

**TWEAKING THE LEGAL SPHERES OF CONTEMPORARY
GOVERNANCE AND TRANS-GENERATIONAL WEALTH
CREATION AND RETENTION: THE IGBO INDIGENOUS
APPRENTICESHIP MODEL AS A CASE STUDY**

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between governance and trans-generational creation of wealth through indigenous apprenticeship systems. It makes the case that governance, through institutional mechanisms, laws, and policies, is necessary to maintain and scale traditional wealth models in contemporary economies. Using the pre-independence Igbo apprenticeship system known as Igba-boi or Imu-ahia, the study explores how networks of kinship, trust, and reciprocity produced entrepreneurial ecosystems that redistributed wealth and guaranteed prosperity for future generations. The study expands the analysis by contrasting the Igbo model with apprenticeship and small-business development frameworks in Malaysia and Japan, where mentorship has been turned into a driving force for national development through state-led institutionalization, funding sources, and regulatory protections. It assesses the Anambra State Apprenticeship and Skill Acquisition Law (2022), which codifies the Igbo model, as a governance innovation that has the potential to be adopted nationally as a policy template (offering financial incentives, legal protection, and structured support for apprenticeship) and eventually as a national framework that combines governance with

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indigenous practices for both unemployment reduction and sustainable wealth transfer in Nigeria.

Keywords: apprenticeship, Igbo apprenticeship, entrepreneurial, trans-generational wealth creation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is safe to say that the practice of apprenticeship has always been used to build human capital and has been for old, spanning across centuries.¹ However, the prevalent issue of unemployment/under employment and fragile small and medium enterprises inability to generate wealth has suppressed development and wealth creation in Nigeria. Despite the country's rich people and material resources, the country is battling unemployment and the Nigerian government is working hard to combat unemployment/underemployment by encouraging the growth of small and medium-sized businesses across the country. These problems have consequently led to the discussion about the role of vocational training, funding for small businesses, and formal education reform in wealth creation.² However, an often-overlooked model or design in official planning or policy formulation is the indigenous apprenticeship- this is a system of education in which a person obtains a skilled trade through a formalized system of on-the-job instruction. It typically entails learning specific information, mastering applicable mechanical skills, and

¹Orogbu L., Onyeizugbe C., and Onuzulike N., 'Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurs Development Among Igbo Traders in Nigeria' (2021) 5(6), *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 999.

²Omede K and Daniel N, 'Towards an Indigenous Social Inclusion Paradigm: Igbo Apprenticeship System, Poverty Alleviation and Wealth Creation in South East Nigeria' (2023) 10(3), *Economics World*, 97.

cultivating a suitable mindset or work ethic.³ The indigenous Igbo apprenticeship system, often described as *Igba-boi/Igba-odibo*, *Imu-ahia*, or *Imu-oru* is a prime example. Historically, this system has enabled large number of youths to move from apprentice to independent trader through a well-organized system of mentorship, financial support and final settlement.⁴

This article critically examines the intersection between governance and how indigenous system particularly the Igbo apprenticeship model can facilitate wealth creation. The article offers a comparison of Malaysia and Japan, where strategic policies and strong institutions have integrated apprenticeship into their overall growth plans. The article further considers the new Anambra state Igbo apprenticeship law to consider its potential as a replicable model for Nigeria. The article uses a mix of sources to consider this stance, combining existing literature and papers on Igbo apprenticeship and policies, papers from Malaysia and Japan to argue that governance when it is properly designed, can convert the strengths of indigenous apprenticeship into durable, legally secured channels for trans-generational wealth transfer.⁵

2.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Governance

³Ibid.

⁴Agu G and Margaca C, 'Indigenous Igbo Entrepreneurship Scheme: Relevance, Restraints and Remedies' (2025) 5(1), *Businesses*, 1.

⁵Ansari M and Others, 'A study on Research Design and Its Types' 2022 9(7), *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 1132.

