

TRADITIONAL POTTERY TECHNIQUES TOWARDS POVERTY ERADICATION IN EMUHAYA CONSTITUENCY, VIHIGA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Poverty level in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County, Kenya is 41% despite there is availability of a natural clay material in that environment for sustainability. This implies that pottery modeling technique opportunities has not effectively been explored to eradicate poverty in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. The purpose of this study was therefore; to find out the level of awareness on varied pottery modeling techniques used in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County to eradicate poverty in line with vision 2030. This study used descriptive survey. Data was collected from 30 potters using questionnaires. Snow ball sampling technique was used to select 30 potters. The findings revealed that the potters are only conversant with coiling technique. The potters hardly reached secondary schools and if they did they dropped out due to lack of school fees. They learned pottery from other older potters that lived within their environment. Majority of the potters were above 50 years implying that pottery skill is threatened to end in this region. Vihiga county government should role down funds to potters in Vihiga County through group training on varied pottery skills such as slab, ball, pinch, casting and throwing on the wheel in their pottery production in order to improve livelihood of the women potters.

Keywords: Pottery, Modeling techniques, Poverty, Empowerment, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Kenya, like all African countries, focused on poverty alleviation at independence from 1963. In recent years the Republic of Kenya (2013) takes note that social dimensions such as levels of access to education and sanitation are important in assessing people's quality of life. Being deprived of these essential services (Alkires and Robles, 2017) confirms that it deepens poverty and reduces people's well-being such as experienced in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. According to World Bank (2008) Kenya is a country of many contrasts, from its landscape to demographics, and more so it's social and economic inequalities. Forty two percent of its population of 44 million lives below the poverty line. Ngugi, Kipruto and Samoei (2013) observes that access to basic quality services such as education and sanitation, is often a luxury for many people in Kenya particularly in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. Large segments of the population in Emuhaya are poor and highly vulnerable to climatic, economic and social shocks. As such, progress on the Millennium Development Goals, especially in regards to social security, is mixed. That prompted the study on pottery modeling techniques towards poverty eradication in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. Vihiga county first integrated development plan 2013-2017 was meant to lead the county in sustainable utilization of available resources such as clay for rural development. Republic of Kenya (2013) pointed out that Vihiga County mission is to contribute to poverty reduction through the promotion of food security, water supply, rural employment and sustainable utilization of the rural resources such clay for pottery production.

Kenya enacted a new Constitution that specifically addresses longstanding historical, geographic and human rights violations that have hindered progressive development such as acquisition of different technique skills in pottery. Under the new dispensation, power was devolved from the National Government to 47 newly decentralized counties where Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County is one of them. The devolved government proposed during the making of the new constitution, is primarily geared towards achieving two main objectives. One is to involve the people in governance and secondly is to allow better supervision and implementation of policies at the grass root level which includes promotion of pottery production in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County to alleviate poverty in line with vision 2030. Pottery is one of the oldest human inventions, originating before the Neolithic period. Rado (1988) observes that pottery is made by forming a ceramic 'often clay' body into objects of a required shape and heating them to high temperatures in a kiln, which removes all the water from the clay, which induces reactions that lead to permanent changes including increasing their strength and hardening and setting their shape. A clay body can be decorated before or after firing; however, prior to some shaping processes, clay must be prepared. Digolo (1991) confirms that

kneading helps to ensure even moisture content throughout the clay body. Air trapped within the clay body needs to be removed. This is called de-airing and can be accomplished either by a machine called a vacuum pug or manually by wedging. Wedging can also help produce even moisture content. Once a clay body has been kneaded and de-aired or wedged, it is shaped by a variety of techniques. After shaping, it is dried and then fired. The question that arose was whether potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County were aware of the varied techniques used to model pots in order to eradicate poverty.

Yeneabat (2007) carried out a study in Ethiopia that explored the livelihood of potters in the Kachene neighborhood, in Addis Ababa. It focused on how they ensure their livelihood by the traditional pottery production knowledge, market supply and demand for traditional pottery, business environment, pottery production contribution to family, and pottery production using a house as a production unit. In depth interviews with 40 women potters and direct observations were the major sources of data. The 40 women were purposively selected from two women potters association. Producing pottery within their workshop and from two groups of potters making pots using their homes was the production unit. The research indicated that potters working in associations had better working environment and marketing opportunities than those producing in the home environment. The current study was conducted because these women potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County are not involved in groups as revealed that potters in groups do better and therefore this is a factor contributing to poverty in this region.

