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Living Heritage, Circular Futures: Intergenerational Transmission of Indigenous Craft Knowledge through Apprenticeship and Circular Production—An African Intangible Cultural Heritage Framework

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Abstract

The survival of indigenous crafts depends on the bearers' abilities to interpret, learn and re-shape their crafts for successive generations. The Akwete textile tradition and Igbo apprenticeship studies inform the analysis within the framework of UNESCO's criteria for the assessment of intangible cultural heritage. This article blends apprenticeship and material use with a focus on the circular economy. The Intergenerational Indigenous Craft Apprenticeship and Circular Economy Model (IICACEM), has fifteen integral components consisting of apprenticeship, teach-back and recipient-learning, community consent and material use. The integration of recipient learning within craft apprenticeship demonstrates that the former is more indicative of craft continuity than the latter. Craft practice balance and confluence inform the determination of the conditions for engagement of youth within craft practice, craft continuity and material balance. The model is translated into practice through a learning architecture and assessment framework. This article identifies instruments for measurement, as well as refines the scope and limits for evaluating the framework. The model positions craft practice as a process for integrating culture with living heritage and community rights. Rather than hypothesising the effects of an intervention, this article presents a model, based on apprenticeship, material balance and continuous practice, to integrate culture and living heritage with craft practice.

Keywords: Living Heritage, Indigenous Craft Knowledge, Intergenerational Transmission, Apprenticeship, Circular Economy, Intangible Cultural Heritage

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1. INTRODUCTION

A cultural object may survive, but the knowledge system that creates it may not. For example, objects like woven or carved items may be collected, exhibited, or published, while the knowledge of how to create it, including permits to create it, weakens in the community. This is more detrimental to traditional knowledge. The goal of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is to protect knowledge and traditions. The safeguarding of these intangible heritage systems requires that the knowledge systems to create and transmit them be sustained, instead of concentrating on increasing the number of physical objects created. (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, n.d.a)

Studies located within the south-eastern part of Nigeria have the potential to be very enlightening. These areas have numerous traditions of making, mentorship and entrepreneurship. However, they should not be treated as unified within a single homogenous cultural group. For example, the Akwete area is a very popular centre of weaving in South East Nigeria. Lately, many authors have documented challenges associated with restrictive inheritance and patent recognition in the field of weaving. Udem, Emejulu and Mbalisi (2026) also have similar insights on the Akwa Ocha textile tradition in Delta State. It is apparent that similar community-specific studies on crafts are very essential.

Further support for the study comes from the Igbo apprenticeship literature. Scholarly works on the Igba Boyi and other associative entrepreneurial systems have addressed the role of sponsorship, learning through doing and reciprocal social relationships in these systems, and their contribution to the economy (Iwara and Adeola, 2021; Nnonyelu et al, 2023; Antai et al, 2024). It is important to note that an apprenticeship system associated with trading should not be assumed to reflect the gender, social and technological relationships, as well as the Customary permissions found in weaving and pottery or woodworking. The focus should be on the components of an apprenticeship system associated with a particular craft, and whether these can be specified and implemented.

The knowledge gap occurs because of the missing integration of various elements. These include, but may not be limited to, community governance, learning by doing, cultural transmission, and responsibility towards material. Generally, heritage literature focuses on guarding and promoting participation. Literature on vocational training and education is concerned with the role of skill and enterprise. In the same vein, analysis in the circular economy focuses on the movement and essence of products and services. This article focuses on the aforementioned elements, and integrates them into a single framework. It considers ongoing practice more than archival materials, sale of goods, and/or short-term evaluations. The author acknowledges that the first and foremost authority over the knowledge practice remains with the respective communities.

1.1. Analytical Questions and Contribution

The main objective of this article is to develop a framework to address the aforementioned elements. To answer the posed questions, the author integrates literature on the craft across several fields. The questions are integrated and framed within the existing IICACEM (Integrated Impact of Craft and Other CreativeSkills and Employment in the Maritime, Maritime related and other related sectors) assessment tool.

These questions are not parallel. It is possible for someone to be able to produce a craft while lacking an understanding of the cultural meaning associated with that craft. Sustained material (such as plants and trees) can be depleted if used for teaching. Efficiency can be increased without the production resulting in an economically viable livelihood. There are cases when the dimensions under consideration may occur together, and the aim of the assessment is to determine when this happens. They should not be merged to

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create a generic, and likely invalid, measure of heritage success.

Table 1. Research questions, evidence domains and limits of inference

Research focus	Observable evidence	Claim not justified by that evidence
Craft competence	Craft-specific practical task and blinded product rating	Long-term community continuity
Cultural knowledge	Contextual explanation and knowledge-holder appraisal	Authority to disclose restricted material
Transmission	Authorised teach-back and recipient follow-up	Sustained intergenerational use
Circular production	Input/output mass, rejects, repair and durability	Overall environmental superiority
Participation and viability	Follow-up practice, time and net returns	Permanent livelihood security

Source: Author's critical synthesis of UNESCO (2003; n.d.-a), Jerome et al. (2022) and indigenous apprenticeship scholarship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Living heritage

Living heritage is constituted by the dynamic relationships within a community, rather than the knowledge or skills that a community member may possess in isolation. The 2003 UNESCO Recommendation acknowledges the environment, setting and rules of heritage transmission. They identify learning about heritage and learning with heritage. The former may assist in acknowledging heritage; the latter may lead to participation and the learning required to sustain the heritage. Not all of the knowledge within a community may be disclosed.

Intangible heritage is inseparable from the material. A practice may be able to be repositioned to another context and upheld a relationship of importance to a culture; on the other hand, a product may be created that appears to be authentic, and in the process reproduce no relationships of importance to the culture. One approach states that not all change to a practice should be assumed to be erosion. The ability of a community to garner the means to learn, available materials, and the will of a community to protect a practice all play a role in determining if safeguarding of intangible heritage has been achieved (UNESCO, n.d.b; 2025).

2.2 Craft and Embodied Learning

The embodiment of knowledge is apparent in the ability to identify the probable outcomes of materials in various forms. This includes anticipating how the material will respond to being worked, perceiving defects in the material, and discerning the intentions and meaning of more knowledgeable practitioners. This type of knowledge is generally acquired through repeated participation in a practice under the guidance of more experienced practitioners.