Governance has been said to be what a government does. It is seen as the efficient management of state institutions and the steering of the society and the state towards the realization of collective goals. The support for governance activities stems from the proposition that accountable and capable state institutions are prerequisites for economic development.⁶ It has also been noted to involve institutional and structural arrangements; decision making processes; policy formulation and implementation capacity; development of personnel; information flows; and the nature and style of leadership within a political system.⁷

2.2 Apprenticeship

As noted above, the system of apprenticeship has been for centuries, and it is one of the oldest ways of building human capital. It has been defined by scholars to mean a work-based learning model in which masters provide on-the-job training to young people over a set period of time in order to prepare better the servants for future career path in various occupations.⁸ Apprenticeship has been further conceived, to involve a contractual relationship between a master-craftsman through formal instructions. It is seen as a training contract between an employer, whereby the trainee undertakes to work for the employer for a specified period and the employer undertakes to provide practical experience and instruction which will allow

⁶Ohazuruike K and Elechi A, 'The Igbo Apprenticeship System, Governance and Entrepreneurial Development in Southeast Nigeria' (2025) 9(2), *South East Journal of Political Science*, 130.

⁷Akinyemi F and Adejumo O, 'Government Policies and Entrepreneurship Phases in Emerging Economies: Nigeria and South Africa' (2018) 8(35), *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 1.

⁸Ibid.

the apprentice to the status of a skilled craftsman.⁹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) as well views apprenticeship as a long term training for a traditional occupation, primarily within an undertaking or under an independent artisan. It is an effective mechanism for a seamless transition from school to work for young people.¹⁰ UNESCO as well describes apprenticeship as a unique form of vocational education that combines job learning and school-based training to develop specific competencies and work processes.¹¹

2.3 The Igbo Pre-Independence Apprenticeship System

The Igbo apprenticeship system, popularly referred to as the *Imu-ahia* or the *Igba-boi* is a form of business incubation system originated and practiced by the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria. It is an indigenous model of job and wealth creation which have been in practice in the Igbo land for centuries.¹² It is basically an informal system where established business owners take in young boys and train them in their line of business while they serve as apprenticeships, subsequently establishing them at the end of

⁹Adeyeye J and others, 'The Effects of Apprenticeship System on Skill Development in the Printing Industry in Lagos State, Nigeria (2015) 10(2), *British Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies*, 25.

¹⁰ International Labour Office, 'A Skilled Workforce for Strong Sustainable and Balanced Growth' (2010) cited in Eze M, 'Assessment of the Igbo Apprenticeship System in Nigeria' (2023), *Jostar Publications*, available at <https://publications.jostar.org.ng/sites/default/files/2023-12/ASSESSMENT%20OF%20THE%20IGBO%20APPRENTICESHIP%20SYSTEM%20IN%20NI.pdf> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

¹¹ UNESCO, 'Delivering TVET through Quality Apprenticeships' (2015), *International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training*.

¹²Kanu IA, 'Igwebuikconomics: The Igbo Apprenticeship System for Wealth Creation, Igwebuik' (2019) 5(4), *African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 56.

the agreed period.¹³ As noted by Ugwu et al, this system is basically translated to mean ‘learn marketing’ or ‘learning work’ and it is considered as an integral part of Igbo culture.¹⁴ The Igbo apprenticeship form is of two types, the *Imu-ahia* and the *Imu-olu*, the former which means to learn trade and the latter means learning a skilled work. While the principles and practices of the both is same, the difference is revealed in the output, while the former is focused on learning the rudiments of trade and commerce, the latter is focused on acquiring a handicraft.¹⁵ Research revealed that the Igbo apprenticeship system has three stages, which includes talent identification, learning and settlement.¹⁶

In the Igbo apprenticeship system, the apprentice (*nwa-boyi*) typically moves away from his family to be trained by the master of his chosen profession, usually for a period of five to seven years, structured in stages, each with its own set of expectations and responsibilities, this relationship is often initiated through familial connections and community networks. The *nwa-boyi* is introduced into the basics of the business, learning through observation and simple tasks. As they progress, apprentices take on more complex duties, gaining hands-on experience and gradually assuming greater responsibility.¹⁷ This phased approach ensures that the apprentice

¹³Ugwu, Njeze A, and Oluka U, ‘An Examination of the Influence of the Igbo Apprenticeship Schemes on Development of SMES in Enugu State’ (2023) 6(2), *Advance Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 36.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ Agama AM and Ohajionu U., ‘X-Raying the Bounds of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS): Implications for Entrepreneurship Education and Job Creation in Emerging Economies’ (2021) 25(2), *International Journal of Psychological Rehabilitation*, 1042.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Okpong D and others, ‘The Igbo Apprenticeship Model and Practice: A Legal Examination of the Contractual Status of the NwaBoy in South East Nigeria’ (2024) 9(3), *Nexus International University Journal of Humanities*, 127.

