which involves acquiring intangible resources like knowledge and skills. Among many means of investing in human capital is the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system in Nigeria and other African countries is described as an age-old

method of training young people in trades and crafts, and is a tradition that is deeply rooted in customs and rituals. Accordingly, this paper attempts to emphasize the need to understand the role of intangible resources and the apprenticeship system in addressing economic inequality.

Apprenticeship has been a long-standing method of training young people in various trades and crafts in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. In the pre-colonial era, this was the primary mode of training, and it is still a common feature of traditional settings to see people learning vocations such as farming, fishing, carving, carpentry, painting, decorating, catering and many others.

Raymond and Ede, (2019) posits that during the colonial era, the focus of the missionaries was primarily on evangelization, and they believed that literary education was the most suitable method of achieving this goal since technical and agricultural training required significant investment in terms of resources and finances. While some missionaries did include trades such as carpentry, farming, and bricklaying in their curriculum, these skills were not considered integral to Western education by pupils and parents.

However, in Nigeria, with the introduction of the 6.3.3.4 system of education in 1982, the focus shifted towards vocational education. As the establishment of schools continues to increase, roadside apprenticeship also became more prevalent, providing opportunities for adolescents who dropped out of school or couldn't afford to pay required fees. Roadside apprenticeship is characterized by a contract agreement between a master craftsman (e.g. motor mechanic, vulcanizer, auto-electrician, wheel alignment and balancing practitioner) and his apprentice. In return for a set training fee, the apprentice is attached to the master's workshop for a stipulated training period.

The informal Igbo apprenticeship system is an indispensable complement to the formal system, according to Chinweuba & Evaristus (2017), as it plays a significant role in promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth. The Igbo people regard entrepreneurship as a core element in the development of individuals and the nation as a whole. This is why, despite the challenges in the contemporary world, the Igbo people exhibit overwhelming entrepreneurial strides. Igbo people are known for pursuing opportunities to become active economic individuals despite the limited resources at their disposal, and this skill is born out of the apprenticeship system. For true Igbo people, socio-economic self-reliance is a vital aspect of participating fully in Igbo life, and they abhor idleness and contribute tangibly to their community's welfare and growth.

Research Objective

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate how human capital development occurs through the Igbo apprenticeship system, which is a unique way of distributing wealth among the Igbo people. This paper aims to accomplish several objectives, including examining the apprenticeship system's role in wealth distribution and economic growth, assessing the system's characteristics, and providing insights into how others can leverage this system to promote economic development

The exploration of the Igbo apprenticeship system will involve extensive research on this community's socio-economic and cultural practices. The paper will delve into the Igbo people's history, tradition, and apprenticeship system's structure to determine how it has resulted in wealth distribution, economic growth, and human capital development. The apprenticeship system has been essential to the Igbo culture as it is used to transfer wealth, knowledge, skills, and general expertise from one generation to another.

Research Methodology

The data for this paper was derived from two main sources; Primary and Secondary. The primary data were generated through interview and personal observation. On the other hand, the secondary data were sourced from journals, the internet and books.

Conceptualization

The Concept of Human Capital

Human capital as a concept is the productive capacity of individuals, and it represents the skills and capabilities individuals possess that enable them to transform raw materials and capital into goods and services. These skills can be developed through education and apprenticeship. Human capital is crucial for economic growth and development, as it directly affects labor productivity, technological innovation, and adaptation.

Education according to Hyun, (2020) plays a critical role in developing human capital, as it provides the necessary knowledge and skills for individuals to contribute to economic growth. However, it is important to note that the skills taught in schools may not always align with the skills required in the labor market. This mismatch can lead to highly educated workers being employed in low-productivity jobs, which can hinder growth in the economy and reduction of poverty.

Apart from education, in the submission of Gabriele and Jorg, (2019) basic skill formation in the family and the apprenticeship system may also contribute to the development of human capital. Additionally, to OECD, (2021) a healthy lifestyle and educational attainment are associated components of human capital that work together to create productivity and contribute to social and economic well-being.