Particular issues relating to apprenticeship in Nigeria are reflected in various studies. Indicators of enterprise success in an indigenous apprenticeship context are analysed by Iwara and Adeola (2021), and the entrepreneurial significance of igba boyi is analysed by Nnonyelu et al. (2023). Antai et al. (2024) analyse legal and contractual issues related to apprenticeship. These studies located the intersections of

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training, employment and social obligations, and apprenticeship and craft. Although commercial training is often guided by informal agreements and apprenticeships, inequality in bargaining power, unremunerated production, gender and family related exclusions, and other different forms of invisibility should not be dismissed because a practice is customary.

The recognition of the importance of context is demonstrated in textile studies. The unique craft is often the focus of attention. For instance, Chudi-Duru (2025) identifies weaving as a specialist craft and considers the factors that affect its survival, particularly design innovations. Mbalisi et al. (2022) analyse weaving in Akwa ocha. Given the differences in design, we may also interpret apprenticeship in terms of its relation to livelihoods. The current model takes a similar view.

2.3. Circular production: opportunities, measurements and critiques

There are a number of practices associated with circular economies, e.g. reducing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling. The lack of definition and consistent use of terminology have been documented by Kirchherr, Reike and Hekkert (2017). Corvellec, Stowell and Johansson (2022) have discussed positive interpretations of the circular economy and have argued that structural and distributional issues should not be neglected. From a cultural-economic perspective this body of criticism and theory is particularly relevant. Extraction should be kept as low as possible, unless novel products made of raffia, fabric or clay, etc. could help to reduce labour- and welfare-economic losses, and provide full employment without increasing unsafe, e.g. environmental, conditions. There is no justification for removing repairable goods from the economy.

Distinguishing novelty from utility makes more sense than focusing on particular substances. Reuse and other practices relating to the circular economy should therefore be encouraged. There are limitations to the application of indicators. In the absence of life-cycle analyses and other environmental assessments, assumptions about the reduction in life-cycle environmental impacts of products cannot be made. Consequently, circular economy practices that involve the systematic recording of inputs and outputs, as well as the setting of appropriate economic and material limits, should be encouraged.

Economic Activity

There are other tensions brought on by economic activity. For example, new orders may bring new work and vitality to a craft but rampant demand may lead to mass production. Mass production takes time away from mentoring and may reward poor design. It may lead to a situation where the true craftsperson (the ‘knowledge holder’) is excluded from production and economic gain. The policy-related documents published by UNESCO highlight the importance of recognition of culture-related rights, adequate compensation, and adequate support and protection of the cultural industry (UNESCO, 2022; UNESCO, 2025). In the present framework, it means that community authorisation to participate in the market will be given on a case-by-case basis.

2.4 Community Consent and Epitestemic Authority

The community will determine the study’s boundaries in terms of what may be considered data. According to UNESCO (UNESCO, n.d.b), ethical practice means obtaining free, prior, and informed consent, while respecting customary rules regarding access. This may be revoked at any time. Furthermore, a community may decide to restrict the publication of data, or endorse or restrict an investigator’s right to publish data or to incorporate a given technique. Similar to the case of refusing to disclose, the quality of research is assessed by its ability to recognise legitimate non-disclosure.

Finally, epistemic substitution remains a possibility. Researchers may, in the opinion of the knowledge holders, arbitrarily define and establish a set of standards by which cultural judgements are assessed, to

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reward a given design, for example. This is different from establishing standards that regulate the evidence to be presented in a claim about cultural judgements. It is similar to establishing standards that govern evidence to be presented about the impact of given cultural practices on the environment or to evaluate the durability of cultural materials.

2.5. Unsolved questions about crafts and heritage protection

There are three analytical gaps, as reported in literature. First, cultural policies promote participation and recognition, yet tend to overlook discernment of awareness, learning and achievement in crafts, teaching and practice. Second, scholarship in apprenticeship covers socialisation and entrepreneurship, yet considers rights to techniques and designs. Finally, circular economy focuses on the flow of materials, yet considers justice and legacy. Combined, these, with other literature, inform an all-inclusive framework, and set standards for crafts, research and policies (UNESCO, 2003; Iwara and Adeola, 2021; Jerome et al., 2022).

Table 2. Literature strands and their contributions to IICACEM

Literature strand	Core contribution	Unresolved issue for this study
Living heritage	Community recognition; recreation; authorised transmission	How to measure continuity beyond awareness
Igbo apprenticeship	Mentorship, work-based learning and reciprocity	Transferability from trading to a specified craft
Craft-specific research	Contextual motifs, technique and situated social rules	Measurement of mastery and cultural authority
Circular-economy analysis	Material-flow, product longevity and repair indicators	Environmental impact beyond workshop efficiency
Mixed-methods evaluation	Explanatory contrasts plus situated accounts	Clustering, implementation fidelity and power

Source: Synthesis of UNESCO (2003; n.d.-a; n.d.-b), Chudi-Duru (2025), Iwara and Adeola (2021), Jerome et al. (2022) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2018).

This synthesis combines UNESCO (2003; n.d.a; n.d.b), Chudi-Duru (2025), Iwara and Adeola (2021), Jerome et al. (2022), and Creswell and Plano Clark (2018).

2.6. Integrated Analytical Framework: IICACEM

2.6.1. Community authority and instructional design

IICACEM identifies five components: community-recognised artisan resources; participatory management and approval; learning and practice; achievement of learning, transmission and material-use outcomes; and supportive circumstances for the practice to be sustained by the community. It posits that practice enhances the artisan community's capability to perform, and that when a community is actively involved, it can make culturally important meanings accessible. It does not assume that long duration facilitates understanding, that culturally appropriate adjustments should be made, or that the ability to perform aids in long term transmission.

The model describes a number of potential other mediating processes, such as constructive feedback and/or opportunities to correct, engaging with a knowledge holder, and reflecting on the choices made with

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regard to the means used, and other competing explanations. Participation is influenced by a number of factors including previous experience, family ties, opportunity and will to undergo practice and the availability of resources used in practice. Teaching is influenced by a number of factors including experience and perspective on adjusting the teaching. Variations must be considered in evaluating the practice.

