COMMUNITY SERVICES TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: A PANACEA FOR EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The generation of productive and adequate remunerated employment is an indispensable component in the fight against poverty. The ability of developing economies to create wage employment opportunities to meet the needs of an expanding labour force is increasingly limited and few supporting services or government programmes exist to exploit the potential of self-employment possibilities. This paper, therefore, discussed the nature and concepts of poverty and poverty eradication, community services training and development and employment generation. It also discussed how community services training and development can generate employment and eradicate poverty, case studies from selected countries, and came up with some recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of employment and income generation continues to be the main strategy for eradication of poverty in developing countries, especially Nigeria. Most of the poor in developing countries are found in rural areas and in the urban informal sector. Their principal asset is their labour, and their main road out of poverty is to improve their productivity and earnings. Progress along this road initially requires no training but reform of policies that discourage economic and employment growth (Middleton, Zidermain & Adama, 1993).

The relatively low official levels of unemployment can partly be explained by the high number of working poor, who work but are poor either because they have too many dependents to support, work in low-wage occupations, are subject to involuntary leave without pay or short hours, are irregularly, or some combination of these factors (Torm, 2003:22). Many of the working poor can be found in the growing informal economies in the impoverished transition counties. Musiolek (2002) notes that during the transition period, the Central and East Europe (CEE)/Common Wealth
of Independent States (CIS) region has experienced a mushrooming of informal activities and that rapid economic restructuring during transition has created massive social problems that led to a search for informal income opportunities. Musiolek noted further that the lack of growth in formal sector employment, combined with an absence of serious social safety nets has meant that the informal and subsistence economies began providing the only means for survival, particularly for women.

In response to these problems, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2014) has developed a community based approach to training the rural and urban poor for employment and income generation. The methodology consists of a set of procedures for systematically identifying employment and income generation opportunities at the local level, designing and delivering appropriate training programmes and providing the necessary post-training support services, including credit, technical assistance and market information, to launch and sustain income generation activities. The approach differs from conventional vocational training programmes in three main ways:

(i) By identifying potential income generating activities and related training needs before designing the content and duration of specific training programmes.
(ii) By involving the local community directly in each phase of the identification, design and delivery process,
(iii) By facilitating the necessary post-training support services, including credit, to ensure that individuals or groups can initiate and sustain the income generating activity for which training was provided.

Skill acquisition through general education and training is needed to generate employment, raise incomes, and reduce poverty in rural communities and families. Skill development in this sense refers to the productive capacities acquired through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job settings, which enables individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods and to have the opportunity to adapt these capacities to meet the changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labour market. The availability of this training and development to promote community services brings development closer to the people. It improved the standard of living of the people living in rural communities, especially those who have little or no occupation.

Moreso, existing training systems continue to be mainly designed for formal wage employment and to train for occupations which do not exist in the informal sector. This situation is especially important for young school leavers who, as a result, migrate to urban areas in search of work, thus adding to the number of urban unemployed. It is also important for the vast majority of the rural and urban poor who are unable to generate sufficient income to achieve minimum living standards, hence the need for this paper which is likely to address this problem.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

♦ Poverty Eradication

There is nowadays a general consensus that poverty needs to be understood in a multidimensional manner. This understanding goes beyond the traditional use of income measures as proxies for poverty (i.e. &1 a day measure), but sees poverty as related to low achievements in education and health. It also includes vulnerability, exposure to risk and voicelessness/powerlessness (World Bank, 2000b:15). In the same vein, Alegiunou and Attah (2005) defined poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that transcends just lack of money or material resources. It encompasses issues such as lack of access to economic, social, political and religious opportunities.
In specific terms, it involves sub-optimal utilization of basic needs such as good food, education, health care, jobs, political power, etc owing to some inhibitive economic and social factors. Eradicating poverty is regarded as the most important goals of human development. Indeed, it is now widely believed that at its core, development must be about improvement of human well-being, removal of hunger, disease and promotion of productive employment for all. A nations first goal must be to end poverty and satisfy the priority needs for all its citizenry in a way that will not jeopardize the opportunity for the future generations to attain the same objective (National MDGs Report, 2004). In other words, poverty eradication tends to reduce the level of poverty in a community or amongst a group of people or countries. It aims at removing social and legal barriers to income growth among the poor. It is also the reduction of any of the negative aspects of having no assets like land, livestock, fishpond or productive skills.

