

## **Igbo Apprenticeship System and Sustainability of South-East Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The Igbo Indigenous Entrepreneurship model known as the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) (Igba Boi/Bonyi) has a rich and chequered history. Dating back to the colonial era, Ndi Igbo (Igbo people) excelled in the trading of Agricultural produce which served as raw materials for several European multinational companies. Over the years, IAS has gained tremendous traction by producing world renowned entrepreneurs, and has metamorphosed into an acclaimed world business incubation model. This study investigates the trajectory of IAS and its sustainability in areas of economic, social and environmental development of Ndi Igbo. Using a survey design, and structured questionnaire, the focus was on the capital cities of the five states in South East Nigeria, where we employed snowball sampling technique to select 325 graduate entrepreneurs. The data collected were presented using tables and simple percentages. Additionally, we tested hypotheses using Multiple Regression Analysis with SPSS version 21. The outcome of the research is that the Igbo Apprenticeship System has had significant positive impact on the economic, social and environmental development of South East Nigeria. It is recommended that greater attention be paid to nationalize IAS for the benefit of the whole country.

**Keywords: Igbo Apprenticeship System, Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Igba Boi/Bonyi.**

### **Introduction**

The Igbo traditional business environment thrives on a very profound vocational and craft-based knowledge acquisition known as Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) through the instrumentality of Igba boi/Bonyi. Igba Boi/Bonyi has a chequered history, and is a process whereby a successful business person, as a way of enhancing business expansion and/or altruistically giving back to the kindred or community, informally contracts an apprentice to learn a trade or craft under agreed terms and conditions (Onu and Agu, 2021). The apprentice lives with their Oga or Master (the owner of the business and/or mentor), learns the trade or craft, while doing other extra-curricular activities, such as house chores and running errands for Oga, their family and neighbours. At the successful completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice is settled with either goods or cash or both. The settled apprentice begins their own business, leveraging on the following: invaluable knowledge gained, experience acquired, knowledge of market dynamics, network of suppliers, customers, fellow Umu Bonyi (plural of Bonyi), and of course, the goodwill of their Oga.

The interesting characteristics, opportunities and prospects of the system, which have fostered enduring and sustainable achievements in the South East of Nigeria, have drawn the attention of researchers and academics, entrepreneurs and technocrats (Adeola and Ozigbo, 2021, p. 21). In fact, the IAS has been acclaimed as the world largest incubation hub and a model for stakeholder capitalism (Ekekwe, 2021). How did it all start?

Dating back to the colonial era, Ndi Igbo (Igbo people) were known for their success in the trading of agricultural produce, mainly palm produce, which served as raw materials for several European Multinational Corporations (MNCs) such as Liver Brothers and UAC, among others (Chinweuba and Ezeugwu, 2017). However, fortuitous events that were to follow destroyed this veritable source of livelihood and wealth (Nnoli, 1978). Nigeria's independence in 1960 substantially reduced the influence of the MNCs in the hinterland, while the exchange of explosives during the civil war destroyed the matured palm trees, increased soil acidity and

claimed almost 2 Million lives, mostly youths, women and children. Furthermore, the Federal Government's strangulating financial policy: the change of the Biafra's currency, and the leveling policy of giving Twenty Pounds to all Igbos irrespective of their deposit in the bank, after the civil war. These circumstances may have contributed to the migration of South East Nigerians to different parts of the country and the world, after the war. The "push entrepreneurship" orientation had one primary goal-survival for self and those left at home. It is no surprise that several studies emphasize the incredible resolve and economic achievements of Ndi Igbo, as a people, despite the region's peculiar challenges (Okoli Agwu, 2018; Agozino and Anyanike, 2007; Olanrewaju, 1999).