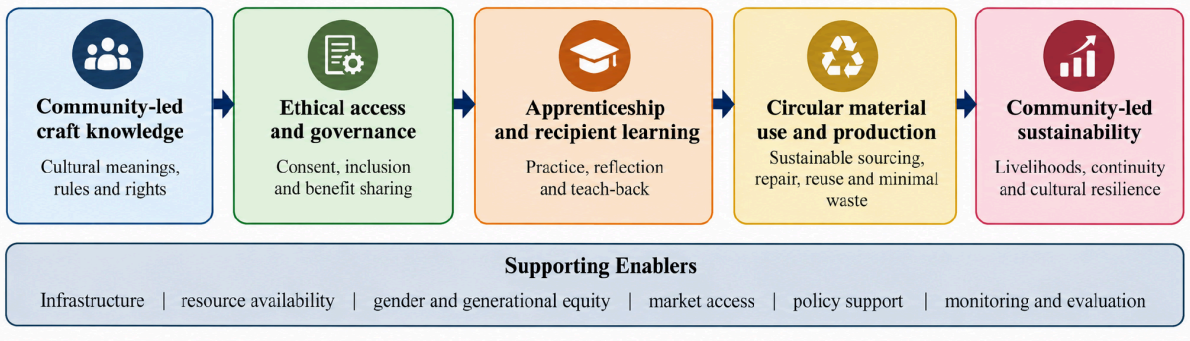


Figure 1. Community authority, apprenticeship process and distinct continuity.

Source: Synthesis of UNESCO (2003; n.d.-b) and Apprenticeship literature, and measurement of continuity within a Circular Economy.

2.6.2 Operational community governance

Community authority is the first of the three interlocking analytical conditions comprising IICACEM. It defines the craft, territory and entry requirements for community membership. Knowledge holders decide on the bounds of fidelity and appropriate cultural use of the knowledge. Other considerations should be the interests of learners, including women and persons with accessibility constraints. Governance decisions respect the community's judgement to restrict the disclosure of certain forms of knowledge. Materials and skills may be governed for demonstration, or governed for teaching in a restricted setting. The permissions to observe or learn do not extend to the publication, digital reproduction or commercial extraction of the knowledges governed for demonstration or teaching.

Heritage governance, revocable permissions, and the exercise of judgement in the interests of the community, determine the bounds of what may count as legitimate evidence in educating and evaluating learners. In heritage governance, a legitimate "boundary" may be placed around what is counted as evidence. It should be noted, that in heritage governance, non-disclosure may appropriately be judged as evidence of sound moral judgement.

Table 3. Community-governed access and stewardship matrix

Material or activity	Permissible decision route	Safeguard and audit trail
Cultural narratives	Knowledge holder and heritage group approve teaching scope	Attributed summary; agreed language
Technical demonstration	Practitioner approves task and permissible observation	Session permission and conditions
Photographs or video	Separate consent for capture and dissemination	Purpose, storage and withdrawal log
Design adaptation	Craft practitioners judge restricted features	Approved variations and excluded motifs

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Material or activity	Permissible decision route	Safeguard and audit trail
Student teach-back	Authorised audience and content confirmed	Recipient record with no restricted details
Commercial utilisation	Separate benefit-sharing and licensing negotiation	No automatic transfer of ownership

Source: Author's governance framework interpreted from UNESCO (n.d.-b).

2.6.3. Distinct pathways to cultural continuity

The cultural pathway covers understanding traditions and participating at an intermediate to advanced level, including the responsible explanation and legitimate circulation of skills. The production pathway covers the efficient use of materials, the reduction of defects and the durability of products. The paths may converge, as a person may become skilled in the production of traditional goods, but may not incorporate them in the teaching process. Likewise, a person may teach traditional knowledge, yet perform so in an irresponsible manner. In the end, retaining traditional knowledge is important to the continuity of the community. The evidence provided in this document shows that the expertise of the researchers is sufficient for safeguarding traditional knowledge, teaching methodology and intergenerational contact. This is demonstrated in Figure 3.

3. ANALYTICAL METHOD AND FRAMEWORK OPERATIONALISATION

3.1. Critical integrative synthesis

The model employs conceptual arguments rather than empirical inference. Details on the operationalization and evaluation of the model are provided by the 12-week curriculum and the comparison-based framework. The model is not developed enough to include the outcome of its field-based implementation. The focus of the analysis is a craft practice recognised by the community, in contrast to abstract categories of African craftsmanship. The model considers the specifics of the case study on Akwete weaving, but makes no assumption on the portability of evidence of one case study to other crafts and to other cultural contexts (Chudi-Duru, 2025; UNESCO, 2003).

3.2. Context, participants and units of analysis

IICACEM describes four constituents in a craft learning relationship. These are knowledgeable individuals who evaluate and grant access to appropriate technique and means; novitiate learners who engage in physical production; practising masters who have learned the technique and have it evaluated; and community members who ultimately assess and decide the term and condition of technique's admission and dissemination. In the context of IICACEM, the exercise of professional and pedagogical skills by environmental facilitators and vocational educators does not alter the control and authority of traditional practitioners. The conditions that influence participation are described using a range of observable variables.

The framework also conceptually separates the 'apprentice' from the 'workshop', 'mentor group' or 'learning circle' as the units of a programme. It is important to make this distinction, as it is possible that apprentices working with one practitioner share, for example, the same training aids, and teaching and social interactions. The application of the sampling approach to distinguish individual apprentices should be carefully considered and justified. This is especially the case when a large number of apprentices exists, as the sampling approach alone, may not warrant individualised treatment (Campbell et al., 2012; Hooper et al., 2018; Eldridge et al., 2016).

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3.3. Apprenticeship Structure and Learning Mechanisms

The model incorporates elements of situated learning and suggests that the programme is made up of six complementary elements, which include: Cultural Orientation; Observing/participating in practised activities; Correcting/editing activities; Examination of material and product flows; Adjustment and improvement of designs; and, Teach-back (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These are supported and integrated by a series of other activities, and assessments to check the apprentices' comprehension of the craft, as well as an investigation to help determine the 'ins' and 'outs' of the activity. A comprehensive and integrated assessment system should allow opportunities to determine whether the apprentices have gained the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for practising the craft (Chudi-Duru, 2025).

