

**A COSMO-ONTOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO “IGBA-BOYI”
(APPRENTICESHIP) SYSTEM: THE EVOLUTION OF ADEPT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF IGBO PEOPLE**

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Abstract

Lately, especially in the build up to the 2023 general elections in Lagos state- the commercial nerve center of Nigeria where their shops, markets and properties largely belonging to ndi Igbo were targeted for mob attacks and arsons, virtually everything about Igbo as a race and one of the major ethnic groups in the heterogeneous Nigerian setting began to attract renewed attentions and discourse. From the foregoing, the entrepreneurial performance of the Igbo people both in Nigeria and beyond featured prominently in the discourses and analyses. This is encapsulated in the most held belief that the majority of the increasing numbers of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) and large business enterprises (LBEs) that underscore the growth of Nigerian economy are championed and managed by Igbo people. Meanwhile, these adept and gross commercial performances even in the face of daunting challenges and harsh circumstances that prevail against the people remain topical among many objective analysts and researchers. Unarguably, Igbo people cannot be successful entrepreneurs without some variable factors like “igba boyi” (apprenticeship system) among them. Hence, this scheme and others could be some bases for their socio-economic performances. Thus, this work seeks to analytically investigate peculiar sources, circumstances and skills of “igba boyi” (apprenticeship system) that form the fulcrum of the evolution of the socio-economic performances of the Igbo people both in Nigeria and across the globe.

Keywords: Igba Boy, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, Igbo

Introduction

Right from the beginning of human existence, the need for socio-economic independence has engaged the attention of many people but it seems to be very pronounced among the people of Igbo extraction from the southeastern Nigeria. Meanwhile, the path to this economic independence differs from tribe to tribe, generation to generation and person to person. To Igbo people, the concept, practice or culture of igba mbo- (struggle or hard work) and igba boyi (apprenticeship) which arguably could be as old as the people themselves have been very pivotal in their attainment of economic independence hence before the county's independence in 1960, Igbo people are on records to have garnered over seventy percent of Nigerian credit associations. This rather entrepreneurial skill has over the years brought the Igbo people to lime light. They understand entrepreneurship as a potent economic force and a core element in the development efforts of an individual and the society at large. To them, a comparative advantage among individuals has dynamically moved towards increasing competitive and qualitative entrepreneurial advancement and this is the fulcrum of personal and national development. This can account for why despite the dynamic multiplication of socio-political

and economic challenges in the world today, Igbo people still manifest adept entrepreneurial strides. The igba-boyi apprenticeship system even with some of its glaring challenges, has since continued to be *evolutionalising*, blossoming and thus announcing the tribe on a global limelight and that is why this work seeks to analyze the ideology and reality of this system.

Clarification Of Some Terms

Cosmo-Ontological: This is a combination of two words-cosmology and ontology. Cosmology is simply the study of the origin, creation and development of the universe while ontology is the study of the nature of being. Ontology can be described as a science that treats the principle, nature and the existence of metaphysical shaping the sense that there are sets of belief about humanity's place in the universe and how that place is constituted, experienced and enacted. Cosmology, once established in the myths, stories and instincts of people functions for much longer time, often even after people move from the location and conditions that gave birth to the cosmology and it is concerned with the question of the existence and reality of something.

Enquiry: The noun enquiry is a British spelling of the word “inquiry”. Both words mean the act of asking questions to gain information, an act of probing, digging and asking for information.

Evolution: This summarily means a process of change in a certain direction especially from a lower or simple state to a higher or complex state.

Adept: It is a term that is connected with being thorough, proficient, skillful and efficient of something.

Entrepreneurship: This is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit.