In conclusion, the proper interaction of educational and health standards is a crucial factor in the development of human capital, which in turn drives economic growth and development.

The Concept of Human Capital Development

Human capital development is an essential process for organizations that aim to increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets of their employees. This process leads to employee productivity and effectiveness, and ultimately contributes to the overall performance of the firm. The importance of human capital development in the opinion of Rastogi, (2000) lies in the fact that it provides employees with continuous improvement opportunities for their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which is vital for the growth of the organization. According to Adeyeye, (2002) work is a two way exchange of value, not a one way exploitation of an asset by its owners

Training is the primary component of human capital development, as it serves as the vehicle that takes organizations to their destination within a predetermined timeframe. As technology and systems rapidly evolve, organizations must invest in the training of their employees to maintain their competitiveness in the market. There is still some debate on the impact of employee training on organizational performance, but it is generally accepted that training increases productivity and performance, which translates into better organizational performance.

Thus, human capital development is critical to the survival of modern organizations as they must continuously train and retrain their employees to ensure that they remain competitive in the market. Industrial Training Fund, (2016) submits that training of employees not only results in increased productivity, but it also assists workers to achieve self-esteem in their personal pursuit as they work to achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, technological growth depends on the availability of a trained

workforce; therefore, investing in human capital development is a crucial strategy for any organization.

Training is an organized process through which people learn knowledge and skills for a specific purpose. It includes directed and planned experiences, guided growth, and modification of an individual's behavior to conform to a pre-defined and specific pattern. Training is also a process for the enhancement of skills, talents, and knowledge of employees.

Human capital development is the continuous improvement to the work environment of staff so as to make them more useful to the organization. This process according to Aluko and Aluko, (2012) focuses on strategizing to improve worker efficiency in the place of work. Therefore, human capital development involves fulfilling the potential of people by enlarging their capabilities, which necessarily implies empowerment of people, enabling them to participate actively in their development. Investing in the development of the work-force of an organization is a means for enhancing greater productivity and improving their individual capacity.

The Concept of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a system through which an employer agrees to employ a young person and systematically train them in a trade for a pre-determined period. The International Labour Organization's definition highlights some key attributes, including that apprenticeship takes place in the workplace, is supervised by a master, aims to teach a trade or skill, and follows a predefined plan outlined in a contract between the employer and apprentice.

Further attributes are added by Ryan et al, (2010) definition, which highlights that apprenticeships combine vocational education with work-based learning for an intermediate occupational skill. Apprenticeships are also subject to externally imposed training standards, particularly for the workplace component, and often incorporate off-the-job education and training.

Furthermore, an apprenticeship is a type of vocational training that allows individuals to gain practical, hands-on experience in a particular trade or profession. Typically, apprenticeships involve working for an employer who provides on-the-job training and instruction, in exchange for the apprentice's labor. This type of training can last for several years, during which time the apprentice will develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become a skilled practitioner in a regulated occupation. Often, apprentices will work under the supervision of a master-craftsman, who will oversee their education and ensure they are progressing appropriately. Ultimately, apprenticeships provide individuals with a pathway to obtaining a license to practice in their chosen field, and can be a valuable way to launch a career and build a strong foundation of skills and knowledge.

Davy, (2019) explains that apprenticeships can be categorized into two: the independent and cooperative. The independent apprenticeships are privately owned enterprises whose modes of training have no documented syllabus. Cooperative apprenticeships, on the other hand, are organized and managed in collaboration between educational institutions and employers and are associated with a curriculum.

Thus, apprenticeship is a widespread phenomenon in developing countries' informal economies. These systems usually focus on workplace-based learning, where apprentices learn through

observation and imitation from an experienced craftsperson. However, long working hours, unsafe working conditions, low or no wages or allowances, little social protection, and strong gender imbalances are among the decent work deficits often found in informal apprenticeships.

