

IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

LinusAdama A., Nwokeiwu Johnson, Venerable Oganezi Bethel,

Onah Glasdys Owere

Corresponding author:linusadama@gmail.com

Department of Business Administration, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Department of Business Administration, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Department of Business Administration, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

A-E Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Abstract

Apprenticeship and skill acquisition have been proven to be a useful and reliable tool for business development and entrepreneurial performance. Apprenticeship in this study focused on Igbo context of skill acquisition and business development. Thus, apprenticeship in term of Igbo context is a system or process through which an apprentice, usually a young person, is admitted by a master craftsman for the sole purpose of acquiring and mastering a craft or trade for a stipulated period of time, after which the apprentice is provided with adequate support to establish his own business. This study examines the Igbo apprenticeship system and its effects on skill acquisition, business growth and entrepreneurial performance. The study adopted a cross-sectional case study of business owners in Ariaria, Aba business cluster. The sample size of the study is 306 small scale business owners in Ariaria, Aba. Data was analyzed using SPSS 21 version. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was adopted in testing hypotheses. The result indicates that apprenticeship programme was effective in helping the apprentices to acquire more skills and knowledge. The findings also suggest that skill acquisition through apprenticeship can guarantee efficiency and effectiveness, which leads to business growth and increase in performance among the entrepreneurs.

Key Words; Apprenticeship, performance, business growth, apprentices, entrepreneur

Introduction

Over the years, the continuous rise in the number of startup businesses and large business enterprises are obviously a necessary part of a nation's economic growth. Research shows that the concept of skill acquisition and apprenticeship gained interest, recognition and

acceptance in the late 70s and early 80s (Ryan and Unwin, 2001). Apprenticeship is important training method that tries to balance the deficiency in education system (European Commission, 2016). Apprenticeship in the Nigerian context is a system or process through which an

apprentice, usually a young person, is admitted by a master craftsman for the sole purpose of acquiring and mastering a craft or trade for a stipulated period of time, after which the apprentice is provided with adequate support to establish his own small business. Ryan and Unwin, (2001), explained apprenticeship to be a program usually structured for 'vocational preparation' and experiences required to run a specific craft or trade. Apprenticeship transfer of learning in the workshop provides an invaluable sense of self-worth and professional identity. The need to develop skills for the growth of the economy and to set young people up for gainful employment have attracted worldwide interest in apprenticeship programme. It was probably in this regard that the Nigerian government added skill acquisition programme to the National Youth Service Corps, known as Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Department (SAED), as a means of equipping the youths with vital entrepreneurial skills to combat unemployment (Sunday, 2015). Apprenticeship creates opportunity for networking as it allows the apprentice to gradually build up a business network with suppliers and client (Alivazona, 2014). Quinn (2018) explained that trainees learn about operating in a business environment and begin to establish their own business network, including suppliers and client which they take with them once they set up their own enterprises. It was established that England apprentices constituted a higher proportion network of the entrepreneurs among the mid income business establishments, (UK Department for Education, 2017). Although, apprenticeship enables a smooth start for first time entrepreneurs (Brychan, 2016), it however does not guarantee that such business will stand the test of time owing to the fledgling nature of newly founded

business and the incessant rise of market competitions. A study carried out by the Bureau of Labour Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage affirmed less than 31% of startup businesses which operated for four years survived through the 7th year (Watson and Everett, 2015).

Unlike in Europe, apprenticeship came about as a result of government efforts to improve skill and build sustainable workforce and create employable youths (Swindon and Wiltshire, 2018, Thyssen, 2018). In Europe apprenticeship is a structured education and training programmes which formally alternate learning in the workplace with learning in an education or training centre. It is a "dual system, a blended combination of on-the-job employer-based training and off-the-job training" (SOLAS, 2016, p 1). In Nigeria (Igbo system) apprenticeship is primarily meant to equip young apprentices to acquire skills that will enable them be self-employed as business men and women (Chand, 2019). Nigerian apprenticeship was unstructured and it came about as the first stage of aspiring entrepreneurs who want to acquire skills (Okoro, 2019). Apprenticeship in the Eastern Nigeria is unique in the sense that it is a work-based training method used to enhance the business skills of young people from different backgrounds (Magner and Jackson, 2019; Onyinye, 2017).

