Review Article

Training and Retraining Needs of Community Development Workers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Community development requires people who are professionals in both theories and practice of developmental programmes. This is to ensure that desired sustainable development is achieved in the communities. For this to be achieved, there has to be manpower development in the community. This paper, therefore, focused on training and retraining needs of community development workers in Nigeria. The paper also examined the roles of community development workers, need for training and retraining community development workers, forms of training, training and retraining methods. It was concluded that with training and retraining, community workers would be equipped with more knowledge and skills for effective task performance. One of the recommendations include that trained community development worker should be recruited to ensure the attainment of the stated community objectives.

Keywords: Community, Community development, Community Development workers, Training, Retraining.

INTRODUCTION

Community development workers need training to excel in the performance of their duties. Anyanwu (1999) noted that the importance of training must be appreciated as a factor in the sustenance of the executive machinery for a successful organization of community development programme. Training for community development embraces a two prolonged exercise which includes both the training of local leaders and the technical training of agents (community workers) of development at the grassroots level.

According to Imhabekhai (2009), training of community development workers is intended primarily to equip them with the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, habit and competence they require for effective task performance. Without training for community development workers, not much achievement can be made. Pre-employment training should be complemented with training programme for workers already on the job. He went further to say that retraining involves the renewal of workers skills, knowledge, attitude and habits that they earlier acquired but may have become obsolete and irrelevant to the needs of their

employment as a result of changes in social, economic, administrative and technological advancements. Any agency that is interested in community development and hopes to achieve much success must pay adequate attention to workers training and retraining.

Training and retraining of community development workers is absolutely needed to bridge gap between demand and supply for community development workers and when there is need to remove any deficiency in the workers' job performance which is as a result of inadequacy in their current job skills, hence the need for this paper.

Conceptual Framework

Community: Community can be defined as a group of people living in a geographical area and united with common interest, culture, belief, tradition and values. Anyanwu (1999) defines a community as a group of people living in one place, village or town in which people share in common the basic conditions of life. Bensman (1994) viewed community as a relatively small isolated centre with a stable population, in which all economic and social services necessary to life can be maintained.

Community Development: Community development can be defined as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions in common problems (Wikipedia, 2015). Community development seeks to empower individuals and group of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of larger social groups working for a common agenda. In the same, the Scottish community Development Centre (2006) describes community development as an activity which confronts disadvantage, poverty and exclusion, promotes values of active citizenship, learning and community participation. It is all about change based on empowerment, leading to a better quality of life. This implies that it is an activity directed towards helping people to achieve better quality of life through poverty reduction and involving the people in the processes of action. In other words, community development is seen as a process whereby people in their own community identify their needs and problems and then seek solution to ameliorate the problems using their available resources with or without external assistance.

Community Development Workers: Community development workers are those who facilitate community development initiative and collective solutions with a community to address issues, needs and problems that arise within that community (the University of Newcastle, Australia, 2014). They implies that they must possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills and enjoy working with and assisting others. They must also have a solid understanding and awareness of the community involved, be able to manage and resolve conflict and work effectively within a specified time.

Also, Australian Community Workers Association (2012) describes a community worker as a qualified person who through professional training and field education has the knowledge, skills and values to work in a social welfare agency or programme intended to promote or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, social groups or larger communities. In practice, community workers provide services, support, activities, information and referral for those in need of assistance. They do this by linking people with appropriate services, government departments, groups, communities and each other.

Roles of Community Development Workers

Community development workers perform a number of roles that positively affect the lives and conditions of people in the community. Community development workers help communities to bring about social change and improve the quality of life in their local areas. They work with individuals, families and whole communities to empower them to: identify their assets, needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities; plan what they want to achieve and take appropriate action; develop activities and services to generate aspiration and confidence (Graduate Prospects Limited, 2004). A community development worker often acts as a link between communities and a range of other local authority and voluntary sector providers such as the police, social workers and teachers.