Despite these weaknesses, informal apprenticeship systems are considered cost-effective in developing countries, especially in the context of expanding formal technical education and training. Improving informal apprenticeship systems can enhance a country's skills base, diversify products and services, and contribute to the productivity, innovation, and adaptability of micro and small enterprises.

The Igbo Apprenticeship System

The Igbo Apprenticeship System is a traditional but highly effective method of business education and development among the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria. The system is based on a formal and informal contractual agreement between parties, including the young apprentice (boy/girl), the master (Oga/Madam), and other members of the community such as the Umunna, Umuada, and Ikwu.

The primary purpose of this system is to facilitate economic growth, stability, and sustainable livelihood by investing in human resources through vocational training. The Igbo people believe that this system prepares the younger generation to take up business as a way of life, thereby enhancing entrepreneurship development in the community.

According to Nnamdi, (2021) there are four critical themes through which the Igbo Apprenticeship System is passed down from generation to generation. The first is Nwaboi, which is an informal volunteering system that allows young people to learn a craft or trade. Second is the role of the first son or Di-okpara, often closely linked to the Afamu-Efuna system, which guarantees the sustainability of lineage among the community.

The third theme is the individualistic but yet communal nature of the Igbo people, enshrined in their motto "Igbo enwe Eze" meaning that the Igbo have no king. This motto emphasizes a lack of central leadership which instead guides community decisions and initiatives. Lastly, there is the cultural and collaborative entrepreneurship initiative of the kindred (Umunna).

The Igbo Apprenticeship System assumes two forms: Imu-Oru Aka, which entails learning a craft or skill while Imu-Ahia is learning to trade across all kinds of trading to various crafts and skills. During the apprenticeship period, the apprentice serves unreservedly under the Oga/Madam, learning the trade, vocation, or craft through practical hands-on experience. This service is grounded in their cosmological belief, which says "Onye fee Eze, Eze eruo ya aka": he who serves the king shall be king thereafter.

Accordingly, the Igbo Apprenticeship System is a re-occurring theme of entrepreneurial development that has sustained the economic growth and stability of the Igbo community over the years. It is a time-honored tradition that continues to provide young people with the opportunity to learn a trade or vocation under the tutelage of a seasoned mentor. The system is steeped in cultural norms, community values, and beliefs in hard work, service, and enterprise, all of which drive the entrepreneurial spirit of the Igbo people.

The Igbo men and women interviewed are in agreement that the entrepreneurial foundation of the Igbo people is anchored on various structures and systems that contribute to their economic success. One such structure is the Igbo apprenticeship system (Igba Odibo/Igba Boyi), which is a traditional business school where young Igbo boys and girls are inducted by a business/vocation mentor (Oga/Madam) into a particular entrepreneurial venture. This apprenticeship system precedes a period of three months trial to test the suitability of the inductee. During the apprenticeship period, the apprentice (Boyi) serves the mentor unreservedly and learns the trade, vocation or craft. According to Chinweuba and Evaristus, (2017) this service is grounded in Igbo cosmological understanding of Onye fee Eze, Eze eru o ya aka (he who serves the King shall be King thereafter).

The apprenticeship system often lasts for seven to nine years, depending on the contractual agreement, during which the apprentice learns the trade, vocation or craft and also imbibes the values and cultures of the business. The practice of apprenticeship is a customary tradition in some societies where a skilled artisan takes a young person under their wing to learn the trade. Apprentices can be male or female, and the age range can vary, but typically they are young people who have just completed their basic education. Some mentors, however, prefer high institution graduates because of the level of education and aptitude the graduates possess.

During the apprenticeship period, the mentor takes on the responsibility of training and guiding the apprentice in the ways of the trade. This involves instructing them in the various techniques and skills needed to excel in the profession. The apprentice is expected to be dedicated and committed to learning, as the mentor instills the values of discipline, hard work and perseverance. As the apprentice develops, they become more adept and knowledgeable about the trade, gaining experience in all aspects. It is a time of immense learning and growth as the mentor provides support and guidance in every aspect of the profession.