Although originally the apprenticeship was meant for young people whose could not pursue academic endeavors because of financial difficulties. However in recent times many university graduates who cannot find job are now turning to apprenticeship as an alternative option for survival (Eze, 2017).

Growth of apprenticeship in the Eastern Nigeria

In Nigeria apprenticeship system was of a concern of individuals who need skills to start off private businesses. There was no entry-level apprenticeship and

qualification is required. It is a simple way young aspiring entrepreneurs gain basic skills to carry out their own business ventures. The learning process of Nigerian apprenticeship has been proven to be thorough and effective and offers a comparatively effective means of meeting the skill needs of the economy. The age of apprentices often ranges between 12-25 years (Adekola and Ezekiel 2013) and last between one to nine years.

In Nigeria, the history of apprenticeship was a classic case of vocational training founded on a stipulated period of tutelage of a master-craftsman (Osuala, 2017). Accordingly, apprenticeship system existed in every trade. It was a tradition that was carefully safeguarded by Igbo ancestors and gain grounds after the civil war of 1967-1970. Igbo apprenticeship is a child of necessity, after the civil war in Nigeria where the Igbos were alienate from the mean stream government activities. Their life servings in banks were confiscated by the Nigerian government and were allowed to withdraw only £20 each by the then Nigerian Minister of finance Chief Obafemi Awoloyo (Adeshokan, 2018). Therefore, their only means of sustainable livelihood was in business (Eze, 2017). It was the most predominant system of training for skill acquisition in the Eastern Nigeria among the Igbos. The period of apprenticeship varied from craft to craft. In many occasions it is a family affair, the family had to agree on the modalities (Onyinye, 2017). Some time it is simply a successful entrepreneur going to the village and pick up willing young person/s to be trained for a particular trade and after which the master-craftsman will support them to start off their own businesses (Foelster, 2019). At other times, apprenticeship almost always starts as small business and among entrepreneurs who usually don't have enough money to hire employees to work for him (Iwara, Amaechi and Netshandama,

2019). Therefore, they engage the services young people to help them usually family members (nephews or cousins or both). There is a predetermined settlement plan between the apprentices and the master-craftsman.

According to Okorie (2017) apprenticeship system in a traditional Eastern Nigerian society was a simple one. It represented customarily attachment of a young person to an experienced business person for a number of years, 'in which labour services are exchanged for the opportunity to learn a skilled occupation' (Ryan, 2011 p. 4). It is an agreement with an established person in business or in workplace to complete a training such that the apprentices become autonomous and competent workers in their areas of leaned trade (SOLAS, 2017). Igbo apprenticeship is on the job based training. Through delegation duty whereby the master-craftsman requests the apprentice to do work on his behalf either in or outside the workshop. The duty of the master-craftsman is a supervisory one, and he gives feedback. There were few material needs, it was not complex and there was no special body or organization to monitor activities, progress or failure (Fafunwa, (2014). A documentary by a CNN has describe Nigeria apprenticeship in as one of the largest business incubator platform in the world. Apprenticeship is the Eastern Nigeria is so successful that Forbes Africa report that Nnewi one of the business clusters in the Eastern Nigeria has more billionaires than any part of Nigeria, including Lagos. Igbos are known for their entrepreneurial acumen such that they succeed where other ethnic groups could not (Iwara, Amaechi, Netshandama, 2019). Eastern Nigerian apprenticeship system has produced a pool of skilled entrepreneurs and has made many millionaires and billionaires then all the Nigerian

