

X-RAYING THE BOUNDS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM (IAS): IMPLICATIONS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND JOB CREATION IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

Adoga Matthew Agama

Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunzein Affiliation with Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Uchechi Cynthia Ohajonu*

Faculty of Applied Sciences, Istanbul Gelisim University,
Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

The overall aim of this study is to provide contextual evidence and deepen understanding of how the 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 research design/approach adopted in this study is the Model approach for designing conceptual studies. This approach involves identifying new connections between phenomena, building of theoretical propositions that uncover new constructs and/or connections between constructs, and explaining the reason behind the outcome from a sequence of events. A functional and viable entrepreneurial development system with almost a century-long evidence of job and wealth creation exists to address critical macroeconomic issues such as rising unemployment, widespread poverty and economic stagnation. 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.

Keywords *Entrepreneurship Education. Emerging Economies. Imu-Ahia. Job creation. Government Programmes.*

1. Introduction and Rationale for the Study

The pursuit of economic growth and development is a common struggle among all nations, particularly emerging and less-developed nations. However, the realization of real national economic development is largely dependent on the collective economic prosperity of the individual members of the society. Common economic indices used in assessing the strength of national economies include GDP, GDP per capita, unemployment rates, inflation rates, and percentage of population living below the poverty line among others. Nigeria, though reputed as the giant of Africa, has been battling with rising youth unemployment and increasing rate of poverty for decades. During this period, several intervention programmes have been rolled out in an attempt to curtail these economic problems plaguing the country and threatening its rise to real economic dominance in the region. Some of these interventions which are mostly in form of economic empowerment programmes include capacity building programmes (e.g. SURE-P graduate internship scheme and NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development), business startup/expansion grants (e.g. the famous YouWIN programme), and social investment schemes (e.g. the current N-Power programme). According to the Nigeria's current Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige, about fourteen (14) different programmes have been implemented in Nigeria by various administration between 1972 till date aimed at addressing the problem of unemployment (PremiumTimes, 2019), yet no significant impact has been recorded from these programmes. Cumulatively, these programmes have cost the Nigerian government billions of Naira (hundreds of millions of USD) over the last decade. Yet youth unemployment and poverty continues to climb. According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 13.9 million Nigerian youth are unemployed (NBS, 2020); see Figure 1 below for a 5 year historical trend of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics' (NBS) report on Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria for 2019 showed that 41% of the total population i.e. about 82.9 million Nigerians are living below the poverty line of \$381.75 (137,430 Naira) per year (NBS, 2019). According to The World Bank (2020), the number of people in Nigeria living in poverty has increased to 87.9 million (43% of the total population), making Nigeria the country with the largest extreme poverty population in the world.

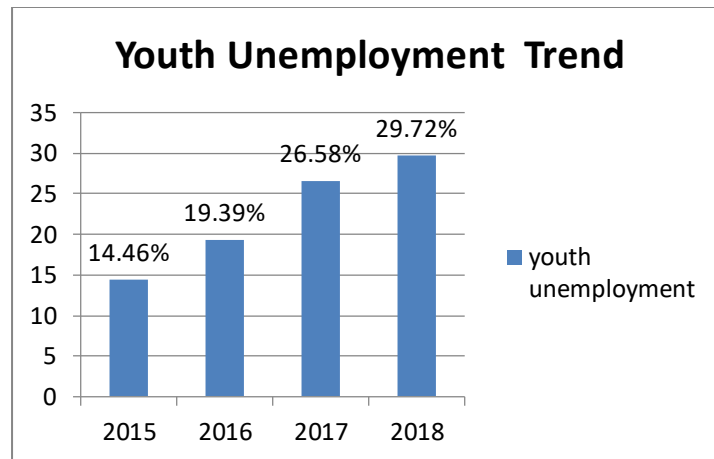


Figure 1: Youth unemployment trend in Nigeria 2015-2018)

Data Source: NBS (2019)

The introduction of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) into the Nigerian higher educational system effective from 2007/2008 was another strategy towards solving the problem of rising youth unemployment in Nigeria (Moses *et al.*, 2015). While the entrepreneurship education programme was well intended and had enormous potential for job creation, and poverty alleviation among other socioeconomic benefits to the nation, many evaluative studies on the programme have reported the ineffectiveness of the programme (Ayatse, 2013; Olorundare and Kayode, 2014; Okoli, and Allahna, 2014; Aja and Onoh 2018). Most of these studies have attributed the shortcoming of the programme to lack of practical components among other factors. Consequently, the graduates are not well equipped with the entrepreneurial capabilities to effectively harness the resources and opportunities in the environment towards successful venture creation, employment generation, poverty alleviation and other related goals.