Upon completion of the apprenticeship, the mentor and the apprentice engage in a settlement or agreement. This involves aiding the apprentice in starting their own business or vocation based on the earlier agreement with the apprentice's family. The mentor may offer financial and other forms of support to ensure a smooth and successful start to the apprentice's new venture.

Overall, the apprenticeship practice plays a significant role in the preservation and development of various trades and skills, ensuring their continuity and transfer to the next generation. The mentor/apprentice relationship is built on mutual respect and trust,

and it is a testament to the importance of passing on knowledge and traditions to future generations. With this financial aid, the apprentice is now free to start his/her own business, and according to Obunike, (2016) most Igbo people utilizes this opportunity to become self-employed.

The Igbo apprenticeship system is a traditional and time-tested model of entrepreneurship development that is prevalent in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. The system is rooted in a formal or informal agreement between a trade master and a trade student, usually a young individual willing to learn a particular craft or trade.

In this system, the trade student is allowed to go and 'serve' the trade master for a specific period, usually ranging from seven to thirteen years. During this period, the trade student is trained in all aspects of the trade by the trade master, who serves as a mentor, guide, and supervisor. The trade student is expected to work hard, be disciplined and responsible, and learn the trade thoroughly. The trade master provides the trade student with accommodation, food, and training, without any monetary compensation. The family of the trade student supports the student in this process, providing them with monthly stipends and other essential items.

After the agreed-upon period of service elapses, the trade student graduates and is established by the trade master to start their business. The graduate is expected to apply the knowledge, skills, and experience acquired during the workplace training to their business endeavors. A major strength of the Igbo apprenticeship system is the development of unique traits of courage, perseverance, and determination, which surpass entrepreneurial risks, dilemmas, loss, ugly experiences, and enormous economic impediments, which are common challenges of the modern business world. These unique traits are embedded in the training experience and apprenticeship process of the Igbo people and play a significant role in their success in various businesses.

Overall, the Igbo apprenticeship system is an exemplary model of entrepreneurship incubation and development, which has produced globally recognized businessmen and women in various sectors, from manufacturing to trading and commerce.

In conclusion, the Igbo apprenticeship system is an essential aspect of the Igbo entrepreneurial foundation. It has contributed to the economic success of the Igbo people and has helped to maintain trans-generational business legacies and inter-generational succession. The Igbo apprenticeship system, combined with other Igbo structures and systems, enables the development of new markets and cultural innovation, making the Igbo people among the most successful business ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The Stages of the Igbo Apprenticeship System

S/No	Stages	Description	Activity
1	Stage 1	Discovery of innate talent and suitable master	The child's parents discover what he/she is capable of doing e.g. trading or craft and the appropriate master is sort after.
2	Stage 2	The child leaves his/her house to stay, work and learn from the master	In line with his/her choice, he/she leaves the parents to stay with the master according to the years of agreement
3	Stage 3	The child spends his/her contractual years till he/she graduates and settled both in cash and in kind	An apprentice that successfully gets to this stage without ill-report is qualified to be settled both in cash and material by the master as start-up capital to open his/her business enterprise.

Source: Study report 2023

The Igbo men and women interviewed all agreed that, the contractual years of apprenticeship requires a great deal patience, endurance, loyalty and wisdom. This is so because according to them, the boy/girl becomes almost totally like the property of the master who is required to use him/her according to his whims and caprices. However, at the end of the contractual years which ranges between seven (7) to thirteen (13) years, it is customary that the master does the following: (a) secure a business premises (commonly called shop). (b) Stock the shop with goods; from which he/she has learnt the skills of salesmanship and (c) settles the boy/girl with cash as start-up capital for the new business enterprise.

