

## Curbing Unemployment: Encouraging SMEs and Entrepreneurs in Studio Pottery Practice

**Patience Anthony-Euba**

Department of Industrial Design  
School of Art, Design and Printing  
Yaba College of Technology  
Lagos

email: [nkemobby@yahoo.com](mailto:nkemobby@yahoo.com)

DOI: [10.56201/wjeds.v10.no5.2025.pg36.42](https://doi.org/10.56201/wjeds.v10.no5.2025.pg36.42)

---

### **Abstract**

*Unemployment has alarmingly become a major socio-economic quandary, which calls for proactive sustainable solutions in the light of job creation and economic empowerment. One of the most viable strategies would be to foster Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship. Contemporary studio pottery/ceramic practice, which encompasses ceramics design, throwing on the wheel, hand modelling, ceramic sculpting, decoration, casting and glazing (which is usually substituted with aesthetic pigmentation), typically presents a significant prospect for employment generation, especially in developing countries. This paper thus, explores the potential of SMEs and entrepreneurship in studio pottery practice as a means to curb unemployment. It assesses requirements upon which studio based pottery/ceramic (unlike in its industrial counterpart) enterprise thrives for sustainability. It examines the challenges faced by small-scale potters/ceramicists/ceramics artists. These include limited access to standard equipment and facilities, scarcity of quality raw materials, zero funding, and market competition. Additionally, it highlights strategies for fostering entrepreneurship in pottery/ceramics, such as vocational training, government incentives, financial support, and digital marketing integration. It wraps up that leveraging creative innovation and sustainable practices, studio based ceramic enterprises can drive the country's economic growth, reduce unemployment, and contribute to the global ceramics commerce. It therefore, advocates for collaborative efforts among governments, financial institutions, and industry stakeholders to create an enabling environment for small-scale studio based ceramic businesses. This paper provides actionable insights for policymakers, business owners, and researchers interested in the intersection of entrepreneurship, ceramics production, and employment generation.*

**KEYWORD:** □ Unemployment, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), Entrepreneurship, Studio Ceramics Practice, Job Creation

---

### **1. Introduction**

Unemployment remains one of the most critical socio-economic challenges affecting both developed and budding economies. The inability of the labour market to absorb the growing labour force has led to increase in the rate of poverty, and stirred arrays of social unrests that resulted in countless economic stagnation. To address the issue of unemployment, the Nigeria governments, policymakers, and economic stakeholders have continuously sought innovative strategies to create employment opportunities. One of the most promising solutions lies in fostering Small and

Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship (Obe, 2025), particularly in industries with strong market potentials and cultural significance. Among such industries, studio pottery practice stands out as a viable platform for job creation, skill development, and economic empowerment. The ceramics industry is one of the oldest and most resilient economic sectors, deeply embedded in cultural pottery traditions and modern ceramics trends. It encompasses a vast range of activities, including \*Nature inspired designs \*Earthy tones and natural finishes, \*Multifunctional pieces, \*Large formats, \*Bold Colours and patterns, \*Inventive Glazing Techniques, \*Tailor made and personalization, \*Textural appeal, \* Eco-friendly ceramics designs, \*Cultural and global influences, \*Hybrid ceramic pieces, and \*Sustainability as standard (Kersa, 2024, Diamond Core Tools, 2023). Studio pottery practice, which involves small-scale and often wheel thrown and hand crafted pottery production, provides a rich, convenient ground for self-employment and small scale business development. With growing global demand for distinctive, handcrafted, and sustainable pottery products, studio pottery ventures have the potential to thrive in both local and international markets (Business Research Insights, (2025).

Encouraging SMEs and entrepreneurs in studio pottery practice can significantly reduce unemployment by providing individuals—particularly youths, women, and artisans—with opportunities to turn their skills into profitable ventures. Unlike large-scale ceramics manufacturing, which requires substantial capital investment and machinery, studio pottery/ceramics ventures can be established with minimal capital, making them accessible to a wider subdivision of the society. Additionally, with advancements in digital technology and e-commerce, small studio pottery/ceramics industries can now reach global consumers, further enhancing their economic prospective.

Moreover, sustainability is an increasingly important factor in the modern pottery/ceramics industry. As environmental concerns coerce command for eco-friendly materials and ethical production methods, studio pottery entrepreneurs have an opportunity to innovate by adopting sustainable practices such as Sustainable Studio Design, Locally Sourced Materials, Clay Recycling and Reuse, Energy-Efficient Kilns, Low-Fire Techniques. This not only enhances the marketability of their products but also contributes to inclusive sustainability efforts.

