

AN EVALUATION OF IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM IN LIGHTS OF LOCKE, MARX AND SEN'S MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines the Igbo apprenticeship system in order to present it as a potential development model for Africa. The failure of current models highlights the necessity for a new approach to development in Africa. This paper attempts to demonstrate that by tapping into Africa's diverse cultural background and traditional structures, development strategies can be created to better address the continent's specific challenges and lead to a more optimistic future. In order to achieve this, the paper employs critical and analytical philosophical methods to investigate Igbo apprenticeship using Karl Marx's labor theory of value, John Locke's labor and property theory, and Amartya Sen's capability approach. The paper seeks to show how the fundamental principles of the Igbo apprenticeship system can guide the development of a model that is both successful and centered on African culture. This paper argues that the Igbo model has the potential to serve as a blueprint in achieving sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: Igbo Apprenticeship System, Development Model, African Development, John Locke, Karl Marx, and Amartya Sen.

Introduction

Studies have shown that Africa as a continent faces a complex web of challenges that hinders its progress towards sustainable development. Three of the most critical hurdles are pervasive poverty, widespread unemployment, and crippling deficiencies in infrastructure (Attah, 2015; Efe, 2014). These issues are intricately linked, creating a vicious cycle that traps many African nations. Poverty is a persistent and debilitating condition that casts a long shadow across the continent. Raimi et al.(2014), is of the view that millions struggle to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and healthcare, This insufficient resources not only creates immense human suffering but also acts as a barrier to economic participation. In the same vein Acha & Acha (2012), posited that limited access to education and skills training further restricts opportunities for moving up economically thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Compounding the problem is widespread

unemployment which is particularly among the youth (Thwala, 2011). This lack of jobs stems from a multitude of factors, including a mismatch between skills offered by the education system and the demands of the labor market (Attah, 2015). Moreover, a lack of credit availability and few opportunities for entrepreneurship hinder the creation of jobs (Nkechi & Emeh, 2012). The high unemployment rate not only contributes to social unrest (Okosun et al., 2016) but also worsens poverty, as families lose their main source of income (Fagbemi, 2021).

Further hindering progress is the continent's inadequate infrastructure. Dilapidated roads, unreliable power grids, and lack of proper sanitation systems all of which act as significant constraints on economic growth (Efe, 2014). Inadequate infrastructure raises business expenses, deters investments, and limits market accessibility (Thwala, 2011). This, in return, hinders the generation of jobs and continues poverty (Okosun et al., 2016). These interconnected problems as mentioned above pose a formidable challenge to Africa's development. Despite numerous attempts to address Africa's challenges, many development models have fallen short. Given that these models are mostly designed based on Western experiences, hence, it has struggled to effectively tackle the continent's unique issues of poverty, unemployment, and infrastructural deficiencies (Ayittey, 1994).

The major shortcoming is in the imposition of "one-size-fits-all" approaches. The Westminster model of governance, for example, has been criticized for not aligning with the historical and cultural contexts of African societies (see Munslow, 1983). Similarly, incorporating Western economic models has often failed to account for "market failures" specific to developing countries, such as limited access to credit and underdeveloped financial systems (Ayittey, 1994). Furthermore, a focus on large-scale development projects has yielded mixed results (Ika, 2012). These projects sometimes lack local ownership, leading to poor implementation and limited long-term impact. In addition to this, Ayittey (1994), suggested that an over-reliance on foreign aid can create a dependency relationship, hindering sustainable development. Nyamnjoh and et al (2005) emphasize the necessity of a more refined approach in light of the perceived shortcomings of certain "developmental state" models in Africa. Although state-led development has been successful in certain Asian nations, trying to apply this approach without taking into account the unique political and economic situations in Africa could have negative outcomes.

The ineffectiveness of these existing models underscores the need for a new paradigm for development in Africa. This new approach should prioritize local ownership, context-specific solutions, and a focus on empowering individuals and communities. This can be achieved by drawing on Africa's rich cultural heritage and traditional systems, such as the Igbo Apprenticeship System, development models can be crafted which can be more responsive to the continent's unique challenges and pave the way for a brighter future. This paper aims to examine the possibilities of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (Lgba Boi) as a base for a new development model in Africa. This is achieved by examining *Lgba Boi* system in lights of the labor theory of value by Karl Marx, John Locke's theory of labor and property, and Amartya Sen's capability approach. To achieve this, the paper employed critical and analytical philosophical method to examine these frameworks. This involves a close examination of the core concepts within each theory and how they might be relevant to the structure and practices of *Lgba Boi*. For instance, Marx's focus on worker empowerment can be compared to the mentorship aspect of *Lgba Boi*, while Locke's emphasis on skill development corresponds with the system's focus on vocational training. Similarly, Sen's capability approach, which emphasizes individual capacity to function and achieve well-being, resonates with Lgba Boi's goal of equipping individuals with the skills needed

for economic success. By critically analyzing these connections, the paper aims to demonstrate how the core principles of ***Lgba Boi*** - skill development, mentorship, delayed gratification, and social responsibility can inform the creation of a development model that is both effective and afrocetric. This model would address the shortcomings of previous one-size-fits-all approaches by drawing on the strengths of a traditional African system and fostering sustainable development in Africa.

