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## **Non-Western Teaching and Learning Processes: Adult education Among Women Artists of Kenya's Luo community.**

Akinyi Wadende

### Abstract

The world over, educators are increasingly expected to serve learners with multiple differentiating conditions, functions of among other things, cultural orientations, modern times, and trends. Additionally, there is increased information exchange in the world due to population migration and the ever increasing access to internet services for hitherto inaccessible Geographical regions and related populations. Internet access has allowed online class attendance and brought needed educational services to learners irrespective of their physical locations around the world. All the above dynamics increase college students' diversity when added to the current economic recession felt in the world and which has seen many people lose their jobs and decide to re-enter educational programs to adapt their skills to the needs of the prevailing job market. Because of this increased diversity in the student constituency, the import of understanding and enriching practice with insight from non-Western perspectives of teaching and learning has never been more essential. This empirical study among indigenous Luo women artists of Western Kenya focused on the teaching and learning processes utilized in the art forms of pottery, basketry, and indigenous architecture. The overarching instrument of study data collection was a form of participant observation adapted to the Luo community's epistemological structures. This study documented the system of sustainable indigenous adult education, explored and described the local terminologies associated with this education within the meta-language of established adult educational studies and practices, and reported the processes involved in this education in a way as to be reproducible in a similar setting. The main objective of the study was to explore the anti-colonial aspects of these indigenous art educational processes. This exploration was in as far as the educational processes gave the study participants skills that enabled them to engage the social, political, economical, spiritual, and medical hurdles facing the community in their capacity as indigenous practitioners. This study found out, among other things that the participants utilized experiential learning strategies that include learning by doing, imitating, and scaffolding. Participants also depended on other collective members as important support network for learning the individual art form and living as expected by the community.

**Introduction:** That the world indeed is a "global village" is also apparent from the diversity commonly inherent in student populations in many universities in the world. Much of this diversity may be linked to the enhanced and speedy information exchange in the world that has been made possible by, among other things, the expansion of internet access and increased migrations of people across Geographical borders. The preceding reasons and others have resulted in an ever widening reservoir of alternative pursuits in life for people all over the world. Education is one field that has been intensely impacted by these current trends in the world, in both instructional content and delivery. The awareness that not all populations in the world teach and learn the same way has reinforced the need to explore Non-Western Teaching and learning processes. The results of such an exploration would continue to expand the Western developed

theories of teaching and learning and also enrich educators practice. This study, among indigenous Luo women artists of western Kenya grouped in a twenty five member collective they christened *Bang' jomariiek* (after the wise ones), hoped to contribute Non-Western adult teaching and learning processes utilized in the production of pottery, basketry, and indigenous architecture, the latter of which the participants referred to as *muono*. They referred to their expressive culture as *chwuech*.

An adapted form of participant observation was the main instrument of data collection in this study. This adapted form of participant observation was supported by equally adapted forms of other conventional data collection instruments namely; semi-structured interviews, journaling, and photo voice. My adaptation of these instruments took the form of making them more useful in collecting data from the study context by molding them within the epistemological structures in the Luo community and especially the family architecture concept referred to as *Kit dak*. This is a concept that defines the strict gender lines in which family members operate and relate. This epistemological structure allows for both collective and individual mixed gender, and gender specific spaces in the family. The effort I took to adapt the study's data collection instruments resulted from the reality that such instruments are often developed in Western Institutions to collect data in Western research contexts. Such instruments would thus be unable to deliver authentic data if utilized in their default forms in Non-Western research contexts.

This study among *Bang' jomariiek* collective found out, including other things, that the artists used experiential teaching and learning strategies. Educational activities also involved scaffolding, modeling, cooperative learning, activation of prior knowledge, and approximation. Song, sayings, proverbs, and spirituality also facilitated learning in this site. The experience of participating in the educational activities was enhanced by the supportive community created by collective members as they helped each other in their tasks. In the *Bang' jomariiek* collective, the women taught, learnt and got involved in more that the art forms because the educational activities allowed them the opportunity to gain skills and be indigenous experts in diverse fields such as medicine, economy, politics, agriculture, just to mention a few areas.