According to William, Barnett and Hoopes (1985) the invention of the potter's wheel in Mesopotamia sometime between 6000 and 4000 BC revolutionized pottery production. Newer kiln designs could fire wares to 1,050 °C to 1,200 °C which enabled new possibilities and new preparation of clays. Production was now carried out by small groups of potters for small cities, rather than individuals making wares for a family. The shapes and range of uses for ceramics and pottery expanded beyond simple vessels to store and carry to specialized cooking utensils, pot stands and rat traps. Robinson (2001) says creative achievement does not always require freedom from constraints or a blank page. The purpose of generative activity in creative thinking is to find an alternative to what has become conventional or routine or to expand the possibilities of a situation such as routine way of pottery production in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. Starko (2005) states that when creating art, creative process can involve metaphorical thinking, flexibility and visualization. Metaphorical thinking allows the individual to find parallels between seemingly unlike ideas, take ideas from one context and represent the idea effectively in a new context. Flexibility denotes the ability to look at a situation from many points of view or to generate many categories of responses which prompted the current study to find out techniques used by potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. William *et al* (1985)

further confirms that with developed new organizations and political forms, pottery became more elaborate and varied. Some wares were made using moulds, allowing for increased production for the needs of the growing populations. Glazing was commonly used and pottery was more decorated. For Poverty to be eradicated in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County the potters need to incorporate new varied technologies than what they have been using before as revealed in the study above. The question that arose was whether the potters were aware of other techniques used in pottery production?

In Kenya the county Government constitutes of a county assembly and county executive whose responsibilities includes exercising the powers of enacting laws at the county level, acting as an oversight instrument on the county executive, approval of plans and policies for smooth operation and management of resources and county institutions such as pottery skill training on new innovations in techniques for improved productivity in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. This ensures that membership is well taken care of through facilitation of Funds and training in pottery areas of varied technique skill acquisition. Oparanya (2012) representing Kenya in a Conference in London Investment summit pointed out that the Kenya Vision 2030 is the country's long term development blueprint which aims to create a globally competitive and prosperous country providing a high quality of life for all its citizens which can be achieved through technique skills such as ball, coil, pinch, throwing and casting in clay. The Vision 2030 development process was launched by H.E. President Mwai Kibaki on October 30th 2006. A number of provincial consultative forums were also held. The objective of the consultations was to provide in-depth understanding of the country's development problems such as poverty and the necessary strategies to achieve the 2030 results, by the people involved in the implementation of Vision 2030. The report says poverty reduction strategies targeting poor areas must address issues and conditions of economic and social development that affect the whole area such as found in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County where people live below poverty line. The report says counties that have a low poverty incidence but a very high poverty contribution require poverty reduction efforts that target poor people directly through skills such as pottery and this prompted the study on Pottery in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County.

Vihiga County is the poorest of the 47 counties in Kenya. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning's report, 'Socio-Economic Atlas of Kenya' — which is based on the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census data — says Vihiga County contributes 4.8 per cent to national poverty. The county's poverty incidence stands at 41 per cent. More than 809,500 of its people live below the poverty line. This level of poverty has implications on the county's efforts in development since no meaningful development can take place including pottery production with many techniques. The causes of poverty are diverse and include lack of capital to invest, high

population, un-economical land units, high dependency syndrome, HIV/AIDS, cultural practices, early marriages, high school dropouts and poor implementation of pro-poor projects. To address the poverty problem, measures such as modern agricultural practices and horticultural crops cultivation, more techniques in pottery production among other things should be put in place. There are however a number of NGOs and CBOs that are assisting the local community in establishing with sustainable income generating activities. The government is also providing relief food to those who cannot afford meals. Devolved funds such as Constituency Development Fund, Women Enterprise Development Fund and Youth Enterprise Development Fund have been used to put up projects and programmes aimed at uplifting the living standards of the people. Whether these programmes have an impact on traditional pottery production towards poverty eradication is the question this study addressed but focussing on awareness of varied techniques. The study was guided by creative problem solving theory of Parnes & Osborn (1959). Their approach is a 4-step creative problem solving model that focused on using creativity in advertising. Understanding the problem, generating ideas, Planning for action and finally acceptance finding. The problem in this study was whether the women potters were using varied techniques in pottery. The ideas to be adopted were the use of varied techniques in their creativity for pottery production. Planning for action involves implementation of the recommendations based on the findings of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The level of Awareness on Varied Techniques for Pottery.

Assan, Caminade, Rances and Obeng (2009) examined the changing livelihood strategies for sustainability. Livelihood diversification as a poverty reduction strategy has been argued to result in improved well-being. According to Du Pissani (1987) 'sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Though the study looked at poverty, issues of skills in pottery as a way of empowering the poor was not handled which the current study researched on. Voliotis, Bezantakos, Giamarelou, Valenti, Kumar and Biskos (2014) points out that Traditional pottery manufacturing involves firing of the ceramics in kilns, a process that leads to high concentrations of airborne particles that are harmful to human health. The findings provided new information for understanding the health impacts of traditional pottery manufacturing. The study above concentrated on health impact but the current study found out that potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County are limited in pottery technique skill.

The study employed descriptive survey design. According to Kothare (2003), descriptive survey focuses on determining the status of a defined population with respect to certain

variables. Its primary advantage is that one can gather a great amount of data within a short period of time (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 1996). Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County was chosen because compared to other regions in Western Kenya poverty index is higher yet pottery production is being done. The study population consisted of 30 women potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. Vihiga County borders Nandi County to the east, Kakamega County to the north, Siaya County to the west and Kisumu County to the south. The County is made up of five constituencies / sub-counties namely Luanda, Emuhaya, Hamisi, Sabatia and Vihiga. Vihiga County lies between longitudes 34 o30' and 35o 0' E, and latitudes 0 o and 0 o15' N. The county covers a total area of 531.0 Km². The equator cuts across the southern part of the county. The county is located on the western region of Kenya, in the Lake Victoria Basin. Its altitude ranges between 1,300 m and 1,800 m above sea level and slopes gently from west to east.