♦ **Community Services Training and Development**

Community services training and development refers to the training given to an individual or group of individuals in the community to develop skills that will enable them render some services needed by the community. These services may be in the areas of health, education, agriculture, infrastructures and other needs of the community. Wikipedia (2014) noted that community service is performed by someone or a group of people for the benefit of the public or its institutions. Community service also allows those participating to reflect on the difference they are making in society. Some participants of a community service may find themselves gaining a greater understanding of their roles in the community, as well as the impact of their contributions towards those in need of service. Because community service outlets vary, those who serve are exposed to many different kinds of people, environment and situations.

Moreso, those involved in community service learning may also find that serving the community for an extended period of time, they have an advantage in real-world experience. Eventually, the skills and knowledge obtained while working with the community may be applied in future areas of work. Community service may also increase a participant’s social connectivity. Because most community service opportunities allow others to interact and work with individuals, this service may help volunteers network and connect with others towards a common goal.

♦ **Employment Generation**

Employment generation can be defined as all the efforts made to create job opportunity, whether long-term or short-term that yield quick impact or development of more enduring livelihoods in the civil service or private sector. (United States Institute of Peace, 2014) providing jobs is vital many levels. Politically, employment opportunities give the population a stake in the peace process that providing young men and women with alternatives to violence. Economically, employment provides income to poor families, revives domestic demand for goods and services and estimates overall growth. Socially, employment can also social healing, encourage the return of displaced persons and improve social welfare in the long run.

**How Community Services Training and Development can generate employment and eradicate poverty in families and communities.**

It is essential to question the capacity of developing or impoverished transition countries economies, and especially their informal economies, to realise these skills outcomes. Skills development outcomes, at all levels, are obviously determined by many other things such as the quality of the education and training and the state of the enabling environment surrounding skills development (Palmer, 2000b).

But, as the World Bank is keen to emphasize, there is no automatic connection between skills development and employment. Training, by itself, will not create jobs and will achieve its objectives
only where the conditions are right for economic growth (World Bank, 2004a). The Banks Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, reviews the findings of a policy paper on TVET adopted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2000), which was based on experience in the Latin America and Caribbean region that, training requires an enabling environment. There is a need to recognize that training alone is not an effective means to combat unemployment. To minimize the risk that training will be ineffective, job creation must also occur. (World Bank, 2004a). Later, the same policy paper advised viewing training as a social policy, not as a means of job creation. Training is essential for improving the productivity and competitiveness of an economy. To the extent that an economy is growing, jobs will be created and training will increase, but training alone does not create jobs.

The importance of skills training for poverty reduction and growth is becoming increasingly recognised. For example, the World Banks Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (2004a: 16-17) makes the case for the importance of investing in skills training in Sub-Saharan Africa today:

- Globalization and competition require higher skills and productivity among workers, both in modern companies and in the micro and small enterprises that support them.
- In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, technological changes require richer cognitive content, higher skill levels in the labour force, and continued enhancement of work force skills. Exploiting the potential of information and communications technology (ICT) requires a strong skills base. A labour force with a solid basic skills foundation is essential for countries to exploit the opportunities opened by technologies change.
- Structural adjustment policies have resulted in an, often significant, displacement of workers (particularly from the public sector), who often need upgrading of their skills.
- Investing in the productivity and skills of economically and socially vulnerable groups is essential for poverty reduction. Skills are an important means to increase incomes and sustainable livelihoods for the poor. The latest draft of the World Banks Education Sector Strategy Update, entitled Achieving the MDGs, Broadening our Perspective, Maximizing our Effectiveness, highlights the importance of skills training for poverty reduction in the informal economy: Reaching the informal sector with skills development will be important for poverty reduction (World Bank, 2005b:9). The ILOs Working out of Poverty document (ILO, 2003: 8) also stresses that skills are essential to improve productivity, incomes and access to employment opportunities.

