

Presentation



Product Development training as a tool for empowerment in crafts: A focus on training initiatives in pottery factories in the North West Province. I.B. Mahlangu

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Introduction

“...data is not knowledge,...The value of culture cannot be adequately expressed in terms of statistics”
(Holden, J. 2004: 21)

General background

- The **rise of the creative economy/industry** (globally) **outperforming the services industry (2-1) and more than 4 times the manufacturing industry** (Joffe & Newton, 2007)
- Governments **attempt to use the industry to address challenges – at national, provincial and local level** – such as inequality, out-migration, geographic segregation, unemployment, sluggish economic growth and poverty
- Lack of attaining formal qualifications reduces access to formal employment, particularly in impoverished communities, thus **government drive for entrepreneurship**. The craft sector has the potential to “contribute to economic development and also social objectives such as the empowerment of women, poverty alleviation and black economic empowerment (Joffe & Newton, 2007: 36)

Advantages of craft production

- The possibility to produce in **confined spaces**
- Very **little tools required**
- Low requirements** for production makes it possible in even the most remote of areas
- Indigenous practice** carried over from generation to generation, particularly in marginalised communities
- In addition to its potential for job creation through enterprise ventures, crafts production has the potential to **create a vibrant culture** that **adds value to** the overall **tourism experience** of a particular region

Research aims:

- To examine how pottery factories in the North West province were conceived & how beneficiaries were selected and trained by Mintek for craft production
- In particular, I assessed whether Mintek's training has led to the empowerment of beneficiaries – empowerment understood in terms of the beneficiaries ability to earn income, create jobs, economically sustain livelihoods particularly by their ability to integrate concepts, ideas and actions.

Literature:

- I frame the argument, in general, on Grobler and, in particular, Risatti's craft theory which stresses three main areas:

1. the **quality of thought** in the making of crafts objects – design which enables innovation and diversification
2. **Technical manual skills** – dexterity, and;
3. **Creative technical manual skills** which involve the process of selecting **relevant materials** to **support the form and function** of objects

- This offers a comprehensive approach that takes into account factors such as size, weight, shape and form/practicality laws

Literature continued:

• I also draws on **Bradshaw's (2006) recommended strategies of identifying the type of poverty and overcoming it.** The 5 categories are:

1. Poverty caused by deficiencies – individuals responsible for their own problems
2. Cultural belief systems that support sub-cultures of poverty – the belief that poverty is transmitted by sets of cultural beliefs
3. Economical, political, social distortions or discrimination – limiting opportunities and resources
4. Geographic disparities – certain areas lacking objective resources needed to generate wellbeing and people lacking the power to claim redistribution
5. Cumulative & cyclical interdependencies – individual situations and community resources as mutually interdependent

Literature continued:

- And **empowerment theories** as outlined by Ife, Ramphele, Borrup and Boyte who perceive empowerment to be a process of increasing the power of the disadvantaged by employing one of four categories of allowing people to take power into their own hands – as opposed to treating them as empty receptors of charity.
 1. Pluralist perspective – power relative to democracy
 2. Elite perspective – a particular group having more influence
 3. Structured perspective – importance of structural inequality
 4. Post-structural perspective – power as constructed – preference on education as opposed to action

About Mintek

- In 2002 Mintek established its small scale mining and beneficiation (**SSMB**) programme aimed at **using craft production for socio-economic advancement of marginalized communities**, in pottery the programme is called Timbita Ceramic Incubator
- It is said to **integrate traditional craft skills with technology and contemporary pottery making techniques, enabling access to resources, financial capital and craft skills development**
- Mintek was originally established as a Minerals research laboratory by the government of South Africa in 1934. Today Mintek is South Africa's national mineral research organization and specializes in minerals processing, extracting metallurgy and related areas.

About Mintek continued

- Timbita aims to offer **product development training & market support** to ensure sustainable livelihoods **for poor rural communities** benefiting from the programme that examines opportunities for rural areas **without “more exciting minerals such as gold and diamond in their immediate areas”** (SSMB brochure, 2013)
- Often these minerals are **sand and clay**, and resources can be harnessed through Timbita for the benefit of local communities enabling them to **make sellable craft products**

About the case study

•Semphete pottery has been selected as my case study of choice. The beneficiaries, from an organisation called Disabled People of South Africa through the Department of Social Development, were informed by the Department of Basic Education to elect themselves, to make up a group of 10 members to form the pottery, receive training and sell crafts. Why Semphete?:

1. Semphete operates on the outskirts of the North West in the most isolated area some **150kms away from the nearest town of Vryburg and over 600kms from Johannesburg where Mintek is based** – isolation from intended mainstream markets and resources
2. All the beneficiaries have a **disability disorder – what Ife (1996) categorises as an “other disadvantage”**
3. They mostly have **neither prior training nor direct interaction with markets outside their locality**