universities put together (Anyanwu, 2019; Ekekwe, 2018). Among them who later become business mogul are Innoson Motor, Cocharis, Ibeto, Chikason, and others. These are conglomerates whose owners started as apprentices and they never pass through high school and some did not even finish primary school (Ekekwe, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa (Leman, 2015). National Statistics (ONS) in a 2013 labour force survey, states that apprenticeship and skill acquisition have become the most attractive option for curbing the menace of unemployment in Nigeria. However, despite Nigerian 169 universities and 132 polytechnics and 123 technical colleges (National Board for technical Education, NBTE, 2020; (Myschoolgist, 2020), educational institutes have disengaged from industrial needs by constant disregard for skills and unwarranted emphasis on certificates. Nigerian educational system is supply driven than demand drive. Vocational training programs are insufficient to cater for the skill need of the job market, because vocational training institutes do not have sufficient technical tools. There is more emphasis on paper than on skill acquisitions. Thus, very few polytechnic graduates secure paid employment within their area of competence (UNIDO, 2017). Although there has been an upsurge in the number of apprenticeship and skill acquisition studies in recent years, but there is little research on the impact of apprenticeship on skill acquisition, entrepreneurial performance, and business growth (Tyson 2016; Hawse and Wood 2017; Wenger-Trayner 2015, and Hyland, 2017). For instance Akçomak, (2017) asserts that most SMEs do not checkmate the impact of the skills on their business growth and productivity. Owing to the foregoing challenges, this paper aims specifically on finding out the impacts of

apprenticeship and skill acquisition, but also on business growth using Ariaria business cluster in Abia state, as a case study.

Review of relevant concept/themes

Ariaria Business Cluster

The Ariaria business cluster, situated in Aba, a popular city in Abia state, is one of the largest market in West Africa, and as a result earned itself a name as "China of Africa" due to its huge contribution to the production of leather wears, such as shoes and bags etc. for Nigeria and for the neighbouring West African countries. The Ariaria business clusters have major sub-clusters, among which are Shoe Plaza business sub-cluster and Power Line business sub-cluster with hundreds of boulevards. Each business in the clusters harbor about 5-10 apprentices and master craftsmen. Bakassi business sub-cluster is considered the largest of the many business sub-clusters in Ariaria. There are roughly 200 shoe makers in Central Avenue and an estimate of 1200 stores on the area alone. Other cluster deal in imported fabrics, while others are involved in sale food items of every kind.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of this research was founded basically on an apprenticeship/skill acquisition-start up business relationship and its influence on business growth and productivity. Following the practice of apprenticeship, an apprentice before setting up his business would have acquired various skills, knowledge and strategies for sustaining business growth and productivity as well as be able to survive in his new business (Alike & Orjiakor-Umunze, 2019). One of the most significant theories of apprenticeship, especially as regards to impart of knowledge, business developing and performance of a SME will be discussed. This theories include but not exclusive to

Bandura's social learning theory and transformational theory.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory:

Bandura (1977) social learning theory posits that individuals gain from each other, by means of perception, copying, and demonstrations of copied knowledge. According to Bergh and Theron, (2006), the theory has been depicted as an extension among "behaviorist and cognitive learning theories" as it envelops "attention, memory, and motivation". This 'social learning theory' applies to this research theme, in that apprentices gain information and abilities by distinctly watching and trying to imitate what they see their masters' craftsmen doing. Individuals who learn by effective practices are bound to attain achievable results quicker and can really sustain their business growth and survival. The use of Bandura's theory of perception can be seen at various work places when an apprentice imitates his master or senior in a given profession. In this manner, a learner should initially perceive how others work before he begins working. The ace, simultaneously, may not be required to apply the cutting-edge educational standards of showing the aptitudes. The Bandura's theory offers an incentive to both nature and the psychological part of the individual. The theory comprises of four fundamental parts which includes, "attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation". In like manner, the theory states that individuals find out much about conduct by watching others. So as to learn, they focus on the conduct, they need to emulate.