Igba-Boyi- The Igbo Form Of Apprenticeship: Igba-boyi is a combination of two words “igba” and “boyi”. Igba is an igbo term representing at least three things depending on the tone and stress. It can mean “to serve, learn” and to fill something just like filling a sack of bag with something. “Boyi” is an “Englisized” Igbo language by the affix of “i” behind the term “boy”. Technically, it means a growing or upcoming young man. But in the context of Igbo apprenticeship or skill acquisition procedures, it encompasses a person or group of persons who regardless of their ages humbled himself or themselves either to serve or learn and be filled with the knowledge of a particular trade or work from an individual known as Oga or Madam (master) with the aim of being settled to become Oga or Madam in the future. It presupposes that the learner even when he/she knows it all, should empty him/herself so as to learn the arts of the trade or work. The key word here is discipline, humility, submission, patience and dedication. The researchers' trip to Onitsha main market and Mgbuka Ugwuagba Old motor spare parts markets revealed that the term “nwa-boyi” simply means a boy that is serving with the understanding, expectation and intention of being settled at the end of the his stay while “nwa-ahia” can mean a person who had gone to acquire the skills of trading or work only to go later without being settled as it is in the case of nwa-boyi rather he/she has to pay his/her master

before or after learning the trade. Three strong key points in all of them are that agreements both oral and are written, the transfer of knowledge and relationships also got established. Mefor (2023) affirms that the Igbo term for apprenticeship-Igba-Boyi involves learning of a trade or craft under someone who is already well-established in the field and is now a master in his own right a.k.a. 'Oga' in local parlance. Though Igbo apprenticeship had been in practice for a while, its significance resonated in addressing the Igbo people's debilitating poverty resulting from the Nigeria-Biafra war.

Contextually, a cosmo-ontological enquiry into “igba-boyi” (apprenticeship) system: the evolution of adept entrepreneurship of Igbo people means how the system of apprenticeship (igba-boyi) of Igbo people implies how a practice or culture that arguably began with the founding of Igbo nation and being one of the provable methods of expanding wealth creation has metamorphosed into a global phenomenon which has also carved a niche for them.

Stimulus, Interpretation And Response Theory

This theory is propounded by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) who was born into a Congregationalist family of Calvinism and supported progressive causes for social reform like the women's rights. Trained in social psychology and philosophy, he spent most of his academic career in the philosophy. Mead was an associate of John Dewey (1859-1952) who was an important American writer and public intellectual. He is generally regarded as pragmatist who sees habit as an issue that Weber and Parsons found very difficult in explaining in their theories of social action. He argued that there are cycles of habit, reflection, rational consciousness, behavioural change and much of human action and interaction that are habitual and reflexive with only occasional reflection and consideration.

Furthermore, Farganis (1996) affirms that George Herbert Mead emphasizes the importance of the social world as leading to the development of various mental and physical states of man through social interaction. He did not foresee people as media that can be put into action by appropriate stimuli or even as subject to the power of social facts as Durkheim, Marx and other social thinkers on religion had argued rather he sees people as thoughtful and reflective creatures whose identities and actions spring up as a result of their interactions with others (p.158). For him, what distinguishes humans from non-human animals is that humans have the ability to delay their reactions to stimulus. Human beings possess intelligence which is the ability to mutually adjust actions. He agrees that other animals also have intelligence because they can act together or individually to adjust how they react to stimulus. Human beings differ from animals because they have a much greater ability to adjust to each other and achieve interaction meaningful to all parties involved. While humans can do this through involuntary gestures, Mead thought it more important that they can do this through gestures and symbols that are significant and meaningful. As a result of this greater intelligence, humans can communicate, plan and work out responses rather than merely reacting in an instinctive or stimulus-response manner.

This theory is adopted in the study because the idea of “Igba-boyi”-apprenticeship in Igbo cosmology begins with a rather abstract, mental and symbolic ideology of culture that is stimulated and concretized through service, patience, hard work and general attitudes that has

enriched the socio-economic base of Igbo people.

Who Are The Igbo People?

Ogbuaku (2008) argues that history deals with the study of past-past events and developments. It is not only learned from the myriads of books on the discipline of history but also transmitted orally from one person to another and from generation to generation with errors and distortions such as method entails. Compression of history therefore is a useful and commendable means of passing on information of more than common interest and a systemic account of the past people, the modes and consequences of their pattern of life, their mistakes and achievements (p.5). The study of history of people does not only provide data but serves also as a guide for planning, improving on accomplishments and modifying other misjudgments so as to make the world a better place for human habitation. A synthetic diffuse data can diffuse animosity, controversies and bad blood between people and their various religious leanings in any given community.

