

**Title: *Imu Ahia* - the Igbo apprenticeship model as inspiration for youth entrepreneurship development**

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**Abstract:** Based on desk reviews, interviews and findings from few countries in Africa, and specifically focusing on Nigeria, the paper identified the success Africa has made and specifically Nigeria using the Igbo Apprenticeship model of job creation. The Nigeria youth investment fund (NYIF) and other efforts towards job creation shows the resourcefulness and how goal oriented the youths have come in supporting job creation and entrepreneurship. Also, observing some of the challenges of this trend, to include, weak government policies and support, bribery and corruption, high interest on loans, weak justice system, partnership and building of employment alliances and coalitions with similar initiatives. The paper prospects optimism for sustainable youth friendly reforms for employment creation for the youth in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Employment, youth, government, initiatives, Africa, economy, agriculture and technology.

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## **Introduction**

Nigeria, the Africa's leading economy, has a population of nearly 200 million people. Globally, it is the 30th largest economy in the world, by GDP volume. However, Nigeria's economy is on fragile oil dependence since the oil boom era, and this is very uncertain and leads to fluctuations in crude oil prices and production at the locally and international level. In 2019, according to (IMF) Nigeria recorded a growth of 2.2%. And it is projected that by 2021, it will improve up to 2.4%, still consequential to the post pandemic universal economic status and recovery conditions. Poverty remains widespread. The poverty rate in over half Nigeria's 36 states is above the national average of 69%. High poverty reflects rising unemployment, estimated at 23.1% in 2018, up from 14.2% in 2016. Low skills limit opportunities for employment in the formal economy. Government social programs—N-Power and other youth empowerment schemes—are meant to address unemployment, however, repositioning the apprenticeship programme in our view would also make positive contributions and change the landscape of developments in these areas.

Despite Nigeria's numerous blessings and richness, the challenge still remain the risk of exploding population. UN projects that the population of Nigeria, mostly likely to heat 730 million people in 2100, from its current 200 million population estimation. Concern regarding this potential boom is exacerbated by the fact that currently half of the inhabitants live below the poverty line; COVID-19 pandemics are raging, insecurity and threats of disintegration increases with tension and uncertainty, food security issues is high and the country is confronted with two destructive threats. The high level of unemployment and insecurity across the country and the

Sub Saharan regions. High unemployment could create social tensions. Rising public debt and associated funding costs could pose fiscal risks if proposed adjustments are not implemented.

The effort to lower inflation to the 6%–9% range faced structural and macroeconomic constraints, including rising food prices and arrears payments, resulting in a rate estimated at 11.3% for 2019. This contribution seeks to present, and maintain the Igbo apprenticeship programme as a tool to bring the youths aspirations of entrepreneurship and skills development into reality through the e while addressing the negative outcomes of unemployment, poverty and insecurity in the country. It is apposite that we have to first, establish the methodology that guided this contribution and also seek conceptual clarity

### **The Igbo Apprenticeship Model Programme.**

The Igbo Apprentice and Apprenticeship programme have been given diverse explanations by various schools of thoughts and scholars. The programme entails more of engaging an individual or a person that have decided to embark and learn a specific skill or job by working for a fixed period of time, for someone who is very good at that job or skill. The Apprentice can be a teenager or young person, male or female that embarks on learning or receiving practical training skills, and also sometimes 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 suggested that it an effective mechanism for easy learning transition for young people to move from school base approach to the world of work or other tasks associated with such. The other way round, the apprenticeship generally has been described as dedicated 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. 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 critical look at the following explanations of apprenticeship somehow 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 of 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. The Igbo Apprenticeship programme and activities have been observed 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.