It is important to point here that stage two is really the critical stage of the apprenticeship system. It determines the future of the boy/girl business-wise. The learning stage equips him/her with the necessary business acumen in purchases, negotiation and salesmanship. But what is important is that at this stage, he/she learns patience, loyalty, dependability and endurance.

The Igbo people of Nigeria have a long tradition of the apprenticeship system which has helped to create successful entrepreneurs. As seen from the table above, the system is structured in three stages which are Talent Identification, Learning Stage, and Graduation and Settlement.

The first stage of the Igbo apprenticeship system is Talent Identification. It is at this stage that the parents or guardians of the child identify the talent that the child has an affinity for. They then reach out to an entrepreneur in that specific field to help teach the child the skills necessary for success. Once they find an entrepreneur, they move the child to the next stage of the apprenticeship system.

The second stage of the Igbo apprenticeship system is the Learning Stage. At this stage, the trade master teaches his mentee practical ways to do business. However, before the trade master proceeds with training, he first tests the trade student in key areas. These include their willingness to learn, doggedness, tenacity, and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is highly important as the trade master will be handing over some trade secrets to the apprentice. Thus, they need to ensure that those trade secrets will be safe. During the Learning Stage, an apprentice lives with his master and also does minor work around the house. Trade masters train the apprentices on key business strategies, such as transaction negotiation, building customer relationships, the bargaining process, how to source affordable goods, and pricing.

The last stage of this apprenticeship system is graduation and settlement. The acceptable practice is that, when an apprentice has served his/her full years of contractual agreement, he/she is legally bound to be settled by his/her master. This settlement could either be in cash or by settling in kind, depending on prior agreements. In cash, the settlement is a sort of startup fund that the trade master gives his mentee to start his own business. When settled in kind, the trade master helps the mentee get a premise and fills it with goods for the mentee to start his entrepreneurial journey.

Overall, the Igbo apprenticeship system is highly structured, and it has produced many successful entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The graduates of this system have excelled in various sectors of the economy and have become major players in the Nigerian business world.

The merits of the Igbo Apprenticeship System: From the foregoing, we can deduce the following merits of the Igbo apprenticeship system.

The system empowers the younger generation with economic independence and means of livelihood thereby overcoming unemployment and poverty.

The system is very efficient for business continuity, growth and economic development of not only the individuals concerned but the society at large.

The system promotes, encourages and sustains entrepreneurial skills and business mindset. Business no doubt is the driver of major economies of the world.

The system is undoubtedly the easiest means of providing start-up funds for business enterprise. No collateral is needed when the master settles the mentee at the end of the contractual years.

The system is an excellent example of the doctrine and principles of mentorship.

The Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria

The Igbo people are a group of individuals who belong to a language stock with several dialects. Scholars refer to them as the Igbo or Ibo, and they are known for their rich cultural heritage and strong entrepreneurial spirit. The Igbo people are located in the south-eastern region of Nigeria, and they have a dominant presence in several Eastern states such as Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Abia.

Ngozi, (2017) explains that their cultural heritage is an amalgamation of both tangible and intangible cultural products. The tangible cultural products include monuments, historical sites, art works, and indigenous technology products. The intangible cultural products are socio-political organizations, cultural patterns, and norms such as dance, folklore, oral tradition, and festivals. These cultural products have contributed to the unique identity of the Igbo people.

The Igbo people are one of Nigeria's major ethnic groups. They are traditionally from the southeastern and southern regions of Nigeria and are known for their strong work ethic and individual achievement. They are an industrious and artisanal group with a penchant for informal training. They believe in the concept of "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."

Despite being primarily capitalistic, the Igbo people have a strong sense of communalism. The community is the bedrock of their existence, and they derive a sense of identity and purpose from it. They are a people who understand the importance of association, and as such, they have strong associations that support their entrepreneurial spirit. The community support comes in various forms, including cash and kind.