Skills development is often said to be beneficial to informal sector operatives in a number a ways:

- Firstly, it is widely assumed that skills training in the informal economy increases productivity, quality, diversity and occupational safety and improves health, thereby increasing incomes and hence leading to reductions in poverty levels for these workers and their families (Fluitman, 2002; World Bank, 2004a: 128). The World Bank notes that: the importance of skills training for the informal sector is rooted in the need to enhance productivity of informal sector activities and improve the quality of its products and services, in order to raise the incomes of those employed in the sector.
- Secondly, it has been argued that skills training helps to develop social capital. Training allows for a gradual building up of informal business networks (with suppliers, customers, other apprentices and masters) (Assad, 1993).
- Thirdly, skills training can help develop business skills and experience. Training in the work place results in experience in, and the development of, general business and managerial skills, including customer relations skills, crucial to apprentices future survival as independent entrepreneurs (Fluitman, 1994). Since informal skills training occurs on-the-job, it is highly
relevant to the real world of work, and allows apprentices to get acquainted with real work conditions.

♦ Fourthly, given that most people, particularly in rural areas, practise occupational pluralism-working both on and off the farm - the increased productivity resulting from skills training in non-agricultural rural employment has positive knock-on effects to agricultural enterprises, principally through cross-financing (Palmer, 2004).

♦ Fifthly, traditional apprenticeship skills training represents the most accessible source of training for the poor. Relative ease of entry into informal skills training means that traditional apprenticeships are by far the most widespread source of skills. They provide a cheap way for the poor to acquire skills and as an important source of technical skills for those who cannot access formal training. Traditional apprenticeship is much cheaper than formalized training. Parents can often pay over time. This makes traditional apprenticeship a viable, and the most accessible, destination for basic-education graduates.

CASE STUDIES FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES

♦ Community-based training in Cambodia

Working from eight provincial training centres scattered around Cambodia, an ILO/UNDP project on vocational training for the alleviation of poverty, and its predecessor project, trained over 8,000 women and men in a diverse range of skills from 1993 to 1999. Follow-up surveys over the 12 months after completion of training showed that over 82 per cent of trainees had work using their new skill and were earning US$33 a month on average, well above the average per capita GDP of about US$22 a month. Over half of the trainees were women and over a third were women heads of household. Many were unskilled farm workers, often having little or no cash income prior to participating in the project.

A key to the success of this project was that it did not offer predetermined courses. Rather, the project staff worked with the local community to find out what skills were in short supply locally. Then people with the scarce skills, recruited from among those trained in the border refugee camps, were asked to help train others, but only enough to satisfy the needs of the local community. The project wanted to make sure that trainees could make a living with their new skill, and an over-supply would lower their earnings. Many of the successful courses were not typical of ILO training programmes, for example, pig rearing and vaccination, duck rearing and vaccination, incense-stick making and vegetable growing. Duck vaccination proved particularly attractive, as graduates of the course were much in demand to quell an outbreak of disease that was decimating farmers’ flocks. Hairdressing was another winner with over 90 per cent of graduates still using the skill after a year and earning US$65 a month on average.

All told, 35 skills courses were offered and, since a majority of the trainees ended up as self-employed people, they all acquired basic business skills too. Courses were run as close as possible to the trainees’ homes in the villages at times most suitable to them. Course length varied, but usually consisted of several hours training a week over two or three months. This was particularly important to ensuring a high participation by women in the programme. An essential part of the project strategy was to build the capacity of Cambodian counterparts to implement a flexible system of skill training linked to identified employment opportunities. A total of 76 government staff received various forms of training support while working on the project. Responsibility for the provincial training centres was handed over to the Cambodian Government at the end of the project, with the aim of integrating their operations into the permanent services provided by the public authorities. A number of other countries have launched projects and programmes based on the ILO community-based training approach, including Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria,
Pakistan, Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.