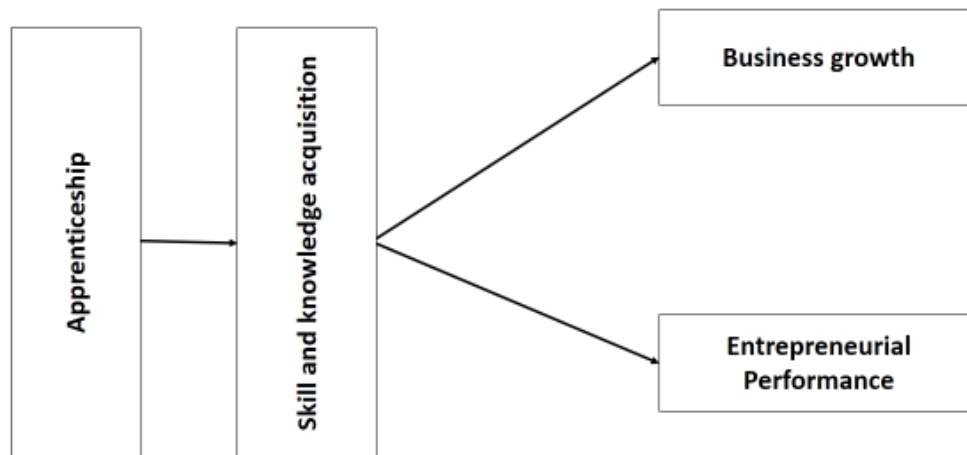
Transformational Theory: The transformational theory is a theory postulated by Brinkerhoff and Montesano (1995). The theory holds that there is a transfer of knowledge during

the process of skill acquisition and apprenticeship, and thus aims to evaluate the managerial intervention, as well as the before and after training effects on organization performance in Michigan, USA. Meanwhile, this theory was redesigned by Montesano in 2002, and posits that "training is necessitated by the desire for knowledge and skill acquisition and such desire is aimed at achieving a particular goal and objectives". That is, those who venture into apprenticeship and skill acquisition have objectives they have the need to fulfill. More so, the theory additionally contends that effective skill acquisition and apprenticeship brings about fulfillment and execution in business, especially when in areas relating to productivity and growth in business. The purpose of this theory on this study is vested on the assertion that improved workforce that yields business growth and productivity is birthed from the effective knowledge imparted unto SMEs during the period of skill acquisition, or rather put, training period. In light of the above, it is thus important to note that entrepreneurs are influenced with effective knowledgeable skills during the period of apprenticeship and skill acquisition. These skills are seen as being transformational and at such the need for the theory adaptation.

Conceptual framework of the study

Apprenticeship is a method through skills and knowledge is acquired and it is understood that these skills and knowledge can be transferred to workplace to improve business productivity. When employees or learners acquire new skills and knowledge it improves their self-efficacy which leads to efficiency and effectiveness. These will eventually results to overall business performance and growth.

Framework for the Study



Empirical review

Apprenticeship and Skill Acquisition

Apprenticeship is important training method that enables individuals to acquire skills which they use in productive business activities for the benefit of their business (Olubisi, 2018). The skills acquisition is an authoritative instrument which give the individuals employable skills and innovative capacity (Boitnott, 2019). Burnside (2018) confirm that apprenticeship is important in increasing skills levels to meet business skill needs. Skill acquisition is a process of empowering young individuals in order to realize their potentials. Thus, motivate and enable them exceed their expectations (Oluremi, 2018). It is an opportunity for harnessing wealth, build social networks, and access open doors for being innovative. A study indicates that “apprentices acquire technical and entrepreneurial skills for self-employment through formal and informal apprenticeship training systems” (Ezenwakwelu, Ebgosionu, Ezezue and Okwo, 2019, p1). A similar study found that there is a correlation between apprenticeship system and employees’ skill development in informal sector, with a special emphasis

on printing industry (Adeyeye, Falola, Waribo, and Akinbode, 2015).

Hypothesis one

H0: Apprenticeship does not have a significant influence on entrepreneurial skill acquisition.

H1: Apprenticeship has a significant influence on entrepreneurial skill acquisition.