**Population:** The study site was in Western Kenya and among the Luo ethnic community. The Luo are the fourth largest ethnic community in Kenya according to the population census completed in 2010. The Luo traditional lands lie at the Kenyan shores of East Africa's Lake Victoria. The Luo have a rich visual culture that includes, among many others skills, the production and decoration of gourds, architecture, metal work, and pottery (Ochola-Ayayo, 1980 and Dietler & Herbich, 1989). This study confined itself to investigating the teaching and learning processes associated with basketry, pottery, and *muono*. My focus on the forms was because I am more familiar with groups of Luo women who involve themselves in the production of these art forms for both income generation and aesthetics. I have also, as a child, lived among such Luo artists and involved myself in the production of some aspects of pottery, basketry and *muono*.

Consequently, this study was sited among the twenty five member *Bang' jomariiesk* women collective, most of whose members I am familiar with from having related with them either as artists or in other forums in the community. *Bang' jomariiek* is a collective modeled on the pre-colonial and indigenous design of such groups into which all women in the community were welcome. The women's socio-economic status, educational levels, spiritual, and cultural orientations and any such measures do not pose impediments to their decisions to join the collective. Once the women decide to register in the collective, they are expected to learn and

contribute to its life in any way they are able. For example, the women who are unable to make the registration fees in cash are allowed to pay in kind by offering labor or even their farm's produce. Since the collective existed and endeavored to improve the lives of the members, everyone in it is expected to share any advantageous information that they had, with others so that collective members' lives are improved in all ways possible, through their participation in the educational program.

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to present the procedure and proceedings of an instructional research into the teaching and learning among women artists, members of *Bang' jomariiek* collective of the Luo community of Western Kenya. The purposes of the research were threefold. First, it sought to document a system of indigenous adult education that has proved sustainable among Luo women from generation to generation. Second, it attempted to examine, document, and contextualize the local terminologies of an indigenous African form of adult education, within the meta-language of scholarly adult educational studies and practices. Third, it reported the entire process through which the research unfolded, in a systematic form that rendered it reproducible in a similar setting. The principal objective of the study was to document the process through which women empower themselves through adult education, by using expressive forms of creativity as metaphors for resistance, regeneration, and survival.

**Theoretical framework:** I carefully studied the theories of adult education in the process of selecting suitable tools for this research. A good portion of the reflective time given to this project elaborated on the varieties of possibilities, before I adopted two main theoretical angles, namely (post)feminist and post colonial perspectives in adult education. The literature in this framework proposed an inclusive and decolonizing research. The study methods fostered by these theories also allowed for the creation of a polyvocal context that enables the participants and researcher to contribute to the research process in a comfortable and fruitful manner. In all these theoretical schools of thought, an ideal research study was one guided by a give and take relationship in which both the researcher and the participants gained, in some way, from the study (Dueli-Klein, 1979; Marker, 2003; Menzies, 2001; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; and Weiler, 1988). I would gain from the chance to advance my academic and research agenda while I would affirm the importance of the art production and educational activities of the collective by the very act of submitting to learn them and share with collective members any relevant insight I had from my many years in formal educational institutions. Below I summarize the gist of these theories that were relevant to this study.

Feminist theories postulate fairness in relations between the females and males in society. Some critical feminists take the position that both men and women play an important role in the community, yet many times only men's contributions get acknowledged. This is a disservice to the women who contribute to the well-being of the whole (hooks, 1989). Some post-colonial feminists focus on underserved members of the community, most of whom are women. These feminists postulate that to serve the interests of such members of society, it is important to appreciate the impacts of the various social dynamics in their lived realities. Mohanty (2003) envisions a world where everyone can lead a sustainable, secure, healthy, and dignified life full of alternatives and where the feminist movement appreciates that people's lives are impacted by various social conditions. Indeed, the four paradigms of post-colonial feminist research as explored by Moreton-Robinson (2000) are; concern with less privileged women; or aim to challenge production of knowledge by the powerful; giving participants' voice; and advocating for changes in the status quo. Chikwenye Ogunyemi (Arndt, 2000) observed that African

women have many issues to deal with at any one time, some of which their Western counterparts might not have to grapple with. Ogunyemi noted that, apart from their sexuality, African women are impacted by their race; culture; the economy; interethnic skirmishes; ethnic cleansing; religious fundamentalism; gerontocracy; and even “in-lawism” (Arndt, 2000). The African woman perseveres to preserve the wholeness of the community, even when this preservation takes the form of sustaining the production of monetarily devalued creative items such as pots (Dietler & Herbich, 1989) in hard economic times. For this study, I appreciated the feminist characterization of women as persevering and focusing on the preservation of wholeness in the community.