With an average annual population growth rate of 2.6%, Nigeria will become the world's third largest country by 2050; rising youth unemployment and growing number of populace living in poverty are socioeconomic vices that require urgent and decisive attention in Nigeria. The current high rate of crimes and criminality, such as kidnappings, armed robbery, mass murders, militancy, insurgency, and drug abuse in the country have been attributed largely to youth unemployment. There is an urgent need to explore alternative approaches to enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship development programmes in Nigeria. While several articles have been written on the IAS, none has provided an in-depth review in the manner done in this study. Hence, this study contributes to filling a practical knowledge gap in the body of

knowledge in entrepreneurship education by deepening understanding of how the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) works and how it can be adapted and integrated as a practice component in entrepreneurship education programmes in Nigeria and other emerging economies.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to provide greater contextual evidence as well as to enhance the understanding of how the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) works and how it can enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship development programmes in emerging and less developed economies. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- I. Explore the origin, philosophy and model of operation of the Igbo Apprenticeship System.
- II. Identify and examine the strengths and defects of the Igbo Apprenticeship System.
- III. Position IAS as a prospective alternative practice component for entrepreneurship education in developing and less developed countries.

2. Overview of the Igbo Apprenticeship System/Programme

The Igbo indigenous apprenticeship system - *imu-olu* which means ‘learning work’ is of two dimensions; one is *imu-ahia* meaning ‘learning trade’ and the other is *imu-olu* which means ‘learning a skilled work’. The only difference between the two is that, while the former is focused on learning the rudiments of trade and commerce, the latter is focused on acquiring a handicraft. However, the concept, principles and practices of both dimensions are basically the same. Basically, the IAS is a form of business incubation system, originated and practiced by the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria. It is an indigenous model of job and wealth creation practiced by the Igbos (Kanu, 2019). The Igbo people of Nigeria are the third largest ethnic group in country and they occupy the south-eastern geographical region of the country (Njokwu, 1990). They are well revered for their enterprising prowess both within Nigeria and beyond. They speak the same language (the Igbo language) which even though has developed into different dialects is still understood by all Igbos. The Igbos according to Isichei (1976) originated from the areas referred to as the Igbo-heartland which include – Okigwe, Orlu, Owerri, and Awka towns. The Igbo ethnic group makes up the five south-eastern states of Nigeria namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. In spite of the geopolitical divisions, the Igbos share similar cultural patterns, which are based on similar cults and socio-cultural institutions.

The history of the IAS dates back to almost a century ago. Based on the principle of shared-prosperity, the system was designed to build a wealthy society and not a few wealthy individuals among poor masses. This system does not fit well into the conventional economic systems such as capitalism, socialism, or communism; it is simply an economic system of its own, dominated with micro-small-medium enterprises and very few or no conglomerates. In a nutshell, the IAS is a business incubation system whereby an apprentice learns a trade under the guidance and mentorship of a master (usually an established businessman) for several years, at the end of which the master is obligated to set the apprentice up in the same line of business and see to it that he succeeds. Crescent (2019) cited in Kanu (2019) defined the IAS as an unpaid business incubation system where a trainee learns business from the master for a certain period, usually between 5-8 years, at the end of which the trainee gets financial, technical and social support needed to startup their own business. A more elaborate description of the system is provided by Aleke (2018), he described the IAS as a system whereby an established businessman takes in young boys as apprentices, usually from his hometown and give them an informal, practical business education with the intention to set them up in the same line of business at the completion of the apprenticeship tenure. The IAS has been a proven strategy for job and wealth creation and an effective incubator for entrepreneurs among the Igbo people for decades.

2.1 Goals of the IAS

There are two main goals (motivation) behind the invention of the IAS. Firstly it was originally invented and intended to prevent extreme poverty and inequality in the society (Ndubuisi, 2019). Secondly, it was invented partly to get every able bodied Igbo youth productively engaged in order to discourage laziness and idleness - two traits greatly abhorred by the Igbo culture.

2.2 Fundamental Principles of the IAS

An economic model of job and wealth creation that has continued to deliver results for decades must be anchored firmly on something fundamental and profound. According to Kanu (2019), three fundamental principles have shaped and sustained the IAS over the years, and they are: the Igbo philosophy of resilience; the Igbo Social Construction of reality; and the Igbo think-home ideology.

a. Igbo Social Construction of Reality

Kalu (1978) defined ‘social construction of reality’ as the entire constellation of shared beliefs, values, techniques, and so on among members of a given community. In other words, it means

the shared worldview held by members of a group. One of such shared perspectives of life among the Igbo people that is relevant to this study is the notion that '*onye aghana nwanne ya*' (meaning - no one leaves their siblings behind). This cosmology among the Igbos emphasizes the values of kinship and sense of community and this has been emphasized through several Igbo proverbs such as - *when spiders unite, they can tie a lion; it takes a village to raise a child; sticks in a bundle cannot be (easily) broken; and a tree does not make a forest* among others. In essence, individual success that does not engender the success of others is not considered real success. Hence, when an Igbo man is successful in his business, he is obligated to help other members of his community to become successful as well.