Probably, just as it is similar to other tribe, the historicity of Igbo people has been an exciting academic and historical adventure. The history surrounding their origin has been the subject of much speculation and of diverse accounts. Onwuejiogwu (1987) employs the concepts of glottochronology and lexicostatistics in explaining the origin and date of Igbo people. Glottochronology is the technique of collecting and calculating basic words of languages in order to work out centuries of separation while Lexicostatistics is the same technique used to establish relative degree of linguistic similarity and difference. There are hypotheses or conjectures on the origin of the Igbo and these are sourced from the fragmentary oral and local traditions, the nexus between cultural traits and archaeological discoveries. All these tend to throw up at least three perspectives on the origin of the Igbo people.

The first perspective deals with the archeological findings. Hartle (1967) submits that archaeological findings indicate that the Igbo people have inhabited parts of south-eastern Nigeria by 2000–3000BC. Afigbo (1975) affirms that the antiquity of the Igbo origin on logistic evidence probably goes back to five or six thousand years. Isichei (1977) avers that the history of Igbo people dates back to 5000BC. She believes that the first Igbo man that inhabited the land must have come from the areas further north-possibly from the Niger confluence (p.1).

Anozie (1979) argued that Igbo people are traditionally migrants and in tracing the origin of the Igbo people, there have been four archaeological findings—the Ugwuele, Afikpo, Nsukka and Igbo-Ukwu. These sites have produced abundant and scientific evidences of the fact that at least between 100,000BC and 5,000BC, man has started his cultural drama in what is referred to as “the theatre of Igbo land. Ugwuele site suggests that the makers of the Ugwuele stone artifacts might have settled near the site engaged in hunting and gathering food and trapping of animals. Onwuejiogwu (1987) explains that the upper dates of Ugwuele overlapped with lower dates of Afikpo and Nsukka which had similar pottery types. The shreds recovered were fired and associated with stone tools. In addition, the pottery is similar to the contemporary Igbo pottery found in both Afikpo and Nsukka today indicating a conservative community.

The second perspective is internal migration hypothetical and Nri myth as propounded by the likes of Isichei (1977) which indicates that Igbo people migrated from the Benue or from the Enugu area for which the Niger-Benue confluence is regarded as the original homeland of the people. It was probably from there that the original Igbo hunters and gatherers migrated southwards to the Nsukka-Okigwe cuesta. Meanwhile, the Nri Myth states that the father of all Nri was Eri. He was sent by Chukwu-supreme God from the Sky to the earth. Expanding the myth further Afigbo (1981) asserts that as he arrived, he sat on an anti-hill because he saw a watery and marshy earth. Eri complained to God about it and God sent an Awka blacksmith with his fiery bellow and charcoal to dry the earth. Having done the job satisfactorily, the Awka blacksmith was given *Ọfọ* as a mark of authority. As Eri lived in the world, Chukwu fed him and his people with “*azu-igwe*”-heavenly fish. But this special food vanished after Eri had passed away but he had one of his surviving sons called Nri. Later Nri complained to God about food and God told him to sacrifice his first son and daughter and bury them in separate graves. A directive Nri complied with and after twelve days which represent the three-Igbo-market days (*Izu na ato*), yam and cocoyam grew from the grave of his son and daughter respectively. Nri and his people ate these food and they slept for the first time. May be the results of these sacrifices made Nri to kill his male and female slaves and buried them separately. Just as it was earlier stated, after *Izu na ato*, an oil palm and a bread fruit tree called *ukwa* grew from the grave of the male and female slaves. With this new food supply, Nri and his people ate and prospered. Chukwu asked him to distribute the new food items to all people but Nri refused because he bought them at the cost of sacrificing his children and slaves. Chukwu made a bargain with Nri. For agreeing to distribute food to all the people around, Nri got number of rights over his surrounding people. One tradition says:

As a reward for distributing food to the other towns Nri would have the right of cleansing every town of an abomination (*nso*) or breach, of crowning the “*Eze*” at *Aguleri*, and of tying the *Ngulu* (ankle cords) when a man takes the title of *ozo*. Also he and his successors would have the privilege of making the *Oguji*, or yam medicine, each year for ensuring a plentiful supply of yams in all surrounding towns, or in all towns that subjected themselves to the *Eze Nri*. For this medicine all the surrounding towns would come in and pay tribute and *Umunmdri* people then could travel unarmed through the world and no one would attack or harm them (pp.40-42)