The Value of Labor in Igbo Culture

In Igbo culture, the value of labor is paramount. It's not just a means to an end, but a cornerstone of dignity, self-respect, and societal recognition. The Igbo proverb, ***Akụ ruo unọ a mara onye kpatara ya*** (One's true wealth is one's contribution to the community), underscores the importance of a good reputation in Igbo society. This good name is often earned through hard work and industriousness. The Igbo people are renowned for their resourcefulness and self-reliance. The maxim, ***Ọ bụ onye na-akpata akpata, na-eri eri*** (It is the one who works hard that eats), emphasizes the importance of taking initiative and finding ways to meet one's needs. Labor is seen as a path to self-reliance and a source of pride. Names like "***di ji***" (great farmer), "***Dike***" (strong and valiant), "***Odogwu***" (a warrior), and "***Ogbu agu***" (a slayer of a lion) all point to the admiration for individuals who exert effort and achieve success through their labor. The concept of laziness is largely absent in Igbo culture because the Igbos believed in ***Onye ruo o rie*** (he who works will eat).

The Igbo people have a strong work ethic which is driven by the desire to provide for themselves and their families. Begging is considered an undesirable option, as self-sufficiency achieved through hard work is highly valued. This cultural focus on hard work encourages a mindset of creativity and ingenuity. The Igbo developed a system that allows young individuals to acquire important skills through committed work by appreciating the importance of hard work in attaining success. This system is not only focused on acquiring technical knowledge, but also on building the work ethic, discipline, and resilience required to succeed in the global environment. With this idea in mind, it is valid to assert that the Igbo apprenticeship system is sustained by this ingrained respect for work. The system itself is a product of the cultural value placed on hard work and skill development. Young individuals are entrusted to experience ***ndị ogā (the masters)***, not just for basic skills, but to learn the intricacies of a trade or business. This extended period of dedicated work allows them to hone their capabilities and contribute meaningfully to the ***ogā's*** (master's) enterprise. The value placed on labor fosters a cyclical system of success. Apprentices, through their hard work, gain valuable skills and knowledge. They are then empowered to become independent entrepreneurs, contributing to the overall economic well-being of the community. Their success inspires future generations to embrace the same work ethic, perpetuating the cycle. The Igbo culture places immense value on labor. It is seen as a path to not just wealth but also dignity, respect, and self-actualization. The Igbo apprenticeship system exemplifies this cultural value by providing a structured framework for young individuals to develop their skills and become successful entrepreneurs. This system, built on the foundation of hard work and dedication, continues to be a vital force in Igbo society.

The Igbo Apprenticeship System Explained

The Igbo apprenticeship system which is also known as ***Lgba-Boi***, is a cornerstone of Igbo economic life in southeastern Nigeria. It functions as a framework for informal indentured

agreements (Agozino & Anyanike, 2007) that foster entrepreneurial ventures by inducting young Igbo individuals into established businesses run by experienced entrepreneurs called *Ogā* (Master) (Ejo-Orusa & Mpi, 2019). This system holds a deep historical significance and is essential in molding the economic environment of the Igbo community. The Igbo tradition of business ownership has strong origins, tracing back to the 15th century and the era of slavery (Ohadike, 1998). Adamu (1979), argues that in the 1800s, many Igbo people were enslaved and engaged in different business ventures such as trading spices, sugar, and tobacco. The Igbo people were inspired by this experience to engage in various forms of entrepreneurship in the pre-colonial era, sparking their entrepreneurial spirit (Iwara, et al. 2019). When the colonial era began, the Igbo people were already known for being top palm oil and kernel exporters, demonstrating their skills in trades such as crafting, business, and small-scale industries.

The Igbo apprenticeship system has served as a vital mechanism for sustaining this entrepreneurial spirit for generations (Ohadike, 1998). It equips apprentices with a well-rounded skillset encompassing technical, managerial, and interpersonal skills (Ejo-Orusa & Mpi, 2019). Some of the core competencies include forecasting, human relationship management, inventory control and analysis, opportunity recognition and utilization, supply chain management, quality control, bookkeeping and accounting, oral communication, linguistic skills, planning and goal setting, monitoring, innovation, marketing, change orientation, finance, visionary leadership, listening skills, organizational culture, network building, negotiation, venturing, coaching, customer relationship management, and teamwork (Onuoha, 2010; Iwara, et al. 2019). The system also emphasizes a focus on maximizing return on investment to fuel business expansion, while maintaining clear boundaries between family relationships and business dealings (Iwara, et al. 2019). These skills translate into a diverse range of industries and sectors, including transportation, construction, manufacturing, real estate, commerce (import and export), mercantile trading, ICT equipment, artisanship, film, automotive, and many more (Ejo-Orusa & Mpi, 2019). Yemi (2021) argues that with the Igbo apprenticeship model, the Igbo people have been able to build collective wealth. However, in the future, there is a call for reforms in the system that would provide better protection to the young people that are apprentices. There are also calls for the government to scale and integrate it into its efforts for youth development and poverty alleviation.

