

Delivering Social Values through Greenification of Apprenticeships in Nigeria

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Abstract: The demand for sustainable social value has affected apprenticeship systems worldwide. Many countries are exploring green apprenticeships to entrench sustainable social values in society. This conceptual paper adopted extensive literature reviews and oral interviews. Specifically, internet-based oral interviews using WhatsApp and Google Meet were conducted to gather opinions from five master crafts people and apprentices on the subject. Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory guided this study. Skills needed to deliver desirable social values through the green apprentice system were identified. A critical review of apprenticeship systems, especially green apprenticeships and their impacts on social values in this era, was conducted. The paper noted that the green apprenticeship system is novel in Nigeria, and the skills needed for the sustainability of social values in the country are lacking among apprentices. To address the challenge of green skills gaps, recommendations are made for the greenification of apprenticeships to promote sustainable social values in Nigeria.

Keywords: Greenification of apprenticeship, green skills, social values, climate change.

INTRODUCTION

Human activities are leading to a rise in atmospheric temperature and climate change worldwide. Climate change is a change in the global or regional climate patterns caused by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, industrial processes, agricultural practices, and the use of transportation. Climate change is the long-term shift in the Earth's average temperatures and weather conditions. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2025), between 2015 and 2024, the global temperature was on average about 1.8 °C above that of the late 1800s, known as the pre-industrial level. The widespread use of fossil fuels – coal, charcoal, oil, and gas in homes, factories, and transport systems causes climate change. It is attributed to increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels. The continued rise in temperature poses serious threats to human lives and nature. There are concerns that this may worsen in the coming decades.

However, scientists believe that the situation can be addressed with the right policy directions, such as support for green skills. Climate change significantly influences skills development and the preservation of social values worldwide. The support for the development of green skills is impacting on various training programmes, including apprenticeships. These are efforts to address the effects of climate change, secure future employment, and uphold social values. Many countries are making efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change through training on green skills. Sodermans et al (2022) remark that between now and 2030, about 65% of the current workforce needs training in 'renewable energy' topics, primarily engineers, operators, and electricians. Green skills are designed to promote sustainability and reduce environmental impact. These skills are crucial across various sectors, from renewable energy to sustainable construction and agriculture (Truslove, 2024). As industries

and society shift towards greener practices, the demand for a workforce skilled in sustainability is skyrocketing (Deloitte, 2020).

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, traditional apprenticeships are still very prevalent. The Igbo apprenticeship system has impacted social cohesion in the South-East Zone of Nigeria (Oluoch-Suleh & Osuji, 2025). The FBS (2023) asserts that apprenticeships have helped create a vibrant small business sector, the growth of local industries, and the creation of jobs and wealth in the region, as the apprentices often go on to start their own businesses after completing their training. Most apprenticeship programmes are still informal and lack green skills content to warrant the sustenance of social values. For instance, skills in sustainable energy, materials, and supporting green projects; fairness and inclusive skills in sustainable development efforts; skills in creating strong community relationships based on mutual support, justice, and a sense of belonging, acting with moral responsibility skills for environmental preservation, and supporting long-term ecological balance are among the green skills lacking in the traditional apprenticeship programme.

In recent times, many youths in Nigeria are not taking up apprenticeships, and this leads to social value issues. Social value issues and moral decadence are common among Nigerian youth. Ogedegbe and Ikhidero (2024) report that despite the potential of apprenticeship to uplift the economic and social standing of Nigerian youth, they are no longer taking up apprenticeships; instead, they engage in cybercrimes, ritual killings, armed robbery, indecent dressing, sexual laxity, among others. Ofoegbu (2023) remarks that the antisocial behaviours of our youth are caused by the neglect of apprenticeships. Besides, the skills offered by traditional apprenticeships, which included farming, fishing, and animal care or veterinary science, weaving (basket, mat, cloth), etc (FBS, 2023). cannot entrench and sustain desired social values in this era.

Social values serve as societal norms that guide interpersonal behaviour and collaboration among members of a community. In Nigerian society, social values include respect for elders, honesty, integrity, hard work, cooperation, tolerance, patriotism, and a sense of community. The social challenges caused by the change in climate require new skills that are different from those delivered by the traditional apprenticeship system currently practiced in Nigeria. The increasing emphasis on sustainability and “green” principles makes the adoption of the green apprenticeship model a strategic approach to reinforce social values while addressing new societal challenges such as climate change, ethical entrepreneurship, and community well-being (Cedefop, 2022). Aligning social and environmental values within green apprenticeship programmes and strategies for sustainable development to avoid social and climate crises is imperative. The “greenification of apprenticeship” is the process of adapting and transforming apprenticeship programmes to equip apprentices with work-based skills (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2015), social values, and knowledge relevant to the green transition and sustainability goals (Cedefop, 2022).