Statistics

- In North West, Timbita received funding from the Department of Educations' Adult Basic Education and Training directorate. **Within a decade, Timbita has:**
- Helped set up and provided training for **8 pottery factories** in the North West, the highest in any province;
- A total of **86 learners graduated** and received certificates in NQF level 2 Craft production (Minteks' Annual Report, 2011: 33);

Statistics continued

- Of the 8 factories, **only 4 are still in operation**, this despite the initial promise to “**compete favorably in mass and export markets**” (Minteks’ Annual Report, 2003: 32);
- **None of the factories has gained entry or sustained participation in markets outside their local communities;**
- **Three of the four factories that are still in operation are made up of members with disability disorders**

5 key questions

- Since the training, were the beneficiaries able to innovate and independently enhance existing and develop new products for a specific target market?
- Are the products relevant to the intended markets, and are beneficiaries able to follow through orders?
- Were beneficiaries able to expand and penetrate new markets as explained by Goodwin (2005) in his 3 expansion strategies – product development, market development and diversification

5 key questions continued

- Have the factories created new jobs, or collapsed?
Are they still dependent on government support, if so then to what extent?
- Are the factories able to sustain the livelihoods of the beneficiaries?

Key factors

- Central issues that affect Timbita's quest to empower the beneficiaries identified in the research:
 1. Timbita's own organizational structure and trainers (how this directed the selection of beneficiaries and partnering organizations) – **Stewart's (1994) power dynamics – expert, positional and resource power.**
 2. The training programme content on product and product development
 3. The training programme content on marketing and market access

Findings

- Mintek's Strategic approach
 1. Bradshaw's (2006) Geographic Disparities strategy that aimed to redistribute resources – emphasis on redistribution & access to market over impact on skills needed to generate human capital.
 2. Empowerment, job creation & economic development as buzzwords designed to enable & sustain funding for unsustainable projects?
 3. Individual situations and community resources as mutually dependent (Bradshaw, 2006).
 4. Success of such initiatives dependent on more than policy, partnership, organisational structure & programme content, also dependent on the quality of programme delivery.

Findings

- Trainers

1. By looking at Stewart's (1994) observation on allowing people to take power into their own hands – organisational structure used role power with marketing division dictating products made (corporate gifts) & trainers using positional power to get through the programme (focus of training).
2. Reporting on poverty alleviation often undertaken using qualitative data and bottom line monthly income.

Stipend (R1200) + R300 from sales per member = R1500 reported on in Mintek's annual report for a premature exit strategy

- DACST (1998: 7) research in an undisclosed province reporting that crafters can earn up to R450

Findings

- Mintek budget
- 46% (R144k) allocated for stipends, 54% (R156k) used for resources, training and management fee.
- This budget meant limited time to deliver the programme and distance meant insufficient hours to cover the recommended 720 core hours for obtaining a SAQA NQF level to certificate in craft production.
- Representation at market platforms outside beneficiaries localities & promotion of Mintek services over respective pottery factories.

Findings

- Case study
- Semphete survived because of the pride the beneficiaries have in being the only pottery in the area & supplementary income for their disability in the form of social grants
- DoE appointed a new service provider for training of new members at Semphete – old members lack the power to train or commission training for new members
- Members have left because of lack of income since stipend is no longer available and not because of upward mobility
- Also they produced import substitutes for the lower consumer market in their locality – their isolation is an advantage in the form of a sustainable market

Findings

- Case study
- Outsourcing of mould manufacturing.
- A blanket approach meant electric kilns for Semphete despite the challenge with electricity, lack of skilled 3phase electrician in the area and overall cost of running electric kilns (R950pm).
- Slip casting as a core skill of production because of lack of sufficient time due to self inflicted budget constraints – beneficiaries as workmen not craftsmen (Risatti, 2007).
- Exhibitions such as the Women in Mining suggesting that pop up markets fail to sustain consistent income, expose products to be out-dated (reached their life cycle) and lack quality.
- Factories failed to compete favourably in mass-export markets

Findings

- Answers to the 5 key questions
 1. The beneficiaries are unable to innovate and develop new products.
 2. Unable to expand their markets.
 3. Remain in what Goodwin (2005) calls the low market penetration – low risk low gain.
 4. Many have collapsed and few new jobs have been created, the beneficiaries are dependent on state funding such as social grants to substitute a lack of income.
 5. Failed to support livelihoods of beneficiaries economically.

Examples of objects (Semphete)



Examples of objects (markets)



End of presentation



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Thank You