Types of Igbo Apprenticeship System

The Igbo apprenticeship system is not monolithic. These categories cater to different needs and preferences, ensuring a flexible approach within the overall framework. It encompasses three main types:

- **Slave Apprenticeship (Igba-Odibo):** This is the most common type, where an apprentice receives free training for a pre-determined period in exchange for working for the *Ogā* for a period between two (2) to seven (7) years. The apprentice becomes a slave for the *Ogā* in order to learn the mysteries of the business of the master. He subjects himself to the master for training and there is delayed gratification since the training would involve inculcating humility, discipline and patience into the apprentice in order to prepare him for future endeavor.
- **Handwork Apprenticeship (Imu-Oruaka):** In this type, the apprentice pays the *Ogā* for learning a specific craft or skill which the *Ogā* will expose him to realities of such skills and provide him with survival tactics to ensure that the apprentice will be capable of facing any

challenges that might come into play in such trade. The master tutors the apprentice practically and equips him with the practical tools for expanding the trade even beyond the confines of the mentor's skills.

- **Trade Apprenticeship (Imu-Ahĩa):** Here, the focus is on learning a trade, and the mentee may or may not pay depending on the arrangement.

The stages in Igbo Apprenticeship System

The Igbo apprenticeship system can be broadly understood through three distinct stages:

- **Talent Recognition and Admission Stage:** This stage begins within the household, where potential entrepreneurial skills are identified in a future mentee. It can also be triggered by the family's inability to afford further formal education for the child, or the child's lack of interest in following established household rules. Once a suitable Ọgā is identified, a traditional handover ceremony is conducted, and the terms of the apprenticeship are established (Iwara, etal. 2019).
- **Training and Examination Stage:** After the mentee have been unified with the Mentor, he typically receives boarding and is expected to perform household chores as part of the training program. The initial months involve learning the basic ways of living according to the Ọgā's preferences. This period also serves as a compatibility check, where the Ọgā assesses the mentee's "willingness to learn," "resilience," and "trustworthiness." Those failing to meet these criteria may not be able to continue. The core training focuses on areas like competitiveness, business language and bargaining strategy, entrepreneurial opportunities, customer relationship management, negotiation, innovative skills, and transaction processes (Iwara, etal. 2019).
- **Settlement or Completion Stage:** Upon successful completion of the training program, the Ọgā offers the mentee start-up capital. This amount is determined by the mentee's efficiency and commitment during the training, as well as the Ọgā's financial capacity (Iwara, etal. 2019). A small ceremony is often held to mark this significant occasion. This graduation marks the end of learning and the start of the mentee's own entrepreneurial path. The newly established entrepreneur uses the skills and market connections learned during the apprenticeship to start their own business. Sometimes, the Ọgā may even establish a small satellite business for the mentee to manage under close supervision, fostering growth and expansion.

Benefits of Igbo Apprenticeship System

The following are the importance of the Igbo apprentice system in the Igbo culture, individuals and society:

- **Entrepreneurial Mindset:** The program helps participants develop a robust entrepreneurial attitude, providing them with necessary skills and knowledge essential to succeed in the corporate environment.
- **Practical Learning:** Apprentices gain hands-on experience through working alongside experienced Ọgā. This practical approach fosters a deeper understanding of business operations compared to purely theoretical learning.

- **Community and Network:** The system fosters a strong sense of community among apprentices and Ọgā. This network offers continuous assistance, guidance, and potential partnerships.
- **Easy Access:** The system provides a different option than traditional schooling, allowing people from various socioeconomic backgrounds to participate.
- **Self-Reliance:** Graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to work for themselves, which helps boost economic growth and reduce poverty.

Challenges of the Igbo Apprenticeship System

At the backdrop of the benefits of Igbo apprenticeship system lies the following challenges below:

- **Absence of formal structures:** The system depends on informal arrangements, which may result in possible exploitation or confusion about the length of training, amount of compensation, and initial investment.
- **Limited availability of funding:** Despite potential funding from Ọgā, obtaining larger financial support from sources like bank loans may be restricted for new business owners.
- **Standardization and Quality Control:** Inconsistencies in knowledge and skills acquired by apprentices can result from the absence of standardized training curricula and quality control measures.
- **Concerns about exploitation:** Instances have occurred where Ọgā have taken advantage of apprentices by assigning them an excessive amount of household tasks or tasks unrelated to their craft.
- Changing business environment may require the system to evolve and embrace new technologies and business models to remain relevant.