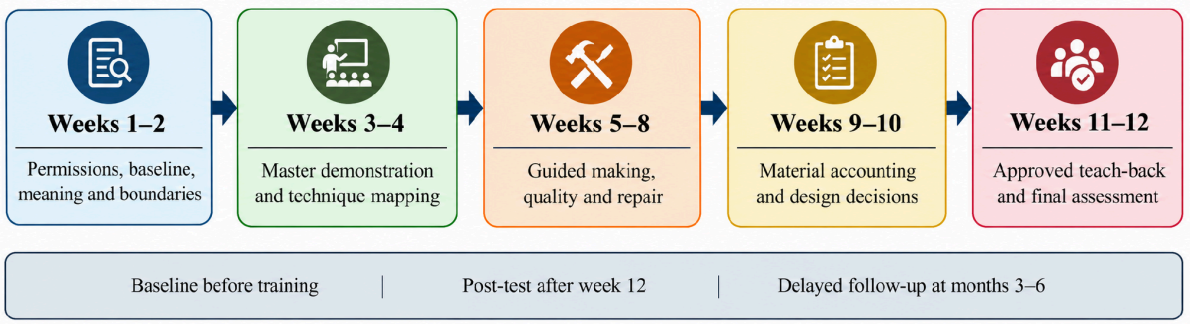


Figure 2. Instructional phases and assessment occasions

Source: IICACEM conceptual instructional architecture; assessment occasions represent an evaluation specification.

Table 4. Twelve-week apprenticeship curriculum and fidelity evidence

Weeks	Pedagogical focus	Observable fidelity evidence
1–2	Community agreement, orientation, baseline assessment	Attendance; permission categories; baseline scripts
3–4	Master demonstration, tools and safe material selection	Mentor contact; demonstration checklist
5–6	Guided foundational making and error correction	Practice hours; technique feedback; safety checks
7–8	Independent products, quality criteria and repair	Product ratings; defect log; repair trials
9–10	Material-flow inquiry and approved design adaptation	Input/output records; design-permission decisions
11–12	Authorised teach-back, review and immediate post-test	Recipient observation; independent scored products
Months 3–6	Follow-up without mandatory programme exposure	Repeat competence; recall; continued practice

Source: Author's synthesis of community-centred craft learning, situated apprenticeship and circular-production assessment.

Evidence of fidelity will be collected at various stages in the curriculum.

The author has synthesised community-centred, Situated apprenticeship and circular production

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assessment in order to inform her analysis.

3.4. Comparative interpretation and instructional fidelity

Fidelity refers to the degree to which the teaching/learning arrangements approved by the community are the ones that are actually implemented. Key elements in fidelity are attendance and participation of the practitioner and helpful suggestions, feedback and comments; safe use of tools; and adherence to community-recognised boundaries and limitations. It is important to understand that, while high levels of practitioner participation or participation are indicators of fidelity, low levels do not necessarily mean the absence of fidelity. Often, communities protect their knowledge by setting rules that govern who, when and how that knowledge is shared. Distinctions should be made to determine the reasons for various levels of community practitioner participation. Understanding these distinctions strengthens the interpretation of the implementation of a programme or project.

Table 5. Design comparators and safeguards against confounding

Dimension	IICACEM condition	Usual-practice comparison
Time frame	Twelve-week supported learning	Existing opportunities observed over same period
Teaching	Scheduled demonstration and guided repetition	Learning as locally available
Materials	Tracked inputs, residues, rejects and repairs	Comparable observation where feasible
Cultural governance	Explicit permissions and knowledge-holder review	Customary rules respected and described
Assessment	Common baseline, post and delayed tasks	Same endpoint, assessor and timing rules
Exposure log	Mentor hours, practice hours, fidelity and crossover	Ordinary exposure and additional activity logged

Source: Author's analysis of IICACEM and customary craft learning.

3.5. Define and assess the validity of the constructs

One of the key outcomes of this conceptual synthesis relates to the measurability of cultural sustainability. It was found that there are multiple measurable outcomes in different domains, and therefore cannot be simplified to a single measurable outcome. For this reason, IICACEM has adopted a profile-based assessment. It is defensible to consider practical craft competence as the primary educational outcome. It should be noted that in instances where a community is concerned with succession, practical craft competence may not be the case. The other outcomes remain as they are.

Technical competence is the ability to apply skills to source and combine materials to produce a craft item that meets predetermined standards and quality. For assessment, judgement is placed on the processes and outcomes of the craftsperson, and is demonstrated through the critique of functional products. For assessment of the craft practitioner, the craft practitioner and an assessor establish a set of behavioural anchors. An independent assessor may assist in achieving an evaluation of cultural adequacy. It should be noted, that this separation of evidence is also suggested in the preponderance of skills and crafts.

Cultural knowledge is an understanding of a practice's meanings, histories, attributions, and ways of

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accessing and teaching it. This type of knowledge is different from the understanding of how to teach a practice. The understanding of how to teach a practice is called transmission competence, and the understanding of that practice is called recipient understanding. Recipient understanding of a practice requires a follower-ship test to reproduction or recall of the practice. Practice of a cultural heritage domain is indicated more by practice outside of the domain rather than by attitudes towards practice. If the cultural knowledge is protected, not disclosing it is justified and should not be assessed as lacking (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, n.d.-b).

Table 6. Measurement domains, evidence requirements and validity concerns

Domain	Indicator and timing	Principal validation concern
Practical craft competence	Craft-specific rubric at baseline, post and follow-up	Rater severity; task equivalence; prior exposure
Cultural knowledge	Community-reviewed contextual explanation	Local specificity; language and disclosure restrictions
Teach-back competence	Approved live demonstration and explanation	Assessor awareness; communication versus mastery
Recipient retention	Delayed independent reproduction or recall	Timing; opportunity; recipient selection
Material performance	Mass balance, rejects, repair and product service	Functional units; input definitions and shifting burdens
Youth continuation	Follow-up practice frequency and obstacles	Self-report bias and differential loss to follow-up
Livelihood opportunity	Time, cost, accepted orders and net return if appropriate	Unpaid labour and hidden material costs

Adapted Measurement Framework from UNESCO (n.d.-a), and Jerome et al. (2022)

3.6. Multilingual Knowledge and Judgement in Assessment

Synthesis brings to the forefront an assessment dilemma. A standardised rubric promotes transparency and fairness in comparison. However, craft-related standards may be substituted for less appropriate ones, and disclosure may be rewarded. The standards and the types of evidence agreed upon by the experts determine validity. Scoring is ensured by a variety of safeguards, including behavioural anchors, relevant examples, and calibration of raters. From the perspectives of measurement and enforcement, it is not appropriate to reward explanations, and, conversely, to treat culturally responsive answers as false.