In the nineteenth century most areas of the world felt the brunt of European imperialism. Although most of these areas are now free of direct domination, they still feel its effects upon the community through the policies enacted during that time. Post-colonial theory examines and describes the nature and impact of inherited power relations (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000 and Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). In the case of Kenya, some policies conceived by the colonists created a power imbalance among men and women. (An example is the registration of clan land to individual men and thus shifting the source of usufruct rights for women from the clan to individual men). The men were also the first to be given a semi-formal education and be deployed away from their homes in the administrative centers and settler farms. This had the effect of interfering with the traditional division of labor, as women took up the work left by the newly employed men. These moves by the colonists contributed to the active disadvantage of women which has continued to be felt in the current community despite the passage of time.

There are various theories, models and concepts that attempt to explain how adults learn. Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1991, 2000) described the transformative experience of adult learning. These scholars and others believe that people can be profoundly changed through learning when their horizons are stretched by the new knowledge they interact with. Andragogy, as developed by Malcolm Knowles (1980), suggests that adults are self-motivated to learn what is most meaningful and useful for them at a certain moment in time. Adults also learn meaningful things that they can put in practice, such as calculations they can use in the grocery store or even practical agricultural methods. Lave (1988) noted that for adults, learning is a reoccurring process of interacting with their social situations. This is what is referred to as ‘situated cognition’ (Lave, 1996). Adults learn better with a supporting network of fellow learners and teachers. These constitute their community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991 and Wenger, 1998).

A recent consideration in adult learning theory is that of how people learn in Non-Western environments (Merriam & Kim, 2008). An examination of non-Western learning processes could improve delivery of educational programs for adults, especially in the global village. Any class of adults could have people from different parts of the world and for whom Western ways of teaching and learning may be disorienting. One Non-Western educational philosophy is African indigenous education philosophy which is anchored in tenets some of which compliment the theories of adult learning as developed by Western scholarship. Writing about adult learning in a Non-Western context of rural Senegal, Diouf, Sheckley, and Kehrhahn (2000) suggested the importance of weaving educational programs into the socio-cultural fabric of the community. The authors explored how cultural traditions impinged on the adult teaching and learning spaces in the community and came to the conclusion that adult learning programs that adapted to salient aspects in the socio-cultural fabric of host communities, enjoyed enhanced

chances of success in these community settings. African indigenous teaching and learning processes were intimately embedded in the essence of the community in which they were found. Some African indigenous education philosophical tenets are holism, communalism, perennialism, functionalism, and preparationalism (Sifuna, 1990).

Holism refers to the teaching and learning process that involves all the faculties of a person. This is an aspect of adult education that is gaining currency in Western scholarship, as described by Merriam & Kim (2008). Merriam (2008, p. 3) notes: 'Learning is a holistic activity involving the mind, body, and spirit. It is also a collective activity, in that learning is done with the community for the benefit of the community.' Communalism recognizes that teaching and learning is a process that enhances the community, both in the sense of supporting a community of learners and teaching to promote cohesion in the community, between one and the other. This other could be another person, the environment, spirits, or even the greater whole, among other things (Ntseane, 2006). It is thus the responsibility of all community members to involve themselves in educational activities. Indigenous African education was perennial because it was steeped in the culture of the community and passed the traditional cultural values from generation to generation. Critical reverence of old ways of knowing ensured the successful integration of new perspectives of knowledge into the community's knowledge system. New ways of knowing and doing would be adapted to fit in with the old ways as the needs of the community expanded. The functionalism tenet of African indigenous education refers to the usefulness of what is taught and learnt in the community. The expectation is that the educated would know the ways of the community. Knowing the ways of the community ensured that the educated led successful lives, by community standards. The tenet preparationalism describes the focus of African indigenous education on preparing learners to live successfully in the community. This tenet came about in recognition of the fact that all make the community and every member needs to live in it successfully to avoid feelings of discontentment and subsequent evils. The teaching and learning process involves content that deals directly with issues that the learner has to deal with daily in the community (Sifuna, 1990; Kenyatta, 1965 and Maathai, 2006).

**Design:** Although the Luo have a rich visual culture that includes the production and decoration of gourds, architecture, metal work (Ochola-Ayayo, 1980), I confined myself to examining the teaching and learning processes associated with basketry, pottery, and *muono*. To satisfy this study's range of aims, purposes, and objectives, I carried out research among the *Bang jomariiek* women, a group already known locally as practitioners of *chwuech*. *Chwuech* is a wide-ranging Luo indigenous term that the artists apply in reference to activities including the creative process, the aesthetic reflections, social intervention, and the art educational structure of their expressive cultures. This group practices a range of art forms including a systematic form of indigenous adult art education. My familiarity with the art forms was one of the principle considerations for choosing this group. I knew the forms as a child who grew up in the same geographical region with these women. But, I also decided to study with them because of their use of sustainable working materials, which are all sourced locally in their environments. Their use of sustainable mediums of expression, which multiplies the efficiency of their sustainable art educational practices, makes them perfect as a model group for this study into sustainable feminist art education among adults in Africa.

