

**INDIGENOUS APPRENTICESHIP AND GLOCALIZATION:
SUSTAINING IGBO "IGBABOI" PRACTICES IN ANAMBRA
STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: The Igbo apprenticeship system, or "IgbaBoi," represents a cornerstone of acquiring indigenous skills and economic empowerment of youths in Southeast Nigeria. Despite its cultural and economic significance, this system faces challenges from globalization and the dominance of Western-centric entrepreneurship training paradigms. This study examines the potential for "glocalizing" the Igbo apprenticeship system in Anambra State, Nigeria, to ensure its relevance in a globalized economy while maintaining cultural authenticity. The study investigated the socioeconomic characteristics of apprentices and the globalized elements that can be integrated into traditional frameworks to enhance practice. It also assessed perceptions about the impact of glocalization on the economic development/productivity of the beneficiaries. The study employed a survey research design across three major cities, namely, Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi. The study adopts theory of structuration, which emphasizes the interplay between structure and agency in shaping social practices. The sample size was 357 apprentices selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency count and percentage). The study revealed a strong representation of young apprentices, aged between 18 and 25 years, and the dominance of males and secondary school leavers in the area. It was also found that the participants strongly agreed that integrating globalized practices in the Indigenous apprenticeship model has a positive impact on the economic productivity of beneficiaries. The study recommends, among others, that integration of globalized practices, such as technological tools and cross-cultural collaboration, can transform the indigenous apprenticeship model and promote skill acquisition and economic empowerment of youths in Anambra state and beyond.

Keywords: Glocalization, Apprenticeship, Economy, Technology, Development

INTRODUCTION

The Igbo apprenticeship system, commonly referred to as "IgbaBoi," is an indigenous framework deeply rooted in the socio-economic fabric of Southeast Nigeria. This system facilitates skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment through mentor-apprentice relationships, offering a practical and cost-effective alternative to formal education. However, globalization's influence has introduced Western-centric models of education and skill acquisition, challenging the sustainability of these traditional practices.

The concept of "glocalization," which emphasizes the integration of global practices into local contexts, presents an opportunity to adapt indigenous apprenticeship systems for contemporary relevance. Despite existing literature highlighting the significance of Indigenous knowledge and the impacts of globalization separately, limited studies examine how traditional practices like "IgbaBoi" can evolve within a glocalized framework. This study addresses this gap, focusing on Anambra State, Nigeria, to explore the dynamics of integrating global elements into indigenous apprenticeship systems without compromising their cultural integrity.

Statement of the Problem

Indigenous apprenticeship systems, such as the Igbo apprenticeship scheme popularly known as "IgbaBoi," have long served as vital mechanisms for skill acquisition, economic empowerment, and poverty reduction in Southeast Nigeria. These systems are deeply rooted in cultural values, interpersonal relationships, and community-based mentorship, making them cost-effective and accessible pathways for entrepreneurship development (Omede & Nte, 2023). However, despite their critical role, indigenous apprenticeship systems often remain underrepresented in global discussions on development, overshadowed by formal education and standardized training programs that prioritize Western-centric models (Olujimi, 2024).

The growing influence of globalization presents significant challenges to these traditional systems. The promotion of standardized global practices often undermines local knowledge systems and disrupts cultural authenticity. Yet, the principle of "glocalization," which emphasizes blending global perspectives with local traditions, provides a unique opportunity to modernize indigenous apprenticeship systems while preserving their cultural essence. Through this approach, local practices can adapt to global standards, enhancing their relevance and scalability in the contemporary economic structure (Onwe, 2024).

While existing studies emphasize the economic and entrepreneurial benefits of indigenous apprenticeship systems, such as IgbaBoi, and the broader impacts of globalization, there remains a critical research gap. Specifically, there is limited empirical evidence on how indigenous apprenticeship systems can integrate globalized practices in ways that enhance their effectiveness while retaining cultural authenticity. Additionally, the challenges and opportunities presented by glocalization in apprenticeship systems, particularly within specific socio-economic and cultural contexts, are not well-documented.

To address these gaps, it is essential to examine the socioeconomic characteristics of apprentices in Indigenous systems, identify globalized practices that can enhance these systems without eroding cultural values, and assess the broader implications of glocalization on the economic development and productivity of youths. This study seeks to contribute to the discourse on sustainable skill acquisition, cultural preservation, and economic inclusivity in the face of globalization. It focuses on Anambra State, Nigeria, a region renowned for its thriving indigenous apprenticeship practices.