develops a comprehensive understanding of the business and acquires the skills necessary to eventually operate independently; this is done via settlement, which typically includes capital, goods, or even a fully equipped shop to start their own business, for transition to independence business owner.¹⁸ This settlement is a form of compensation for the years of service rendered and is also seen as an investment in the apprentice's future success. The mechanisms of trans-generational wealth in the Igbo traditional system typically involves the skill transfer and business know-how (where the apprentice acquire technical competence and knowledge about marketing), social and finance capital (where the master provides the apprentice with trade networks) and the collective norms and dispute resolution (which is the community governance and kin-based adjudication).¹⁹

The outcome of this practice were numerous as it established a safety net, as the informal system guaranteed generational business renewal and a culture of self-reliance that allowed the Igbo to withstand the upheavals of colonialism and even the devastating effects of the Nigerian civil war; it redistributed wealth as wealthy merchants were forced to hire apprentices; and institutionalized entrepreneurship, as the Igbo gained a reputation for resilience and business acumen.²⁰ However, despite the strength of this practice, the exploitation associated with the informal nature of the practice poses inherent tension. Similarly, the absence of legal safeguards renders apprentices powerless in cases of dispute, rendering them vulnerable. These

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Chukwu U and others, 'Igbo Apprenticeship System in the Modern World: Challenges and Prospects' (2024) 23(1), *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews* 237.

²⁰Odeh E and Others, 'Business Mentorship System of the Igbo and Job Creation in Onitsha Main Market, Anambra State, Nigeria' (2025) 4(1), *African Journal of Economics and Business Research*, 1.

challenges underscore why scholars have called for the legal recognition of this practice, moving from cultural enforcement to state-backed protections, outlining forms, duties, obligations, and responsibilities of a master and apprentice.²¹

Despite these weaknesses, the *Igba-boi* traditional trade practice is still relevant to the economic challenges of 21st century Nigeria. In the face of high unemployment rates, and formal education that is frequently out of touch with market realities, the apprenticeship system provides a clear path to job creation and entrepreneurial empowerment, a way to overcome financial exclusion, and also a way to transfer wealth across generations, and an inclusive growth model focusing on collective responsibility rather than individual accumulation.²² This system despite critics about its informal nature demonstrates that sustainable wealth creation can emerge from indigenous practices and governance framework should integrate these models and formalize the practices rather than replacing.

3.0 APPRENTICESHIP AND GOVERNANCE: THE ANAMBRA APPRENTICESHIP LAW

Recent public documentation reveals the Anambra state effort at integrating the Igbo traditional apprenticeship system into its sub-national framework. The Part II of the Second Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended empowers the State House of Assembly to make laws for the development of industrial, commercial or agricultural

²¹Ibid.

²²Aluu D and Enudu O, 'Igbo Apprenticeship Practices and Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition Among Auto Maintenance Mechanics in Enugu State South East Nigeria' (2023) 7(3), *Advance Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 26.

sector in the state.²³ Consequently, reports about the recent development in Anambra state indicates a movement to officially recognize and regulate the Igbo apprenticeship system, a proposed Igbo apprenticeship law introduced in 2025, designed to regulate and formalize the traditional apprenticeship system. This proposed law provides for the regulation of the *Igba-boi* and for related matters. This represents a landmark step by the Anambra state government to recognize the *Igba-boi* system formally, providing a framework for Igbo apprenticeship agreements, welfare standards, dispute resolution, and settlement obligations.²⁴

This proposed framework has been passed into law and it is to take effect from September 10, 2025. As stated above, this law seeks to formalize and regulate one of the most recognized models of wealth creation and business mentorship among the Igbo people.²⁵ To avoid ambiguity, the law expressly defines what *Igba-boi* connotes, it provides that:

A system of apprenticeship training where an expert in a type or types of business undertakes to train and take care of the welfare of an apprentice for an agreed period, after which the

²³ Paragraph 18, Part II, Second Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended - subject to the provisions of this Constitution, a House of Assembly may make laws for that State with respect to industrial, commercial or agricultural development of a state.