In the same vein, community workers facilitate community development initiatives and collective solutions within a community. They do this by encouraging and assisting community groups to identify their needs, participate in decision and develop appropriate services and facilities. They frequently act as a source of information and advisers to individuals and communities about the services and programmes available to them. These work plans develop and deliver a range of programmes and services, including family support, resettlement programmes for migrants and refugees, community and adult education, counseling services and programmes for children (Department of training and workforce development, 2015).

Moreso, the Ministry for Public Service and Administration (2007) noted that community development workers are participatory change agents who work in the communities where they live and to whom they have to ensure for their activities. They are required to help people in communities improve their lives and change their circumstances. They are expected to help community members to understand how they can participate in the plans for development in their communities, facilitate community participation in policy making and implementation and in service delivery. They also give community members information and help to empower individuals and communities, guide and support community members working in community-based projects such as small business development projects, projects that help people generate an income or projects that develop local assets and resources.

In addition, other roles performed by community development workers include: helping to raise public awareness on relevant issues, raising and managing funds, mediating in matters of conflicts, overseeing the management of limited fund, challenging deviant behaviours, developing and implementing strategies, among others.

Need for Training and Retraining Community Development Workers

Training of community development workers is very necessary to enable them perform their functions very well. Imhabekhai (2009) corroborates this assertion when he said that such training is intended primarily to equip them with knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, habits and competence they require for effective task performance. Without training for community development workers, not much achievement can be made.

According to Graduate Prospects Limited (2015), ongoing training is essential in community work and usually occurs on the job or as part-time study to gain a recognized qualification. Since projects and communities vary so much, community development workers must constantly develop new skills, update old ones and acquire specific knowledge. Training

provision varies depending on the employer, but there are likely to be opportunities to develop relevant skills. In other words, training and retraining of community development workers is necessary to remove any deficiency in the workers job performance which is traceable to absence of training and retraining. Training and retraining can also serve in improving community development workers job ethics, working relationship, morale booster, status enhancement and general improvement on the productivity of workers.

Anyanwu (1999) noted that training for the technical staff in the community should be organized to give trainees knowledge of the techniques of community development applicable to communities in varying stages of development. This should involve four principal groups of trainees (i) men and women required to work in the villages (2) men and women who may have had some initial training and who may profit by some more specialized training (3) men and women who are being trained to work as members of demonstration teams and (4) men and women drawn from the field or from technical training centres, who are capable of undergoing short course, not so much with the view of becoming technical community development officers but to understand the various aspects of community development processes and operation.

It should be noted, therefore, that training and retraining of community development workers promotes all round development of the communities in all aspects of human endeavours. With the training and retraining, workers would be equipped with current methods and practices in talking community development issues.

Forms of Training and Retraining of Community Development Workers

Training of community development workers can be categorized into:

1. Induction/Orientation Training:

This type of training is given to new employees to equip them with the desired skills, knowledge and competence required for their jobs before they are actually assigned specific duties or responsibilities. This type of training is inevitable. It is expected that all new employees, despite their previous training and experiences should be exposed to their new work environment and shown to perform specific tasks. In a situation where one is transferred or promoted; new skills and knowledge must be learned to adapt to the new place of work.

2. On-the-Job Training

This is the type of training which takes place at the workplace and possibly while at work. According to Enungwu (1992), on-the-job development takes place at work location. Responsibility for its implementation is primarily that of a trainee's immediate manager or supervisor. They have in-depth knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates and should know how best such subordinates should be assisted to overcome any identified weakness. Oshionebo cited in Imhabekhai (1998:162) identifies five methods of on-the-job training as:

i.   Coaching: i.e. the trainee is put under the guidance of an experienced employee who shows the trainee how to do the job.

ii. Job rotations: i.e. the trainee is given several jobs in succession so as to gain experience on a wide range of activities.

iii. Temporary promotion: i.e. an individual is promoted to his/her superior's position whilst the superior is absent due to say illness. This gives the individual a chance to experience the demands of a more superior position.

iv. Assistant to: i.e. a junior officer with good potentials may be appointed as an assistant to the chief executive or another officer. In this way, the individual gains experience of how the organization is managed at the top.

v. Committees i.e. trainees might be included in the membership of committees to enable them gain an understanding of inter-department relations.