b. Igbo Philosophy of Resilience

The Igbo people are well known for their resilient and persevering spirit; the ability to adapt and endure well in the face of adversity. They accept and embrace the fact that difficulties are inevitable parts of life (and business) and in order to survive and thrive, one must face and overcome difficulties. This philosophy according to Oguejiofor (2010) largely shapes the attitude of the Igbos towards life (and business); to the Igbos, overcoming adversities and succeeding in business is unavoidable for survival. This view is corroborated by Nwala (1998) who asserted that the desire for life and its preservation is perceived as the supreme good among the Igbos and all other things should serve to realize this supreme good. This is why the Igbos endure and adapt to any environment or conditions no matter how unpleasant or difficult in order to achieve their goal. This quality was well demonstrated by how the Igbos bounced back from the devastation of the Nigeria Civil War (Biafra War) that left them with nothing but £20 per person to start life with. This shared trait among the Igbos is based on a shared belief that one needs to achieve economic success in order to be accepted into the *community of life* both on earth and in the afterlife (Kanu, 2019). The Igbos generally have a positive attitude towards difficulties, sufferings or struggles associated with working to make money; and this helps strengthen their resolve to keep at what they are doing until they succeed. Hence, this common saying in Igbo – '*onye obula choro ihe mara mma ga adi nkwadobe ituchara ya okpofu n'ihina o dighi ije oma na-ada n'elu*' (which means 'one who desires a great thing must be ready to work hard for it').

c. Igbo think-home Ideology

The philosophy of '*cheta uno*' which means 'think home' resonated more with the Igbos after the Biafra War left them high and dry (Kanu, 2019). The *think home ideology* entails been

conscious of their identity and heritage and having a sense of belongingness. The devastating aftermath of the Biafra War taught the Igbos the importance of identifying with their roots and having assets in their homeland. This ideology is emphasized through common Igbo sayings such as ‘*aku ruo uno*’ meaning the ‘wealth must reach home’. Guided by this ideology, no matter how successful an Igbo person is out there, if he does not have assets at home or visit home to associate with his kinsmen, he is referred to as *efulefu* which means ‘the lost one’. Hence, Igbos living outside their homelands make efforts to *think home* in different ways; some ensure they build a house in their village even if no one is living in it, others visit home regularly especially during festivals, while others form or join Igbo associations where they are based in order to maintain that sense of identity and community with their roots.

2.3 Model of Operation of IAS

The model of operation of the IAS (i.e. how the system works) consists of three broad stages namely, adoption, incubation, and settlement; this is illustrated in Figure 2 below:



Figure 2: Model of Operation of IAS

2.3.1 Adoption

This stage consists of the preliminary steps involved in establishing the apprentice-master relationship (recruitment of the apprentice) and the introduction of the apprentice to the masters business. Typically, an established businessman travels to his hometown to seek out and to select a young boy (or boys), usually among his kinsmen who will become an apprentice under his guidance and mentorship. He will first of all approach the parent of the boy to request for their son to be taken in as an apprentice. The parents will typically give their consent and an agreement will be reached in principle in terms of duration of apprenticeship. No legal documents or written agreements are involved (Neuwirth, 2018). The apprentice, when taken in, lives under the care (accommodation and feeding) of the master and is introduced to the business, given orientation and told his duties in the day-to-day operations of the master’s business.

2.3.2 Incubation

This is where the actual business training happens; where the master provides informal hands-on business training and mentorship to the apprentice. There is no formal curriculum guiding the training of the apprentice. The training begins with assigning basic tasks in the business to the apprentice. As the apprentice exhibit mastery of these simple tasks, more challenging tasks are assigned to him. The training process is almost entirely based on *learning-by-doing* model. Through this model, the apprentice is being exposed to and prepared for future realities - the unforgiving and brutal world of business. As the apprentice continue to prove himself ready for weightier responsibilities, the master begins to allow him some level of freedom and independence in the running of the business. In some cases, the master might open another branch and task the apprentice with managing it. While such expansion benefits the master through increased sales and profits, it allows the apprentice to develop stronger sense of independence, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and mindset, and relevant business management skills which are critical for his success in the future. The duration of the training varies between five to eight years depending on the nature of business involved and the learning ability of the apprentice.

2.3.3 Settlement

At the completion of the apprenticeship tenure, the master is obligated to '*settle*' the apprentice. The concept of '*settlement*' here implies that the master will give the apprentice startup capital along with all the support the apprentice needs to get his own business started successfully. There is usually no stated or agreed amount of money to be given as settlement, however, it behoves on the master to give an amount large enough to get the apprentice decently setup in the same line of business. The master also provides other forms of support to facilitate smooth take off of the apprentice's new venture. Some examples of these supports such as- giving away part of his market share to the apprentice, providing up to two years of accommodation allowance for the apprentice, give the apprentice access to their business network, and so on. All these support is given in order to lessen troubles associated with starting-up and to enhance the apprentice's prospects of survival and success. The settlement usually involves a ceremony which marks the successful completion of the apprenticeship and the graduation of the apprentice. Once the apprentice is well established in his new business, he will then go back to his hometown to pick someone who will be his apprentice, and so goes the endless cycle of the IAS. Meanwhile, as the

settlement date of the apprentice is approaching, the master will take in another apprentice to start learning the trade and as a replacement for the graduating apprentice when he leaves.