Generally, sustainability is about inter-generational equity and sustenance. It is about present consumption in consideration for the needs of future generations. The sustainability of the IAS model came from the underlying cultural philosophy and ethos that guide Igbo business practices. Such entrepreneurial metaphors that spurred Ndi Igbo after the civil war included: Onye ajuru, anaghi aju onwe ya (he who is despised by others does not despise self- a veiled reference to Nigerian Government's attitude towards Ndi Igbo); onye aghana nwanneya (feel and fend for your brother) aka aja-aja, n'ebute onu mmanu-mmanu (there is reward for labour); Onye ruo, orie (there is no food for the lazy man); Ike Otu Onye (hustling or solo effort); aku ruo uno, okwuo onye kpatara ya (take one's wealth home where it is most needed by one's kinsmen) and aka ji aku (social recognition-title- bestowed on a wealthy man. These cultural ethos embedded the spirit of opportunism, adaptability, hustling, resilience, perseverance, I can do, doggedness, prudence and community. That is why an Igbo man will journey to a new town, quickly surveys the market and finds a niche, adapts to the local nuances and begins to hustle. They are resilient, possess the "I can do" spirit, and continue to persevere. They maintain very austere and prudent way of life until success is achieved. While they are doing this, they are also creating opportunities for their kinsmen to join them in the same type of business (first as apprentice). When success comes, they always remember home. To consolidate their positions and provide for security, mutual help and insurance, they form Town Unions in every city they do business.

As a business model, the IAS has produced world renown entrepreneurs and businesses both living and demised such as; Innocent Chukwuma of Innoson Group, Cosmas Maduka of Coscharis Group, Dr. Samuel Maduka Onyishi of Peace Mass Transit group, Late Ejikeme Augustine Ilodibe of Ekenedilichukwu Transport Limited and Late Lawrence Chukwunye Amazu of Chidiebere Transport Limited, to mention a few. There are also doyens of the system who are still doing business in the different markets across Nigeria (Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, Lagos, Kano, Abuja, etc) for above four decades with three or more generations of apprentices (Onu, 2022; Adeola and Ozigbo, 2021; Onu and Agu, 2021 ; Igwe, Madichie and Nihar, 2020a; Okoro & Onyejiuwa, 2019; Okoli, & Agwu, 2018; Olutayo, 1999).

The major objective of this study was to interrogate how Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) has brought sustainability to South East Nigeria.

The other objectives were to;

- i. Examine the role of IAS in bringing economic sustainability in South East Nigeria.
- ii. Investigate how IAS brought social sustainability to South East Nigeria
- iii. Explore how IAS brought environmental sustainability to South East Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Framework**

An attempt at defining entrepreneurship or who is an entrepreneur is variously described metaphorically as; 'wading through a jungle of theories (Hisrich, Peters, and Shepherd, 2008). The definition of entrepreneurship is as diverse as there are theorists, but three schools of thought appear dominant: The Economic, Sociological and Psychological. The economic school adopted the functionalist perspective (i.e. what the entrepreneur does). Here, the entrepreneur operated in the domain of a middleman, administrator/manager, uncertainty bearing, opportunity identification and exploitation (Cantillon, 1776; Say, 1803; Knight, 2006; Schumpeter, 1934;

Kirsner, 1961), cited in Onu (2017). The sociological school considered socio-cultural imperatives as important determinant of the entrepreneur's behaviour, e.g. influences of family, socialization, religion, experience, values and reward system (Weber, 1947) as cited in Akpor-robaro (2012). Whereas these factors are important, they, at best, complemented other internal and external variables within the operating environment. On the other hand, the psychological school centered its discourse on the characteristics/personality traits of the entrepreneur, e.g. resourcefulness, resilience, perseverance, optimism, locus of control, risk tolerance, among others (McClelland, 1961), cited in Onu (2017). It would appear that future definitions of entrepreneurship took its bearing from the standpoint of these foundational beginnings. At different times, attempts had been made either to further elucidate the positions of these schools, or a contentious rhetoric against the categorization, or yet a synthesis of the different conceptual positions of the schools. Abstracting from the various definitions, cultural entrepreneurship is primarily supported by the sociological school, and complemented by the psychological and the economic schools.

The Igbo Apprenticeship System is embedded in the culture of Ndi Igbo. Ab initio, the inclination of Ndi Igbo to business (Obunike, 2016), venture capitalism (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017) and business incubation (Neuwirth, 2017) has continued to elicit divergent connotations. Agbionu, Emejulu & Egolum (2015) perceived the Igbo entrepreneurship as a system of mentorship where the master is the mentor and the apprentice is the mentee. Another variant is master-servant relationship – apprenticeship (Obunike, 2016; Neuwirth, 2017). Both systems involve training or tutoring individuals by successful masters and professionals of a given skill or profession. Ekekwe (2021) further conceptualized the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), as a Communal Enterprising Framework (CEF), where successful businesses develop others, and over time provide capital and give away [arguably] their customers to the new businesses. According to him, the uniqueness of this model is that few businesses grow to become very dominant, since they keep relinquishing market share, and in doing so, they accomplish one thing: a largely equal community where everyone has opportunities, no matter how small. It is alluded that the IAS is modeled to achieve more inclusive, just, and equitable economic systems that work for all, not just a few. In Igbo land, the apprenticeship system comes with various nomenclature like: Okpu-uzu na Nwa-uzu' (meaning black smith and servant), where craftsmanship is involved; Oga na Nwa-bonyi (meaning master and servant), where apprenticeship is involved. These names refer to the relationship between a master and apprentice, depending on the trade or type of business.