Nafiu and Tunde (2014) concluded that the Igbo entrepreneurial activity is the enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets. According to Agazie, remove the Igbos from the country, and Nigeria will collapse like 1-2-3, like a flimsy deck of cards. Igbo people can be described as indispensable with a unique trait and skills which can holistically serve as a solution tool for the dynamic economic situation of developing nations of the world. This set of people is cultured particularly in the area of business and development. The Igbo people are likened and speculated in the narrative image of the parable of the Talents or the biblical pounds provided by the Masters to the servants. Where different talents were given to each of the three, the two socially and religiously increase their talent with personal abilities, love and mercy and the other refused, but decided to bury and deposit his talents and fail to re-invest it. This narrative vividly describes the Igbo man's ability in entrepreneurial investment and multiplying it to reach others. There exists a prior conception that most Igbo business veterans acquired their business skills from their past colonial masters and slave masters during

the period. It was also argued that the post civil war placed an agony of survival before them, which forced the rich and prominent ones among them to conceive investment of their little money for returns. The Igbo culture and traditions teaches that: *a hand that does not picks dirt, does not see wealth and prosperity*. This is the more reason the Igbos are focused, self-contented and self-made. The Igbo people of Nigeria are Africa's most energetic and most entrepreneurial people, accordingly, Olutayo, he acknowledged that the Igbo people are empirically committed and are very industrious and entrepreneurial, and this is obvious to other ethnic groups and what they do. Give a committed and focused Igbo person a credit value of worth no matter how small; its returns will be in gold and profits. This is one inherit capability and quality of an Igbo person in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the Igbo people are also strategic risk-takers and intelligent entrepreneurs, who are committed in totality to economic activities as their line age hobby. The Igbo entrepreneurs play inevitable roles that are capable of proliferating healthy state for the Nigerian economy for a distant time. In a nutshell, their entrepreneurial activities have indisputably dominated and are still dominating all sectors of the economy of Nigeria, and even across the border.

### **The Igbo Apprenticeship Model: A Success Story entrepreneurship and development aspiration.**

The Igbos of Southeast Nigeria is first and foremost focused, business minded and risk absorbing kind of people; they are forward thinking and very industrious, creative set of business individuals in the world with traditional and independent thinking for development wherever they are and they have ancient money-making heritage for societal growth and sustainable economics. In all the regions of Africa, one finds the Igbos either carrying out small trade or business, manufacturing and process of one product, items or the other. The Igbo wealth creation, employment and entrepreneurship system is found in the popular Igbo model called

*Umu Ahia* or *Umu Oru*, which means the art of learning skill or trade. The Igbo apprenticeship system entails value chains creation, talent identification, sourcing a mentor, learning, training, and establishment. It is characterized by co-creation, patience, support, improvisation and these attributes have helped in producing successful entrepreneurs in Nigeria who are making a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the nation. This model involves several years of learning and mastering the trade under the tutelage of the lead mentor. The mentee is made to see the world as a market place where you need to carve a niche for yourself. This is similar to research as you need to master your area of interest to be able to compete with others. During this stage, the apprentice is expected to be trustworthy, show worthy integrity, hardworking, and accountable. Failure to meet these expectations and roles could result in termination of the apprenticeship program, joblessness and declaration of null and void to such fellow. This sustainable apprenticeship model is directly linked to business growths and developments in Aba- Ngwa, Lagos, Onitsha, Kano, Kaduna, Nnewi, Enugu, Omoba and Obekwesu- all in Nigeria. The *Imu Ahia or Izu Ahia ndi Igbo*, the mentorship entrepreneurship creates opportunities. It has become a useful model for research apprenticeship within the Nigeria context of business and job creation development. It is important to point out, that the provision of social capital is the hallmark of the Igbo apprenticeship system. The Igbo apprenticeship system could serve as a model for researchers and could help train and retain the next generation of innovative Entrepreneurs in Africa if properly and further harnessed. As it is, the uniqueness of the Apprenticeship system remains an issue of debate for so many, especially for the non- Igbo. The apprenticeship programme is neither cultic, thralldom nor ritualistic; rather it is an ancient inheritance and age long, and life dedication to hard work and job creation from generation to generation. It has been considered perhaps, as one of the indigenous job creation and business development models for centuries; one of the major factors that helped pull majority of South-Eastern families out of poverty within 30 months of the Biafra civil war.

There have also been the calls for a restructuring and mainstreaming of the apprenticeship system in accordance with the contemporary realities of business, job creation processes and development.