Furthermore, Anedo (2012) posits that early nucleus of settlement in the northern Igbo land is confirmed by Igbo tradition of *Umueri* clan which includes the ancient Nri state. The tradition holds that Igbo people and *Igala* people descended from the same Nri but while on transit, the *Igala* people went to their way, *Agukwu*, *Amanuke*, *Nteje* and *Igbariam* went to different directions. With time, other proto Igbo population dispersed more widely in the forests of Igbo land. They came to concentrate especially in what much later became *Owerre*, *Okigwe*, *Orlu* and *Awka* divisions.

The third perspective deals in external migration theory. In this case, Afigbo (1981) believes Igbo people are among the numerous Negro Africans (p.1). Basden (1983) traces the origin of Igbo people to the Jews. Before then, the Igbo ex-slave *Olaudah Equiano* had similar ethnographic and cultural grounds advanced the thesis of the Hebrew origin of Igbo people. D.W Jeffery impressed by the feature of dual division of Igbo social structures traces Igbo

people to Egypt. Ogbu (2008) postulates the external migration theory that asserts that Igbo people descended from the Jews. Okorie (1983) also holds that the Igbo people migrated from Judah. His story gives explicit dates, names and map of this migration of the Igbo from the Middle East. This theory states that the ten tribes wandered out of the present day Palestine during the Assyrian assault in which the ten northern tribes of Israel fell about 718BC. Many of the tribes in the northern Israel of the time wandered away in different directions and got intermingled among different tribes and cultures and disappeared from history. Even though there is yet to be any scientific and biblical explanations concerning the history and whereabouts of these displaced tribes, the theory still holds that a tribe in northern Israel at the time of the Assyrian assault called “Scheckenigbo” was among the tribes that wandered out of northern Israel. They wandered down to Egypt but remembered what happened to them in Egypt and left Egypt again and trekked further south. Along the way, because of fear that the Assyrians could still go after them, they dropped “Schecken” in their name and adopted only “Igbo”. They continued to wander southwest Africa and intermarried with the people on their way until they came to the present day Nigeria. On reaching the Niger, most of them crossed over and settled while some of them remained at the west of the Niger which is the Delta Igbo of today.

Ogbukagu (2008) avers that before the arrival of Vasco Da Gama on the bight of Biafra in the fifteenth century, Igbo people were greatly advanced in technology, inventions and industries relating to arts, iron and metal works. Examples of these facets of advancement in technologies comprises music, drama, medicine, carving, weaving, ceramics, iron and bronze casting, religion, drawing and painting. Notably, the first contact between Igbo land and Europe came around the mid-fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese. This contact began from 1434 to around 1807 in the Niger coast. These contacts served as a contact point between the Africans and the Europeans. Having begun with the Portuguese explorers, it was extended to their Dutch and the English counterparts. At the initial stage, the emphasis was on trade instead of building empires. The trade consisted primarily of slaves but with the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, a new trading era opened up. The new form of trade concentrated on raw material products such as palm products, timbers, elephant tusks and spices. By this time, the British had begun to combine aggressive trading with aggressive imperialism. By 1900, the area that had been administered by the British Niger Company became the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria which also incorporated the Niger Coast Protectorate. Before being officially conquered, Igbo land was treated as a British colony. Between 1900 and 1914 (when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated) there had been twenty-one British military expeditions into Igbo land. In 1928, Igbo men were for the first time in their history forced to pay taxes.

From the above account, it is not known exactly where the Igbo language started separating from its Kwa sister-languages but it is assumed to be around where the Igbo now live, which would help to explain the absence of Igbo linguistic enclaves. Igbo people have since maintained self-governing structure that has protected them and served as their legal justice system before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria. The system of Umunna or kindred men are people whose genealogical relationship can be traced to a common ancestry and they constitute the strongest and most effective means of managing and controlling excesses in a community. It is also an essential vehicle for the maintenance of law and order in Igbo land.