Source: ILO in Focus Programme on Skills. Knowledge and Employability (IFP/SKILLS), cited in ILO, 2003

♦ Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) in Philippines

The ILO TREE project (2002-2005), funded by the U.S. Department of Labour, aimed to expand economic opportunity and income security through workforce education, skills training, employment creation, and local economic development for the most marginalized groups in diverse, geographical areas in Philippines. The project pursues its task through the development and implementation of the TREE methodology, which is a comprehensive training package that identifies and assesses local economic opportunities, designs and delivers community-based skills training, and provides post-training services.

In the Philippines, the TREE project involved both skills and entrepreneurship development training and organizing corporate community groups and community fund scheme. As of March 2005, the project trained 725 beneficiaries in vocational and entrepreneurial skills, 59.4% of the end-of-project target of 1,220 trained beneficiaries. Some 99% of trainees successfully passed training. Follow-up surveys have revealed that on average 85% of participants in the TREE training programs are utilizing their skills acquired for income generation, though this percentage varies according to different groups (91% men, 82% women, 63% youths). Tracer studies of 222 beneficiaries also revealed that some had increased their average monthly incomes by up to 80%. The project has also organized 5 corporate community groups and assisted 5 more existing federations.

The benefits to the target groups are increased self-esteem, hope for the future, and the ability to contribute to family welfare. As a result of training, beneficiaries—both women and men—are empowered with skills and have the confidence to set up small businesses in their communities. These community enterprises can be expected to have an increasingly greater impact as enterprises mature and support local economic development. The project has had a wider impact on peace and order in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1996, the concern has been how to convince people to support the peace process, that there is something good, something to wait for, something to expect from the peace process. The project addresses the major problems of poverty and unemployment in the ARMM by providing people who have been left out with skills training to take advantage of economic opportunities and, in this way, links economic development to peace in the region (Webb, 2005: v).

The TREE project has been very successful in providing benefits to the target groups both economically and socially. Youth beneficiaries are now gainfully employed or self-employed and contribute to household incomes. The Project has learned some lessons in its implementation:

- Traditional skills’ training is not an end in itself. Employability is the end, but this will not be addressed by traditional vocational training.
- Providing only skills training to beneficiaries is not enough. Follow up support is crucially important to facilitate better outcomes of the project in terms of increased employment.
- Selecting a strong local implementing partner is critical because it can provide post training support especially micro finance services, business management services and MIS for follow up and impact assessment.

A Mid-Term Evaluation Mission, conducted in December 2004 concluded that the project has succeeded in addressing the issues of poverty, unemployment, security and peace by means of skills training and local institutional capacity building. It has everywhere generated a strong demand
for skills training and has the unqualified support of government, donors, partners and the target
groups. It is recommended without reservation that the project continue beyond the scheduled
closing date to ensure sustainability, and furthermore, that all concerned parties give serious
consideration to the expansion of the project, whether by means of increased coverage in the present
target areas or extended coverage into new target areas or both, for the purpose of scaling up a highly
effective project (ILO, 2005).

Chile Joven in Latin America

Since the beginning of the 1990s, an occupational training programme targeted at young
people afflicted by structural unemployment and high social risk, has spread rapidly through several
Latin American countries (in Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay since 1994). Its initial model was
tried out and systematised in Chile under the name of Chile Joven. The target group is: young people
with low income; preferably between 16 and 24; laid off, underemployed, inactive or looking for
work for the first time; with education not greater than secondary level. Areas are targeted according
to poverty and employment indicators.

Brief outline of main innovative, successful features of the project/programme:

- The training is relevant to the labour market.
- The implementation of the training is flexible, decentralised and regulated by market
  mechanisms.
- The design of activities is focused on the beneficiaries (vocational skills but also personal
development).
- Efforts are coordinated between the State, civil society and the corporate sector.
- Adaptation to the motivations, needs and expectations of participants.