Greenification of apprenticeships is a system designed to give the future workforce and society the skills needed to meet sustainability goals and help mitigate climate change. The green apprenticeship model is emerging as a contemporary approach to reinforce social values while addressing new societal challenges such as climate change, ethical entrepreneurship, and community well-being (Cedefop, 2022). Currently, the green transitioning across the globe will ultimately create jobs (Pai et al. 2021; Cedefop 2021b), green transition creates jobs. On the contrary, Vona et al (2019) remark that stoppage in the use of fossil fuels will, in the short run creates job losses. Therefore, examining sustainable social values through the periscope of green apprenticeship in Nigeria is not only crucial but relevant to the attainment of national aspirations in the present scenario of climate change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of social values and sustainable development

Conceptually, values are generally accepted principles or standards of a person, institution, or enterprise. Therefore, social values are widely shared principles and standards within a society (Vieyt, 2022). Social values are an integral part of culture, which, as we all know, is the total way of life of a people. Other components of culture include national character, social stratification, morals, religion, mores, and law. All these aspects of culture give clues to the commonly shared principles and standards in any society. According to Oluoch-Suleh and Osuji (2025), social values like honesty, respect, responsibility, empathy, diligence, and a sense of community are crucial to every society. Social values are closely linked to moral values. They are principles that individuals follow to act morally correctly in their actions, thoughts, and decisions within their social system (Utility SwopShop, 2025).

These values establish clear distinctions between what is right and wrong and are shaped by social traditions, religion, culture, and institutions. It also encompasses how much value a person or an organization contributes to or supports a local cause, such as economic or environmental initiatives. Social values reflect how we connect with the community. Social values include justice, freedom, respect, community, and accountability. However, Vieyt (2022) remarks that in today's world, we have become increasingly racist, abusive, selfish, etc, and recommends that core values our society needs include empathy, respect, love, loyalty, and honesty.

Social values are vital to the development of society. They are the pillars of any society. To this effect, Dhillon (2025) remarks that social values facilitate economic progress of the society, emphasizing that in a society where members practice truth and honesty in their daily lives, such a society will be free from corruption and other illegal activities. Dhillon (2025) further emphasises that social values such as cooperation, tolerance, respect for elders, love for younger ones, sympathy, empathy, among others, improve social ties and social relations among people, which, in turn, will lead to the development of any society at a progressive rate. In addition, social values like patriotism, tolerance, perfection, and excellence help people to invent and develop new methods, processes, and techniques, thus leading to the availability of better products for the people, which in turn leads to a healthy and sustainable society (Singh, 2017). However, Nigeria is facing a social values crisis ostensibly caused by a lack of skills that align with sustainability.

In this era, social values are fundamentally connected to sustainability, environmental responsibility, equity, and community well-being. According to Utility SwopShop (2025), the social values desired in the green agenda include;

- Using sustainable energy, materials, and supporting green projects to show responsibility toward protecting the Earth and local environments.
- Ensuring fairness and inclusion in sustainable development efforts, promoting social well-being without compromising future generations.
- Creating strong community relationships based on mutual support, justice, and a sense of belonging, which are integral to sustainable societal progress.
- Acting with moral responsibility toward environmental preservation and supporting long-term ecological balance.
- Encouraging businesses to generate social value by creating employment, supporting local enterprises, and adopting sustainable practices.
- Valuing diversity within societies and fostering cooperation for ecological and social well-being.
- Recognizing the moral relationship between humans and nature, moving toward ethical frameworks that support both human welfare and environmental preservation.

- Aligning social and environmental values within programmes and strategies for sustainable development to avoid social and climate crises.

Greenification of Apprenticeships in Nigeria

Currently, the Nigerian government is promoting green skills for the sustainability of social values through initiatives like the Circular Economy Youth Empower Initiative (CEYEI), which trains youth in waste-to-wealth projects (F.R.N., 2025) to enable them to acquire skills to convert waste into eco-friendly products, sustainable businesses, and valuable resources. Another green skills initiative of the government is the Green Money Project, which focuses on sustainable agriculture where the youth gain in-demand skills in modern farming practices, business management, financial literacy, access to grants, loans, and mentorship opportunities (F.R.N. 2024).