Sustainability has become an existential issue to the human race. It is of concern in all aspects of our life: economic, social and environmental. According to the United Nations (UN),(Un.org, 2015) sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability indices are encapsulated in the UN 17 (Seventeen) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Framed in 2015, and expected to have been achieved in 2030. Elkington, (1998) insisted that businesses must adopt a Triple Bottom Line (TBL) concept in doing business, wherein the society (people), environment and profit deserve equal attention. Sustainability has become the appropriate measure of a responsible organization. In essence, sustainable development is a holistic concept that takes into account economic, social, and environmental factors. Thus, the elements of sustainable development include economic development, social development, and environmental protection (Al-Dahir, Kang, & Bisley, 2009). Economic development involves the creation of wealth and the improvement of people's standard of living. Social development involves the improvement of people's well-being and quality of life. Environmental sustainability involves the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, including perpetuation of people's culture.

The Igbo Apprenticeship system aligns with some of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, the system promotes decent work and economic growth (SDG, Goal 8), by providing young people with the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs or skilled workers. The system also promotes reduced inequalities by providing equal opportunities for young people to learn a trade or skill, regardless of

their socio-economic background (SDG, Goal 10). Additionally, the system promotes partnerships for the goals by fostering collaboration between mentors, apprentices, and community which strengthens the local economy and promotes sustainable community development (Ipinnaiye & Olaniyan, 2023; Okoli, 2023) (SDG, Goal 11).

### **Empirical Framework**

A study conducted in Canada by Anderson, Dana and Dana (2006) found that indigenous entrepreneurs created more jobs and generated more income than non-indigenous entrepreneurs. Another study conducted in New Zealand found that indigenous entrepreneurship contributed to the preservation of Maori culture and the protection of the environment (Westhead and Solesvik, 2016). Furthermore, a study conducted in Nigeria by Nwajiuba (2012) found that indigenous entrepreneurship played a key role in the economic development of rural communities. In a conceptual review by Omorede and Omorede (2017), it was argued that indigenous entrepreneurship is critical in promoting economic growth and development in Nigeria. The study of Onu and Agu (2021) concluded that there is significant positive relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship (engagement, learner's stewardship, commitment and patience) and small business sustainability (acquisition of in-depth market knowledge, networking propensity, social capital support and ability to build stakeholders' strategic alliance). Similarly, in a study by Ogbuji and Okereke (2019), it was found that indigenous entrepreneurship can promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

Ezeajughu's (2021) concluded that the Igbo Apprenticeship System has the potential to significantly increase the level of entrepreneurial metabolism and to stimulate the rate and pace of new venture creation and thus a viable platform for entrepreneurship promotion in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study on Igbo apprenticeship system and sustainable development adopted an eclectic approach. The theories include; social learning, cultural transmission, and reciprocal determinism. Social learning theory posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012; Kurt, 2019). This theory is evident in the Igbo apprenticeship system, where the apprentice learns through observation and modeling of the master's behavior. Cultural transmission theory posits that cultural knowledge and values are transmitted from one generation to the next (White, 2023; Nickerson, 2023). The Igbo apprenticeship system is a prime example of this, as knowledge and skills are passed down from the master to the apprentice over a period of time. The theory of reciprocal determinism posits that individuals are influenced by their environment and the people around them (Schiffer, 2022). The Igbo apprenticeship system creates an environment of reciprocity, where both the master and the apprentice are influenced by each other.