Potential Solutions to the Challenge of Igbo Apprenticeship System

These challenges highlight the need for potential improvements to the system. These below are some possibilities:

- **Developing Formal Frameworks:** Standardized contracts outlining rights, responsibilities, and expectations for both Ọgā and apprentices could enhance transparency and reduce exploitation.
- **Government Involvement:** Government efforts could offer apprentices access to microloans, training programs, and resources for business development.
- **Modernized Curriculum:** By incorporating new technologies and industry trends into the apprenticeship program, graduates will be better prepared for today's market.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing a process to assess the impact and success of apprenticeship initiatives will help highlight areas that require improvement.

Through overcoming these obstacles and promoting ongoing enhancement, the Igbo apprenticeship system can maintain its success in developing future generations of Igbo business owners. The Igbo system of apprenticeship is a distinctive and successful approach to nurturing entrepreneurship. It offers beneficial training, encourages a robust entrepreneurial mindset, and builds a support system for future business owners. Nevertheless, it is essential to continuously address issues concerning formalization, funding access, and curriculum updates to guarantee the system remains relevant and effective in the constantly changing economic environment. By accepting transformation and adjustment, the Igbo apprenticeship system can remain a strong mechanism for generating wealth and empowering the Igbo community.

John Locke's Theory of Labor and Property

John Locke, a key philosopher in the 17th century, offered a distinct viewpoint on property rights in his influential work, *Two Treatises of Government*. Locke starts by recognizing two potential reasons for the original condition of the world: natural reason, implying a right to survival by having essentials, and revelation, indicating God's bestowal of the Earth to mankind (Locke, 1689, p.115). However, this initial state presents a conundrum: how can individuals acquire property rights within a world initially held in common? Locke's theory hinges on the notion that labor is the foundation of property rights. He tells us thus: "[w]hatever then he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property" (Locke, 1689, p. 116). This implies that individuals have ownership over things they have transformed from their natural state through their labor. For instance, gathering acorns or hunting deer grants ownership of those resources because human effort has been expended (Locke, 1689, p. 116-117).

Locke acknowledges the initial abundance of natural resources. He argues that in the beginning, the Earth existed as a "common" good, freely accessible to all (Locke, 1689, p.115). However, with the introduction of labor, individuals could claim ownership of specific portions without infringing upon the rights of others, as long as sufficient resources remained unclaimed (see Locke, 1689, p.117). This concept, known as the Lockean Proviso, ensures that appropriation through labor doesn't create scarcity for the rest of humanity. Locke extends the labor theory to land ownership. He posits that cultivating land, a form of labor, establishes a right to that specific plot (Locke, 1689, p. 118). This enclosure can only be justified if there is sufficient fertile land available for others to use. This argument stresses the significance of not impeding future generations' access to the advantages provided by nature. Locke acknowledges that the invention of money and its acceptance as a medium of exchange altered the landscape of property ownership. Before money, possessions were primarily tied to their immediate use and perishability. Money, however, being durable, allowed individuals to accumulate wealth beyond immediate needs, potentially exceeding the bounds of what their labor directly produced (Locke, 1689, 119-125).

Locke emphasizes that the right to property derived from labor comes with limitations. Appropriation cannot be excessive, leading to the waste or spoilage of resources. One cannot claim ownership of more than they can use before it spoils. This ensures that others have access to the remaining resources and prevents individuals from hoarding excessively (see Locke, P.116). Locke proposes that the extent of property ownership should be determined by the amount of land an individual can cultivate for their use and the limitations imposed by the availability of land for others. Initially, with vast stretches of unclaimed land, this wouldn't restrict anyone. However, as populations grow, the concept of "enough" might evolve (see Locke, p.119-120). Locke recognizes

that vast tracts of land remain unclaimed and unimproved. These areas persist in a common state, accessible to those who haven't adopted the use of money. Additionally, established communities might define property rights through laws and agreements, further shaping the landscape of property ownership (see Locke, p.121). Locke's theory of labor and property emphasizes the role of individual effort in establishing ownership. He prioritizes the responsible use of resources and discourages wastefulness. However, the introduction of money creates complexities, potentially leading to unequal distribution of land. Locke's ideas offer a foundation for understanding property rights, highlighting the tension between individual ownership and the need for equitable access to resources.