2.4 Key Success Factors of the IAS

Even though the IAS has no legal documents or written agreements to guide the system, the model has been very effective over the years. Below are some of the factors that ensure the success of the system:

- i. The trainee is conscious of the fact that his success in life depends on the success of the master's business. Hence, he puts in his best efforts and handles the master's business carefully and dutifully to ensure the success of the master's business.
- ii. According to Okoro (2018), the fear that the apprenticeship arrangement might be terminated in the event of an established act of theft, diversion or wasteful use of the master's money makes the apprentice to avoid any behavior that could lead to the termination of the apprenticeship.
- iii. The fear of a ruined reputation and its attendant consequence makes the master feel obligated to settle the apprentice and not dismiss him on flimsy grounds or fail to settle the apprentice at the completion of the agreed tenure.
- iv. Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2017) suggested a cultural factor that inspires the loyal service of the apprentice to the master. He asserts that the devotion of the apprentice to the master is motivated by an Igbo cosmological belief which is captured in a popular Igbo saying that '*onye fee Eze, Ezeeruo ya aka*', which means 'he who serves the king shall be king thereafter'. Hence, the devoted service to the master is done with an anticipation to receive the same faithful service from his apprentice in the future.

2.5 Strengths and Defects of the IAS

The review of the IAS has revealed what makes the system robust and also some of its defects. These strengths and defects are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Strengths and defects of the IAS

STRENGTHS	DEFECTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The IAS significantly reduces rates of startup/business failure. Given the rigorous, hands-on training and direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most apprentices are dropouts from primary or junior secondary schools, this could be a source of disadvantage in today's modern

<p>mentorship involved in the incubation stage of the programme, failure rates are extremely low.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed startup capital and support. At the completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice gets a startup package. • Learn-by-doing model. The 100 percent hands-on training and real life learning experience makes the system very effective. • Firsthand business mentorship. Direct everyday mentorship and guidance from the master significantly enhances the effectiveness of the system. • No monetary cost on the part of the apprentice. No training fee and or living expenses for the apprentice. • Evidence of enduring success abound; proving that the IAS is a very efficient, effective and sustainable model for job creation and poverty eradication. 	<p>business landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of proper legal framework to protect the interest of both parties in the face of emerging issues of cunning masters and shrewd apprentices. • Lack of formal structures, processes and systems. • Relies on learn-by-imitation which limits capacity for innovation and creativity. • Challenge of limited scale in terms of job creation largely due to the relatively long duration of the apprenticeship cycle. • Rooted and thrives on commerce – buying and selling with little opportunity and motivation for differentiation, innovation or R&D. • The system is threatened by modern day business practices of trade secrets and non-compete clauses. It is difficult to find a business willing to expose its core business secret (and access to clientele) to an apprentice – who is a future competitor.
---	---

3. Review of Empirical Studies on the Effect of IAS

Ekésiobi and Dimnwobi (2020) carried out an empirically study to assess the effect of the Igbo Entrepreneurship Model (i.e. Igbo Apprenticeship system) on enterprise performance (business survival rates, income growth, access to trade credit, ease of customer acquisition, etc) of participants and non-participants of the IEM. Using a sample size of 1187, Propensity Score Matching (PSM) technique was employed to estimate the effects of treatment on the treated and control groups. The study reported that entrepreneurs who went through the IEM record higher business growth rate, business survival rate, and access to trade and informal credit. Utilizing

data from 251 Igbo entrepreneurs Ugbaja (2019) reported that the IAS drives entrepreneurial activities, stimulates self-employment, and can be useful for tackling the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Similar findings were reported by Igwe *et al.*, (2018) using key informant interview approach with 50 participants across the five South-Eastern States of Nigeria.

An analytical investigation was done by Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2017) with the aim to ascertain the peculiar sources, conditions and competencies that are pivotal to the increasing socio-economic ascendancy of the Igbo people. The findings of the study attributed the superior entrepreneurial performance of the Igbos to the economic culture and values of the Igbos which is the keystone of the IAS. This finding is consistent with other literatures which suggest that culture influences the practices of entrepreneurship (Cullen, 2019; Anderson and Ronteau, 2017; Klyver and Foley, 2012). Furthermore, a study by Obunike (2016) using data obtained from 107 entrepreneurs finds that the IAS facilitates fund raising for start-ups, and significantly improves business performance in terms of marketing, networking and profitability. This assertion is supported by the findings of Tehseen and Anderson (2020) in their study on culture and entrepreneurial competences in Malaysia where they found cultural dispositions to have positive impact on business growth.

In a similar study, Orugun and Nafiu (2014) assessed the impact of the IAS on the business success of the Igbos and also the effect of the entrepreneurial behaviours of the Igbos on Nigeria's economic growth. The findings of the study affirmed that the IAS is extremely instrumental to their superior business performance and that the entrepreneurial behaviours of the Igbos contribute immensely to the economic growth of the country. They concluded that the increasing numbers of small, medium and large scale enterprises which are responsible for the growth of Nigerian economy are owned and managed mostly by the Igbo people. This conclusion is supported by a study which reported that 74% of investments in Lagos state – the commercial capital of Nigeria, are owned by the Igbos, while the rest is owned by Hausa-Fulani (5%), non Nigerians (15%), other Nigerians (5%) and the Yorubas (1%) (Maliga, 2013).