Apprenticeship and Business Growth

The UNDP's Human Development Report (2012) affirms that it is through "skill acquisition that creativity, initiative, capability, commitment and empowerment" that grantee genuine business development can be accomplished. The acquisition of skills which is bolstered through apprenticeship system is a direct positive response to the issue of star-up survivals, just as guaranteeing business growth and better performance of the existing businesses. Furthermore, it was recognized that apprenticeship has the ability to meaningfully increase the level business growth and the rate at which new business are developed (Ejo-orusa and Mpi, 2019). Many businesses across the globe are depending on their apprentices to grow their businesses. It

was reported by 41% of organisations that apprenticeship was beneficial to them in terms of contributing to the growth of their businesses (Widjaya, 2015). Europeans countries engaged in apprentices' scheme to increase the establishment of new businesses and develop the existing ones (English and Collins, 2010). Also, a study suggests that Nigerian and others economies cannot develop unless apprenticeship is encouraged amongst young people (Fajobi, Olatujoy, Amusa, and Adedoy, 2017). Apprenticeship offer opportunity to upgrade employees' skills and build capacity for organisations to drive business expansion and productivity (Chartered Management Institute, 2020). The use of apprentices can lead to business growth because they bring in new perspective and modern ideas into working of the organisations, making it relevant and innovative (Hasluck, Hogarth, Balduaf, and Briscoe, 2008). Apprentices also provide stability, and company loyalty, these saves money for the business in different ways (Gough, 2017). It has been ascertained that there is a relationship between apprentice competencies and increase in organizational effectiveness, quality, efficiencies of the businesses and these to lead to business growth (Onwusu-Achempong, 2015). The study done by Ejo-Orusa and Mpi (2019) suggests that the apprenticeship scheme in Nigeria has the prospect for enhancing meaningfully business growth and commitment and to motivate the rate at which new ventures are established and thus become a worthwhile platform for business promotion. A similar study affirmed that the Nigerian entrepreneurial activities impact on business success (Orugun and Nafiu, 2014). Satiawati and Riyanto (2011) also found apprenticeship was useful in achieving growth in business and economic development in Indonesia and beyond.

Based on the review of literature above the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis two

H0: Apprenticeship does not influence business growth.

H1: Apprenticeship influence business growth.

Apprenticeship and entrepreneurial performance

Apprenticeship has been associated with employees' performance in different research studies. According to the Department of Labour, each dollar spent on apprenticeships yields \$1.47 in improved output (Ginsber, 2020). Similarly, Mohrebweister, (2010) found that using apprenticeship as a work-based learning method increases skill, performance and brings new ideas and novelty in the industry. Furthermore, it affirmed that knowledge and skills acquired during apprenticeship were significantly related to different type performance dimensions (improved quality, increased productivity and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness) (Owusu-Acheampong, 2015). Apprenticeships increases performance in business because they are more practical and job-related than other methods of training. A study was carried out among the business owners that undergo apprenticeship to determine if there was correlation between apprenticeship and performance and it was found that there is a positive relationship between the two variables (Udu, 2015). Apprenticeship enhance quality and improve productivity and was found to increase overall benefit of the organisation within a short time (2017, UK Department of Education research report, cited in Magner and Jackson, 2019). In a study by Overton (2019) indicate that 76% found that productivity increased after employing apprentices. It was reported by 33% of organisations pointed out that apprenticeship is an important way of

expanding businesses (Widjaya, 2015). The results are possible because apprenticeship offers employees practical knowledge of workplace practices and brings together theory and practical skills to bear in the workplace. Moreover, apprenticeship assists in developing the desired skills and knowledge that helps to improve organizational growth and investments. Apprenticeship help apprentices to be familiar to companies' best practices and acquire skills particularly important to their companies (Boitnott, 2019).

Therefore, based on the review of literature above the following hypothesis was formulated.

Hypothesis two

H0: Apprenticeship does not influence entrepreneurial performance.

H1: Apprenticeship influence entrepreneurial performance.

Methodology

Research methodology defines the methods, approaches and designs and pointing out those used all through the study and justifying why it was chosen against other methods, approaches and designs by considering their applicability to the topic under review (Langkos, 2014). Research methodology is a body of knowledge that offer techniques that are used in research to find, select, process, and analyse data. The methodology allows researchers to collect important informations, analytically assess the study's general validity and reliability.