### **Aims:**

To explore the potential of studio pottery/ceramic practices as a viable avenue for job creation and economic empowerment in the context of tackling unemployment.

To assess the role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship in fostering sustainable livelihoods through studio-based ceramic enterprises.

To propose strategies for supporting and scaling small-scale ceramic businesses as a tool for socio-economic development.

### **Objectives:**

To examine the employment opportunities inherent in contemporary studio pottery/ceramics practices such as wheel throwing, hand modelling, casting, and glazing.

To identify the sustainability requirements specific to studio-based ceramic enterprises, distinct from industrial ceramic production.

To investigate the key challenges facing small-scale potters and ceramic artists, including limited access to funding, equipment, and raw materials.

To analyze strategies that can enhance entrepreneurship in ceramics, such as vocational training, financial incentives, and digital marketing.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Entrepreneurship**

E.E.S.C. (2019) defines Entrepreneurship as an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It asserts that entrepreneurship includes creativity, innovation, risk taking and the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve desired objectives.

According to Eniola et al. (2015), SMEs provide over 90% of employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector and account for approximately 70% of aggregate employment created annually in Nigeria (33, 34). Furthermore, SMEs contribute between 40% to 60% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This shows how vital the SMEs and entrepreneurial bodies are to the growth of an economy

### **Unemployment in Nigeria**

Numerous researches have been carried out on the issue of unemployment around the world and in Nigeria. Some of these did underline the versatility of the socio-economic implications of unemployment.

Unemployment may be described as a circumstance when a person who is not employed but employable is seeking employment, but cannot find work to do. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics asserts that unemployment is a key factor to measure the health of a nation's economy, where a low unemployment rate represents a strong economy while a high unemployment rate represents a weak economy (Investopedia, 2025).

Hayes (2025) listed some factors such as depressions, technological improvements, job outsourcing, recession, and voluntarily leaving one job for another, as some of the many reasons for unemployment. In his narrative, he asserts that high rates of unemployment signal economic distress while extremely low rates of unemployment may be an indicator of an overheated economy.

The subject of unemployment in Nigeria has been widely studied, with numerous researchers highlighting its multi-faceted socio-economic implications. Nigeria's unemployment rate has steadily increased over the past decade due to weak industrial growth and a mismatch between education and labour market needs (Nigeria Economic SummitGroup, 2024). In the same vein, Okuneye et al. (2023) found that there is a long-term relationship between inclusive growth, unemployment, and health outcomes. Their study also showed that unemployment and health outcomes negatively and

### **Types of Unemployment**

Unemployment can be classified into frictional, cyclical, structural, or institutional.

Frictional unemployment is usually a naturally occurrence that takes place when workers take the initiative to change jobs. In order words, it results from a worker's voluntary employment transition within a particular economy, even within a growing, stable economy.

Cyclical unemployment has to do with the loss of jobs that occurs during changes in business cycles.

Structural unemployment relays to lasting interruptions that could result from fundamental and permanent changes due to technological shifts, a lack of relevant skills, and emigration of jobs to another country. Structural unemployment, most cases bring about changes that could marginalize a group of employees.

According to Best Insurance (2024), Institutional unemployment is an intricate economic experience that arises from institutional factors such as government policies, labour market

regulations, and social structures within the labour market. Unlike other forms of unemployment, which are primarily motivated by economic factors, institutional unemployment is influenced by the rules, regulations, and institutions that administer the labour market.

Nigeria Economic Summit Group (2024) asserts that Nigeria's unemployment rate has steadily increased over the past decade due to weak industrial growth and a mismatch between education and labour market needs. Similarly Okuneye et al. (2023) found that there is a long-term relationship between inclusive growth, unemployment, and health outcomes. Their study also showed that unemployment and health outcomes negatively and

#### Overview of the Pottery Industry

The pottery industry has historically been a significant contributor to local economies and cultural heritage. In Nigeria, for instance, pottery has been a traditional occupation, especially among women. It serves domestic, agricultural, ceremonial, and religious purposes. However, the industry faces challenges due to technological advancements and competition from mass-produced ceramics, plastic and metal wares, and arrays of other industrially produced alternatives.

Fatuyi (2018) highlights that traditional pottery in South-Western Nigeria is declining due to the introduction of modern materials like plastics and metals, which serve similar functions but are often more affordable and widely available. The study recommends the establishment of pottery centres for training and practice, as well as the creation of galleries to display pottery wares, to revitalize the industry.