3.1 Pedagogical Techniques in Entrepreneurship Education

Several empirical studies in entrepreneurship education were reviewed to determine the optimal pedagogical approaches in delivering entrepreneurship education. Among these studies are Ahmad, Bakar, and Ahmad's (2018) study that evaluated teaching methods in

entrepreneurship. They concluded that no single teaching method is adequate for achieving the learning outcomes of entrepreneurship education. Hence, they recommended a balanced combination of theory and practice methods. Another study by Ruhi (2015) also proposed a combination of several methods including lectures, case studies, demos, simulations, capstone projects among others, but with emphasis on experiential learning. Perusso and Baaken (2020) studied the relative effectiveness of the three most common methods used to introduce practice into the business education which are case methods, internships and Problem Based Learning (PBL). Their findings showed PBL method to be the best suited for introducing practice into entrepreneurship education. Hence, he recommended adapted version of PBL as the most effective means of incorporating practice into entrepreneurship education.

Malek and Nayel (2020) studied the perception of two hundred and twenty academic staffs from business faculties of ten public universities on the adoption of business incubators by higher educational institutions. Their findings showed a vast consensus among respondents that the idea will be of great benefit. However, when Iyortsuunet *al.*, (2020) tested the effect of the use of incubation resources within the university on students' attitude towards entrepreneurship, it was not significant. This was speculated to be due to lack of or inadequate resources in the incubators. A study by Banderaet *al.*, (2018) investigated the effects of technology-supported and experiential entrepreneurship education on learners' intention and attitude towards risks. It was found that the learners risk tolerance increased significantly after exposure to the incubators (actual startups within the Enterprise Development Center). This finding implies that exposing students to the actual entrepreneurship experiences and tools could increase tolerance for risks associated with venture startup, and this increased risk-taking tendency is a more significant measure of the success of entrepreneurship education than entrepreneurial intention.

3.2 Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

The IAS is grounded in the experiential learning theory (ELT) which is rooted in theories of human learning and it provides a compelling basis for effective education and learning (Kolb, 1984; Kolb and Kolb, 2008). ELT emphasizes the idea that people learn through their own experiences and discoveries; these experiences therefore affect their cognitive development and influence how they grasp knowledge, (Kolb, 1984). Among the four typologies of experiential learning proposed by Kolb, (1984); Kolb and Kolb, (2005a), the IAS fits perfectly into the *active experimentation* (AE) typology. The active experimentation involves learning by doing (which is

exactly how IAS works) through actively interacting and experiencing the subject of study. This way, the learner adopts a practical approach towards learning based on what works in reality, instead of passively taking in information or observing a situation as is the case in most conventional entrepreneurship education contexts.

4. Methodology

This is a conceptual study grounded in theories and concepts that are developed and tested through empirical research. The research design/approach adopted in this study is the Model approach for designing conceptual studies. This approach according to Jaakola (2020) entails developing a theoretical framework that explains and predicts relationships between constructs. This approach also involves identifying new connections between phenomena, building of theoretical propositions that uncover new constructs and/or connections between constructs, and explaining the reason behind the outcome from a sequence of events. This approach was chosen because the overall aim of the study is to develop a theoretical framework that explains and predicts relationships between the concepts and theory reviewed in the study.

5. Adopting IAS as a Practice Component of Entrepreneurship Education Programmes

Apparently, there is increasing number of studies attempting to proffer solution to the need for incorporating practice into business education with the aim of developing the necessary competencies for entrepreneurial success among business students. However, from the literatures reviewed, no study has presented and justified the adoption of *apprenticeship* (modeled after the IAS) as a practice component for entrepreneurship education programme; this is part of the original contribution of this study. Thus, we argue that, the IAS provides a proven model which can be adopted as the *practice* component of entrepreneurship education programme in developing and less developed countries, towards improving the outcomes of entrepreneurship development programmes. However, given the limitations of the original IAS highlighted in table 1 earlier, we propose an adaptation of the IAS which is illustrated below in figure 3.