Other efforts of the government include partnerships with international organisations to integrate climate education and green skills into the curriculum and supporting green manufacturing through policy and financial incentives. The green manufacturing practices in Nigeria prioritize the use of eco-friendly materials, aiming to reduce environmental impact while catering to the needs of conscious consumers. Even with these efforts, most apprenticeships in Nigeria are still traditional; thus, lacking in green skills. Skills in waste management, eco-friendly farming, and recycling of wastes, which are vital for a green economy and environmental sustainability, are still lacking among the majority of apprentices.

Green Skills and Environmental Sustainability through Green Apprenticeships

Sustainable social value in this era requires the development of green skills. Green skills are skills required for jobs such as renewable energy installation, sustainable agriculture, waste management, green building design, and critical thinking for climate-related challenges. The skills are designed to promote sustainability and reduce environmental impact. These skills are crucial across various sectors, from renewable energy to sustainable construction and agriculture (Truslove, 2024). As industries shift towards greener practices, the demand for a workforce skilled in sustainability is skyrocketing. Already, skill gaps and shortages necessary to deliver social values have been identified in some sectors of the economy (Cedefop, 2022). Training for green skills could be achieved using vocational training centres or the green apprenticeship model, or both. The "greenification of apprenticeship" is the process of adapting and transforming apprenticeship programmes to equip apprentices with skills, social values, and knowledge relevant to the green transition and sustainability goals (Cedefop, 2022).

Apprenticeship is vital for skill development and economic progress. It is needed in a society for job security. The skills developed through apprenticeship, especially the green skills, are needed for future jobs. The Apprenticeship Hub (2022) views green apprenticeships as a system designed to give the future workforce and society the skills needed to meet sustainability goals and help mitigate climate change. This involves reviewing the existing apprenticeship curricula or developing new programmes tailored to the needs of greener economies and sustainable social practices. It is designed to provide apprentices with skills to contribute positively to environmental protection and sustainability, supporting broader climate and green goals.

The green apprenticeships often combine learning both at educational institutions and in-company training that focuses on sustainable technologies, processes, and materials. It can range from grassroots initiatives to comprehensive, nationally coordinated approaches involving multiple stakeholders, including governments, education providers, companies, and sector partners. Green apprenticeships also help firms, especially SMEs, integrate sustainability into their operations while preparing a future-proof workforce. Raising awareness, auditing business practices for social value sustainability, and implementing greener operational changes are part of how companies and apprenticeship programmes can drive this greenification (Cedefop, 2022). Ultimately, green apprenticeships represent an important pathway for developing a workforce that can support zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The greenification of apprenticeship leads to the development of social values such as environmental stewardship, self-reliance, community support, social equity, and ethical entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to sustainable economic and social development in Nigeria. Sustaining social values involves integrating ethical, social, and environmental principles into apprenticeship programmes. Green apprenticeships emphasise not only the development of technical skills for sustainable industries but also the promotion of social responsibility, community engagement, and ethical behaviour among apprentices. The greenification of apprenticeship in Nigeria contributes to the development of social values in several ways:

1. **Sustainable Development Focus:** Incorporating green practices into apprenticeship programs teaches apprentices the importance of environmental responsibility and sustainability. This fosters values like respect for nature, conservation, and long-term thinking, which are vital social values for community welfare in Nigeria (Eneh et al., 2022).
2. **Poverty Reduction and Youth Empowerment:** Apprenticeship practice, especially when aligned with sustainable and green entrepreneurship, helps reduce poverty by providing youth with practical skills that enable self-employment and economic independence. Green apprenticeship practice enhances social values related to self-reliance, dignity, and contributing economically to family and society (Eneh et al., 2022).
3. **Social Cohesion and Communal Support:** Traditional apprenticeship systems in Nigeria, especially among the Igbo, emphasize mentorship, mutual trust, and community-oriented mindsets (Oluoch-Suleh & Osuji, 2025; Odusanya, 2023). The greenification of these systems reinforces values of social equity, inclusion, communal responsibility, and solidarity. The apprentices acquire both technical skills and social value principles that foster collective progress (Oluoch-Suleh & Osuji, 2025).
4. **Cultural Integration and Modern Challenges:** While rooted in traditional practices, there is a growing need to modernize apprenticeship programmes to address global environmental challenges. This modernisation supports values such as adaptability, innovation, and the integration of indigenous knowledge with modern sustainable development goals.
5. **Enhanced Employability and Ethical Entrepreneurship:** Green apprenticeship promotes skills in environmentally-friendly trades, fostering an ethical approach to business and employment among youth. This promotes honesty, hard work, and ethical stewardship as core social values in Nigerian communities (Sani et al., 2021).