One of the notable facts about Igbo culture lies in its length and continuity. Igbo tradition ensures the protection of culture, values, family system, tradition, religion and conviviality of the people. From the primordial times, Igbo people lived on farming, hunting and gathering as means of survival. There has been a clear cut distinction between the Igbo civil government and cultural government and their modes of government fashioned their existence. As result of the British expeditions to the Igbo land, the people summarily parted with many aspects of their civil independence.

The Igbo people as stated by Nzomiwu (1999) live in the tropical region of Africa. They are mostly found in Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi states. Some others are found in parts of Delta and River States. Igbo land lies between latitude 5° and 7° north and longitude 6° and 8° east of Greenwich line. Igbo land is bounded on the north by the Igala and Tiv people, on the east by the Ekoi, on the south by the Ibibio and on the west by Bini and Isoko (p.1). Igbo land is the abode to people known as ndi Igbo and it covers all the Southeastern Nigeria and some parts of the South southern parts of Nigeria. They are surrounded on all sides by other tribes such as the Bini, Warri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako and Ibibio.

Understanding The Cosmo-Ontological System Of Igba-Boyi And Entrepreneurial Philosophy Of Igbo People

Historically, the traditional Igbo idea of achievements is defined by the expanse of lands, large farms, barns, abundant harvests, number of wives and children, large compounds, philanthropic deeds felt by the community etc. All these attainments can earn an individual such titles as Ochiri-ozuo (raiser of many), Osiri-oha (feeder of many), Onwa (light for people), Omere-oha (helper of people) etc. Therefore, Igbo people view apprenticeship as a gateway to entrepreneurship and thus understand entrepreneurship as self-employment that bothers on continuously identifying, evaluating and taking advantage of business opportunities and initiating sustainable action to attain achievement. For them, every entrepreneurial endeavor is also a veritable answer to the questions elicited from their experiences in their special world. It is as well understood as a search for profit based on innovation, creativity and efficient utilization of resources in a consistent Igbo cultural pattern which is filled with vision and enthusiasm and is result driven. Entrepreneurship for the Igbo people incorporates every profit and goal oriented strategies which they describe as Ibido ahia or Oru (starting an enterprise or work), Izu ahia (trading), Imu ahia (learning how to trade), Imu oru (learning a craft or work) and Igba oso ahia (hustling in marketing other people's goods with their consent at a price so that that one makes his/her own gain). Thus, participating fully in Igbo understanding of life portends some amount of socio-economic reliance and gesture. For every true Igbo person abhors idleness and tangibly contributes to the welfare and growth of the community. This economic gesture is what Igbo people prizes most as aku ruo ulo (wealth that reached home). In order to be part of this reality, they struggle to transform economic resources within their control from an area of lower to an area of higher productivity and greater yield deriving strength. This service is indeed grounded in Igbo cosmological understanding of Onye fee Eze, Eze eruo ya aka (he who serves the King shall be King thereafter) and Onye ruo, O rie (He who works must enjoy the wealth) and aka aja aja na ebute onu mmanu mmanu (hard work brings about oily mouth).

The researcher's visit to Mgbuka Ugwuagba old motor spare parts and Onitsha main market reveals another evolutionary dimension to the igba-boyi just as a preparatory ground for the attainment of manhood and its responsibilities. In a personal communications with Sunday Egbo and Igwe Samuel both who are Oga-(masters) and Onwe Joshua and Ifeanyi Emeka who are also umu-boyi (apprentices) revealed that their agreement that when a young man is brought for igba-boyi, he is ushered into a room assigned for umu-boyi and he is given time to acclimatized with the older umu-boyi and the business as well. But after a year or two depending on space, another shop will be opened often with little money and the nwa-boyi will be assigned to manage it just to test his igba-mbo (business hustling) and business dexterity. There are two times when accounts are required from and they are sometimes at the end of the year or when he is about to be settled. While he runs the shop, some certain family responsibilities and bills like provision of water, weekend meals are allocated to him. This practice though may look punitive has really prepared majority of Igbo boys for the challenges of life ahead of them. No wonder Green (1947) remarks that Igbo people admire “the man of energy, the gogetter” and that the qualities stressed in children's upbringing are property, money, honesty and loyalty to kinsmen”. Basden (1966) insists that wherever Igbo people are and whatever the conditions, it will not be long before they adapt themselves and make their socio-economic presence impactful.