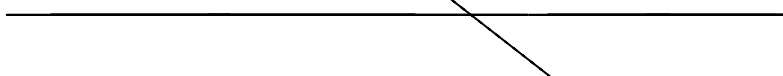


Figure 3: Illustrations of the proposed Adapted IAS model

5.1. Operationalisation of the Adapted IAS

The model presented in Figure 4 below is an attempt to illustrate the operationalisation of the proposed adapted IAS and to show its potential impact on entrepreneurship education and practice. Unlike the original IAS model where the Adoption stage involves the master (i.e. the established businessman) going to his hometown to pick his relatives to be trained in business, in this adapted IAS model, students enrolled in the entrepreneurship programme at the HEI, will seek apprenticeship placement in a functional business of their choice after undergoing two years of rigorous entrepreneurship tutoring through lectures, case studies, PBL, etc. The practical component of the entrepreneurship programme will then be undertaken through apprenticeship in a real life business context; where they will learn by hands-on method (experiential learning) and under direct mentorship, just like in the original IAS model. Since this is an academic programme unlike the original IAS setting, the settlement stage will involve an evaluation element whereby the student-apprentice will be required to produce a business plan to be assessed based on feasibility, profitability, scalability and potential for job creation. This business plan along with a recommendation letter from the master, will serve as the basis for application for funding by the student-apprentice upon graduation. Unlike in YouWIN (a Nigerian government-initiated youth economic empowerment programme in form of a business plan competition) where funds were given to winners based on viability of business plans alone, under this adapted IAS model, the recommendation letter from the master will certify that the applicant has undergone a thorough training and has demonstrated capacity to start and run a venture successfully. The masters will not be *settling* (funding) the apprentices' ventures upon graduation like it is in the original IAS, rather, the government will fund the Graduate Enterprise Development Programme (GEDP) and the startups that will emerge from it through a Graduate Enterprise Fund (GEF) – a fund set aside for the GEDP by the government.

Figure 4: A Conceptual model for the operationalisation of the proposed adapted IAS.

The government adopted grants (free money), as a means for funding of the winning business plans under the failed YouWIN programme (Mckenzie (2019), however, under the proposed adapted IAS, instead of grants, loans will be used. The hard lesson from the failed YouWIN programme is that - free money is subject to abuse; apparently, most recipients of the grant under YouWIN never invested the money gotten in any business venture. Nevertheless, the terms of the loan should be flexible; it could be a loan with 5% interest rate per annum, no collateral (but applicant will provide a guarantor), and repayment period of up to 10years flexible plan. This way, the graduate entrepreneurs will not feel too relaxed (as it was with the beneficiaries of YouWIN), but at the same time, will not feel too pressured, to the point that they will be afraid to take risks or innovate in order to improve their business performances. Meanwhile, we suggest that, the students should get a monthly stipend equivalent to the current minimum wage in the

country to support them during the apprenticeship period (as was done by the government during the SURE-P Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)).

We believe that this proposed model will result in the creation of higher number of thriving new startups which will grow into established businesses that will in turn serve as ‘incubation’ platforms for other entrepreneurship trainees, and so the cycle (similar to that of the original IAS) will emerge and continue endlessly.

5.2. Benefits of the Adapted IAS Model

Our argument for adopting the IAS is not simply based on the observable evidence of its success, but also on grounded theory of learning (ELT) and emerging evidences from empirical studies in entrepreneurship education and IAS. Specifically, we propose the adoption of the adapted IAS as the practice component of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and other emerging economies because:

- i. It significantly reduces rates of startup/business failures. Given the rigorous, hands-on training and direct mentorship involved in the incubation stage of the programme, failure rates are extremely low.
- ii. It is grounded in a proven learning theory (Experiential Learning Theory) which promotes *learning by doing*. Under this experiential learning model, the training is based on what works in a real life context, instead of passively taking in information or observing a situation as is the case in most conventional entrepreneurship education programmes.
- iii. There is overwhelming evidence of enduring successes in terms of new venture startups as well as jobs and wealth creation from the IAS; proving that the IAS is a very effective and sustainable model for job creation and poverty eradication.
- iv. Also, IAS form of apprenticeship is a superior (more effective) form of experiential learning when it comes to entrepreneurship education compared to other forms of experiential learning such as internships, PBL, simulations, etc.
- v. It is a highly scalable model for job and wealth creation.
- vi. It increase rate of business startups and facilitates national economic growth and development.

- vii. It is useful not only for raising competent and confident entrepreneurs but also for developing *intrapreneurs* (i.e. employees who leverage entrepreneurial skills and thinking to seek out and exploit opportunities that could benefit their organisation).
- viii. It is replicable and usable in other disciplines or career paths where practical competencies are required for success.

6. Conclusion

This study was undertaken to explore an alternative approach for enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programmes in Nigeria as a panacea for the rising rate of youth unemployment and widespread poverty in the country. However, its recommendation offers useful insights which can be replicated and applied in other emerging economies with characteristics similar to those of Nigeria. From the review of the IAS, it is clear that the system provides a proven model which can be adapted and integrated as the *practice* component of entrepreneurship education programme 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 component of entrepreneurship education programme in emerging economies will significantly reduce 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.

6.1. Implications for Entrepreneurship Education

While different forms of practice component have been developed and integrated into entrepreneurship education programmes across different higher institutions of learning, the adapted IAS proposed in this study brings new dimensions, distinct from the form of *apprenticeship* presently used by some institutions, to the practical aspect of entrepreneurship education. Many studies as seen in the literatures have attributed the shortcoming of the entrepreneurship education programme in Nigeria to lack of relevant practical components among other factors. The adapted IAS proposed in this study is based on *learning-by-doing* model and as such will be very effective in equipping the graduates with the entrepreneurial capabilities required to effectively harness the resources and opportunities in the environment towards employment creation, poverty alleviation and other related goals.