Theoretical Frameworks of Apprenticeship, Greenification, and Social Change

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by Lev Vygotsky in 1978 provides a framework for understanding green apprenticeships as developmental, socially mediated processes that build both green competencies and pro-environmental dispositions through apprenticeship-based collaboration and mentorship. The theory explains green apprenticeship and the delivery of social values primarily through the lens of social interaction, scaffolding, and internalization within a cultural context. It emphasised that learning occurs first on a social level, through interaction with More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) – parents, mentors, masters, or peers, before it becomes internalized by the learner individually.

Green apprenticeship makes apprentices learn green skills from experienced practitioners who model sustainable practices and social values within a community or workplace, thus facilitating green practices as part of cultural and workplace norms (McLeod, 2025). Additionally, the green apprenticeship fits the theory's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where apprentices develop skills they can not perform independently but can achieve with guided support. In a green apprenticeship, mentors scaffold learning by demonstrating eco-friendly techniques and gradually transferring responsibility to apprentices. This process helps embed green social values,

such as environmental responsibility and ethical resource use, within the apprentices' cognitive and behavioural frameworks (Gowriensw, 2025).

Through sustained social engagement and guided practice, the external green skills and associated social values—such as sustainability, community responsibility, and innovation for environmental well-being—are internalized by apprentices. This internalization shifts these values to become part of the apprentice's own reasoning and identity, ensuring that green practices continue beyond formal training into lifelong behaviour and social contribution (Cedefop, 2021). Vygotsky highlighted that culture and language are essential in shaping learning. In the context of a green apprenticeship, the language of sustainability and the cultural values around ecological stewardship are conveyed, negotiated, and co-constructed between mentor and apprentice, enhancing shared understanding and reinforcing green social values (Main, 2023). The SLT helps explain green apprenticeship by framing learning as a culturally mediated social process, where apprentices gain green skills and internalize social values through guided interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative knowledge construction within a community dedicated to sustainable practices. This ensures not only skill acquisition but also the transmission of social and environmental values crucial for sustainable development (McLeod, 2025)

METHOD

The paper used a qualitative research design, which involved extensive literature studies and oral interviews with five master crafts people and apprentices. The literature studies were critically analysed, while Internet-based oral interviews employing WhatsApp and Google Meet platforms were used. The online oral interview was considered appropriate for the study evaluating the sparse locations of the master craftspeople and apprentices, as well as different trades covered in the study. According to Cohen et al (2009), online interviews are entirely real-time and can be anonymous for both parties if so desired, and the opportunity to contact respondents at mutually convenient times is enhanced. Indeed, an online interview is an extremely inexpensive means of conversation, enabling discussions with hard-to-reach groups or individuals.

FINDINGS

A 19-year-old female apprentice engaged in selling charcoal for cooking (Interviewee A, based in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory) was asked about the social values she acquires from her mistress. She remarked that *“they were always taught to be punctual to the store, clean the shop and burn refuse in a nearby refuse dump; account for daily sales through simple book-keeping; respect the elderly and customers; politely talk to customers; and above all to be humble”*. She, however, remarked that *nobody had ever told her that her trade of selling charcoal hurts forestation and that burning of refuse at an improvised dump-site is also not proper*.

Another 21-year-old female apprentice engaged in garment making (Interviewee B from Enugu) remarked that *“part of the agreement reached with her master before the commencement of the apprenticeship was that she must be a good apprentice in terms of character— honest, humble, respectful, and ready to keep to rules guiding activities in the workshops”*. She further remarked that her master and, indeed, other senior apprentices have never educated her on better and proper waste disposal. According to her, *all the wastes swept from the shop daily are thrown into the gutters during the rainy season or is burnt, especially during the dry season, as there are no areas marked out for the dumping of refuse near her workshop*.