Language and craft may be inseparable. Knowledge may be expressed in a craft most appropriately in Igbo. Relying on English for assessment may result in incorrectly classifying craft knowledge as a deficit. Where the concept to be assessed involves judgement concerning cultural constructs, equivalence may not be ensured by a literal translation of words, and variation may arise as a result of the cultural background of the assessor. Systematic checks may be implemented to ensure scoring consistency. To address judgmental errors in assessment of cultural craft, it may be appropriate to solicit the views of representatives of the culturally affected group (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

3.7. Circular Production and the Material Boundaries of Evidence

The circular economy begins with an agreed functional unit (e.g., the finished craft item). Differentiating

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input material, output material, rejects, offcuts and repair within a workshop allows us to determine material yield. Usable material yield (UY) is the mass of accepted functional output divided by the mass of the input material, expressed as a percentage. Equation (1) shows the calculation of usable material yield. UY provides a way to describe material flow within a workshop and is not intended to indicate the environmental sustainability of a workshop (Mayer et al., 2019; Jerome et al., 2022).

Sourcing material, energy use, hazardous substances, durability, repair and labour are all aspects of circular economy that require attention. An input material may be harvested in an unsustainable way, and a material may be recycled at an energy cost. A craft item may be designed to be too light in weight and fail during use. When discussing the craft item, the comparative aspect is of primary concern and the system boundaries are to be declared. This position is in the spirit of critiques of the circular economy where it is questioned how isolated claims of environmental sustainability can be made (Corvellec, Stowell and Johansson, 2022).

Equation (1) shows calculation of the usable yield.

$$U_y = 100 \times M_{accepted} / M_{input}$$

Equation 1. Workshop-level usable material yield.

In Equation (1), U_γ is the percentage of usable yield from the system, M_accepted is the mass of the output craft item that meets the functional requirements, and M_input is the mass of the primary and secondary inputs to the workshop.

Table 7. Circular-production indicators and evidential boundaries

Indicator	Operational definition	Boundary and caution
Usable yield (%)	100 × accepted output mass / recorded input mass	Does not quantify emissions or use-phase burden
Reject rate (%)	100 × rejected units / completed units	Requires consistent product quality criteria
Offcut reuse (%)	100 × reused offcut mass / measured eligible offcut mass	Reuse may consume time, additives and energy
Repairability	Successful standardised repair and time/cost required	Needs equal functional condition and service expectation
Durability	Agreed performance test or follow-up service interval	Observation may extend beyond the programme
Responsible sourcing	Traceable input origin and locally defined extraction conditions	A natural material is not necessarily sustainable

Source: Operationalisation informed by Mayer et al. (2019), Jerome et al. (2022) and Corvellec et al. (2022).

3.8. Transmission, Learning and Continuity

In this study, ‘inter-generational transmission’ has been considered as ‘progressive realisation’ as opposed to ‘one-off event’. There exists an evidence hierarchy. Amongst the hierarchy, evidence of an authorised event is the least among others. The authorised event may be a person teaching a particular technique to another. Among the others, evidence of learning is the highest. Eventual practice by the community is the

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best among all. The evidence hierarchy developed by UNESCO (2003) and UNESCO (n.d.a) has been considered for this study. A hierarchy among evidence of interest, learning and practice has been depicted in Fig.3.

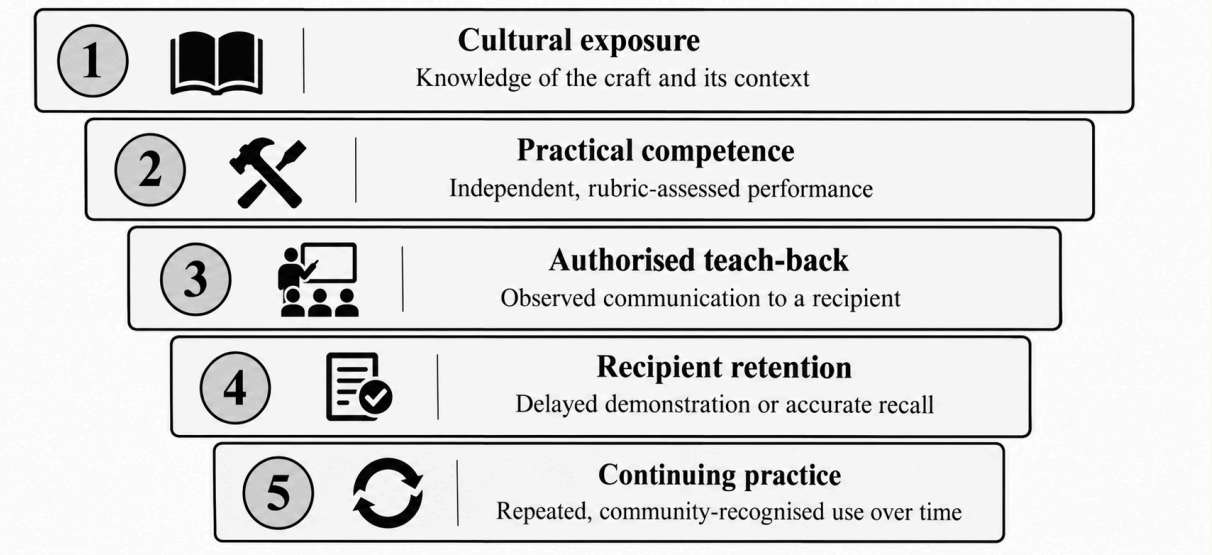


Figure 3. Evidence strength from awareness to continuing craft practice

Source: Analytical hierarchy derived from UNESCO (2003; n.d.-a) and the operational definitions of IICACEM.

3.9. Interpretive integration and reflexivity

Understanding participants' interpretation of obligations (e.g. apprenticeships; mentorships; ownership; gendered access and cultural permission) is important for a complete assessment of the situation. Some qualitative methods can help interpret the model's performance and provide a complement to the model's performance indicators. For example, the qualitative methods can help interpret reasons for situations where some student groups, in spite of the improvement in the overall quality of educational output, continue to achieve less than what is expected of them and where maximum efficiency in the use of educational inputs is achieved at the cost of gross inequality and indifference to design, value and use in architecture. From this perspective, the gaps and inconsistencies are not problems to be resolved, but rather cases where the components of the model are in alignment.