May the forgoing account for why Anyanwu (1999) observes that Igbo people no longer look up to benevolent government for salvation but are working towards self-reliance and even contributes up to 80% of Nigeria's economy while receiving the lowest decreasing allocation from the federal government. Obunike (2016) affirms that the Igbo entrepreneurs hardly wait for government's funds before venturing into the business of their choice because “Igba-odibo” igba-boyi has remained a source of wealth creation and a means of employment. It helps and incubates the people's entrepreneurial skills to stand on its own, raise capital for them and actively engage in economic ventures. Thus, the Igbos without government assistance is dynamically moving from trade to industries and factories.

Moreover, Uchegara (2009) confirms that Igbo culture placed strong values on the praise and recognition of well-deserved achievements. This tradition of pouring encomium and celebrating achievement is discernible even in Igbo religious beliefs, rites, rituals, festivals, folklores and myths. It is also another way for an individual to gain social status, prestige and rank hence those proverbs and idiomatic expressions such as Nwata kwochaa aka, o soro Okenye rie nri (a child that washes his hands dines with the elders), Ogbenye alu (to be married not by the poor), ego di (there is money), ego amaka (money is good), aku na esi obi ike (wealth strengthens the heart), aku tigbulu iro (wealth kills enemies), aku bu uto ndu (wealth is the spice of life), aku na ebi okwu (wealth settles quarrel), Akunwanne (wealth of brother, sister, or relative), Chinyereugo (God has crowned), Akunna (wealth of the father), Nwa Chinemere (One graced by God), Akunne (wealth of the mother), Onye ruo, O rie (He who works will eat) etc. However, in as much as all these matter, the source of the wealth and achievement is also a critical point to the people. Even though, they value and revered economic achievements, these honours are not attached to every kind of wealth. Any achievement or wealth that is acquired through dubious means and circumstances does not earn that intrinsic respect in Igbo land. As such, wealth acquisition is expected to tow the means of hard work, integrity and honesty and that is why one hears those statements as aku

ruo ulo okwuo ebe o si (when wealth gets to home, it declares its source), ajo ego (bad money), ogwu ego, ego obara (blood money) etc. just to depict Igbo probe for sources of wealth that enters the community. But to avoid suffering in penury and depending on others for existence and other disdainful conditions, Igbo people try to engage in economic struggle (Igba mbo) displaying a resounding entrepreneurial initiative, skill, ambition, competition, enterprise and hard work.

The Impacts Of Igba-Boyi On The Socio-Economic Life Of Igbo People

The induction strategy of igba-boyi and entrepreneurs has continued to progress because of its advantages as it encourages business expansion, networking and diversification, helps the entrepreneurs to have an edge over other competitors and is highly profit driven. More so, the inductee gains adequate exposure and insight into the business, gains self-employment, knows the customers, producers, importers, middlemen, regardless of their locations, and acquires adequate entrepreneur-customers relations and business skills necessary for performance.

At the heart of Igbo apprenticeship system are unique and major traits of courage, perseverance and determination which surpass entrepreneurial risks, dilemma, loss, ugly experiences and enormous economic impediments in the modern world. These unique traits, Forrest (1995) submits are part of the significant strength of the Igbo people over every denial, hardship, discipline and risk proneness that goes with entrepreneurship. Olutayo (1999) states that at the nick of Nigerian independence, Igbo people have the highest record of 68,220 individuals in credit association as compared to 5,776 and 2,407 individuals for the western and northern Nigerians respectively. Maliga's (2013) maintains that Igbo people own 74% of investments in Lagos state, 5% own Hausa-Fulani, 15% by non-Nigerians, 5% by other Nigerians and 1% by Yorubas. Going further, Udegbe (2013) confirms that statistics also show that Igbo people has not less than three hundred trillion naira investments in Lagos and double of that in Abuja worth at about six hundred trillion naira. In other places such as Kano and Kaduna, their investments run up to ten trillion naira while in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states has about five trillion investments respectively, Plateau state is not left out as it can count of over fifteen trillion naira investments. These achievements are not possible without the igba-boyi system of Igbo people.