6.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

Several entrepreneurship development policies and programmes have been introduced in the past without success. The Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria has developed, based on their cultural values, beliefs, practices and social construction of life, an entrepreneurship development model with remarkable evidences of success. While the practice may have been rooted in their social construction of life, the model is replicable and importantly, scalable for improved results if adapted. The proposed adapted IAS model can be adopted and integrated by the governments of emerging economies in the development of entrepreneurship education programmes. This can significantly improve the outcomes of those programmes especially in terms of employment creation, poverty alleviation, and business outcomes. Furthermore, the adapted IAS can be a platform for developing successful entrepreneurs who will transform the economy of the country for the better. This is because the proposed IAS can significantly reduce rate of business failures in the country; increase rate of business startups and facilitates national economic growth and development. Another important implication for practice is that it is a scalable model for job creation. It has been proven practically and through empirical studies some of which are cited in this paper, that the IAS is a proven model for job creation and the proposed adapted IAS has even higher potential for accelerated job creation. Also, the adapted IAS, is useful not only for raising competent and confident entrepreneurs but also for developing *intrapreneurs* (i.e. employees who leverage entrepreneurial skills and thinking to seek out and exploit opportunities that could benefit their organisation).

6.3. Implications for Research

This paper utilized secondary data to provide contextual evidence and to deepen understanding of how the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) works and how it can be adapted and integrated as a practice component in entrepreneurship education programmes in emerging economies. There is need for an experimental study to test the proposed adapted IAS Model in a real institution of higher learning. This will help validate the position of this paper and also facilitate the adoption of the proposed IAS as a practice component for entrepreneurship education in emerging economies. There is also need for more empirical studies to corroborate or refute the findings of Ekesiobi and Dimnwobi (2020) as they seem to be the pioneers in attempting to empirically assess the effect of the IAS on business outcomes using treated and controlled groups.

References

1. Ahmad, S. Z., Bakar, A. R. A. & Ahmad, N. (2018). An evaluation of teaching methods of entrepreneurship in hospitality and tourism programs. *The International Journal of Management Education*. 16 (2018) 14–25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.11.002>.
2. Aja, S. N. & Onoh, O.N. (2018). Evaluating Entrepreneurship Education Programme in Nigerian Universities for sustainable development. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*. Vol. 21. Issue 1. ISSN 1528-2651).
3. Aleke, M. (2018). The Igbo Apprenticeship System that builds wealth and started the incubation system. Available from <http://www.pulse.ng/gist/imu-ahia-the-igbo-apprenticeship-system-that-hiulds-wealth-and-started-the-incubation-system/q50p344>. accessed on 4th January 2021.
4. Anderson, A. & Ronteau, S. (2017), “Towards an entrepreneurial theory of practice; emerging ideas for emerging economies”, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 110-120.
5. Ayatse, F. A. (2013). Driving Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. *International Journal of Business and Management Review* Vol.1, No.4, pp.83-90.
6. Bandera, C., Collins, R. & Passerini, K. (2018). Risky business: Experiential learning, information and communications technology, and risk-taking attitudes in entrepreneurship education. *The International Journal of Management Education* 16, 224–238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2018.02.006>.
7. Chinweuba, G. E. & Ezeugwu, E. C. (2017). The Ontological foundation of the Igbo Entrepreneurship: An analytical investigation. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*. Vol. 22, 2017. ISSN 2422-8443.
8. Cullen, U. (2019). Sociocultural factors as determinants of female entrepreneurs’ business strategies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies* Vol. 12 No. 1, 2020 pp. 144-167 DOI 10.1108/JEEE-04-2019-0046.
9. Ekesiobi, C. & Dimnwobi, S. K. (2020). Economic assessment of the Igbo entrepreneurship model for entrepreneurial development in Nigeria: Evidence from clusters in Anambra State. AGDI Working Paper, No. WP/20/085. Accessed 26th February, 2021. Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/228062>.