Learning a trade has always been the norm with the Igbo people of South-East Nigeria. An Igbo person believes in controlling his financial 'destiny' and the best way to guarantee this was through commerce and venture into business. In Nigeria, across the 36 States and Federal capital Territory, anywhere the Igbo people are doing business, this method is established. Here, the apprentice, upon completion of their apprenticeship pays the master a 'freedom fee', buys drinks and throws a party according to his and her financial abilities before they can graduate and get on with their trade officially. Youths between the ages of 18 to 24 enroll into this programme, sometimes vibrant and ambitious teens also enroll into the apprenticeship programme; the number of females, women that enroll into this mentorship programme are less; there are no data generation on why it has been so; however, assumptions have it that the gender roles and responsibility may have attributed to that. The period of apprenticeship is usually 2 – 4 years on the average and it depends on the nature of entrepreneurship. The apprentice is usually presented with a certificate of experience in entrepreneurship. The apprentice does not necessarily live under the care of his or her boss and is responsible for his and her own feeding in most cases. At the end of the apprenticeship, they are compensated with a take-off fund which they use for shop rent, goods, equipment (if needed) and in some cases, accommodation for a given period of time. At this point, the apprentice is established and within six months or one year of operating, he or she admits one or two apprentices that come under his tutelage. This does not in any way prevent collaboration with the master despite being a competitor. In fact, in some cases due to the apprentice's weak buying power, a master can assist with goods procurement for a former apprentice to help them reduce overhead importation/exportation cost.

## **Remodeling the Igbo Apprenticeship Programme for better entrepreneurship Development**

There has been challenges affecting the Imu Ahia Apprenticeship, some of these factors that affect the development and the improvement of the programme, the combination of factor identified includes:

The reoccurring low value of the Igbo apprenticeship programme, existence of verbal and informal agreement, lack of certification and licensing with curricula based programme, high cost of engagement and lack of governmental funding and technical support. We seek to demonstrate further action that addressing the mentioned issues above will be useful in improvement of the programme in Nigeria.

Over the years the achievements of Igbo apprenticeship programme has been documented in the literature both local and international, the evolving narrative, and the future of it, and the diminishing interest in the apprenticeship programme calls for reinvention and remodeling of the Igbo apprenticeship programme for maximum impact and growth. Certain apprenticeship needs to be redefined to broaden its scope and intervention to a large number of interests and purposes. Except this remodeling takes a good effect, the apprenticeship programme will not reach and attain to its goals and turning point objectives at the end of the day.

With the identified challenges, here are the notable suggestions and way forward :(1) The state and government involvement in promoting entrepreneurship programmes. The apprenticeship programme as it is now practiced needs to have more coordinated and motivated support and involvement from both the Federal and State governments. The local, state and federal governments suppose to take active part by developing a blueprint that specifically addresses the apprenticeship programmes or innovations generally in Nigeria and in a comprehensive manner and approach. The government's funding is very fundamental to the progress and future



development of apprenticeship in both Igbo land and Nigeria as a whole. This is because; it will not be the ideal scenario to continue in the antiquated style of apprenticeship programme that makes the master bear all the responsibilities of development, training and setting up the apprentice. It should be a practice that government itself takes part and also plays an active participatory role between the master and the apprentice .Government packages and support suppose to be part of the programme to motivate more people to get embrace it and not to only abandon it in private hands. Also, the active participation of government should also be needed in policy making and legislative provisions that positions the programme statutorily in terms of level of involvement, roles, commitments and share of tasks between the government and private stakeholders in this. Indeed with what it is on ground now, it is very important to play cautiously with informality status of apprenticeships programme as it is now in Igboland, so as to avoid harmful damaging tendencies that may occur as result of formalization through the incorporation and institutional base establishment or formalization of apprenticeship practices. This is important because any attempt towards undermining the contributions of the informal practice of the programme may be resisted and may cause a destructive boomerang within the stakeholders in the Imu Ahia apprenticeship model. (2) National orientation and information sharing. It is very important, however to have a quality and sustainable information dissemination about the Igbo apprenticeship programme from time to time. Using different platforms that are useful and will add value to the programme provides the programme and its beneficiaries with opportunities to do better, Also, it provides Nigerians all over the country the awareness and entrepreneurship education that the programme exists for all persons from any part of the country. Indeed, sharing proper information enables potential men and women have access to the fast growing Igbo apprenticeship , and this also promotes the apprenticeship, and propel interested Nigerian Youths to take to apprenticeship as an inspirational tool for developing themselves and also making themselves employable in the global competitive labour market, especially, now the