For the interpretation of the first-person accounts, reflexive thematic analysis is appropriate. For other components of this review, where integration of qualitative and quantitative methods is required, the author refers the reader to other publications (citing Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). This review does not contain completed interviews nor does it make claims based on interviews. It identifies the interpretive questions which should be considered in association with any such work, including the case where community members may justify restricting access to information.

3.10. Ethical authority and safeguarding boundaries

Ethical integrity is embedded within the IICACEM framework. Practitioners are able to decide what they wish to teach and disseminate, and this is to be balanced against informed consent, and where relevant, the assent and protection of minors. Attribution and benefit sharing are broad and may extend beyond the research frame. The separation of craft and scholarly knowledge permits craft motifs and designs, and craft skills to be retained within the craft realm, and disclosed through scholarly publications, or in other ways, as determined by the craft practitioner (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

Like all other forms of work, craft practice is replete with dangers and may require the use of sharp,

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caustic or noxious substances. The integrity of the craft practitioner and the process determines what is unsafe. Conceptual analysis does not imply ethical clearance, researcher recruitment, informed verbal consent or approval for fieldwork. Community approval and understanding of the intent and rationale for the proposed work, and the sphere of knowledge to be accessed and shared are essential, prior to the undertaking of a research project.

3.11. Extension to the case of available clusters

Equation 2 specifies how different units of learning and training may be treated once comparative data are available. In this case, the post-training outcome may be modelled as function of the instructional condition, the trainee's pre-training condition, and other group-level covariates, and a group level intercept. Making different assumptions about the absence of independence, as is the case with different formulations of the clustering structure, may be of interest, but it is not our concern here to consider the effect of clustering. It should be noted that the terms in Equation 2 represent a model, not a representation of an observed process; and the term β_1 should not be interpreted as the effect of condition T.

$$Y_{ij,post} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_j + \beta_2 Y_{ij,pre} + \gamma X_{ij} + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Equation 2. Baseline-adjusted multilevel outcome model.

3.12. Retention and other considerations

Of primary concern is distinguishing immediate from delayed outcomes. Stability of a performance norm can be assessed through (delayed) test scores; other outcomes may need to be represented through different statistical methods. If adequate evidence is available, a focus on the size and duration of confidence intervals and on context may be more helpful than on a single threshold of statistical significance.

Equation 3 shows the expected value for the mean immediate gain at a later assessment. It becomes unstable, and the mean retention of apprentices is not defined by the proportion of individual apprentices that are competent. Therefore, other evidence, such as delayed assessment scores and relevant context, is necessary to make sound inferences about apprentice retention.

$$R_{gain} = 100 \times (Y_{delayed} - Y_{baseline}) / (Y_{post} - Y_{baseline})$$

Equation 3. Percentage of mean gain retained at delayed assessment.

Equation 3 shows the ratio of the change at the immediate baseline to the change at the post test, with the excess at the baseline assessment expressed as an remainder. This equation is descriptive. Like Equation 2, it is sensitive to the measurement scale and does not reflect the proportion of individual apprentices that have retained the skills.

3.13. Alternative explanations and Validity Constraints

Some alternative explanations that may account for the differences observed in apprentices include prior experience, self selection, inequity in the experience and knowledge of mentors, difference in the materials used to practice, amount of practice and time, expectations of the raters, and other contextual factors. Variation in task difficulty and the level of challenge may also be interpreted as learning. Changes in the difficulty level of the task, for example, may be interpreted as learning when it is in fact an intention or a challenge given to apprentices to complete. The possible threats to the validity of apprenticeship data reflect many of the threats in causal inference that are salient and untestable in cluster designs (Hooper et al., 2018, UNESCO, n.d. - b).

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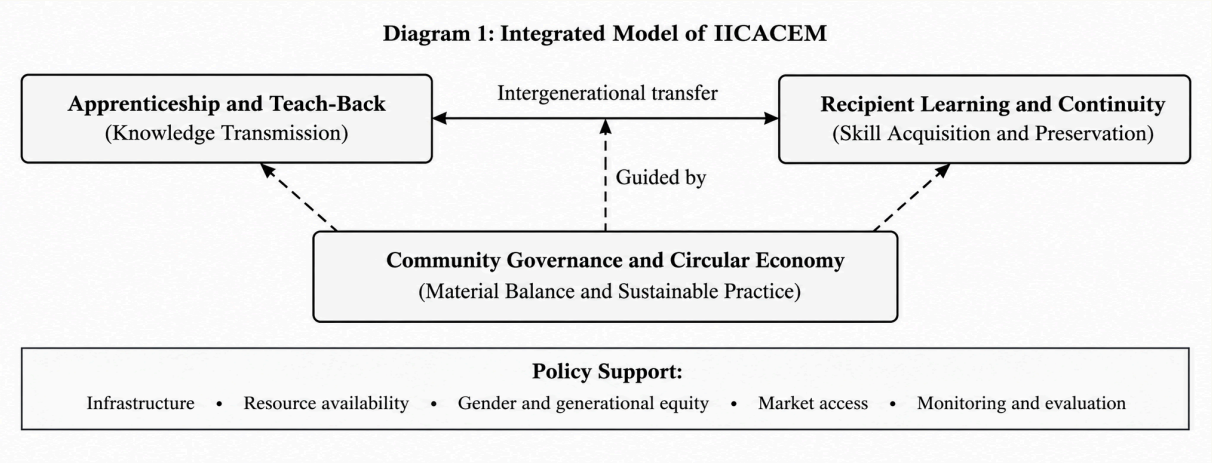


Figure 4. Possible Threats to Validity

Source: Author's critical synthesis of programme logic, contextual influences and inferential limitations; not an empirical causal estimate.

The author argues that some of the differences in the apprentices may be explained by different equilibrium challenges, and they might perceive the tasks differently due to differing cultural and contextual experiences.

Table 8. Validity threats, alternative interpretations and safeguards

Threat	Potential distortion	Analytical or procedural response
Baseline imbalance	Selection mistaken for programme benefit	Baseline-adjusted contrasts and pre-training profile
Cluster dependence	Overly narrow confidence intervals	Cluster-aware estimation and small-sample caution
Mentor variation	Mentor effect mistaken for curriculum effect	Mentor logs and appropriate random effects
Cross-group exposure	Contrast diluted or contaminated	Crossovers and outside learning recorded
Missing follow-up	Persistence exaggerated by selective retention	Attrition table and sensitivity analysis
Outcome multiplicity	Chance results emphasised selectively	Primary outcome and secondary family pre-specified
Community restrictions	Approved non-disclosure marked as poor competence	Permission-adjusted assessment rules

Source: Synthesis of methodologies used in Campbell et al. (2012), Hooper et al. (2018) and Eldridge et al. (2016) as well as UNESCO (n.d.-b).