Context, identification of needs: The development model in Latin America has been moving from a
protectionist and import-substitution model to an open model striving for international
competitiveness. The impact of this change on the labour market and on youth employment has been
very serious. Latin American young people - in particular those insufficiently or badly trained, from
lower socioeconomic strata, rural sectors or ethnic minorities-are not being offered real options for
accessing labour markets or society in general, reflecting issues of equity and social stability. In this
context, policies aimed at promoting training and employment become essential. At the beginning of
the project, 13% of the Chileans 15-24 years of age were unemployed, underemployed or outside
formal education. As this coincided with a period of important economic growth in Chile, the
programme assumed that the lack of skills demanded in the market was the main reason for
unemployment. The programme responds to the objective demand signs in the labour market. The
training institutions identify themselves the market niches: no demand = no training.

Objectives/Aims: The overall objective of the programme is to improve the possibilities of access to
employment of young beneficiaries of low-income families. It is also to contribute to the social
integration (as workers or students) of these young persons that are often marginalized. Specific

Objectives

- Getting young participants to adopt a positive attitude towards work; to make effective their
  access to employment.
- Imparting the technical skill of a trade to young people at semi-skilled level, to facilitate their
  placement.
• Generating a technical training supply relevant to the needs of firms and enterprises.

Other Skills Included

The Chile programme includes other skills such as: (i) Technical training and social and occupational skills, (ii) basic education; technical training, in-firm training (iii) management training (accounting, costing, marketing, etc) and (iv) occupational training.

Activities: Training in a trade and on-the-job training (teaching phase) followed by a protected labour experience at enterprise.

Skills: development of attitudes, behaviour and psychological and social abilities.

Support services: Medical insurance against labour accidents, a transportation subsidy and a subsistence allowance during their internship, when they have no labour contract.

Impact: Between 1991-2001 there were 164,000 beneficiaries. Evaluation studies of graduates six months after graduation from the Chile Joven programme revealed that the percentage of employed former trainees was 57.8%, as opposed to 38.3% in the control group (those who had not been on the programme). Men were more successful regarding access to labour (65% against 49% for women), and those who were relatively younger had less possibilities of getting a job. The evaluation indicates that one year after graduation project beneficiaries has substantially improved their labour situation. As compared with a control group, the impact was positive, as most participants (70%) had effectively improved their possibility of obtaining a higher quality, better paid job. The study also shows that the direct linkage of beneficiaries with the labour world, due to the practical nature of the training model, positively changes their motivations and attitudes vis-à-vis work, training and education in general.

In Argentina, the following results have been found: impact on earnings were statistically significant for young males and adult females only (not adult males and young females); the estimated impact on employment was statistically significant for adult females only. Difficulties to evaluate the Latin America occupational training programmes include: shortcomings in the countries statistical information systems, difficulties in gathering valid and reliable information regarding the target population (and then to evaluate the results achieved), relatively recent application of research evaluation practices in the region.

Source: Brewer, 2005.

CONCLUSION

Having discussed the multidimensional character of poverty and its eradication, it can be concluded that an assessment of training impact on income alone will not be satisfactory. It demands that skills development is needed to boost the employability and productive capacity of the people in informal sector of Nigeria economy. These skills should be acquired through different levels and types of education and training that will enable the poor to generate employment and eradicate or alleviate poverty. The acquisition of these capacities is dependent on many factors, including quality education/training and the presence of a supportive environment to engender sustainable development.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested for Nigerian governments at all levels.

1. The Nigerian governments should emulate the poverty eradication strategies and activities of other countries especially those cited as case study. This will enable them to reduce the poverty level in Nigeria.

2. There is need for government to mount mass mobilization campaign on the people, especially those in rural areas on the need for their participation in community services training and development. This will help reawaken their interest in poverty eradication training programmes.

3. Government should equally select the training programmes based on the needs of the community so as to ensure their popular participation in the training programmes.

4. Trained trainers should be recruited by government and their commensurate allowances paid as at when due to retain them in the job.

REFERENCES