government and other stakeholders find it difficult in the area of providing specific apprenticeship allocated budget lines vis-a-viz the light of the shrinking size of government revenue owing to dwindling oil revenue and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Information with its agency-the National Orientation Agency (NOA), The Industrial Trust Fund (ITF), the Federal Ministry of Youths & Sports Development, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, the Nigerian Directorate of Employment, and its parent ministry –the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Productivity should focus on orientating and re-orientating the public on apprenticeship programme and become co- creators and partners driving social development and growth through Igbo apprenticeship programme which has received a global recognition in its performance and economic strengthening towards youths and other sectors in Nigeria. other relevant stakeholders in this crusade of orientation that will be helpful in changing the narrative, and pushing for the apprenticeship to be attractive to all include: members of the Organized Private Sector in Nigeria (OPSIN)- that includes the multinational cooperation's that operates in Nigeria, the micro finance institutions, Market Traders and Business Associations (MTBA), Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Trade Unions and Cooperative Societies, Religious Bodies and groups. Also, now we are in the era of social media revolution, tapping and using the different social media to propagate the information across board to everywhere necessary. (3) Linkage to relevant education and technical programme. Persons and individuals or groups participating in the programme of apprenticeship should be provided with relevant technical knowledge and fundamental education. Among the Igbo in South Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo apprenticeship programme had been in existence for long, even before Colonialism, and has over the years shown some level of resilience. And some of the issues affecting it include (a) poor education Level and school dropout: it has been argued until recently, that apprenticeship

was meant for a person who had primary education or at best secondary school certificate, but could not for diverse reasons proceed for further studies. According to Olulu & Udeorah's, they asserted that the low educational level or background of the apprentices, which is even reinforced by their low socio-economic status. As it is, so many of the people engaged in apprenticeship, with a closer look, they are all from very poor beginnings, families and home fronts. (b) Multiple engagements at a time: there seems to be this manifestation of "jack of all trade system found in the system, or diverse of trades and occupations: This is a common characterize form of diverse engagements at a time in different occupations that the apprentices are involved in. This is turning out as a tradition in the apprenticeship circle for those in commerce, trade and the likes, especially a large number of them are found in the trading (buying and selling of different commodities and services).

Practically, and for the benefit of those involved, this however cannot be underestimated; there is need to boost the educational quality and needs in the system so as to maintain a good quality skills and knowledge of those involved and also to ensure adequate skills to be acquired for economic development, necessary labour market employability of young people, and overall support for the programme. This is not just the task of the individual, but can be achieved via shared function and commitment through public private partnerships, involving universities, policy think tanks of the Government and relevant organisations in the provision of quality vocational and Technical education that will build in a balance and completeness in the apprenticeship programme from what it is today. Here, it is expected that both apprentices and the vocational education and its centers will be core change agents in reinvigorating programme. Ofcours, the vocational education with vocational centres at various areas can be turned into centers of excellence and research thereby making them not be underutilized; rather apprentices from all works of life, tribe, tradition, religion, sex, race and orientation whether as university graduates, college or polytechnic graduates can have access to them for training and skills

development. Graduates in Nigeria as it is, are eluded in life due to the nations state of uncertainty, therefore with this linkage to adequate education programme and technical education, Igbo apprenticeship programme becomes a source of hope by which graduates can secure good jobs and get away from the unemployment.

A quality education, technical and vocational programmes goes with an excellent curriculum and school based training development that can issue out professional licenses, memberships authorizations with professional skills tested certificates on excellent performance and completion of training exercise will go a long way to complement the current style of Igbo apprenticeship into high proficiency, competency and reliability.

Thus it is expected that credence and high morale boost associated with the above will also empower the confidence, self-esteem of those involved thereby motivating and repositioning them with new vigor, sense of value, recovery and self-worth, and also the status in which they have chosen. This paper calls for a fundamental extensive review of Igbo apprenticeship to enable it realize its primary goals and objectives to the bulge demography of young people in Nigeria. With this review, it therefore means that the full potentials and core framework of the programme is set to full achievement and realization in a sustainable short and long term approach, that can stand the test of time against Inflation ,low oil prices , limited private and public investment.