### **Methodology**

The collection of data in this study involved the adoption of a survey research design and the use of a structured questionnaire. Our focus was on the capital cities of the five states in South East Nigeria, where we employed snowball sampling technique to select 325 successful entrepreneurs who were graduates (65 from each state's capital city). These are non probability sampling techniques. Snowball is a non probability sampling technique, where samples have rare traits (e.g graduate entrepreneurs), and in which existing subjects provide referrals to recruit samples required for a research study. The method became imperative because of non-a-priori knowledge of the population of study. The data collected were carefully presented using tables and simple percentages. Additionally, we tested hypotheses using Multiple Regression Analysis with SPSS version 21. The research model for this study is of the form:

$$IAS = F(ED, SD, EP)$$

Where:

IAS means Igbo Apprenticeship System

ED means Economic development

SD means Social development

EP means Environmental protection

When conducting multiple regression tests to validate or nullify a hypothesis, the R, R<sup>2</sup>, t and P-values of the constructs under examination were given significant attention. The null hypotheses were rejected in instances where the SPSS p-values were less than alpha (0.05) and t calculated greater than the table's t-value (1.960); otherwise, alternative hypotheses were accepted. Moreover, decisions regarding individual variables were based on their respective *p* and *t* values, as demonstrated in the SPSS coefficients output. It was crucial to carefully consider these criteria in order to either accept or reject a hypothesis and make informed decisions regarding its validity.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

**Table 1: Distribution and Retrieval of Instrument**

Number of Copies Distributed	Number of Copies Retrieved and Used	Difference (Copies not used)	Percentage of Lost Copies	Percentage of Retrieved and Used Copied
325	300	25	7.00	93.00

Source: Field survey, 2023

As depicted in Table 1, the administration of 325 copies of the questionnaire to selected respondents resulted in the retrieval and use of 300 (93%) copies. Regrettably, 25 (7%) copies were lost in transit. Consequently, all subsequent analyses were conducted solely on the 300 retrieved copies, as indicated by Table 1.

**Table 2: Respondents' view on the nature of Igbo Apprenticeship System in South East Nigeria**

STATEMENT	SA	A	UN	D	SD	TOTAL
I learnt practical skills and work under an experienced master.	135	149	3	7	6	300
There were laid down rules and regulations guiding my apprenticeship	118	153	10	12	7	300
My Oga trained me in different areas of our business.	250	40	2	5	3	300
My Oga and my seniors supervised and monitored the process of the apprenticeship	260	31	4	3	2	300
My Oga settled me with goods and finances to enable me start up my own business	282	12	1	3	2	300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1500</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey 2023

From table 2 above, it is obvious that majority of the respondents attested that Igbo apprenticeship system is in practice within the region; given that 70% and 26% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 4 (1%) respondents were indifferent, 2% and 1% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagreed respectively on the statements relating to the nature of Igbo Apprenticeship System in South East Nigeria.

**Table 3: Responses on whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to economic development**

STATEMENT	SA	A	UN	D	SD	TOTAL
I acquired the skills that are in demand through the apprenticeship system.	112	156	6	9	17	300
The system provided the pathway for me to create job for others in the society.	82	135	32	28	23	300
Through the apprenticeship system, I have my own businesses and servants under my mentorship.	239	46	4	6	5	300
Through the programme, I am financially self-independent.	219	51	14	9	7	300

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1200</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

From table 3 above, it is obvious that majority of the respondents attested to the effect of Igbo apprenticeship system on economic development; given that 53% and 33% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 14 (5%) respondents were indifferent, 4% respondents each disagree and strongly disagreed respectively on the statements relating to whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to economic development.

**Table 4: Responses on whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to social development**

STATEMENT	SA	A	UN	D	SD	TOTAL
The apprenticeship system provides practical skills for social inclusion of participants	130	127	12	16	15	300
It leads to improvement of the quality of life and relevance in society in the South-East of Nigeria	231	54	2	7	6	300
It strengthens social cohesion and inter-generational solidarity	166	114	5	8	7	300
The programme enables social networking among participants, leading to life-long relationships	201	69	9	13	8	300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1200</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

From table 4 above, it is obvious that majority of the respondents attested to the effect of Igbo apprenticeship system on social development of the South-East, Nigeria; given that 70% and 26% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 4 (1%) respondents were indifferent, 2% and 1% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagreed respectively on the statements relating whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to social development.