Research design

To fulfill the objective of this study, quantitative approach was used, the three research questions for this study can best be answered quantitatively. Quantitative data is easier to collect and analyze and can be used for large sample size (British Library, 2019). Data can be measured objectively unlike the qualitative data that is based on subjective analysis (Sileyew, 2019). Quantitative data analysis is more

scientific and the outcome allow for generalization to a wider group. Quantitative research involves theory that is exposed to arduous testing (Saunders et al., 2007). Is an approach that is applied a concept in the actual world so as to test and evaluate their legitimacy. This approach was used because the researcher was interested in contributing to knowledge by helping to identify the effects of apprenticeship on entrepreneurial performance, and business growth skill acquisition among the small scale business owners in Ariaria, business cluster.

This study is a cross-sectional case study of business owners in Ariaria, Aba business cluster. A cross-sectional research method was used because it enables the researcher to gathers facts once within a certain period (Cohen et al., 2011). The data collection for this study took place within three weeks in November- December 2022 period. A longitudinal research approach involved the study of a similar setting repeatedly over time was rejected to avoid the disadvantage of attrition of longitudinal research method in case of death or withdrawal of respondents.

Research population

The target population talks about the group of people to which findings of the sample are to be generalized. The target population is about 1500 entrepreneurs in shoe and bay production zone. The sampling frame is the list of all the people who are doing business in this specified type of business. The choice of Ariaria was based on the fact that Ariaria is one of the biggest small-scale business cluster in Nigeria, people are readily available and have enough workers for this kind of studies. Participants were randomly selected. Stratification method was used make sure that every unit from a particular stratum of the population has an equal chance of being selected, which reduces bias (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The number of respondents was manually generated using Morris's

(2003) random number table portrayed in Saunders et al. (2007). The 306 workers who were selected for the study were approached to participate prior to its commencement; thus only those who volunteered to participate were included in the study. Participants were selected by picking from any starting point through the table without looking at it, as every part of the table is randomly arranged. Then the researcher went down the columns from the arbitrary starting point, accepting any numbers in his range.

The sample size of the study is 306 small scale business owners in Ariaria, Aba. This study arrived at the number of respondents according to calculation

done and verified by Sekaran & Bougie, (2010, p. 295) and has been adopted all over the world as a correct method of selecting sample size. Therefore, of out 1500 business owners, 306 were sampled. Therefore, the researcher selected a sample comprised 306 business onwners in order to obtain a 95% confidence level for this study according to Sekaran & Bougie, (2010) calculations. The size of the respondents can be obtained or determined using the Taro Yamani Formula with a 95% (0.05) confidence level. However for the sake of accuracy, the researcher decided to use the already predetermined size of respondents that had been tested and found to be accurate (see the table below).

Source: Field Survey, 2018)

Sample Size for a Given Population Size: Confidence 95% Margin of Error					
N	S	N	S	N	S
10 - 10		220 - 140		1200 - 291	
15 - 14		230 - 144		1300 - 297	
20 - 19		240 - 148		1400 - 302	
25 - 24		250 - 152		<u>1500 - 306</u>	
30 - 28		260 - 155		1600 - 310	
35 - 32		270 - 159		1700 - 313	
40 - 36		280 - 162		1800 - 317	
45 - 40		290 - 165		1900 - 320	
50 - 44		300 - 169		2000 - 322	
55 - 48		320 - 175		2200 - 327	
60 - 52		340 - 181		2400 - 331	
65 - 56		360 - 186		2600 - 335	
70 - 59		380 - 191		2800 - 338	
75 - 63		400 - 196		3000 - 341	
80 - 66		420 - 201		3500 - 346	
85 - 70		440 - 205		4000 - 351	
90 - 73		460 - 210		4500 - 354	
95 - 76		480 - 214		5000 - 357	
100 - 80		500 - 217		6000 - 361	
110 - 86		550 - 226		7000 - 364	
120 - 92		600 - 234		8000 - 367	
130 - 97		650 - 242		9000 - 368	
140 - 103		700 - 248		10000 - 370	