Objectives of the study

Based on the foregoing the objectives of the study include to:

- i. examine the socioeconomic characteristics of apprentices in selected cities of Anambra State.
- ii. identify globalized practices that enhance indigenous apprenticeship while preserving cultural authenticity.
- iii. assess the perceived impact of glocalizing indigenous apprenticeship on economic development and productivity of beneficiaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Igbo apprenticeship system, known as *IgbaBoi*, has been recognised as a model of indigenous African entrepreneurship. Nnonyelu et al. (2023) highlight the effectiveness of the Igbo apprenticeship system (*IgbaBoi*) in promoting entrepreneurship, skill acquisition, and economic empowerment. Their findings align with those of Fajobi et al. (2017) and Obadara and Abatan (2014), both of whom emphasize the role of indigenous apprenticeship in reducing unemployment and promoting self-reliance. However, while Nnonyelu et al. advocate for government support and modernisation through digital literacy, Obadara and Abatan (2014) do not explore how indigenous apprenticeship could scale beyond local contexts, creating a conceptual gap that the current study seeks to address.

Similarly, Neyt, Verhelst, and Baert (2020) provide evidence from Germany's dual labour market, showing that structured apprenticeships improve employment outcomes through employer collaboration and quality training. This study underscores the importance of structure and external support in making apprenticeships sustainable, aligning with Nnonyelu et al.'s (2023) recommendation for public-private partnerships. However, a key difference is that while German apprenticeships are embedded in formal labour policies, *IgbaBoi* operates informally, often relying on social capital rather than institutional frameworks. This raises questions about the replicability of Western apprenticeship models in indigenous African contexts and whether formalization would dilute the communal essence of *IgbaBoi*.

Additionally, Sharpe and Gibson (2005) highlight the need for inclusivity in apprenticeship programs, particularly in terms of gender and geography, an aspect that is underexplored in studies on Igbo apprenticeships. While *IgbaBoi* is traditionally male-dominated, integrating gender-inclusive policies could improve accessibility and broaden participation.

A common concern across studies is the decreasing interest in vocational training. Available literature (Fajobi et al., 2017; Afolabi & Taleat, 2024) attribute this decline to a preference for white-collar jobs. This is a crucial contradiction in the discourse: while apprenticeship is acknowledged as a key driver of economic development, there is an increasing societal shift away from it. Afolabi and Taleat (2024) suggest incentives to revitalize vocational trades, but this approach lacks empirical validation. For instance, would financial incentives be enough, or are broader cultural and educational reforms needed? Nnonyelu et al. (2023) take a different approach,

advocating for modernization through digital literacy, which aligns more with global economic shifts.

The concept of glocalization, which implies integrating local practices with global trends, is explored by Puddle (2019) and Adriana and Alexandra (2017), both of whom argue that cultural and economic survival depends on the ability to adapt to global influences. While Puddle (2019) examines this in the context of parkour culture, Adriana and Alexandra (2017) apply it to business strategies, showing how merging indigenous and modern approaches can enhance market competitiveness. Nnonyelu et al. (2023) similarly propose integrating digital skills into the Igbo apprenticeship system, but their study does not fully explore the potential challenges of such an integration, such as resistance from traditional mentors or the risk of diluting indigenous values.

In contrast, Obadara and Abatan (2014) focus more on personal development within traditional apprenticeships but do not consider how these systems could evolve to meet global demands. This presents a major limitation in their study, which the current research seeks to address by advocating for glocalization strategies that merge traditional training with digital and entrepreneurial innovations.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration, which emphasizes the interplay between structure and agency in shaping social practices. Capitalism, as a hallmark of modernity, promotes an environment conducive to the growth of indigenous apprenticeship schemes by promoting private ownership, free trade, and individual ingenuity (Chatterjee, Kunwar & den Hond, 2019).

The structuration theory highlights the significance of time and space in adapting traditional practices to modern contexts. The transition from pre-modern manual production to technologically advanced systems underscore the need for indigenous apprenticeships to align with global trends. Glocalization, in this context, allows traditional practices to evolve from family-based workshops to structured organizations capable of competing in global markets.

METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on indigenous apprenticeship schemes in Onitsha, Awka, and Nnewi, three major cities in Anambra State. Onitsha: Known for its vibrant commerce, Onitsha serves as a hub for various trades and apprenticeship practices. Awka: As the administrative capital of Anambra State, Awka combines governance with educational and economic activities, offering a diverse apprenticeship landscape. Nnewi: Renowned for its industrial activities, hosts a range of technical and vocational apprenticeship schemes. These cities were selected for their commercial, administrative, and industrial significance, which provide a rich context for exploring the dynamics of apprenticeship practices.

A survey research design was adopted; a structured questionnaire was utilized to collect quantitative data on apprentices' socioeconomic characteristics, perception of the impact of

glocalization on the economic productivity of beneficiaries, and glocalized practices that can be integrated to enhance the indigenous model.