The Labor Theory of Value in Karl Marx's Capital

Karl Marx's criticism of capitalism heavily relies on his labor theory of value (LTV), which he thoroughly explains in his major work, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Marx, 1887). This theory suggests that the worth of a product is not decided by its inherent characteristics, market influences, or personal preferences, but by the average quantity of labor needed to create it. Marx starts by differentiating between use-value and exchange-value in a commodity (Marx, 1887, p.26). Use-value represents the intrinsic usefulness or enjoyment a product offers to a consumer. An example would be a loaf of bread possessing use-value as it satisfies hunger. On the contrary, exchange-value indicates the capacity of a commodity to be traded for different commodities at a set ratio. A loaf of bread could be traded for a specific quantity of milk, showing their relative values in exchange. Marx believes that even though commodities have different functionalities, they all have one thing in common: the labor invested in them. Each product symbolizes a particular quantity of labor put into making it. This work may come in two forms: direct labor involves physical effort in making the product, while indirect labor is needed to make the tools and machines used (Marx, 1887, p.29-30). Therefore, the commodity's worth is established by the average quantity of labor time needed to produce it, taking into account the current technology and societal productivity. Marx recognizes the apparent contradiction of exchange-value. What is the reason for a loaf of bread, which serves a particular purpose, to be traded for a specific quantity of milk, which serves a different purpose? He credits this to the concept of "... commodity fetishism"(p.46-51).

In capitalist societies, the social relations of production become obscured, and the inherent connection between labor and value is masked. Commodities appear to possess an intrinsic value independent of the labor invested in them. This fetishism, according to Marx, hinders our understanding of the true source of value: human labor. The exchange of commodities, based on their relative exchange-values, necessitates a common measure. This role is initially fulfilled by barter, where commodities are directly exchanged for one another. However, barter becomes cumbersome as economies grow more complex. Money becomes a more convenient medium of exchange, acting as a universally accepted representative of value (Marx, 1887, p.70-74). Notably, Marx differentiates between the concept of money as a medium of exchange and its function as capital. The core of capitalist production lies in the transformation of money into capital. Capital, for Marx, is not simply money used to purchase goods. It's a specific relationship between money and labor-power (Marx, 1887, p.102). The capitalist possesses a sum of money (capital) that they use to purchase two key elements:

1. Means of Production: These include raw materials, machinery, and tools necessary for the production process.

2. Labor-Power: This refers to the worker's capacity to work, which the capitalist purchases for a specific wage.

The crux of Marx's critique lies in the concept of surplus value. During the labor process, the worker creates a product with a value greater than the cost of their labor power (wages). This difference between the value the worker creates and the wage they receive represents surplus value, which the capitalist appropriates (Marx, 1887, p.126-130). The rate of exploitation, as Marx terms it, is the degree to which surplus value is extracted from the worker's labor (Marx, 1887, p.149). The labor theory of value provides a critical lens for examining the inner workings of capitalism. It sheds light on the role of labor in creating value and the potential for exploitation within the system. While the theory has its limitations, it remains a valuable tool for understanding economic power dynamics and the ongoing debate about fair compensation and wealth distribution.

The Capability Approach in Amartya Sen

Amartya Sen's capability approach (CA) provides a persuasive option to conventional welfare economics in assessing human welfare. Many times, traditional welfare economics uses utilitarian methods, with an emphasis on maximizing overall societal utility or happiness. On the other hand, welfarist strategies focus on the allocation of resources like income to gauge individuals' welfare, according to Sen (1985). Sen (1999) criticizes these methods for overlooking the important connection between resources, personal choice, and the ability to select a life that is meaningful. The Capability Approach emphasizes on the personal freedoms that individuals possess to pursue lives they find meaningful. These skills demonstrate an individual's capacity to achieve important things like maintaining good health, receiving proper nutrition, obtaining education, and participating in social interactions (Sen, 1999). The CA makes a distinction between functionings and capabilities. Functionings, in this context, are defined as the conditions of "existing" and "acting" that shape an individual's existence, including being adequately nourished, being physically fit, or being able to engage in civic pursuits. On the flip side, capabilities refer to the different sets of functionings that an individual can accomplish (Sen, 1999). An example of achieving good nutrition is by eating a balanced diet in adequate amounts. Just because someone has the ability to have a nutritious diet doesn't mean they will always eat well, but it does show their option to do so if they want.

The CA highlights personal liberty and capacity for action. Different individuals and cultures have varying values and objectives, and the CA recognizes that the definition of a "good life" differs among them (Sen, 1999). The approach aims to increase the options and possibilities individuals have, enabling them to follow their own visions of a successful life. Despite avoiding a specific definition of the good life, the CA doesn't provide a single definition. Instead, Sen (1999) presents a list of key capabilities that are universally seen as important in diverse cultures. This list consists of fundamental skills such as preventing malnutrition, finding protection from the weather, and ensuring basic safety. The CA also covers more intricate abilities such as learning, involvement in politics, and social connections. It uses functionings and capabilities to evaluate personal and societal welfare. A person's quality of life can be determined by the valuable activities they engage in or the abilities they have (Sen, 1999). Likewise, the overall health of a society can be assessed by looking at the range of opportunities accessible to its inhabitants and how well these opportunities are utilized.