Following from the ethnographic nature of this study and the pragmatic orientations of the theories that form its base, I chose participant observation, which I particularly adapted into

the concept of *kit dak* in the Luo family architecture, as the main instrument for collecting data. *Kit dak* is a concept that defines the architecture of the Luo family in which members operate in gender lines that allow for both individual and communal spaces. I wished to fit the study into the local epistemologies and, by so doing, enhance its success among members of the *Bang' jomariiek* women group. Wenger (1999) noted that information gathered when a researcher is a participant in their own study is more comprehensive and wholesome. The wholesomeness of this information is only possible through consideration of the multidimensionality of the phenomenon under study. Similarly, postcolonial scholars, such as Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and Fitzgerald (2010), suggest the importance of community relationships and the need to adapt any study's processes into the already existing structures in the community in order to enhance the study's success.

I utilized open-ended semi-structured interviews to collect demographic information from six women participants. The six women who took the open-ended semi-structured interviews represented approximately 20% of the study participants. I left the responsibility of who took the interview to the groups' members, because I was not fully aware of the power dynamics that guide members' protocol in the collective. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and other postcolonial theorists suggest the prudence of using the already existing structures in the community in making decisions about participants' roles in the study. From these interviews, I educed detailed demographic information and recorded reports offered about biography, iconography, and method of instruction. I did all this through a conversational process. I designed the questions to seek narrative answers from the participants much like the advice scholars give for designing and conducting ethnographic interviews. Spradley (1979) argued that ethnography involves the researcher trying to get insight into the participants' culture and entails the necessity to ask open ended questions that elicit narrative answers.

One volunteer for each art form and I made still picture records of the process of teaching and learning and the impact of the women's products in their community. In my case, I intended to particularly make still picture and video records of objects and processes in the teaching and learning environment that impacted my journey of "becoming", as I liked to think was one purpose of this study. Although I asked for ideas about the themes of the photographs to be taken, I proposed that they capture salient aspects of the processes of teaching and learning and the impact of the women's creative productions on the community. This was part of my adaptation, to the West Reru site, of the photo voice data collection instrument as developed by Wang and Burris (1994) in their seminal study China which was sponsored by the Ford Foundation and named Yunnan women's Reproductive Health and Development Program (YWRHDP). In this project, the rural Chinese women were systematically sampled for representativeness, and trained to take pictures of their everyday activities. These women got to share their photographs with policy makers as part of the rural women's contribution to policy decisions in their community. In my adaptation of photo voice, I purposed to share the results of this study with policy makers when I disseminate it widely after completion of my PhD studies and through scholarly talks I give around the world.

I believed that photo voice in an adapted form was especially suited for this participant observer feminist post-colonial qualitative study because of its theoretical base. This foundation includes empowerment education as proposed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, which this study planned to do in West Reru. Freire (1970) conceived of the character of ideal education as one that raises the consciousness of the learner and encourages both individual and consequent

societal change. Freire thought that any medium that could reflect society back to itself, such as photography, could function to educate members of the society. Another foundational tenet of photo voice comes from feminist theories and policy. These theories criticize any approach that retains women as objects and not active actors in their world because such approaches position women as powerless and dependant. According to Weiler (1988), there are three important themes that characterize feminist methods of research; the appreciation of women's subjective experience, recognition of the consequence of that experience, and political commitment to women's issues.

I was aware that I was both a basic research instrument and also an object in the study in order to be true to the feminist undertones of this study. Harding (1987) and Lather (1991) suggested the importance of the researcher's ability to reflect on and relate to his/her own variegated biography to understand its impact on their findings. I kept a journal of my reflections and observation in the process of the study. In this journal, I detailed my thoughts about the processes that I was involved in. My reflective journal captured and highlighted my long-held views and assumptions about the teaching and learning processes in which the participants were engaged. I believed that keeping a daily log in my journal allowed me to be the main instrument in the study as suggested by Janesick (1999). I thought it important that I drew liberally from my journal entries when writing the study report because, after all, the report is written according to my impressions of the study.