The development of the survey instrument followed a structured approach to ensure that it accurately captured the relevant data while maintaining reliability and validity. The questionnaire was designed based on a thorough literature review, expert consultations, and the study's research objectives. The items were carefully framed to ensure clarity, avoid ambiguity, and align with the research questions.

To establish content validity, the initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis supervisor and three research experts. Their feedback helped refine the wording, structure, and comprehensiveness of the items, ensuring that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure. This expert validation process also helped in eliminating potential biases, errors, and redundant questions that could compromise the quality of data collection. Face validity was further assessed by evaluating whether the questionnaire appeared appropriate and relevant to respondents.

For reliability testing, the test-retest method was employed. The questionnaire was administered to a pilot sample of 20 apprentices drawn from the target population but excluded from the main study. The same group was reassessed one week later, and the Pearson r Product Formula was used to determine the reliability coefficient. A target reliability coefficient of 0.78 was set, with values meeting or exceeding this threshold considered reliable, while lower values indicated the need for further refinement. This process ensured that the instrument produced consistent results over time, confirming its stability and dependability for the main study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, namely, frequency count and percentage.

Ethical Considerations for the Study

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants, the integrity of data collection, and the responsible dissemination of findings. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully briefed on the study's objectives, methodology, and potential implications. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals could withdraw at any stage without facing any negative consequences. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, names were not mentioned to ensure that apprentices could not be traced. Additionally, data was securely stored, with digital records encrypted and physical documents kept in locked storage.

The study also took measures to prevent psychological, social, or economic harm to participants by framing sensitive questions in a non-intrusive manner. Ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board, ensuring that the research complied with established ethical standards. Finally, the findings were reported objectively, avoiding fabrication or misrepresentation and ensuring that the study contributes meaningfully to the discourse on skill acquisition and economic empowerment in Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 18	5	1.4%
	18–25	236	66.1%
	26–35	91	25.5%
	36–45	22	6.2%
	Above 45	3	0.8%
Total		357	100%
Gender	Female	128	35.9%
	Male	229	64.1%
Total		357	100%
Level of Education attained	Secondary school	250	70.0%
	University	107	30.0%
Total		357	100%

The result in Table 1 reveals a strong representation of young participants, with 66.1% aged between 18 and 25 years. This trend suggests that apprenticeship programs primarily attract individuals in the early stages of their careers. Participation declines with age, as only 6.2% of participants fall within the 36–45 age range, and just 0.8% are above 45 years. While this pattern may reflect a natural tendency for younger individuals to engage in skill acquisition programs, it also raises questions about the accessibility and appeal of apprenticeships to older individuals who may seek career transitions or reskilling opportunities.

This aligns with the Igbo tradition of engaging youths in entrepreneurial ventures to foster economic independence (Madichie, 2023). Minimal participation by those above 36 years underscores societal expectations for financial stability at that age.

Gender disparities persist, with males comprising 64.1% of participants. This imbalance suggests potential gender-based barriers to participation, possibly shaped by societal expectations, cultural norms, or industry-specific biases that favour male involvement. Cultural norms, societal expectations, and industry-specific biases limit female participation, particularly in traditionally male-dominated trades. This imbalance reflects broader gender dynamics within Nigerian society, emphasising the need for equitable apprenticeship access (Okpokwasili & Onwuatuegwu, 2024).

Educationally, 70.0% of apprentices possess only secondary education, highlighting apprenticeship as a viable alternative for skill acquisition among individuals not pursuing higher education. The underrepresentation of university graduates raises questions about how apprenticeships are perceived among those with higher education and whether structural barriers discourage their participation. This result is consistent with studies on the Igbo apprenticeship system, which caters to those with limited formal education (Obi, 2021).

Table 2: Perceived Impact of Glocalised Apprenticeship Model on Economic Development/Productivity of Beneficiaries

The extent to which integration of globalised practices impacts economic development/productivity among apprentices	Response option	Frequency	Percent (%)
	Not at all	32	9.0
	Low extent	4	1.1
	Neutral	34	9.5
	Moderate extent	51	14.3
	Great extent	236	66.1

Table 2 above revealed that a majority of participants (66.1%) acknowledged the economic benefits of glocalization, affirming its role in enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of apprentices. These findings align with existing literature, which highlights the transformative potential of innovation and technology in driving economic development within informal sectors.

The strong agreement on the positive economic impact of integrating new ideas into apprenticeships underscores the perceived benefits of glocalization. This finding is consistent with Nzenwata et al., (2022) study, which emphasised that innovation enhances the productivity and competitiveness of apprentices in Nigeria's informal sector. However, the minority who expressed neutrality (9.5%) or scepticism (9.0%) about the impact of integrating the new model raises questions about the effective implementation of these practices. Such concerns may stem from fears of cultural erosion or inadequate integration of new methods into traditional systems.