²⁴ SRJ Legal, ‘Anambra State Igbo Apprenticeship Law’ (2025), *SRJ Legal*, available at <<https://srjlegal.com/download-anambra-state-igbo-apprenticeship-law-2025/>> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

²⁵ Education Tram, ‘Anambra State Passes Igbo Apprenticeship Scheme (IgbaBoi) into Law, Effective September 2025’ (2025), *The Nigeria Education News*, available at <<https://thenigeriaeducationnews.com/2025/08/28/anambra-state-passesigbo-apprenticeship-scheme-igab-boi-into-law-effective-eptember-2025/>> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

expert gives the apprentice an agreed sum of money or goods to start his own business.²⁶

Flowing from the above, it is evident that the law statutorily recognizes the Igbo apprenticeship system. The objectives of the law further reveal that the law not only recognizes the Igbo apprenticeship scheme, it sees the system as one which is deserving of legal protection and standardization.²⁷ The law further defines the form which an *Igba-boi* apprenticeship scheme would take (requiring that same must be in writing, an evidence of a formal contractual obligations worthy of legal protection,²⁸ such a person (the *nwa-boi*) must have obtained a Basic Education Certificate²⁹ etc.) as well as the master/trainee apprenticeship scheme (there is also a requirement for writing under this head,³⁰ must also have obtained a basic education certificate³¹ etc.). This ensures clear guidelines for operation as well as accountability.

The law further defines rights and obligations for masters and trainees, describing minimum condition for training, settling disputes and mechanisms to ensure the settlement component is honored. The law sets up the Anambra State Igbo Apprenticeship Commission to perform oversight functions, including maintain a register for all contractual agreements between apprentice and masters will be recorded,³² provision of a structure for arbitration or mediation for dispute resolution between

²⁶Igbo Apprenticeship Law s 2.

²⁷Ibid s 4.

²⁸Ibid s 5.

²⁹Ibid s 6.

³⁰Ibid s 12.

³¹Ibid s 13.

³² Ibid Section 22(2)

apprentices and masters,³³ facilitation of the improvement and efficiency of the Igbo Apprenticeship Scheme,³⁴ issuance of certificate to the apprentice upon completion,³⁵ ensuring the payment of stipend as settlement³⁶ etc. The law not only seeks to provide formal structure for the traditional Igbo Apprenticeship system, rather, it seeks to align the traditional apprenticeship model with vocational training and skill accreditation, improving transitions into formal SMEs system.³⁷ This law is particularly important and a prime development as it represents a delicate balance between cultural authenticity and statutory oversight, the law similarly holds potential benefits for governance, which includes: legal safeguards for apprenticeship by providing them with rights that can be enforced, e.g., clarity on duration, dispute resolution, and settlement obligations. This can potentially lower the risk of exploitation; registration of apprenticeships, which can potentially help in keeping track of results, helping policymaker to gather data to guide decisions, and offer support where needed; and boosting the state's economy and growth by integrating apprenticeship system into SME.³⁸

The Anambra Igbo Apprenticeship law holds significant implications for Nigeria's wider governance. If apprenticeship laws, like those in Anambra, were replicated nationwide, apprentices would be protected in a standard way across all states. Such replication could also ensure the integration of apprenticeship into nationwide labour policy, complementing existing vocational education and SME development frameworks. Furthermore, a

³³Ibid s 22(3).

³⁴Ibid s 22(5).

³⁵Ibid s 22(6).

³⁶Ibid s 22(8).

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

federal replication could potentially unlock access to funding, like international donor programs focusing on youth skills and entrepreneurship. A formal apprenticeship system would also allow for cross border recognition of skills within ECOWAS, positioning Nigeria as a leader in combining local economic practices with modern governance.³⁹ However, it must be noted that statutory formalization of this traditional system can as well significantly raise or pose risks which includes: strict regulatory burdens could potentially stifle the informal nature of apprenticeships, consequently discouraging masters if compliance costs are high; the issue of fairness can potentially pose a risk too, marginalized groups can be left out on account of registration or compliance cost.⁴⁰ Thus, to balance these potential risks, a well-considered regulatory framework should blend a few, yet enforceable, standards with enabling support. This method aligns with global advice on creating high-quality apprenticeships.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ International Labour Organization, 'Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023' (2024), *International Labour Organization*, available at <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/1684_SKILLS_Quality_Apprenticeships_WEB.pdf> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

⁴¹ International Labour Organization, 'Towards Lifelong Learning and Skills for the Future of Work: Global Lessons from Innovative Apprenticeships' (2022), *International Labour Organization*, available at <https://www.ilo.org/default/files/wcmpps5/grpups/public/%40ed_emp/%40ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_872242.pdf> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