METHODOLOGY

This research applied descriptive research design. Snow ball sampling technique was used to select 30 potters. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observe that the initial subjects with the desired characteristics are identified using purposive sampling technique. The few identified subjects name others that they know have the required characteristics until the researcher gets the number of cases required. Snowball sampling technique is most appropriate because it enabled easy access to potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. A pilot study with 5 potters from the county was done. Subjects used for piloting were excluded from the final study to avoid response set, distortion of data and subjectivity of responses. Data collection instrument was a questionnaire. Collected data was subject to descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of Awareness on Pottery Techniques

The objective of this study was to find out awareness of pottery techniques towards poverty eradication. The results obtained are as shown in table (1). One of the objectives of Vision 2030 is to eradicate poverty. An open ended questionnaire was given to 30 women potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County who were to name techniques used in pottery production.

Table 1: Pottery Techniques in Pottery Production

Women Potters Frequency	N=30	100%
0-1 Technique	27	90%
2-3 Techniques	3	10%
Above 4	0	none

Table (1) shows that 90% woman potters identified one pottery techniques that exist in pottery making. The study revealed that 10% women potters identified 2-3 technique used in Pottery production. None of the potters could identify more than four techniques used in pottery production.

Table 2: Potters Education Level

Frequency	N=30	100%
Primary Level	25	83%
Secondary Level	5	17%
University	0	none

Table (2) shows that 83% women potters went to school up to primary level and 5% women potters went to secondary level. None of the women potters went beyond secondary level.

Table 3: Age of Women Potters in Emuhaya

Frequency	N=30	100%
18-30 years	0	none
31-40 years	0	none
41-50 years	1	3%
Above 50years	29	97%

Table (3) indicates that 97% women potters were above 50 years. Only one woman was above 40 years. Table (1) shows that many potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County were not aware of the many techniques that could be used in pottery production. This could be attributed to their level of education because table (2) revealed that majority of women potters dropped out at primary level. Education is typically seen as a means of improving people's welfare. Ngugi *et al* (2013) found out that a total of 20% of Vihiga County residents have a secondary level of education or above. Sabatia constituency which neighbours Vihiga has the highest share of residents with a secondary level of education or above at 23%. Emuhaya constituency has the lowest share of residents with a secondary level of education or above. This confirms the

findings revealed on women potters in Emuhaya who dropped out in primary schools. A total of 63% of Vihiga County residents have a primary level of education only. Emuhaya constituency has the highest share of residents with a primary level of education only at 64%. From the statistics given by Ngugi *et al* (2013) Vihiga County have a smaller percentage of secondary education achievers as majority were confirmed to drop out in Primary school. Studies indicate that inequality declines as the average level of educational attainment increases, with secondary education producing the greatest payoff, especially for women (Cornia and Court, 2001). Education is therefore typically viewed as a powerful factor in leveling the field of opportunity as it provides individuals with the capacity to obtain a higher income and standard of living such as through pottery with varied techniques. By acquiring technical or professional skills such as in pottery production, people increase their chances of obtaining decent and better-paying jobs hence achieve empowerment. Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation such as acquisition of many techniques for quality pottery production (Mahalinga, 2014). Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. Empowerment allows individuals to reach their full potential, to improve their social participation and to believe in their own capabilities. Bhat (2015) in his research on the role of education in the empowerment observed that women education can play a very important role in the development of the country such as through pottery production. According Hughes (2009) the contemporary production of pottery for global ethnic art markets set in motion a series of economic and social transformations that completely changed the Chihuahuan community of Mata Ortíz. Today, there are women of talent and expertise represented at every level of pottery execution and quality along the market continuum. Table 3 indicated that many women potters in Emuhaya Constituency Vihiga County were above 50 years. This implies that with time, we shall not have pottery technique skills utilized in this region. Lack of adequate skills such as information on other techniques is bound to affect the growth of pottery in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County now that majority of the potters are above 50years.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were reached based on the stated objective: To establish the awareness on pottery techniques used by women potters in Emuhaya Constituency, Vihiga County. The low level of education could not widen their horizon to know of the other techniques. Many of the women potters were above 50 years hence such important skills are

likely to diminish in Emuhaya hence the eradication of poverty by 2030 may take long to be achieved.

Based on these findings the following recommendations were made: The County Government of Vihiga should organize workshops to equip the potters with other techniques of pottery such as use of ball, slab, throwing on the wheel and casting in order to remain relevant for sustainability. The potters should be trained in both use of manual and electric wheel for production of quality and original pottery. Casting will enable production of identical pottery production. The pottery should be trained on use of glaze in order to compete favorably with the current market. Ball and slab technique will be good for variety. The county should incorporate the youth, source for funding to facilitate training of youth in pottery work to eradicate poverty and retain pottery skills

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