The CA provides a valuable perspective for understanding social disadvantage. It extends beyond just examining income inequality and takes into account how issues such as discrimination, societal norms, and limited healthcare access can restrict individuals' abilities (Sen, 1999). For

example, someone with a disability may have enough money but lack the ability to move around because of the absence of accessible infrastructure. The CA emphasizes the importance of tackling these non-income-related factors that limit freedom and well-being. The CA has been utilized in a variety of areas such as development policy, healthcare, and education (Sen, 1999). By concentrating on enhancing abilities instead of just boosting income or resources, it can guide policy choices. For instance, a health policy could focus on interventions that improve both life expectancy and the ability to live a healthy and active life.

The Influence of Locke, Marx and Sen on the Justification of Igbo Apprenticeship System

The Igbo apprenticeship system in southeastern Nigeria is supported by a combination of three different philosophical viewpoints: John Locke's labor theory of property, Karl Marx's labor theory of value, and Amartya Sen's capability approach, which all play a role in justifying its existence. Analyzing the system from these perspectives shows a distinct framework that promotes business creation, enables individuals, and complies with essential principles of fair economic transactions. First, Locke (1689) contended that individuals possess an inherent right to property as a result of their labor. Individuals establish a valid ownership claim by creating value through mixing their labor with natural resources (Locke, 1689, p.116). The Igbo system of apprenticeship represents this principle. Apprentices, through their dedicated labor within the Ọgā's business, acquire skills and knowledge. This investment of labor imbues them with a right to the fruits of their learning – the ability to establish their own ventures. The start-up capital provided by the Ọgā upon graduation can be seen as a recognition of the value the apprentice has created through their labor. This is in line with Locke's idea of acquiring property justly, as the Ọgā benefits from the apprentice's help while the apprentice receives tools for independence. Secondly, Marx contended that the worth of a product is closely tied to the labor needed for its creation (see Marx, 1867). The Igbo system of apprenticeship, although not a strict Marxist model, demonstrates this idea by focusing on practical, experiential learning. Apprentices don't just learn theoretical concepts; they actively contribute to the Ọgā's business through their labor. This labor adds value to the Ọgā's enterprise and equips the apprentice with valuable skills that translate into future value creation in their own ventures. The system recognizes the apprentice's labor as valuable, not only for doing basic tasks, but also for helping them succeed economically in the future.

Additionally, according to Amartya Sen's capability approach, the quality of development should be evaluated based on the level of freedom individuals have to pursue a satisfying life (Sen, 1999). The Igbo apprenticeship system aligns with this approach by empowering individuals with the capabilities they need to flourish economically. Through the system, apprentices gain not just technical skills but also crucial soft skills like negotiation, marketing, and financial management. These capabilities expand their freedom to choose their future economic path, whether through self-employment or skilled employment. Furthermore, the apprenticeship system often fosters a strong network of support between the Ọgā and former apprentices, creating a sense of community and expanding their access to resources and opportunities. This social capital further strengthens their capabilities and enhances their chances of economic success.

Furthermore, the Igbo apprenticeship system although demonstrably successful, faces challenges that require attention. The lack of formal contracts can lead to exploitation, and limited access to funding can hinder new ventures. However, by incorporating elements from each of these theoretical perspectives, the system can be strengthened. For instance, Locke's framework can be used for formalization, given that it can help establish a standardized contracts outlining

rights, responsibilities, and expectations, as Locke's property theory suggests, can enhance transparency and reduce exploitation. Also, Marx's focus on fair value can ensure that the apprentices receive a fair share of the value they create, perhaps through profit-sharing arrangements that reflect their contribution, aligns with the spirit of Marx's labor theory of value. In addition, Sen's capability for access to resources can inform government initiatives, as suggested by Sen's focus on expanding freedoms, could provide microloans, training programs, and business development resources for apprentices, enhancing their capabilities and promoting economic inclusion.

From the foregoing, we have observed that the Igbo apprenticeship system is grounded in the principles of labor, value creation, and capability expansion and therefore offers a compelling model for fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. By addressing existing challenges and incorporating insights from these diverse philosophical perspectives, the system can ensure its continued success in nurturing future generations of Igbo entrepreneurs. Valuable lessons for economic development models worldwide can be found in its emphasis on hands-on learning, community development, and self-sufficiency. According to the Igbo proverb, when a man has a child, he is also blessed with wealth. Essentially, the Igbo apprenticeship system is well justified because it provides apprentices with ownership (Locke) of the skills they acquire through their labor. It recognizes the value (Marx) created by the apprentice's labor in their future economic endeavors. It also expands capabilities (Sen) of apprentices, empowering them to pursue a fulfilling economic life.

The Igbo Apprenticeship System: A Model for Development in Communal Africa

Since, Africa is faced with the task of turning the continent's abundant resources and entrepreneurial culture into widespread prosperity. In this situation, the Igbo apprenticeship system, deeply rooted in the culture of the Igbo people, serves as a strong model for growth throughout the continent. Based on communal values and a deep respect for labor, this system provides important insights for promoting economic empowerment and societal advancement. As pointed earlier, the Igbo apprenticeship system functions as a unique informal indentured agreement. Young individuals (mentees) enter into a pact with established business owners (Ọgā) to acquire practical skills and knowledge through hands-on experience. This system thrives on the *principle of reciprocity*, where the mentee contributes their labor to the Ọgā's business in exchange for training and mentorship. Upon successful completion of the program, the Ọgā provides the mentee with start-up capital, enabling them to launch their own ventures.