4.0 COMPARATIVE GOVERNANCE MODELS: INSIGHTS FROM MALAYSIA AND JAPAN

4.1 The Malaysia Government

Malaysia provides a prime example of how a country can use governance to turn apprenticeship into an economic tool. Since the 1980s, the Malaysia government has been supporting Small and Medium Businesses (SMEs) using skills programs. The government has consistently prioritized SME development through integrated policy instruments, including the SME Master-plans and the Twelfth Malaysia Plan. SME serve as a crucial component of Malaysia strategy to become a high-income nation. The country has leveraged on this by embarking on a multi-dimensional strategy to boost SME development and sustainability with the creation of the National SME Development Council (NSDC) in 2004, the purpose of which is to oversee policy development and the coordination of task for policy development.⁴²

The launch of the SME master-plan (2012-2020) sparked a major shift in the trajectory of SMEs. Prior to this development, Malaysia had a fragmented approach to SME, resulting in SMEs insignificant role in the Malaysian economy. The framework was developed to facilitate a long-term growth strategy for SME and to influence overall SME development

⁴² World Bank Group, ‘Malaysia’s Experience with the SME Masterplan’ (2020), *World Bank Group, Global Knowledge and Research Hub in Malaysia*, available at <<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/504361583989615623/pdf/Malaysia-s-Experience-with-the-Small-and-Medium-Sized-Enterprises-Masterplan-Lessons-Learned.pdf>>accessed on 11 September, 2025.

by focusing on six high impact programs⁴³ and 26 policy measures. The objectives of the framework were achieved by:

- i. Increasing the rate of business formation;
- ii. Expanding the number of high growth and innovative SMEs;
- iii. Raising the productivity of SMEs; and
- iv. Intensifying the rate of formalization.

Present day Malaysia under the leadership of National Entrepreneurship SME Development Council (NESDC) formerly known as the NSDC, and the numerous policy initiatives thereafter, SMEs have started to show more dynamics in the Malaysian economy, consistently providing substantial gains to Malaysia's GDP.⁴⁴

Similarly, the Twelfth Malaysia plan framework was developed for a period of 2021-2025, anchored by three key themes, including resetting the economy, strengthening security, well-being and inclusivity as well as advancing sustainability.⁴⁵ The framework is expected to assist in regaining momentum as it recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic as well as helping the Malaysian economy grow.⁴⁶ Malaysia government plays a direct role through different agencies, monitoring apprenticeship schemes, providing credit guarantee for SMEs and links training with industrial needs. Policy

⁴³ The six high impact programs include- Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU); the Malaysian Innovation Agency (through plaTOM Ventures); SME Corporation Malaysian (SME Corp); Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE); SME Investment Program; and YayasanInovasi Malaysia.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵SME Corp, 'RMKe-12' (2024)*SMECorp*, available at <<https://smecorp.gov.my/index.php/en/policies/2015-12-21-09-26-24/rmke-12>> accessed on 11 September, 2025.

⁴⁶Ibid.

instruments in Malaysia have integrated state-sponsored financing schemes, vocational and technical education linkages, and business development services that connect small enterprises to the value chain.⁴⁷

4.2 Japanese Government

Japan's economic success after World War II is often linked to its specific business culture. This culture featured apprenticeship programs as part of a system where employees were hired for life and worked within company groups called *keiretsu*. Apprenticeships in Japan weren't just for crafts but also included manufacturing jobs. Management systems made sure that training was connected to long-term jobs. Companies saw investing in their employees' skills as a key part of their business plans. Vocational training laws, such as the Human Resource Development Promotion Act⁴⁸ provided a legal foundation for apprenticeship, outlining national policies and frameworks for human resource development, establishing provisions for the vocational training of job-seekers and the development of skills for workers.⁴⁹ Article 1 of the Act specifically states that:

The purpose of this Act, together with the Employment Countermeasures Act, is to promote the development and improvement of the abilities workers need for their jobs, by way of comprehensively and systematically taking measures for enriching and smoothly carrying out vocational training and vocational ability tests and measures for ensuring that there are opportunities for workers to receive educational training on the job or

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸ Act No. 64 of 1969.