The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan anchored with Apprenticeship programme can lead to Nigeria's industrialization by establishing industrial clusters and staple crop processing zones. An exercise that that will directly engage colleges and universities with vocational Education and Technology skills (VET) to provide and supply needed manpower to firms through competitive procedures through access to raw materials, skilled labor, technology, and materials. Additionally, the Power Sector Reform Program, if effectively implemented, could

attract private investment that will be in need of trained and skillful Apprentice experts. The main obstacles to development in Nigeria are the inappropriate energy supply, deficient transport infrastructures, widespread corruption, together with high inflation, contributing to apprenticeship programme can be of immense help to the country and its future.

A total remodeling of the Igbo apprenticeship will in our view, bring smart and innovative change that will transform Nigeria from its status to where it will be a better and enriched country supported by the Igbo apprenticeship programme for total rebirth and development.

Considered as the fundamental component needed to maintain a good flow and steadiness in whatever entrepreneurship that creates or generate employment, this is important in order to address the gaps and challenges that come with it.

And for the purpose of the youth efforts in this context, it is worth mentioning about two great youth motivators, collaborators and stakeholder philanthropists; specifically they have shown good and exemplary youth friendly focus and support through youth mentorship and youth driven initiatives. The contributions and youth capacities in creation of jobs and provisions of support to African communities by Dr. Alex Otti, (a Nigerian economist, enterprenuer, banker, investor, philanthropist and politician), and a former Group Managing Director of Diamond Bank Plc, a leading retain financial institution in Nigeria before it was merged with Access Bank, has been tremendous. Also, Dr. Tony Elumelu, also a former Managing Director of United Bank for Africa, have been very instrumental in providing youths in Africa with support to booster job creations through various youth entrepreneurship programmes. While Alex Otti, with Alex Otti Foundation has provided scholarships specifically to over 32 Nigerians in tertiary institutions and other learning centers, this effort contributes immensely towards educational empowerment that leads to development of skills and leadership that create sense of self development for job creation and future opportunities.

The Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme on the other hand has been a collaborator of youth tool across Africa for young entrepreneurs from 2015-2017. Since then the foundation has committed and demonstrated support for the economic and social impact on youths in harnessing their talents, grow it and turn into opportunities that create jobs for themselves and others in their communities .According to the Foundation, about 15 per cent of all 2015-2017 entrepreneurs (426) have created 3,728 jobs and generated \$25.8 million in total revenue within the period of review.

Entrepreneurs Transforming Africa (an abridged impact of the Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme 2017-2017: ”If this small sample is able to create such a phenomenal impact, the exponential effect of the existing 3,000 not to mention future entrepreneurs cannot be overstated. The report also shows the impact of the TEF programme on the businesses of the entrepreneurs, with 98% of those surveyed saying that their ability to run a business has improved because of the 12-weeks enterprise tool kit while 77% of them rate the mentorship programme as good, very good or excellent. This real life testimonial validates the TEF programme as a transformative model for Entrepreneurship in Africa and provides a compelling case for like-minded organisations to partner with us. With the exponential increase in the number of annual applications to the programme, the Foundation remains keen on partnering with leading organisations to take on more beneficiaries in addition to our commitment of 10,000 over 10 years. The Programme is now in its 4th year with 3,000 beneficiaries impacted so far”

### **Implications for Future Research and development study**

This paper during panel group discussion and presentation focused on the need to have a detailed and more comprehensive research study of successes, challenges and opportunism and continued prospects of Igbo apprenticeship programme. Also here, it has exposed same and more issues. It

has become necessary therefore that further research shall focus on the statistical data of beneficiaries that Imu Ahia programme has helped, also focus on how to make government commitment in it takes permanent and regular support, also further studies should be able to specifically generate data on other tribes involvement, Imu Ahia within the Sub- Saharan region,etc. The support processes of research study to avail numerous areas of concern in the programme. Also, embarking on a more regular scientific research work that utilizes both quantitative and qualitative approach towards enhancing this very paper and presentation within a period of time. It is believed therefore, that apprenticeship innovation and replicability and scaling up is bound to occur in the nearest future base on the development highlights as indicated by the issues of the moment as regards work places and facts of working these days, also this we believe strongly and propose in the subsequent research undertaken effort.