4. ANALYTICAL FINDINGS

4.1. Heritage is Multifaceted

Continuity of a heritage can take several forms. The methodological synthesis under consideration recognises a central issue in the framework for evaluating heritage: failure to distinguish between forms of

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heritage. The case studies provided show that heritage can be in the form of tangible objects, training and technologies, as well as in practices and relations.

Transmission and renewal of heritage are key elements for protecting heritage. Thus, UNESCO's interpretation and definition of living heritage supports relational and functional approaches (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, n.d.-a).

The IICACEM matrix defines five domains: practical mastery, cultural interpretation, authorised teaching, material expression and continued engagement. The focus is on areas ofstrength and weakness in both; these are graphically illustrated without calculating an overall 'heritage' score. It follows that omissions due to the protection of knowledge should not be scored as weaknesses. Rather, they should be interpreted as positive evidence of protection of knowledge. This creates a greater accountability to the knowledge holders and stewards and a higher level of trust.

4.2. Craft mastery is independent of cultural authority

Performance can take many forms. The literature on Akwete weaving speaks to learning as weaving craft in conjunction with context and a social judgement (Chudi-Duru, 2025; Lave and Wenger 1991). Motor skills and performances can lead to the production of culturally acceptable objects. However, lack of motor skills and craft mastery does not negate cultural understanding. A purposeful integration of craft and cultural knowledge is essential to fully appreciate the ambits of each domain.

This results indicates that a system where the judgement of experts is prioritised over that of artisans can result in the marginalization of members of the community. When the community is authorised to decide the relevant requirements and standards, certain performance can be demonstrated. This does not always mean that higher level of documentation indicates a higher level of cultural relevance. Often non-disclosure of data is based on expertise and is particularly applicable when access to certain designs and methods are restricted (UNESCO, n.d., b).

4.3. Transmission involving multiple generations requires evidence beyond proof

The third finding is related to kinds of evidence. It is not always the case that observation of an apprenticeship session proves that learning has taken place. Demonstration of a learner's capacity to perform a skill independently gives evidence that the learner has acquired the skill, but this also does not prove that the skill can be transmitted. Teach-back is a stronger evidence of transmission, as it requires the learner to explain the skill to another individual. A delayed recipient of the teach-back is stronger evidence than a simple observation of teaching. Figure 3 shows that when certain prerequisites, or communities permit, evidence of transmission can be demonstrated in several ways (UNESCO, 2003, UNESCO, n.d.).

Evidence of recipient comprehension and retention does not always guarantees that a skill or knowledge is safe. Transmission of an skill or knowledge can be assured if the practice has continued over a long period of time. This depends on community, support and resources. Applying what has been learned to an ordinary and continuing communal activity serves as evidence of participation. Igbo apprenticeship demonstrates that it is also dependent on community, resources and opportunity (Iwara and Adeola, 2021; Nnonyelu et al., 2023).

4.4. Circumstances can separate livelihoods and heritage values

There are situations whereby the use of traditional techniques and materials results in a product that better aligns with the local needs and interests (and, consequently, is more environmentally responsible). This finding shows that the historical age of a craft technique or the natural source of the craft material is of little importance in determining environmental responsibility. There are other factors that may be of greater

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importance, such as a positive difference in the workshop in terms of the rate of rejection and the yield of craft materials (i.e., the usability and efficiency of the craft material), and to what extent a workshop is able to reuse craft materials. Workshop accounting may shed light on the negative aspects of environmental impacts, but there are limitations to what it can achieve. For these reasons, the judgement of the IICACEM governance unit is that a closing of the materials loop may create a false sense of environmental responsibility.

Different impacts of an economic nature can also arise. For example, the sale of a product can positively impact the production of that product and enable an individual to learn and obtain the materials to craft further products. Yet the intensive production of a product can ultimately lead to a loss of time to mentor. A product designed to last, for example, may require a greater craft material input and, therefore, be of greater environmental impact than a product that is intended to be of only short-term use. A trade-off of this sort cannot be measured in absolute terms.

4.5. Success is Situation Dependent

Lastly, recall that community governance and learning opportunities are causal and interpretive conditions, not optional ancillary conditions. Sensitivity to the authority of practitioners determines what tasks correction is allowed to undertake, its quality, what specialist tools and strategies are allowed, and the right to teach new audiences. Differences in student achievement may be attributed to differences in the learner, mentor, and/or material, as well as family situation, even when a uniform curriculum is employed. Therefore, when rival (or multiple) explanations for a given phenomenon occur, the IICACEM framework assumes (in contrast to other frameworks) that the cultural context of the situation is relevant (UNESCO, n.d.-b; Hooper et al., 2018).

Based on the above, the authors of IICACEM have demonstrated that, for the protective safeguarding of cultural heritage, it is beneficial to analytically disaggregate and recombine (in specified relations) the following: the possessors of traditional knowledge, the guardians of cultural heritage, mentors, tools, and the participation of bearers of that heritage. The article supports and justifies the framework and describes several illustrative cases. Effect size and/or reduction of waste could not be assessed, as that would be beyond the study at hand. Making evident the kinds of science that led to the various conclusions is the main objective of the synthesis.

5. CRITICAL DISCUSSION

5.1. Safeguarding practical capability

The focus of the analysis shifts to the ability to create craft objects and to recognise, evaluate and interpret them. This shift does not mean that museums, school exhibitions or archives are of no importance; usually, craft objects are represented there and should be. Rather, it concerns the kind of evidence these collections offer. It is true of most objects in a collection that there is no information as to whether craftspersons of the next generation have the means to learn how to make the object, how to resolve the problems connected to its production and how to participate in the process of learning. This is the practical dimension of safeguarding living heritage and requires an examination of the social frameworks that are instrumental in its reproduction (UNESCO, 2003; UNESCO, n.d.-a).

Among the different types of evidence that are relevant to this discussion, demonstration of craft competence by a member of the community is a lower evidence level than direct craft competence of a community member. In community-based projects, it is often assumed that a community's active participation and involvement in a programme constitutes continuity of a living tradition, i.e. that implementation of activities equals cultural preservation. It can, however, be misleading to equate cultural

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continuity and the preservation of living traditions with the number of activities implemented. On the other hand, durability of community involvement requires repeated participation and commitment over an extended period of time.