The Igbo people are known for their outstanding ability in entrepreneurship, which is driven by the resources available to them. This is to say that they excel in business when there are no means of livelihood, poverty, and the need to survive. This has, in turn, made them a people that are attuned to opportunities and always on the lookout for avenues to create wealth.

One of the key factors that contribute to the success of the Igbo people as entrepreneurs is their innate self-confidence. They

possess a strong belief in their abilities to achieve their goals and succeed in whatever field they venture into. This trait enables them to aim high and take calculated risks that most people shy away from.

Another factor that has fueled their entrepreneurial spirit is a society that is relatively open. Igbo people are receptive to new ideas, diverse cultures, and religions, and this has made them more flexible in adapting to changes. This attribute gives them an edge in business, as they can easily embrace new market trends and make informed decisions that will grow their businesses.

The competitive individualism of the Igbo people is also a major factor that drives their entrepreneurial spirit. They believe that every person is unique and should strive for individual excellence in whatever field they find themselves. This attribute fosters a sense of competition amongst them and encourages them to always innovate and improve on their products and services.

Furthermore, Igbo people possess a spirit of adventure, which contributes to their success in business. They are willing to take risks to explore new opportunities, test new waters, and push boundaries. This has enabled them to venture into new territories and thereby expand their business empires.

Finally, the Igbo people believe that no condition is permanent, and this has helped them to surmount challenges, both economically and otherwise. They take a proactive approach to their limitations and work out ways to overcome them. This mindset has contributed to their rapid advancement in technology and the economy.

In conclusion, the Igbo people's success in entrepreneurship is due to a combination of factors, including their self-confidence, openness to new ideas, competitive individualism, adventurous spirit, and belief in the temporariness of their conditions.

Indeed, the Igbo people are a resilient and dynamic group with a rich cultural heritage and strong entrepreneurial spirit. They are custom-made to grasp opportunities and have continued to advance economically and technologically at an unparalleled speed compared to other entities in Nigeria. Their success is grounded in their cosmological understanding of the universe, which emphasizes work as a vital part of life.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory: This theory focuses on the role of cognitive processes in apprenticeship. It suggests that apprentices not only learn skills through observation and practices but also develop meta-cognitive skills, problem-solving strategies, and critical thinking abilities. The master plays a crucial role in guiding and scaffolding the apprentice's cognitive development.

Cognitive apprenticeship theory is a model of learning and instruction that focuses on the development of problem-solving skills and expertise through the nurturing of apprenticeship-like relationships between novice learners and expert mentors. The theory was first proposed by Brown, Collins, and Duguid in 1989 as an alternative to traditional instructional approach.

The central idea behind cognitive apprenticeship theory is that learning is best achieved by actively engaging learners in authentic tasks and providing them with embedded, supportive guidance from an expert. This model emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in learning, as learners are

encouraged to observe, imitate, and gradually take on more complex tasks with scaffolding from experts.

Cognitive apprenticeship theory is a philosophy of learning that views learning as a social and cultural activity that takes place within a specific cultural context. In this view, learners are immersed in authentic situations that reflect real-life experiences, enabling them to obtain knowledge and skills that are relevant to practical situations in the world.

One of the main features of cognitive apprenticeship theory is situated learning. This form of learning takes place in real-life contexts, and it enables learners to develop an understanding of how knowledge and skills are used in practical situations. Situated learning emphasizes the importance of active participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility among learners and experts.

Another crucial aspect of cognitive apprenticeship theory involves modeling. Experts in a particular domain serve as models for novices, demonstrating how to solve problems and approach complex tasks. Experts provide learners with examples of effective strategies and thought processes, enabling novices to imitate and apply these techniques.

The third significant component of cognitive apprenticeship theory is coaching. Experts in a particular field provide guidance and feedback to novices throughout the learning process. This coaching is designed to facilitate the development of meta-cognitive skills, which are skills that enable learners to become more self-regulated and independent problem solvers. Coaches' help novices understand the reasoning behind their actions, provide feedback on their performance, and encourage them to reflect on their learning experiences.