⁴⁹ Terada M, 'Japanese System of Vocational Education and Training in Historical Comparison: Focusing on the Role of Schools and Companies in the Formation of Vocational Competencies' (2024) 8(48), *Japan Labor Issues*, 19.

vocational ability tests voluntarily, and thereby to ensure security of employment and improvement of the status of workers, as well as to contribute to the development of the economy and society as a whole.

The Japanese model reveals:

- a. A strong firm-based training where companies undertake in-house training and long apprenticeship schemes that build craftsmanship.
- b. Institutionalized vocational education integrated into policies.
- c. Family enterprise continuity where succession ensures continuity of family businesses across generations.⁵⁰

4.3 Comparative Insights

The Igbo *Igba-boi* system, Malaysia's SME focused apprenticeship, and Japanese culture of corporate-embedded training all rely on mentorship, transition to independence, and continuity. This is evident from the system of apprenticeship practice in operation in the three region. In the Igbo *Igba-boi* scheme, the master takes on the role of a mentor fregionsor the apprentice, offering his technical know-how, business crafts and ethical advice.⁵¹ This similar approach exists in the Malaysia's dual training system, where apprentices learn in both vocational schools and industrial settings under experienced mentors.⁵² The same mentorship practice is in operation in Japan in company structures, where senior employees guide and train junior staffs.⁵³ These examples show that mentorship is a crucial

⁵⁰ Henning A and Romar E, 'Learning from Japanese Businesses: Ethics in Operational Excellence' (2023) 8, *Humanistic Management Journal*329.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Sakai T, 'Current Status of the Job-seekers Support System as a Second Safety Net' (2024) 8(48), *Japan Labour Issues* 1.

part of apprenticeship program. Similarly, the transition from apprenticeships to independence also reveals the similarity and divergence of practice in the considered nations. However, a common practice across these systems is the recognition of institutional support for a smooth transition.⁵⁴

Despite the similarities highlighted between these systems, there are potential points of divergence. In the Igbo community, mentorship and apprenticeship operate informally at the local level, which can leave apprentices in vulnerable positions.⁵⁵ By contrast, the Malaysia government has incorporated apprenticeships into its national economic strategy, providing government funding and job related training.⁵⁶ While in Japan, apprenticeships are part of company frameworks, legally protected, and supported by cultural practices such as long-term employment.⁵⁷ The key difference between these systems however lies in governance. While the Igbo system thrives on community rules, Malaysia and Japan relies on formal governance through frameworks which have been designed to address same. Policies, frameworks, and the oversight functions performed by state institution, such as the NESDC for Malaysia and vocational training corporation for Japan, ensures that apprenticeship systems are protected, funded, and able to grow.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Omiere C, 'Igbo Apprenticeship Model and Mentorship in the Nigerian University System: A Comparative Analysis' (2025) 15(1), *African Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 601.

⁵⁶Mohammed MA, Threeton M, and Omar K, 'Industrial Engagement in the Technical and Vocational System (TVET) System' (2021) 20(12), *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Education* 19.

⁵⁷Hirao T, 'Determinants of Understanding of Labor Laws: Evidence from Japanese University Students' (2023) 35, *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 437.

⁵⁸Ibid.

These comparisons highlight Nigeria's governance gap. Thus, the challenge on Nigeria is to incorporate the Igbo apprenticeship system in its economic plans without losing its cultural character. Unlike Japan and Malaysia, Nigeria's approach to apprenticeship differs. While Malaysia and Japan have significantly reached a milestone in incorporating apprenticeship into its national policies, Nigeria still grapples with integrating apprenticeship into its national policies, consequently leaving the subject matter outside the formal economic system, lacking contracts, legal protections, or access to financial support. These further buttresses the point that apprenticeship flourishes across societies only when it is integrated into government policies, ensuring protection, financing, and institutionalization.⁵⁹

Conclusively, the comparison above reveals that apprenticeships models thrive not merely because of cultural factors but because of policies or governance structures that have been integrated into the system to transform these models into structured economic boosters. Although, the systems compared above seems different at first, with roots in African community, Japanese company unity and Malaysia government and policies growth, a detailed look however shows that there is similarities in mentorship, transition into independence and institutionalization in the three system.⁶⁰ Thus, by combining the Anambra's apprenticeship law with Malaysia's government led approach and Japan's corporate incorporation, Nigeria could develop a mixed governance system. This system could potentially

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

turn apprenticeships into a tool for sustainable, trans-generational wealth creation.