The Igbo apprenticeship system flourishes in Africa's inherently communal setting. It resonates with the continent's social structure in the following ways:

- **Collective Responsibility:** The system encourages a feeling of shared responsibility among members of the community. Ọgā are not only business owners but also mentors and role models, leading the next generation of entrepreneurs. The focus on sharing knowledge and working together for advancement reflects the communal values common in numerous African cultures.
- **Social Network and Support:** The apprenticeship system creates a powerful social network for both Ọgā and apprentices. Former apprentices often maintain close ties with their Ọgā, forming a support system that can offer valuable guidance, business connections, and even

financial resources in the future. This network structure strengthens the community's economic structure by facilitating collaboration and knowledge transfer.

- **Preserving Cultural Heritage:** The system serves as a powerful tool for preserving cultural heritage related to specific trades and crafts. Apprentices learn not just technical skills but also the underlying cultural significance and traditional practices associated with their chosen field. This helps sustain unique cultural expressions and ensures their transmission to future generations.
- **Empowering Individuals and Societies:** The Igbo apprenticeship system goes beyond cultural alignment; it empowers individuals and fosters societal progress. This is because the system equips individuals with practical skills that are directly relevant to the local economy. This not only enhances their employability but also fosters *job creation* as graduates establish their own businesses, employing others within the community (see Ejo-Orusa & Mpi 2019). By providing start-up capital, the system empowers graduates to *break out of poverty cycles* and achieve financial independence. This fosters a sense of agency and contributes to the overall economic well-being of the community (see Agozino & Anyanike, 2007). In return, it cultivates a strong *entrepreneurial spirit* among participants. Apprentices learn not just technical skills but also essential business acumen, including marketing, negotiation, and financial management (see Iwara et al, 2019). This fosters a culture of self-reliance and innovation, driving economic growth across the continent.

The Igbo apprenticeship system offers a potent model for development in Africa. Its focus on community values, practical skills building, and empowering entrepreneurs is in line with the social structure and economic goals of the continent. By tackling current obstacles and encouraging ongoing enhancements, the Igbo apprenticeship system has the potential to be a beneficial resource in unleashing Africa's extensive economic opportunities and uplifting its citizens towards a brighter tomorrow.

Lessons from Igbo Apprenticeship System

The strengths of the Igbo system offer valuable lessons for development models across Africa:

- **Adapting the Model:** Although a direct replication might not be feasible, core principles can be adapted to the specific contexts of different African countries. The focus on practical skills, mentorship, and community support can be integrated into existing training programs or youth development initiatives.
- **Promoting Informal Learning:** Africa can take advantage of the Igbo system's focus on informal learning to help fill educational deficiencies. Governments can establish supportive frameworks that promote business participation in apprenticeships and skills-based training by acknowledging their value.
- **Fostering Financial Inclusion:** Aspiring African entrepreneurs face a significant challenge in accessing capital. Governments and financial institutions have the ability to assist by establishing microloan programs and making it easier for graduates of apprenticeship programs to obtain financial resources.

- **Promoting Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer:** The Igbo system facilitates the passing of knowledge and skills from seasoned entrepreneurs to young aspiring individuals, bridging the generation gap. Establishing mentorship programs that connect established businesses with young people interested in entrepreneurship can replicate this model.

Although the Igbo apprenticeship system is a strong model, Africa should also consider other methods for inclusive development. These are some extra factors to take into account:

- **Leveraging Technology:** Technology can be pivotal in improving apprenticeship programs. Online education platforms have the potential to enhance conventional apprenticeship techniques, broadening their availability and reach.
- **Focus on Innovation:** The growth of Africa relies on promoting a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Apprenticeship schemes can include features that promote creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking abilities.
- **Government and Private Sector Collaboration:** Effective development necessitates cooperation among governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations. By collaborating, these stakeholders can establish a nurturing environment for apprenticeship programs to succeed.

The Igbo system of apprenticeship, which is rooted in communal values and a profound appreciation for work, provides useful lessons for development approaches in Africa. African nations can establish an environment conducive to developing future entrepreneurs and empowering individuals to contribute to a thriving continent by adjusting the fundamental principles of the system, acknowledging its weaknesses, and promoting innovation. The Igbo system acts as a model for the development process in Africa.