**Research questions:** The principal question in this study was; what are the adult educational processes by which indigenous Luo women empower themselves when they utilize expressive forms of creativity as metaphors for resistance, regeneration, and survival. The following were subsections of the main question; 1. What are the processes of teaching and learning of the selected creative forms? 2. What are the characteristics of creative women in the three forms? 3. What are the insights both novices and artists have of this teaching and learning process? and 4. What are the artists' reflections about the value of these educational activities?

**Data Analysis:** I borrowed the common data analysis methods available but adapted them to the post colonial suggestions for the analysis of data collected among indigenous populations. Such analysis methods encourage conducting member checks for validation of the information collected. In this way, I affirmed the participants' ownership of the knowledge emerging, which is an important aspect of research with indigenous populations (Fitzgerald, 2004; Menzies, 2001; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; and Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

After gathering data as a participant observer, I first grouped data according to the three forms of creativity. I transcribed the interviews and coded them into categories. Initially the codes were tied to each of my research questions. Later on, I expanded the codes according to the information emerging from the data. I documented the emerging themes by adapting a few features of qualitative methods of data analysis that involve constant comparison. I grouped similar incidents under higher-level descriptive concepts. I then was able to distinguish different categories of themes and to identify the little details that make up the different themes. From all this, I made matrices that identified the patterns, the comparisons, and any information that seemed to be unique. I looked for any inconsistencies in the matrices and sought explanations for them in the literature and from my experience in line with the process of theoretical comparisons. This comparison allowed me to draw from the literature and my experience to comprehend, explain, and draw implications from particular incidents in the data. In completing the analysis of the verbal interactions, I reread and summarize each one. These summaries cast



more light on the common and diverse threads of information that run through the interactions. For each thread, I positioned illustrations that best captured it, be the illustration a quote or pictorial data.

In analyzing data collected through the photo voice instrument, I listened to and recorded the photographers' story about the still pictures they took. I grouped this information according to emerging themes. The still pictures that I took allowed me to recall what I may have missed because it could not otherwise be captured by the other data collection instruments. I got a chance to reflect on the training process of the three forms of creative production at the various steps which it seemed important to make a visual record. The pictures served as prompts to the discussions captured by my other data collection instruments, particularly the interviews. The pictures also enabled me orient my readers to the context of my study.

In analyzing the data I collected in my reflective journal, I coded the information according to emerging themes. I tied the codes to the research questions but accommodated emerging information. When I could elicit no more information salient to the study from the data collected in the journal, I integrated the information I had drawn from the journal entries into the emergent themes of this study. This information helped me triangulate the data I collected through the other instruments.

**Findings and conclusions:** *Chwuech* activities are intimately steeped in the socio-cultural fabric of the community in West Reru. *Chwuech* operated in this community in a cyclical manner in that it originated from the community, engaged the societal forces impacting the community, and, by its products, positively enhanced the same community's capacities to survive negative forces confronting it. In the West Reru community, *chwuech* functions to improve multiple aspects of the community. These feminist art education processes are anti-colonial in orientations for the way they spur critical thinking among participants who gain the confidence of exploring avenues, at their disposal, to improve their lives and that of their community. By engaging in *chwuech*, participants not only learn an income-generating skill in the art forms they produce, but are able to be actively involved in their community's economic, medical, political, spiritual, and social dimension as indigenous practitioners. Among the many issues I witnessed them deal with, include emerging medical, political, and economic issues. Participants openly solicited advice from other members about any problems confronting them. I observed a discussion in which members drew from their personal experience as family care-givers, to patients suffering from HIV/AIDS and other illnesses, to advice a new such care-giver on good nutritional choices for her patient. At another session, members discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the various political parties campaigning for office in the area. Thus, *chwuech* allowed the participants a means by which they tackled the emerging problems of poverty, disease, political instability, and social strife that commonly confronted them in their community and with varying degrees of success.

The participants employed various strategies for *chwuech*. Most were experiential in nature. Scaffolding, modeling, cooperative learning, activation of prior knowledge, and approximation played an important part in this site. Song, sayings, proverbs, and spirituality also facilitated learning in this site. When dealing with intricate parts that needed much dexterity to make, such as the necks of pots in pottery, the expert at first used a scaffolding support system (Wood, Brunner, & Ross, 1976, and Pearson, 1985) though in gradually diminishing levels, to allow the apprentices to move on to other parts of the pot that were not as demanding. The experts modeled the various art forms for the apprentice, who then made attempts to copy the