A specialist in solar panel installation (Interviewee C, based in Lagos) remarked that *he learnt the skills on the installation from a Chinese company producing the solar panels and selling them in Nigeria using the network of their distribution outlets in Nigeria. The company would get you employed and train you on how to install panels at offices and houses of individuals. We had up to 15 employees-apprentices in the company who were never taught how to manage or recycle waste*.

Mohammed, an iron-bending practitioner and barely literate (Interviewee D, based in Tudun Wada Kano), remarked that *his boss during the time of his apprenticeship was known for uprightness, transparency, honesty, integrity, and being a great disciplinarian. He delivered perfect jobs to his clients on or before the time arranged. I made sure I learned those attributes from him. The attributes are very helpful. At the moment, I have nine (9) apprentices and am getting enough jobs from clients across the entire length and breadth of Kano. Sometimes, some of my clients give me jobs in Abuja. However, I have never received any assistance in terms of loans or grants from the government. As a master craft person in iron bending, I expect the government to be sending trainees (school drop-outs, unemployed youths/graduates) to me for training because the trade is lucrative and economically sustainable.*

Jane, a lady tailor (Interviewee E, based in Enugu), when asked how she attends to her customers stated that “*she is always punctual and ensures that the customers demands -timely and effective delivery services - are met. I always make sure that customers are properly and politely treated especially by all the 18 apprentices learning the trade under me*”

DISCUSSION

Apprenticeships empower apprentices with technical skills and desirable social values such as integrity, humility, honesty, uprightness, transparency, and respectfulness. However, most apprentices interviewed do not possess green skills. It is work-based learning where, as an employee of a firm, earning income, the individual could still be trained in a trade. However, most practitioners of various trades in Nigeria do not have access to government support, such as loans or grants.

They are also not provided opportunities for regular upskilling to facilitate knowledge of new trends in skills development, such as those related to climate change. The interviewees are equally aware of the effects of waste disposal on environmental sustainability. Although the Federal Government of Nigeria has taken some measures for the development of green skills among the youths, the impact has not been widely felt across the country. This situation is worsening due to the growing apathy and lack of interest among the youth in taking up apprenticeships despite the rising level of youth unemployment in the country.

CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, traditional apprenticeships are still very prevalent. In addition, the youth are no longer interested in taking up an apprenticeship due to their desire to get rich quickly. Drawing from these scenarios, the green skills required for environmental and economic sustainability, as well as future jobs for the youth in the era of climate change, are lacking. The greenification of apprenticeships in Nigeria is proving vital for sustaining and transmitting social and moral values in contemporary society. Through the integration of technical education with conscious value orientation and sustainable methods, these models enable youth to become moral, community-focused, and environmentally aware citizens—who are equally capable of promoting economic growth and social revitalization.

SUGGESTIONS

Arising from the discussions above, the following practical suggestions for sustaining social values through greenification apprenticeship in Nigeria are made in this paper:

1. Curriculum planners should ensure that the green apprenticeship programmes must go beyond occupation-level training to include civic education, moral thinking, and reflective exercises connecting occupational skills to community values and social values. For instance, the majority of countries set programs to upgrade existing curricula with new content blocks like biodiversity, water conservation, power saving, application of renewables in agriculture, reducing emissions, and overall sustainable tourism and rural heritage protection.

2. Mentorship plays a significant role in social value transmission, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and civic awareness. Mentors are ethical role models and shape the vocational self and social attitudes of apprentices. Formal mentor choice and training programmes with a focus on integrity, empathy, and ethical workplace conduct make this transmission possible.
3. Active participation by the social partners (e.g., employers, training providers, local communities) facilitates the effectiveness of apprenticeship programmes in the green transition and the incorporation of transversal competencies for sustainable economies and societies. This collaboration generates innovation and application of apprenticeships to new green innovations and practices.
4. Green apprenticeships raise levels of awareness regarding the environment and encourage apprentices to embrace sustainable working practices and lifestyles. This includes an understanding of the importance of green action, green business, and climate protection.
5. Policies for education must enable long-term mentorship agreements, value-based teaching approaches worthy of recognition, and the inclusion of citizenship and sustainability goals in qualification arrangements to formalize the integration of social values into apprenticeship.
6. Green apprenticeships are character-building platforms, preservation of culture, and transmission of moral values, hence placing apprentices in positions of skilled labourers and socially committed citizens who are capable of bringing about social change.

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