**Table 5: Responses on whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to environmental protection**

STATEMENT	SA	A	UN	D	SD	TOTAL
It helps to preserve Igbo traditional knowledge and culture.	117	89	28	31	35	300
The system fosters a sense of community and social responsibility as apprentices are expected to give back to their communities after training.	211	61	8	12	8	300
It also encourages the preservation of local skills and production of locally made products, which could boost the region's economy.	168	114	4	8	6	300
It supports the development of a unique regional identity and boost local tourism in the South-East.	112	112	24	29	23	300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1200</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

From table 5 above, it is obvious that majority of the respondents attested to the effect of Igbo apprenticeship system on environmental development and sustainability; given that 51% and 31% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 5% respondents were indifferent, 7% and 6% of the respondents disagree

and strongly disagreed respectively on the statements relating whether Igbo Apprenticeship System leads to environmental development and sustenance.

**Test of Hypotheses**

The hypotheses were tested using the multiple regression in SPSS. The output is presented below:

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Igbo Apprenticeship System	4.6033	.74015	300
Economic development	4.2800	1.03852	300
Social development	4.4200	.93444	300
Environmental protection	4.1400	1.16257	300

**Table 7: Correlations**

		Igbo Apprenticeship System	Economic development	Social development	Environmental protection
Pearson Correlation	Igbo Apprenticeship System	1.000	.850	.890	.819
	Economic development	.850	1.000	.943	.956
	Social development	.890	.943	1.000	.897
	Environmental protection	.819	.956	.897	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Igbo Apprenticeship System	.	.000	.000	.000
	Economic development	.000	.	.000	.000
	Social development	.000	.000	.	.000
	Environmental protection	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Igbo Apprenticeship System	300	300	300	300
	Economic development	300	300	300	300
	Social development	300	300	300	300
	Environmental protection	300	300	300	300

**Table 8: Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Environmental protection, Social development, Economic development <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Igbo Apprenticeship System

b. All requested variables entered.

**Table 9: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.891 <sup>a</sup>	.794	.792	.33783	.167

a. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental protection, Social development, Economic development

b. Dependent Variable: Igbo Apprenticeship System

**Table 10: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.014	3	43.338	379.726	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	33.782	296	.114		
	Total	163.797	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Igbo Apprenticeship System

b. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental protection, Social development, Economic development

**Table 11: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.543	.099		15.552	.000
	Economic development	-.017	.086	-.023	-.194	.846
	Social development	.637	.063	.805	10.100	.000
	Environmental protection	.076	.058	.119	2.320	.009

a. Dependent Variable: Igbo Apprenticeship System

**Table 12: Residuals Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.2397	5.0264	4.6033	.65942	300
Residual	-1.23966	1.13971	.00000	.33613	300
Std. Predicted Value	-3.584	.642	.000	1.000	300
Std. Residual	-3.669	3.374	.000	.995	300

a. Dependent Variable: Igbo Apprenticeship System

As shown on the model summary and ANOVA tables, with an adjusted R Square value of 0.792 and a significance value of 0.000 respectively, this shows that the Igbo apprenticeship system substantially contributes to the sustainable development of South East Nigeria. Therefore, for the hypotheses, the decisions are as follows:

**Table 13: Results of the Hypotheses**

Hypotheses	TValue	Pvalue	Decision
H <sub>01</sub>	0.194	0.846	Reject alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis.
H <sub>02</sub>	10.100	0.000	Reject null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.
H <sub>03</sub>	2.320	0.000	Reject null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.



### Source: Extracts from the SPSS Result

#### Summary of Findings

Based on the result of the analyses, the results show that:

1. Igbo apprenticeship system influences economic development of South East Nigeria.
2. Igbo apprenticeship system influences social development of South East Nigeria.
3. Igbo apprenticeship system promotes environmental sustainability in the South East Nigeria?

#### Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the tests of hypotheses supports extant conceptual review (Omoredede and Omoredede, (2017), and empirical studies (Nwajiuba, 2012; Onu, 2021; Onu and Agu (2021), that IAS is a potent instrument that enhances economic, social and environmental sustainability in the South East of Nigeria. This evidence has also been found in other climes like Canada (Anderson, Dana and Dana (2006) and New Zealand (Westhead and Solesvik, 2016).

#### Conclusion and Recommendation

The Igbo apprenticeship system has a significant impact on the sustainability of South-East Nigeria. The findings suggest that this system not only influences economic development, but also contributes to social development and environmental sustainability. The apprenticeship system is a cultural practice that has been in existence for centuries and serves as a means of transferring skills, knowledge, and values from one generation to another.

It is recommended that greater attention be paid to nationalize IAS for the benefit of the whole country, with a view to enhance the economic, social and environmental development of Nigeria.

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