5.0 TOWARDS A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANS-GENERATIONAL WEALTH CREATION

As noted above, apprenticeship models thrive not merely because of cultural factors but because of policies or governance structures that have been integrated into the system to transform these models into structured economic boosters, and as noted earlier, Nigeria battles with youth unemployment/underemployment and fragile small and medium enterprises' inability to generate wealth.⁶¹ This issue is prevalent in Nigeria, which underscores the urgency of a governance framework that not only addresses immediate labour market gaps but also facilitates long-term wealth transfer across generations. The article has considered the indigenous apprenticeship system, particularly the Igbo traditional apprenticeship system's role in trans-generational wealth creation through generations. However, if these systems are not part of formal governing systems, they may become less relevant in a fast-changing global economy. As a result, a national approach to trans-generational wealth creation should therefore integrate indigenous systems, provide legal protections for same and use them as strategic tools of development policy. This would be discussed below.

The integration of indigenous systems into governance addresses the demand for broad economic growth. This can potentially reduce incidences of unemployment/underemployment while boosting the country's economy. Oftentimes, economic policies from other nations overlook

⁶¹Ibid.

grass-root practices, which causes a gap between government policies and a people's lived experiences.⁶² Unlike some formal apprenticeship system, the Igbo traditional system is naturally linked to trust, family ties etc. This achieves results without a lot of bureaucracy. Integrating this framework into Nigeria's governance structure ensures that current methods of wealth creation are reinforced instead of being replaced.⁶³ Similarly, a well-defined plan is needed for national implementation. The Anambra Igbo Apprenticeship Law provides a model for this by formalizing apprenticeship agreements⁶⁴ and establishing ways to resolve dispute. A federal policy or framework on apprenticeship and skill development can be patterned around this law. It can build on same by bringing state efforts together under a single national policy, while still allowing for local differences. Such policy would formalize apprenticeship contracts, recognize masters and apprentices, and protect the system's cultural values. Policy mainstreaming could also connect apprenticeship with youth job programs and national industrial strategies, making it a recognized part of Nigeria's economic plans.

Provision of legal protections must form a key part of the framework in ensuring a national framework which guarantees trans-generational wealth creation. A large number of apprentices deal with exploitation, sudden termination of service, or lack of settlement.⁶⁵ To prevent such abuse, legal frameworks must establish contracts that can be enforced, set standards of working conditions, and offer ways to receive and address complaints.

⁶²Obuseh R and others, 'Igbo Apprenticeship System and SME Development in Imo State Nigeria' (2024) 5(3), *International Journal of Business and Management* 216.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Igbo Apprenticeship Law (n 26) s 5.

⁶⁵Ibid.

Furthermore, giving apprentices social support like health insurance, retirement plans etc. would ensure that apprentices are not just seen as a cheap worker but as future business owners with rights.⁶⁶ These protections not only guarantee a continued trans-generational wealth creation, it will as well ensure Nigeria's alignment with international labour standards while preserving its unique culture. Additionally, masters/mentors must be encouraged to keep mentors motivated and engaged. This can be done by way of incentive.

Public private partnership is also an effective way to broaden apprenticeship programs across the country. By working with groups like chambers of commerce, trade associations and cooperatives, the state can jointly develop standard curricula, invest in training centers, and connect apprentices to specific industry skills.⁶⁷ This form of collaboration mirrors the practice in Malaysia and Japan where government support apprenticeship through industry partnership.⁶⁸ This can potentially help in Nigeria by connecting informal mentorship with formal technical training, making sure apprentices are ready for both local and competition worldwide. Furthermore, integrating apprenticeships in vocational and educational institutions can significantly impact how they are perceived.⁶⁹ Conclusively, the need for a national framework for trans-generational wealth creation in Nigeria is based on the idea that governance should not duplicate effort, rather, the government can leverage on existing indigenous practices that have demonstrated efficacy. Nigeria may turn the Igbo wealth