10. Igwe, P. A., Newbery, R., Amoncar, N., White, G.R.T. & Madichie, N.O. (2018b), "Keeping it in the family: exploring Igbo ethnic entrepreneurial behaviour in Nigeria", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 34-53.
11. Isichei, E. (1976). A History of the Igbo People. London: The Macmillan Press. 9.
12. Iyortsuun, A. S., Goyit, M. G. & Dakung, R. J. (2020). Entrepreneurship education programme, passion and attitude towards self-employment. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies* 2053-4604 DOI 10.1108/JEEE-11-2019-0170.
13. Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: four approaches. *AMS Rev* 10, 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>.
14. Kalu, O. (1978). Precarious vision: The African Perception of the World. O. Kalu (Ed.), *African Cultural Development* (pp. 28-41). Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
15. Kanu, I. A. (2019). Igwebuikoeconomics: The Igbo Apprenticeship System for Wealth Creation. *African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 5 No 4, July 2019. 2488-9210.
16. Klyver, K. and Foley, D. (2012), "Networking and culture in entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 24 Nos 7/8, pp. 561-588.
17. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005a). Learning styles and learning spaces: enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4, 193e212.
18. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2008). Experiential learning theory: a dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development, in: *handbook of management learning*. Education and Development, 1e59. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n3>.
19. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
20. Malek, A., & Nayel, A. (2020). Revisiting the entrepreneurial ventures through the adoption of business incubators by higher education institutions. *The International Journal of Management Education* 21, 1472-8117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2020.100419>.
21. Maliga, S. (2013), Igbos Dominate Economically in Lagos because Yoruba's are lazy, October 11, 2013. Available at elombah.com.
22. Mckenzie, D. (2019), Predicting entrepreneurial success is hard: Evidence from a business plan competition in Nigeria. *Journal of Development Economics*. Vol. 141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2019.07.002>.

23. Moses, C., Oluyomi, O. O. S., Oludayo, O. A. M., & Uzoma, A. (2015). Entrepreneurship Education and Poverty Alleviation: Impact Analysis of Covenant University Graduate between 2006-2013. Paper presented at the International Conference on African Development Issues (CU-ICADI) 2015.
24. NBS, (2019). 2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria: Executive Summary. Available from www.nigerianstat.gov.ng Accessed on 6th January, 2021.
25. NBS, (2020). Labor Force Statistics: Unemployment and Underemployment Report. Available from www.nigerianstat.gov.ng Accessed on 5th January, 2021.
26. Ndubuisi, E. (2019). The Major Defects in Igbo Apprenticeship System. Available from www.tekedia.com/the-major-defects-in-igbo-apprenticeship. accessed on 26th December, 2020.
27. Neuwirth, R. (2018). The age-old sharing economics of Africa – and why we should scale them. TED Talk. Available from: www.tekedia.com/the-major-defects-in-igbo-apprenticeship. accessed 26th Dec. 2020.
28. Njokwu, E. E. (1990). The Igbos of Nigeria: Ancient rites, changes and survival. New York: Edwin Mellen.
29. Nwala, T. U. (1998). Igbo Philosophy . Lagos: Literained Publications.
30. Obunike, C. (2016), “Induction strategy of Igbo entrepreneurs and micro-business success: a study of household equipment line, main market Onitsha, Nigeria”, *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Economics and Business*, Vol. 4, pp. 43-65.
31. Oguejiofor, O. (2010). Globalisation and the Resilience of the traditional paradigms: The case of the Igbo of Nigeria. (pp. 15-25). Anambra: Rex Charlse and Patrick.
32. Okoli, N. & Allahna, E. J. (2014). Entrepreneurship Education from pre-Colonial to Post-independent Nigeria. *Merit Research Journal of Education and Review* (ISSN: 2350-2282) Vol. 2(10) pp. 252-256, October, 2014 Available <http://www.meritresearchjournals.org/er/index.htm>.
33. Okoro, C. (2018). What makes the Igbo apprenticeship thick and critical considerations before taking it mainstream. Available from <http://techpoint.africa/2018/11/07/igbo=apprenticeship-system-for-startups> accessed on 14th January 2021.

34. Olorundare, S. O. & Kayode, D. J. (2014). Evaluating Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities: A tool for national transformation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*. Vol. 29, 155–175, 2014.
35. Orugun, J.J. & Nafiu, A.T (2014), “An exploratory study of Igbo entrepreneurial activity and business success in Nigeria as the panacea for economic growth and development”, *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, Vol. 3 No. 9, pp. 158-165.
36. Perusso, A. & Baaken, T. (2020). Assessing the authenticity of cases, internships and problem based learning as managerial learning experiences: Concepts, methods and lessons for practice. *The International Journal of Management Education* 18 (2020) 100425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2020.100425>.
37. PremiumTimes, (2019). Nigeria’s unemployment rate hits 33.5 per cent by 2020 – Minister. Available from: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/328137-nigerias-unemployment-rate-hits-33-5-per-cent-by-2020-minister.html>. Accessed on 12 January, 2021.
38. Ruhi, U. (2015). An experiential learning pedagogical framework for enterprise systems education in business schools. *The International Journal of Management Education* 14 (2016) 198e211. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2016.04.006>.
39. Tehseen, S. & Anderson, A. R. (2020). Cultures and entrepreneurial competencies; ethnic propensities and performance in Malaysia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*. 2053-4604 DOI 10.1108/JEEE-10-2019-0156.
40. The World Bank, (2020), Nigeria releases new report on poverty and inequality in country. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/lsm/brief/nigeria-releases-new-report-on-poverty-and-inequality-in-country>. Accessed on 12th December, 2020.
41. Ugbaja, S. C. (2019), “Corporate social responsibility: A case for the Igbo trade apprenticeship (ITAS) as a sustainable model of a startup incubator for social entrepreneurship in Nigeria, Africa”, *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies*, Vol. 6 No.1, pp. 194-213.