5.2. Circularity and cultural responsibility

Circular economy advocates call for more emphasis on the efficient use of materials, repair and reuse. However, critiques of the resource-loop approach remain valid. Better utilisation of inputs in a process can mask the presence of hazardous, unsustainable and unethical inputs. On the other hand, an improved process can lead to positive impacts in terms of sustainability. For example, using a less mass-intensive process can lead to positive impacts if the process results in a product with better and longer service life. The purpose of the impact assessment is to determine the legitimacy of processes without introducing subjective environmental impacts.

5.3 Youth competence, inclusion and apprenticeship

Numerous factors (gender, age, location, peacefulness, stability of the regional economy) can influence the possibility of accessing education and good livelihood, as well as participation in an apprenticeship programme. The opportunities, obstacles, and other factors affecting participation in apprenticeships can vary by age, gender and location. While data and reports on apprenticeships related to sustainability and peace can provide baseline data, further research is needed on how best to organise incentives and economic rewards for apprenticeships.

MOTIVATION AND OPPORTUNITY MUST BE PROPERLY DISTINGUISHED. Patrimonial commitment can disappear, but the inability to afford tools or instability in the market can make apprentices stop practising. Different people might benefit from business opportunities, though. Apprenticeship should provide answers as to who learns and who doesn't, who gets paid and who doesn't, who is recognised for his/her ideas and who maintains control over the evolution of the craft. Other issues related to the profession should be addressed as well. The study by Iwara and Adeola (2021) and Antai and his colleagues (2024) help expand these issues within the Igbo Apprenticeship Literature.

5.4. Cultural Heritage and Innovation

Creative endeavors do not threaten cultural heritage. The latest interpretation of the UNESCO Convention acknowledges that creative activities do occur. Other researchers also indicate that recent developments within the Akwete Cloth industry do confirm the presence of innovation. Cultural heritage and invention do not represent a binary paradigm of absolute and relative truths. "It may be culturally legitimate to adapt a given invention and integrate it into a product, especially if the change is beneficial and appreciated by the craftspeople" (Antai et al. 2024, pp. 55-56). In such a context, the goal of the legal framework should be to balance the right of innovation and the right to cultural heritage so as to enable the circulation of cultural goods and services.

According to the logic of the control paradox, co-governance of the creative sector would recognise that distributional choices, for example, favouring the circulation of protected designs, are consistent with boundary judgements.

5.5. Curriculum, policy and international significance

Where the article connects with educational policy is more in its structure of distinctions than in the broad-spectrum example of a craft curriculum. Design and architecture schools and colleges have design principles such as practitioner-led assessment, outcome-spaced learning, authorised teach-back, and bound material-flow in their toolkit. The way instruments and permits are constituted for weaving, basketry and

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carving, and learning clay manufacture, has to be addressed locally. Lumping one tradition into what have been described as ‘examples of Igbo craft’ makes the same errors as community-based safeguarding seek to address (Chudi-Duru, 2025; UNESCO, 2003).

UNESCO’s statement on cultural policy places heritage education in the area of human rights, empowerment and social conditions of creative work (2005). Education policy has to locate practitioners as knowers, provide secure and safe materials and locations, and promote repair and res Harvesting and gathering could be good examples where the intentions of policy and its effect are difficult to measure. Policymakers should not overstate the case for entrepreneurship, which creates tensions and unintended consequences, such as design monopolies.

5.6. Relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals

This model helps achieve SDG 4 by creating opportunities for the acquisition of skills and intergenerational learning. It achieves SDG 11 by means of community-based governance. It helps achieve SDG 12 by means of accounting and control of materials, and SDG 17 by means of partnering. These are examples of the ways and means by which goals can be achieved. The aim is to show the kinds of proof that can be brought to bear on assessing the merit of policies, such as evidence of mastery and teaching, practice and use of materials, and reciprocal governance, among others (UNESCO 2022, 2025).

Table 9. Sustainable Development Goal alignment and measurable research contribution

Goal	Evidence pathway in the framework	Limit on SDG claims
SDG 4: Quality education	Competence and approved teach-back; access to mentoring	Course completion does not establish system-wide access
SDG 11: Sustainable communities	Community control and continuing craft practice	Short follow-up cannot establish permanent safeguarding
SDG 12: Responsible production	Input/output records, repair and durability	Workshop circularity is not full life-cycle sustainability
SDG 17: Partnerships	Documented roles, decisions and reciprocal benefits	Partner numbers do not measure equitable power

Source: Interpretation of UNESCO (n.d.-a; 2022; 2025) and IICACEM measurement framework.

6. CONCLUSION

The case study describes how particular craft knowledge of the Igbo is preserved and maintained through the reproduction of social relations and opportunities to engage in practice. IICACEM takes a pluralist approach and offers this as an example of the concurrent operation of various elements, which it describes as craft skill, cultural knowledge, authorised transmission, and material obligation, within the context of cultural preservation. It also offers the example of youth cultural protection and preservation, which it describes as youth cultural continuation. Most importantly, it offers that various aspects be assessed using their own relevant evidence and through an interpretation endorsed by the respective cultural community.

The framework also identifies other trade-offs. There are the tensions, for example, between increased productivity and greater damage to the ecological system, and the export of cultural knowledge, and between short-term engagement and the development of long-lasting cultural practices. The model

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encourages the interpretation that the practice of responsible cultural preservation and the sustainability of the system are limited, and the practice may not alleviate significant challenges. The model encourages an interpretation that the practice may serve to maintain cultural knowledge and preserve heritage and living culture of a people.

Ethical Position, Research Scope and Data Availability

This integrative conceptual study synthesizes published literature and develops the IICACEM framework. Primary data from participant intervention programmes is absent. The views of participants are not solicited or reported. Estimated treatment effects are not reported.

Ethics: The framework outlines community control over culturally relevant data, fair attribution, and voluntary consent as integral to the ethical basis of the study. It is assumed that the participant recruitment process and the ethics review committee have approved the research. These processes and requirements will need to be satisfied for any research conducted by or with the community following the conceptual analysis.

Declarations: The responsible author will determine and provide other required information, such as competing interests, funding, authorship, and relevant policies of the sponsoring institution(s) according to the requirements of the targeted journal.

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