### **Implications for policy position and implementation**

The entirety of findings and presentation made in this paper call for the positive reaction of the all stakeholders- the government, master and apprentices (including national and local governments, private and multinational entities, UN systems and other African countries practicing TVET, foreign NGOs) to create the suitable environment for the apprenticeship scheme to succeed and survive . Creating an enabling environment to standardize the practice of the apprenticeship programme, accelerate and enlarge specific skill and knowledge levels, and intensify funding access and support for immediate use as key remedy to overhaul the weak parts and systems.

The strong argument of this paper centers on the fact that the presence Igbo apprenticeship programmes requires more diagnostic and precision surgery between the informal, traditional Igbo apprenticeship scheme and the formal based apprenticeship programmes with all its policy

implications to address the imbalances, development of the programme, skills as it relates to such institutions like Nigerian labour market, Nigeria Technical Aid Corps, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). It is also envisaged that an extended apprenticeship programme targeting the Nurses, Herbalists, Shoe makers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, teachers, etc shall be essentially helpful to apprenticeship significantly.

## **Conclusion**

The Igbo Apprenticeship model and entrepreneurship programme has raised concerns and attentions. This paper focused on the direction of Igbo apprenticeship scheme as an inspiration for entrepreneurial development. The paper has been able to enlist some of the challenges and factors attributed as problem factors against the programme, and some reasons that it has improved as it is expected to be over the years. We also noted and presented some of the reasons for that the lows being experienced by those that undertake the apprentices and apprenticeships, its limitations, and other related issues, we also noted the sedate effects of the lack of government involvement in providing supportive environment towards apprenticeship, the challenges it faces without being modernized and innovative, the issue of integration of apprenticeship programme to existing programmers of government and private sectors. The school based approach alongside curriculum programmes. This paper also discussed the hard work values and dedication of the Igbos in the entrepreneurship and engagements, that such hard work and discipline is the bed rock of any personal or apprenticeship development. However, in view of the expositions made towards improvement and further development by relevant stakeholders, and given the role this apprenticeship mode has played over the years, this paper therefore foresees the implications for further research studies on incorporating the



apprenticeship programme in different and diverse systems in order to massively create more entrepreneurial opportunities for development in Nigeria, as well as Africa.

The Nigerian economy cannot achieve its progress and developmental set goals in a monopolistic economy or pseudo-democratic economic system, there has to be market structures operating free economy with healthy competitiveness existing. The government ought to re-visit the programme to have a pure and perfect system, invest in more research, set up think tank and scientifically review it and launch the programme as a marshal economic tool for youth entrepreneurship and job creation long term as part of 2050/2070 Nigeria national economic strategy. This is not to set aside other government initiatives and programmes rather, it should have possibilities of integration and complimenting in the process. Undoubtedly, the contributions of such entrepreneurship towards the Nigerian economic lifecycle are immeasurable. The exceptionality of the Igbo tribes thrives in Nigeria, and this is not an exaggeration, nor vainglorious act, neither praise singing of some sort. This is purely empirical and evidence based that the Igbo people of the South-Eastern part of the country, have demonstrated an outstanding and unique trait among other ethnic groups with the ancient Igbo heritage and business culture as essential drivers for the economy. The Igbo entrepreneurial activities in recent time have ear-marked commendable effort towards improving standard of living and reduction of unemployment from the rural to urban settings. Through judicious utilization of the scarce economic resources by the Igbos, Nigeria has recorded a fairly stable economic climate. Igbo entrepreneurial activities and business success have contributed immensely to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy. Therefore, the Igbo entrepreneurial activities are the panacea for the Nigerian economic growth and development.

The Igbo mentoring programme has over the years sustained the Igbos across the eastern states. As a model of economic empowerment and sustainability, it is a model that could be adopted in

transforming the Nigeria state, create more massive employment, take advantage of the youth budge by making the youthful population resourceful, enterprising and creative to adequately to contribute to Nigeria and even the Sub-Saharan regional development in its current competitive global economy. In view of this, the paper investigated the successes of Igbo mentoring programme, the business performance entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The result indicates that the apprenticeship mentoring as it exists among the Igbo entrepreneurs despite some of its disadvantages has more positive results to produce when actively introduced to the Nigeria economy.

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