150 - 108	750 - 254	15000 - 375
160 - 113	800 - 260	20000 - 377
170 - 118	850 - 265	30000 - 379
180 - 123	900 - 269	40000 - 380
190 - 127	950 - 274	50000 - 381
200 - 132	1000 - 278	75000 - 382
210 - 136	1100 - 285	1000000 - 384

Source Sekaran & Bougie, 2010, p. 295

3.5. Instrumentation

Both primary and secondary data were used for this study. Apart from the use of questionnaire for the collection of primary data. Secondary data were collected through the review of available literature in academic journals, conference proceedings and text books. The primary data were obtained by the use of questionnaire formulated for this study. The questionnaire was formulated to achieve the research objectives of the study. Participants were given a comprehensive questionnaire on their perceptions of the impact of apprenticeship has on peoples' skills acquisition, effects it has on work performance, and on their business growth.

The questions are structured using Likert Scale format for the dependent and independent variables. The well-structured questionnaires was formulated in such a way that respondents were asked to tick the most suitable option from the list of options given, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). A leaflet was attached to the questionnaire containing information about the topic of the study to enable the respondents to become familiar with the questions to enhance the reliability and to prevent bias. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with the help of contact persons in the market. The researcher collected the questionnaire personally with the assistance of the contact persons

at a later date so that respondents could complete it in their own time. Advantages of questionnaires lies in the fact that it is the best known and most widely used data collection methods for survey strategy. It is a competent way of collecting answers from a large sample before analyzing it quantitatively (Walonick, 1993).

Pilot testing: In order to validate the research instrument, and to avoid misconception by survey participants, the researcher took time to conduct a pilot test to help improve it. During the course of carrying out this study, the researcher met with individuals who have successfully undergone the process of apprenticeship and skill acquisition in Meat Market in Abakaliki to test run the questions. Their responses were used to improve the questionnaire before collecting data. This approach was employed in order to ensure that the questionnaire is not confusing, and to have an idea of the time frame to complete the survey. The pilot test conducted however aided in the improvement and overall development of the project insight.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 21 version. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was adopted in testing the hypotheses. For data processing a completed copy of questionnaire were coded and responses were captured in the SPSS statistical software program.

Data Presentation

Cronbach's alpha was analysed to determine the reliability of the

measuring instrument. The results are presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics (see table 1 below). A “p” value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.7 or higher indicates a high degree of inter correlation amongst the items and confirms that the items relate to a common construct. The alpha values for the independent and three dependent variables were performed and

all were above .7 and are therefore acceptable to be used in this study.

Descriptive Statistics of all the Variables

The variable of the study were presented in the descriptive statistics table below, which shows minimum, maximum, means, standard deviations, and the reliabilities for all measures. All the variables were measured on a five-point scale.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Business Growth	305	15.00	50.00	39.4098	9.54694	.937
Skill Acquisition	306	10.00	50.00	36.3824	9.83541	.934
Apprenticeship	305	11.00	50.00	38.7607	7.90892	.873
Entrepreneurs Perform	305	13.00	50.00	29.9705	10.14480	.738
Valid N (listwise)	303					

The relationship between apprenticeship and skill acquisition was analyzed through the use of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality. It was discovered that there was a moderate positive correlation, $r = .445$, $n = 305$, $p < .001$. The result

indicate that there is more likelihood that individuals who participated in apprenticeship are more likely to acquire more skills and knowledge than those who did not participate. Therefore, the more time one spent in an apprenticeship programme the more likely he will acquire more skills. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2 Hypothesis 1 Apprenticeship and entrepreneurial skill
Correlations

		Apprenticeship	Entrepreneurial Skill
Apprenticeship	Pearson Correlation	1	.445**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	305	305
Entrepreneurial Skill	Pearson Correlation	.445**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	305	306

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between apprenticeship and entrepreneurs' performance was analyzed through the use of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. It was discovered that there was a low positive correlation between the two

variables, $r = .179$, $n = 304$, $p < .001$. The result indicate that the more apprenticeship a person undergo the more likely that he or she will be able to performance better in the business than those who did not participate.