Concluding Reflections

I would like to conclude with this question: Can the Igbo apprenticeship system ignite Africa's development flame? Africa has struggled for a long time to achieve sustainable development. The continent faces ongoing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and insufficient infrastructure that impede economic development and human well-being. Despite numerous efforts by economists and political theorists to revamp African economies, progress has often been slow and uneven. In this context, the Igbo apprenticeship system, a time-tested tradition practiced by the Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria, stands out as a source of optimism, providing a distinctive and encouraging framework for progress throughout the continent. In this paper, we have analyzed the Igbo apprenticeship system using the theoretical perspectives of John Locke, Karl Marx, and Amartya Sen. Locke's ideas on labor and property align with the emphasis of the system in giving ownership to apprentices after they finish. This "ownership," although not a formal certificate in the Western sense, signifies the mastery of skills and knowledge – a valuable asset for their future economic endeavors. Marx's labor theory of value finds relevance in the system's recognition of the value created by the apprentice's labor. The skills and knowledge acquired translate into future value creation as they establish their own businesses. Sen's capability approach aligns perfectly with the system's focus on expanding the capabilities of apprentices. The system equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead a satisfying economic life, promoting both material prosperity and a feeling of control and independence. This paper

explored the fundamental aspects of the Igbo apprenticeship tradition, emphasizing its key principles and workings.

We have also seen how it functions as an informal indentured agreement where young individuals gain practical skills and knowledge through hands-on experience within the established businesses of *Ogā*, seasoned entrepreneurs. The system thrives on reciprocity – the mentee contributes their labor in exchange for training and mentorship. Upon successful completion, the *Ogā* provides start-up capital, empowering the mentee to launch their own venture and embark on a path of self-reliance. This model resonates deeply with the inherent communal nature of African societies. The emphasis on collective responsibility is a cornerstone of the system. *Ogā* act as more than just business owners; they become mentors and role models, guiding the next generation of entrepreneurs. This fosters knowledge sharing and aligns perfectly with the spirit of collective progress prevalent in many African cultures. The apprenticeship system also cultivates a robust social network for both *Ogā* and apprentices. Former apprentices often maintain close ties, forming a support system that offers crucial guidance, business connections, and even financial resources. This network structure strengthens the community's economic structure by facilitating collaboration and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the system serves as a powerful tool for preserving cultural heritage associated with specific trades and crafts. Apprentices learn not just technical skills, but also the underlying cultural significance and traditional practices within their chosen field. This ensures the transmission of unique cultural expressions to future generations.

We have also seen that beyond cultural alignment, the Igbo apprenticeship system empowers individuals and fosters societal progress. The system equips individuals with practical skills directly relevant to the local economy. This improves their chances of getting hired and promotes the growth of job opportunities as graduates start their own companies and hire local individuals. By supplying initial funds, the system enables graduates to escape from poverty traps and attain economic self-sufficiency. This plays a major role in the community's overall economic development. Furthermore, the program fosters a robust entrepreneurial mindset in its members. Apprentices acquire not just technical expertise but also crucial knowledge of business in marketing, negotiation, and financial management. This promotes a culture of independence and creativity, important factors for economic development throughout the continent. Nevertheless, it would be negligent to overlook the difficulties that come with the Igbo apprenticeship system. The lack of formality in the system may result in variations in the quality of training and possible abuse. Formalizing the system with standardized training modules and minimum rights for both *Ogā* and apprentices can enhance transparency and ensure fairer outcomes. Additionally, access to capital beyond the start-up provided by the *Ogā* can be limited for new entrepreneurs. Initiatives connecting graduates with microfinance institutions or government loan programs can address this challenge. It is essential for the system to adopt continuous learning by incorporating emerging technologies and trends into the training program, preparing graduates for the constantly changing business environment.

To this end, this paper believes that the Igbo apprenticeship system offers a compelling model for development in Africa. It is rooted in the continent's communal values, emphasizes practical skills development, and fosters a spirit of entrepreneurial empowerment. By addressing existing challenges and fostering continuous improvement, the Igbo apprenticeship system can be a valuable tool for unlocking Africa's vast economic potential and empowering its people. While not a one-size-fits-all solution, the system offers valuable lessons and a framework that can be adapted and implemented within diverse African contexts. It can serve as a catalyst for igniting a

development flame that burns brightly, illuminating a path towards a more prosperous and equitable future for Africa. However, the success of this model hinges not only on adapting the system itself, but also on fostering a supportive environment for its growth. Governments across Africa can play a crucial role in this endeavor. Beyond government intervention, a cultural shift is also necessary. The societal stigma often attached to vocational training needs to be addressed. Promoting the value and dignity associated with skilled trades and entrepreneurship is crucial for attracting young people to the apprenticeship system. The Igbo apprenticeship system is not a silver bullet. It has limitations and requires adaptation for success across diverse African contexts. However, its core principles – reciprocity, community, and skills development offer a powerful foundation for fostering sustainable development in Africa. By learning from the Igbo experience, adapting the model to local needs, and fostering a supportive environment, Africa can leverage the power of apprenticeships to empower its people, unleash its entrepreneurial spirit, and illuminate a path towards a brighter future.

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