Abiodun (2018) emphasizes the need for technical improvements in cottage ceramic industries in Southwestern Nigeria. The research observes that most of these industries use locally sourced materials and appropriate technologies but struggle with competition from imported wares. Enhancing technical capacities through research and technological advancements is suggested to increase productivity and sustainability.

Olding (2020) research at the Crafts Study Centre in Farnham, Surrey, underscores the economic and cultural impact of studio pottery. The study notes that studio pottery activities contribute significantly to the local economy and have led to Farnham being designated as a 'World Craft City' by the World Crafts Council. Furthermore, collaborations with institutions like the Yale Center for British Art have enhanced the presentation and interpretation of studio pottery in museum exhibitions.

#### Studio Pottery

Studio pottery refers to ceramics created by professional ceramists, individual artist-potters, amateur artists, artisans or small group of ceramic artists. Typically, all phases of production are executed by the artists themselves, and at times, with the help of few help hands who are actually apprentices. In a more elaborate term, modern ceramics is also used as a synonym for studio pottery and the art of ceramics. Zueblin (ynk) expresses the affiliation of these terms with the fine arts, stressing those modern ceramics is an orientation to the term modern art. The term modern ceramics expresses more clearly than the term studio pottery that this type of ceramics goes beyond the arts and crafts utility ceramics or decorative ceramic figures. In addition, this work distinguishes modern ceramics from antique or historical art ceramics and provides more robust synonyms for studio pottery.

In terms of produce, studio pottery refers to pottery pieces that come from a workshop (studio). This is unlike industrial pottery, which has a much larger yield as they are mass produced (Zueblin, ynk). It became known as a divergent form of art in the early 20th century, where emphasis was placed on quality draughtsmanship and individual artistic expression. Studio pottery can include

functional items like tableware and cookware (Cooper, 2000), as well as non-functional or sculptural pieces.

(Arzt, 2024) provides a glimpse into the process of pottery. He opines that pottery is made by combining naturally occurring raw materials, such as clay, earthen minerals, and water and shaping them into forms. Once shaped, the clay body is fired in a kiln at a high temperature to be hardened and heat resistant.

### **Characteristics of Studio Pottery**

Until the 80s, Dinnerware, otherwise referred to as cookware, and other utility ceramics formed a large sector of studio pottery. However, there has been a distinct drift away from functional pottery (Gowing, et al, 1989), a shift which allows an increasing number of studio potters create non-functional or sculptural products.

**Individual Craftsmanship:** Studio pottery is characterized by the artist's direct involvement in all aspects of the creation process, from sourcing of clay, clay body composition, forming wares, decoration, to firing the kiln.

**Unique Pieces:** Many studio pottery pieces are one-of-a-kind or made in small, limited quantities.

**Artistic Expression:** While functional items like dinnerware are common, studio potters also create decorative and sculptural pieces, pushing the boundaries of the craft.

**Independent Artists:** Studio potters often work independently or in small studios, emphasizing their personal vision and artistic style.

**Handmade Quality:** The emphasis on handmade production is a key characteristic of studio pottery, contrasting with mass-produced ceramics.

**Diverse Range:** Studio pottery encompasses a wide range of styles and techniques, from traditional techniques to contemporary explorations.

**STUDIO Pottery and Sustainability**  
“Studio pottery contributes substantially to the craft economy and creative identity of communities. Farnham’s designation as a World Craft City was driven largely by the presence of studio ceramics and supporting institutions.”

### **Raw Material**

Clay is the basic raw material used in studio pottery (Arzt, 2024). often mixed with other materials to create desired properties. These materials include various types of clay, silica, feldspar, and other minerals where the actual mix and proportions are crucial for achieving specific colors, shrinkage, porosity, and firing temperature characteristics. The different types of clay are grouped under two major poles; namely primary or residual clay and secondary or sedimentary clays, of which nature has made readily available in quantity that no generation has been able to exhaust.

Tools and equipments

Sustainable Development

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In conclusion, fostering SMEs and entrepreneurship in studio pottery practice presents a strategic pathway to curbing unemployment. By harnessing creativity, indigenous pottery tradition, and modern business strategies, individual potters or ceramicists can generate income, drive local economies, and contribute to comprehensive pottery markets. With the right support structures in place, studio ceramics enterprises can serve as a catalyst for economic transformation, skill empowerment, and job creation, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and inclusive economy.



To maximize the impact of SMEs in studio pottery/ceramic practice, it is essential to implement supportive measures such as vocational training, financial assistance, business incubation, and access to raw materials. Governments and private investors can play a crucial role by providing incentives such as grants, low-interest loans, and tax breaks to budding entrepreneurs. Educational institutions can also contribute by integrating pottery design and business management courses into their curricula, equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to establish and sustain their businesses.