Table 3 Hypothesis 2: Apprenticeship and entrepreneurship

Correlations

		Apprenticeship	Entrepreneurs' Performance
Skill acquisition	Pearson Correlation	1	.179**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	305	304
Entrepreneurs' Performance	Pearson Correlation	.179**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	304	305

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between apprenticeship and entrepreneurs' performance was analyzed through the use of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. It was discovered that there was a high positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .548$, $n = 305$, $p < .001$. The

result indicates that the more apprenticeship a person undergo the more likely that he or she will acquire more skills and knowledge to enable him performance better in the business, which will eventually lead to the growth of the business

Table 4 Hypothesis 3: Apprentice/Business growth

Correlations

		Apprenticeship	Total Business Growth1
Skill acquisition	Pearson Correlation	1	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	305	304
Business Growth	Pearson Correlation	.548**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	304	305

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion of the results

It is important to note that the highest educational attainment for the majority of the respondents is secondary school and majority are mainly boys. This is typical issue with boys from the South Eastern part of Nigeria, who prefer career in apprenticeship than furthering their education. This trend is attributed to high rate of unemployment for university graduates. Other contributing factor is government emphasis on the importance of skill acquisition and self-employment.

However, the finding of this study indicates that participating in apprenticeship programmes can aid in increasing the skills and knowledge acquisition of the individuals who participated in it. This result corroborated the findings of the earlier works done on a similar topic, both in Africa and in the other parts of the world, where apprenticeship programmes have been found to have aided potential entrepreneurs to acquire skills that stand them in good stead for the future business undertakings. The second finding of this study indicates that apprenticeship programmes help young entrepreneurs to perform better in their business undertakings. This finding can easily be explained in the sense that through apprenticeship programmes individuals gain skills and knowledge as indicated above. These new competencies enable the individuals to become more efficient, because the increase in competencies boost self-efficacy thus, increase in performance. When these competencies are transferred to the workplace, it help the individuals to handle complex issues and difficult tasks more effectively in such a way that there will be less errors and better quality products and service. The finding corroborates the previous findings, where apprenticeship were found to have impacted technical and entrepreneurial skills, practical

experience and innovative capacity to produce varied and quality products. Ezenwakwelu, Ebgosionu, Ezezue and Okwo, (2019) and Oluyemisi (2018) posit that skill acquisition is a process of empowering an individual in order for them to realize their potentials and such people will further help other apprentices under them exceed or realize their own potentials.

The need to acquire a skill is significant and fundamental, if one is to overcome workplace deficiencies and this can be done through apprenticeship. It is a sure way to overcome economic challenges both for the educated and not so educated, for the poor and not so poor. Governments, for many years, acknowledged that skill acquisition or skills development is the fundamental vehicle for helping poor adolescents to opt out of the poverty. This is possible because skill acquisition leads to self-employment, financial independence, therefore, it is a progressive reaction to the problem of poor performance and high rate of unemployment. Thus the federal government recently made entrepreneurial studies compulsory for all university students in Nigeria.

The final key finding of this study is that apprenticeship can help entrepreneurs to expand or grow their businesses. In other work, the finding suggests that skill acquisition through apprenticeship can guarantee efficiency, which leads to business growth and better productivity. Acquisition technical and entrepreneurial skill through apprenticeship programme (formal or informal) can bolster confidence or self-efficacy which in turn leads to better productivity which will further leads to business growth. The present study helped in contributing to the ongoing debate on whether apprenticeship is effective in impacting technical skill on the future entrepreneurs to enable them to perform better, and grow their businesses. The study supported the

findings of the previous researchers who found that apprenticeship was effective enough to impact technical and entrepreneurial skill to current and potential entrepreneurs. It was particularly indicated that apprenticeship was highly effective in improving business growth. Therefore, the finding of this study will serve as a pedagogical tool for future study in the field entrepreneurial management.

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