experts' every maneuver. Cooperative learning strategy (Tsay, M., & Brady, M., 2010) allowed the apprentices to learn by engaging with other participants who were at various stages of conserving the art skill at hand. The West Reru educational site encouraged the activation of prior knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) to help with conserving the new skill. For example, participants freely utilized measurement techniques they used in their cookery or even trade, to quantify the raw materials required for making the three art forms. Participants also produced the art forms through approximation. During the course of our production of the art forms, a participant would break out in song, often about the art form at hand. Some other participants would join in the singing while other would just listen. Many participants also often interspersed their speech with sayings related to the art form we would be engaged with. Spirituality served as an important source of direction in the *chwuech* activities and the women's lives. The spirit of community created by the collective nature of the *chwuech* activities enabled the learners to willingly help each other with issues that impede life. This happy, accepting, dynamic, and effervescent environment also fostered free exchange of information unhindered by any forms of limitations on content.

**Implications for adult education theory and practice:** This study's findings had implications for the theory and practice of teaching adults. Some aspects of this educational endeavor that this study grappled with include; what it meant to succeed as a learner of *chwuech*, what efficacy cohort-based delivery of learning programs have for adults, what place the local epistemologies and ontologies play in the success of the adult learning programs, and, lastly, what need, if any, there is for a people management component in adult learning programs.

From the participants' actions and words, I learned that they loved taking part in *chwuech* activities. They often talked of the benefits they had got from involving themselves in these indigenous adult educational activities. The participants mentioned two main advantages of *chwuech* in their lives. These were the income they made from the sale of their products and the emotional support they got from each other. Emotional support is an aspect of *chwuech* that is most important and necessary for an underserved population as presented by these women. Most of them are poor widows with large families to care for. Additionally, they are either infected or affected by the big problem of HIV/AIDS in their community. Emotional support did enhance the participants' educational experience.

As a member of the *Bang' jomariiek* women group, I observed that the design of the indigenous adult educational processes included features that actively engaged the affective and spiritual facets of the participants. As participants worked, they often got into discussions of spiritual issues in which they held strong beliefs. There was talk of traditional beliefs that, if not kept would result in curses from the community elders. Scholars such as Mbiti (1969) and Magesa (1998) described the spiritual nature of the African. The African weaves their spirituality into all that they do. Any adult learning context that did not engage the spiritual aspect of the learner failed to fully utilize the learners' capacity to engage in the educational processes. Indeed, Western scholars such as Tisdell (2003) articulated the importance of inviting and employing the spiritual dimension of adult learners for their success. Developers of adult learning programs may consider incorporating spirituality more into their designs.

The cohort-based model of learning as I experienced it in West Reru enabled me to get help with my learning from other members of the group. Other members of my cohort often came in to show me a process which I was having difficulty with. This kind of help provided me with a group of instructors possessing mixed abilities in the *chwuech* form at hand. All these

participants formed what Lave and Wenger (1991) described as a community of practice. *Chwuechogy* is an important aspect of the Luo epistemology and is deeply seated in the essence of the community. As we worked on our *chwuech* we often made reference to our community to elucidate aspects or processes we were engaged in. We measured the sizes of our pots according to how much food we could cook in it, water it could hold, and grain it could store. We estimated how much grain, food, and supplies baskets could carry or store.

The place of adults' prior life experiences is an issue that often came up in the study. The *Bang' jomariiek* women's group actively sought and employed members' prior life experience, both for the success of the individual member and the group. It was considered quite important for all participants to contribute to the success of the group in whichever way they could. Adult learning scholars such as Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) observe that adults bring in lived experience to enrich their new learning tasks.

Developers of Adult educational programs ought to comprehensively and successfully assimilate and utilize the learners' prior life experiences. In doing this, such adult educational programs require to be designed to recognize and align themselves with the local community's foundations, scope, and validity of knowledge. In West Reru, *chwuech*, as an indigenous adult educational activity, is closely enmeshed in the Luo epistemology system's concept of *kit dak*. *Chwuech* draws from and enriches this epistemic aspect of the Luo community by its processes and products that acknowledge and incorporate diverse initiatives from participants. The participants learnt in the community utilizing locally available materials and in a sustainable manner. Additionally, participants utilized the benefits they got from their *chwuech* activities to improve their community.

Most indigenous African adult educational activities are carried out in a communal environment. This is because they draw membership and material from the community in which they are found and enrich this same community with the educational processes and products. Human resource management is a skill seamlessly built into these indigenous adult educational programs. Because of this, I was often reminded of the importance of including a people management component in adult education programs.

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