⁶⁶Nduka K and Chukwu U, 'Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System and Wealth Creation in South East, Nigeria' (2024), 2(4), *International Journal of Socio-Cultural Research* 53.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

transfer system into a long term national asset by making apprenticeship a part of formal governance, protecting apprentices, rewarding mentors, encouraging cooperation between the public and private sectors, and including apprenticeship in school curricula.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central argument advanced in this article is that governance is necessary for long term accumulation of wealth across generations. Individual initiative, cultural creativity, and communal solidarity are all important, but the long-term success of these systems in a fast changing global economy depends on how well they fit with institutional governing frameworks. In the absence of such alignment, indigenous system of wealth creation faces the threat of deterioration due to informal exploitation, insufficient legal safeguards, and isolation from contemporary financial institutions. However, with the right governance, they can be leveraged, replicated and institutionalized as catalyst for equitable economy growth. The Igbo traditional system which is the case study of the article is a tried and tested approach, which has fostered wealth transfer, youth empowerment, and keep businesses going for years, resulting in Africa's strongest entrepreneurial classes. Its longevity demonstrates two key lessons: first, that indigenous systems are more than just cultural systems; they are living institutions capable of driving economic transformation; and as a social and economic institution that must be recognized and protected by the government. If government policies or frameworks fails to integrate such indigenous practices, Nigeria risks jeopardizing its most reliable weapon for long term wealth development.

The system in operation in Malaysia and Japan was considered in this article. Lessons from these nations highlights that institutionalization is

effective and it is possible. The Japan's dual system considered reveals that apprenticeship has continually produced high skilled workforce in line with industry demands. The Malaysian government's inclusion of apprenticeship in national frameworks has also significantly driven guaranteed mentorship, financial stability, skill development, and overall, the growth of SMEs, which have consequently increased the country's GDP. These systems highlight that governance, when integrated into apprenticeships, can drive economic growth. Nigeria, therefore, has a lot to learn from these approaches. Drawing on these comparative insights, it becomes obvious that formal frameworks are not opposed to cultural practices, but can be structured to retain their essence while expanding their reach. Furthermore, the article considers the Anambra State Igbo Apprenticeship Law, and how same can be replicated by national frameworks to enhance trans-generational wealth creation. The Anambra framework is an excellent illustration of how government can constructively connect with indigenous practices. This framework bridges gap between traditional and modern governance by incorporating apprenticeship agreements, conflict resolution mechanisms, apprenticeship scheme, and integrating apprenticeship with broader economic policy. While still nascent, the law significantly has profound implications for Nigeria, these includes, domesticating indigenous apprenticeship practices without losing its cultural roots, and as a model which can be replicated in other states and at the federal level to ensure trans-generational wealth creation and business continuity.

Overall, the article reveals that there is an intersection between governance and indigenous practices in trans-generational wealth creation, thus, to address the issue of underemployment/unemployment, it is necessary to integrate indigenous practices into modern day governance. By growing apprenticeship through governance innovation, which in turn enhances

youth empowerment and employment, there is the need to consider indigenous practices. Nigeria has the potential to transform a cultural tradition into a national framework of wealth creation, and inclusivity. The Igbo traditional apprenticeship provides a foundation, while the Anambra law offers a path forward for this transformation. The political will to replicate these frameworks for the benefit of national development is all that is left.

6.1 Recommendations

In light of the foregoing analysis, several recommendations have been espoused to strengthen governance and ensure the sustainability of trans-generational wealth creation through indigenous apprenticeship practices in Nigeria. They include:

i. Implementation of National Apprenticeship Framework:

A national apprenticeship framework should be implemented by the federal government to establish a consistent legal framework throughout the nation. By expanding upon the Anambra state law, this legislation can potentially help in defining rights, codifying apprenticeship agreements, and guaranteeing enforceability through specialized tribunals.

ii. Establishment of an Authority to Strengthen the Governance Structure:

A specialized apprenticeship skill authority must be established to supervise the apprenticeship system to guarantee sustainability. Taking inspiration from the Malaysian and Japanese model, such an institution would oversee the results of trans-generational wealth, ensuring not only immediate employment but also long-term wealth transfer, enforce dispute resolution, and regulate training standards.

iii. The Incorporation of Wealth Transfer Mechanisms into Law:

Apprenticeship settlement should be formalized in legal terms, with clear obligations for mentors. The government can provide low-interest loans, matching grants and tax credits to companies that hire and train apprentices, consequently encouraging mentors to continue the practice. In this way, wealth transfer is institutionalized as a governance-backed economic policy.

iv. Integration of Apprenticeship/Vocational Skills into Educational Curriculum:

This mirrors the model practised in Japan and Malaysia. Integrating apprenticeship into formal curriculum can potentially elevate its prestige, encourage participation and ensure continuity of wealth creation across generations.