The positive perception of glocalised apprenticeship models in enhancing the economic development of youths suggests that integrating global practices with indigenous knowledge can improve apprentices' economic development/productivity. This perspective is supported by existing studies highlighting the success of the Igbo apprenticeship system in promoting economic growth through such integrative approaches (Nnonyelu, et al., 2023).

Table 3: Globalized Practices that Can Enhance Indigenous Apprenticeship while Preserving Cultural Authenticity.

Response option	Frequency	Percent (%)	Percent of cases
Learning from indigenous industrial experts	217	32.7%	61.1
Learning from foreign industrial experts	154	23.2%	43.4
Learning from industrial experts in addition to learning through computer/phone (e.g. YouTube)	203	30.6%	57.2
Learning through formal platform (e.g. school)	90	13.6%	25.4
Total	664	100.0%	187.0%

The findings revealed globalised practices that can enhance indigenous apprenticeship to improve skill acquisition and productivity while preserving indigenous knowledge and values. For instance, 61.1% of participants highlighted the role of learning from indigenous industrial experts, while 57.2% emphasised the use of technological tools such as YouTube. These approaches reflect the potential of "glocalisation," wherein global innovations are adapted to fit local contexts, thereby enhancing the efficacy of apprenticeship training while preserving its cultural essence.

Despite the promising integration of digital tools and global practices, challenges persist. The relatively low emphasis on formal education platforms (25.4%) within traditional apprenticeship systems underscores the need to bridge systemic barriers. Initiatives such as curriculum integration, partnerships with industries, and public awareness campaigns can create a more inclusive and adaptable apprenticeship model.

The integration of globalised practices, coupled with the preservation of indigenous knowledge, holds significant promise for promoting economic development. This dual approach aligns with the concept of "glocalisation" and reinforces the relevance of apprenticeship systems in enhancing socioeconomic performance in Anambra State and beyond.

Summary

This study explored the socioeconomic characteristics of apprentices in selected cities of Anambra State, identified globalized practices that enhance indigenous apprenticeship while preserving cultural authenticity, and assessed the perceived impact of glocalizing indigenous apprenticeship on economic development and productivity.

The findings revealed that the apprenticeship system in Anambra State predominantly attracts younger individuals, with a male majority, and most participants possess secondary education. The underrepresentation of females and the limited presence of individuals with tertiary education highlight areas for improvement.

Globalized practices, such as leveraging digital tools (e.g., YouTube) and learning from indigenous industrial experts, are being integrated into traditional apprenticeship systems. Mentors play a pivotal role in balancing the adaptation of modern approaches with the preservation of cultural authenticity. However, barriers such as limited formal education alignment and technological disparities remain.

The glocalisation of indigenous apprenticeship was perceived as beneficial for economic development, with participants highlighting increased productivity and competitiveness. However, concerns about cultural erosion and incomplete integration of globalized practices point to the need for careful and inclusive implementation strategies.

Conclusion

The apprenticeship system in Anambra State remains a cornerstone of skill acquisition, economic development, and cultural preservation. Its ability to integrate globalized practices demonstrates

its adaptability and relevance in a rapidly evolving world. However, challenges such as gender imbalance, limited formal education integration, and scepticism about the impact of globalized practices suggest the need for a more inclusive and adaptive framework.

Glocalisation has significant potential to enhance productivity and competitiveness within apprenticeship systems while preserving cultural authenticity. The indigenous apprenticeship system can serve as a model for sustainable economic development and cultural preservation. However, this requires addressing systemic barriers and promoting collaboration between stakeholders.

Recommendations

There is a need to encourage the participation of females in apprenticeship programs by challenging societal norms, offering incentives, and creating policies that support women in traditionally male-dominated apprenticeships.

Collaboration with educational institutions to develop tailored apprenticeship curricula that combine traditional skills with modern techniques is essential to ensure that apprentices receive a holistic education. Educational institutions should develop programs that promote cultural preservation alongside modern skill acquisition. Policymakers should support initiatives that integrate global practices into Indigenous apprenticeship systems.

Giving apprentices and mentors access to affordable digital tools and training will help blend global practices with cultural values. There is a need for educating and monitoring indigenous mentors to ensure that they effectively integrate global practices into their teaching while maintaining cultural authenticity. Support programs can include workshops, subsidies, and exposure to innovative trends.

There is also a need to promote partnerships between government agencies, private organizations, and traditional apprenticeship institutions to address systemic barriers and fund the integration of modern practices.

It is germane to conduct public campaigns and community engagement programs to educate stakeholders on the benefits of glocalisation and the importance of cultural preservation in apprenticeship systems.

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