Overall, cognitive apprenticeship theory is a powerful framework for understanding how people learn and develop their skills and expertise. This theory emphasizes the importance of social and cultural context, modeling, and coaching in the learning process. By providing learners with authentic, situated learning experiences, cognitive apprenticeship theory encourages learners to become independent and effective problem solvers in their field.

The Igbo Wealth and Economic Strength of Nigeria

Igbo people are highly regarded for their exceptional entrepreneurial skills. According to Osita et al (2020), an entrepreneur is someone who can establish a viable business, generate income, create jobs for themselves and others, contribute to the GDP of a nation, and take risks. Igbo people are innovative and can create and nurture new businesses from scratch. They are well known for running various business ventures across Nigeria and beyond. Their entrepreneurial spirit was a crucial factor that helped them weather the storm during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war that took place between 1967 and 1970. Most Igbo people were able to disperse to various cities, towns, and villages within and outside Nigeria in search of a livelihood after the war. This is a testament to their resilient and enterprising nature.

In an interview, a Portuguese pilot named Artur Alves Pereira, as reported by Osita et al (2020), stated that the Igbo people are a prestigious and highly innovative group. He went further to describe them as the future of Africa, endowed with creative business ideas that could lead to the growth of the continent. Being one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, Igbo people are

found in almost every corner of the country as well as in other parts of the world. Their entrepreneurial skills have encouraged them to embrace rural-urban migration and emigration beyond the borders of Nigeria.

Igbo entrepreneurs are adept at expanding and creating new markets through the identification and utilization of opportunities. Markets, which are the lifeblood of many Nigerian towns and cities, are often championed by Igbo business people. Orugun and Nafiu (2014) argue that Igbo people are the backbone of the Nigerian economy, and that failure to recognize and integrate them into the economic fabric of the nation is dangerous. The former governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswan, had also cautioned against ignoring the Igbo people, stating that any state government that does so is at risk of harming its economy.

The Igbo apprenticeship model, popularly known as "Igba boyi," is a key factor in any discussion about the prosperity of Igbo people or their ability to create wealth. It is a business incubator model that enables young Igbo people to learn a trade or vocation from a master for a certain number of years, usually between 9-13 years, during which the apprentice is unpaid. At the end of the apprenticeship, the learner receives financial support and resources to start their own business. They emerge from their apprenticeship with the knowledge and experience of their master, equipped to become self-made entrepreneurs. The Igbo apprenticeship model has contributed significantly to the economic success of the Igbo people, enabling them to spot untapped opportunities and close economic gaps.

That is why Kanu, (2019) asserts that Igbo people possess a rare entrepreneurial prowess that has contributed significantly to their economic prosperity and the growth of Nigeria as a whole. They are innovative, creative, and highly skilled in identifying and exploiting opportunities. The Igbo apprenticeship model is a crucial factor in this success, having provided a platform for young Igbo people to learn important business skills and emerge as self-made entrepreneurs.

Conclusion:

Although the Igbo method of apprenticeship has contributed to the seamless distribution of economic empowerment among themselves and the growth of the economy, the training provided falls below modern training procedures. Apprenticeship modalities and contractual agreement is mostly unstructured and unorganized.

However, the resilient nature of Igbo people is never in doubt, even in the midst of security challenges and the seeming unfavourable economic policies of Nigerian government. The Igbo people's wealth and economic advancement is premised on their socio-cultural belief that to break away from poverty, you must champion your self-development effort. To this end, it is common knowledge that the Igbo businesses have not only saturated Nigerian towns and cities but also other African countries. Undoubtedly, this is traceable to the "magic wand" of the Igbo apprenticeship model.

Recommendation

On the strength of the above, the paper recommends that the system of apprenticeship of the Igbo people should be emulated by other Nigerian ethnic groups rather than looking at them as business rivals.

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