The Evolution And Adeptness Of Igba-Boyi And The Entrepreneurship Of Igbo People

Understandably, the igba-boyi system has not been all bed of roses. This is because the system is being gradually affected due to many factors which include: the preference of some business owners for sales girls over apprentices (Umu-Boyi), some Igbo youths are lacking the patience to go through the slow mill called apprenticeship, which takes five years or longer. Today, majority of Igbo boys seek immediate and big money. Another factor has to do with some masters' inability to settle their apprentices who managed to go through the apprenticeship system. The boys would sometimes face accusations of one sort or another and many are forced to leave empty-handed. This often happens more than halfway into the settlement date. The economic relations between the Igbo people and Europeans have been very academically

and historically exciting. The trade began initially with trade in slaves and later in palm products and through these Igbo people acquired many new items of material culture, new wealth and new standard of values and prestige and they also were in contact with other neighbouring tribes such as Igala and Idoma peoples in the north central, Ogoja and Ibibio tribes, Ijaw people and Edo people in the south south. Olutayo and Forrest (1999) maintain that from 19th century, Igbo people were bringing Asians to assist them in establishing industries and factories with international components in Nigeria. These industries are scattered in Igbo cities of Nnewi, Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Awka, Owerri, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, and beyond. Hence, without government assistance Igbo people are producing many things such as Innoson (IVM) Cars, Motor parts, Motorcycle parts, plastics, iron casts, steel products, Shoes, Clothes, electric cables, building materials, pipes, paints, milling machines, etc. which contributes immensely to Nigerian economy. These industries and factories of course have ties and links with most Asian entrepreneurs in Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, etc. who act as entrepreneurial advisers. Another visit to Mgbuka Old Motor Spare parts revealed another *evolutionised* system of igba-boyi in Igbo land. In this system, some masters-Oga will send their apprentices-umu-boyi to Dubai, Malaysia, Taiwan etc. to learn how to purchase and ship the old parts for them at a cheap price while they collect interests from others in buying and loading containers for them. There are others who have opened branches in other African countries then sent their apprentices to manage them with the understanding that they would be settled with the profits made from the ventures at the end of their services. Even though some of these have ended in fiasco, Igba Boi' has grown as a key indigenous business incubation tool that has drawn attention from around the world and has been examined by one or more universities, including Harvard Business School and Nnamdi Azikiwe University. In the context of Igbo people's worldview of igba-boyi and entrepreneurship alongside with their attendant achievements, their achievements cannot not be divulged from the cosmo-ontological worldviews and values they attach to their elders, honesty, being brothers' keepers, hard work etc.

Conclusion

Ideally, the way people understand reality of life and existence spans across the correlation with the way they think, feel and their general attitude to life. Therefore, it can be submitted that the ontological and cosmological realities are at the basis with which the Igbo people conceive and perceive the reality of both spiritual and physical workings of the human world. They attach strong respect for life, morality, truth, achievements, justice, ancestors, elders, hard work (igba mbo), etc. It is the aforementioned invisible beliefs and attachments to all these realities that shape and inform and thus define their general attitudes. The Igbo entrepreneurial philosophy can be viewed from the unified socio-economic picture of their cosmos. The igba-boyi (apprenticeship) and entrepreneurial performance of Igbo people which can be arguably started when they were created, shaped and informed by their cosmological and ontological existence has evolve into the contemporary times as a dynamic and continuous system. The practices are however propelled by their worldview, economic value and other essential historical factors have made Igbo entrepreneurs successful. Igbo entrepreneurs have not only made recognizable imprints in the Nigerian economy but also that of African, Asian, European and American countries. From the research so far, it can be noticed that these exploits are possible because of certain foundations and skills possessed by

the Igbo people such as confidence, sense of responsibility, strong will, commitment, flexibility, fearlessness and vision are shared through the practice of Igba-boyi. However, in view of some inherent challenges thereto, regardless of the intrinsic and unwritten agreements often exchanged between nwa-boyi-(apprentice) and Oga-(master) and knowing that our world is evolving, there is a need for a piece of legislation to regulate the system for more efficiency.

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