### **What Nigerian Governments can do to further boost SMEs and entrepreneurs in studio pottery?**

The government could start off by prioritizing small, medium, and micro enterprises for economic growth and social development, in order to avail significant opportunities to the unemployed Nigerian youth population. Furthermore, they could:

- a) Creates a business friendly environment through the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and other similar bodies. The SMEDAN can reach out to young school leavers and undergraduates' to promote the 'Think Small First' principle and entrepreneurial spirit among Nigerian youths.
- b) Promotes entrepreneurship through the Entrepreneurship Action Plan, which is bound to support entrepreneurial education, while providing support tools for aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as instilling the entrepreneurial spirit in them early.
- c) Provides key support networks and information for SMEs  
the Your Europe Business Portal is a practical guide to doing business in Europe. It provides entrepreneurs with information and interactive services that help them expand their business abroad
- d) Improve access to new markets and internationalisation Nigerian studio produced potteries. Despite their, aesthetics, most of the SMEs exported studio potteries are done by the individual studio potter. In order to ensure more robust cross-border activities by SMEs studio potters, the Nigeria government could generate several networks: Your Europe Business Portal, Enterprise Europe Network and SME Internationalisation support.
- e) Easy access to finance. Access to finance is the most pressing issue for many small enterprises. The Nigeria Governments could improve the financing environment for studio potters and provide information on funding. Access to Finance portal will definitely help studio pottery SMEs to apply for loans.
- f) Encourage and sustain innovation and competitiveness among Studio Pottery SMEs. This is a key aspect of a good economic policy. Standards are an important tool for enhancing SMEs' competitiveness, as they help reduce technical barriers to trade, reduce costs, and facilitate SMEs' access to markets. SMEs should be represented in the standardisation process by Small Business Standards (SBS).

## REFERENCES

- Abiodun, S. O. (2018). Technical Trends of Cottage Ceramic Industries in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Visual Art and Design*, 10(2), 119-141. <https://doi.org/10.5614/j.vad.2018.10.2.3>
- Arzt, K. (2024). Guide To Making Pottery. The Crucible. [www.thecrucible.org](http://www.thecrucible.org)
- Best Insurance (2024). Institutional Unemployment: Definition, Cause, Types, and Example. [www.bestinsurance.co.uk/](http://www.bestinsurance.co.uk/)
- EESC. (2019). SMEs and Entrepreneurship. Publications Office of the European Union. ISBN 978-92-830-3398-1
- Eniola, A. A., Entebang, H., Sakariyau, O. (2015). Small and medium scale business performance in Nigeria: Challenges faced from an intellectual capital perspective. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management Studies online*(1) DOI: 10.5861/ijrsm.2015.964
- Fatuyi, O. A. (2018). Technological Shift and Consequences for Pottery Practices in South-Western Nigeria. [www.ijsciences.com/pub/article/1284](http://www.ijsciences.com/pub/article/1284)
- Gowing, Christopher, and Rice, Paul. (1989) *British Studio Ceramics in the 20th Century*, Barrie and Jenkins, p. 113. ISBN 0-7126-2042-7
- Hayes, D. (2025). What is Unemployment? Causes, Types and Measurements. Investopedia. [www.investopedia.com](http://www.investopedia.com)
- Obe, O. (2025). Small and Medium Enterprises as Catalysts for Reducing Unemployment in Nigeria. *IRE Journals*, Vol. 8, Issue 7. ISSN: 2456-8880
- Olding, S. (2020). *The Craft Economy: Studio Ceramics and Regional Identity*. University for the Creative Arts. UCA Research Archive
- Kersa Cerámica (2024). Modern Ceramic Trends Design Sustainability: How to Optimize the Material. [www.kersa.es/en](http://www.kersa.es/en)
- Diamondcoretools (2023). Upcoming Pottery Trends for 2024. [www.Diamondcoretools.com](http://www.Diamondcoretools.com). Dec 22, 2023
- Business Research Insights. (2025). Pottery ceramics market size, share [2033]: Research report. Business Research Insights. Retrieved from <https://www.businessresearchinsights.com/market-reports/pottery-ceramics-market-119846>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "How the Government Measures Unemployment."
- Cooper, E. (2000). *Ten Thousand Years of Pottery*. British Museum Press. ISBN 0-7141-2701-9.
- Dawsons. (2022). WHAT DOES THE TERM STUDIO POTTERY MEAN? [www.dawsonsauctions.co.uk](http://www.dawsonsauctions.co.uk)