3. Off-the-Job Training

This is the type of training provided in training centres either in the work place while the trainee is not actually performing his responsibilities or outside the workplace. It could be organized in established institutions and employees are permitted to participate with or without official sponsorship's from the employer. This training is important when the knowledge of jobs, skills and attitude are needed by employees especially when it is organized outside the job places. Off-the-job training can be of any duration depending of the needs of the trainees and the organization in which they work.

Training and Retraining Methods of community Development Workers

Many methods can be utilized in training and retraining of community development workers depending on the number of trainees, location of the class, topic to be treated, materials available, among others. A trainer can combine two methods if need be. The methods include:

1. Lecture Method: This is a style of teaching usually used for a group of learners. It is a one-way communication between the facilitator and the participants in a programme. The method involves the teacher 'feeding' the participants with the information he wants them to have. The participants listen and received information as given without interrupting the teacher. The use of this method introduces information which the group did not know before and learning task with which the adult learners/ participants interact.

2. Explanation Method: This is type of lecture method that requires the use of description, interpretation, analysis, direction giving and classification in an informal and conventional manner. The teacher encourages the learner to ask questions freely. The explanations are made short and concise to the point for easy understanding. Explanation methods serves the following:

i. Clarifies information and specifies points that are vague and unclear.

ii. Adds information from other sources not readily available in class.

iii. Synthesizes, abbreviates and summarizes information previously presented.

iv. Emphasizes and reinforces information previously read and reviewed.

v. Adopts previously learned information to new situations or other content areas.

3. Demonstration Method: This involves exposing the participants to the practical aspects of an action or the procedure for preparing something. It involves the participants observing and listening to the facilitator as he performs the action while at the same time the participants are given opportunity to practice the actions involved under the guidance of the facilitators. Immediate corrections are effected on the procedure and application. This method can be very useful in vocational education involving skill

acquisition such as fashion and textile designing, cake making furniture making, etc.

4. Discussion Method: In a typical discussion group, the adult educator or facilitator starts the discussion with a brief introduction to the issue. Most discussion groups consider issues, problems and concerns which involve values rather than factual answers. Since the answers are not very obvious, the groups search it out. As the members of the group assume more responsibility for the discussion, the adult teacher does more listening, refocusing the discussion only when necessary. This method brings out the best from each member of the group by encouraging them to address the issue. It also provides opportunity for every group member to gain new knowledge from other members. The facilitator also gains additional ideas in the discussion.

5. Project Method: This method involves giving the participants take-home assignments and projects which they are expected to carry out individually. When the assignments are completed, they are submitted to the facilitator who marks and corrects them where necessary. This method makes the participants to read and work on their own assignments or projects and encourages creative thinking and critical analysis of problem.

6. Role Play Method: The role-playing method involves assigning programme participants some roles, which they are expected to play in real life or in their jobs or occupations after completing the training. By performing these assigned roles during the training

process, the participants acquire the new skills, new habits, attitude, knowledge and ability necessary for successful performance of their roles. Role-playing makes it possible for participants to improve their performance in their daily activities by actually doing something to solve their problems rather than by talking about the problems.

Other methods that can be used in training and retraining of community development workers include; case studies, seminars, workshops, forum, inquiry, among others.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the foregoing that community development workers are change agents. They are employed to introduce positive changes and innovations into the lives of the people in their various communities of assignments. Since changes must occur in the people's thinking, in their attitude to life, in their habits and ways of doing things, the community development workers must be appropriately trained and retrained so as to bring about desired knowledge and skills that will engender positive changes in community development process.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were made:
1. Trained community development workers should be recruited to ensure the attainment of the development objectives of their respective communities.
2. People should be conscientized on the need for training and training of community workers including community leaders. This will help them renew their obsolete skills, knowledge, attitudes and habits in

their community development process.

3. Good training methods that will yield desired results should be adopted by the trainers. This will help facilitate the rate of training and learning process.

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