Benefits of Human Resources Programmes to Community Development Officers

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Abstract: The study examines benefits of Human Resources Programmes to Community Development Officers in Rivers State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was administered to 190 randomly selected Community Development Officers in the study area. Findings revealed Workshop, Seminar, in-service training/on-the-job training, refresher courses/re-training programmes, Orientation courses/induction programmes, Weekend study/short courses, Symposium and Computer literacy as Human resources programmes that community development officers participate in. Also, findings revealed that the following benefits have been derived from HRD programmes: Human resource development (HRD) programmes have helped to improve skills and competence in organizing community development programmes, HRD programmes have provided opportunities to acquire new skills and techniques for organizing community development programmes, HRD programmes provided by Rivers State government has made them better professionals or experts in community development, enhanced computer literacy through computer training provided by your employer. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that more HRD programmes be provided regularly for community development officers in order to improve their skills and competence. Also, study leave with pay should be encouraged to update the knowledge of those who may have been employed earlier without adequate requisite credentials. It is also suggested that weekend and short courses be encouraged among community development officers.
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Key words: Human Resources Programmes, Community Development Officers, benefits

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a country of 923,768sq. km: a Federation of 36 States, 140 million people and about 250 ethnic groups (Enemugwem 2008). The nation is "perceived as one of the richest countries in Africa because of the nation's large population and large petroleum reserves. Such speculation is based on Nigeria being the fifth largest sources of United States oil imports and one of the world's largest exports" (The Library of Congress Countries Studies: CLA World Fact Book June, 1991). Despite the fabulous wealth, most communities in the country lack the basic amenities such as hospitals, schools, roads, pipe-borne-water, and electricity. Moreover, the rate of unemployment and poverty level is high. Thus the need for community development programmes/projects such as infrastructural development, skill acquisition programme, agricultural extension programme, family life, HIV and AIDS programme just to mention but a few in order to quell the problem of under development in the country.

Community development programmes provided by the government, non-governmental organizations and oil companies have not been effective because these problems are still there in the communities. The problems facing community development programmes are probably as a result of unqualified and untrained change agents in oil companies, nongovernmental organizations and in the local, state and federal government. This calls for training and retraining of community development officers, as they play significant role in community development programmes.

Rivers State of Nigeria is not left out in this problem of underdevelopment. The State is located in the southern region of Nigeria between latitude 4^0 22'E and 7^0 35' (Nlegwe A. 1987:1). The State shares boundaries with Anambra State in the north, Imo state in the north-east, Akwa Ibom on the east and Bayelsa on the west. There are 23 local government areas in Rivers State namely Andoni, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, PortHarcourt, Abua/Odua, Ahoada West, Ahoada East, Tai, Oyigbo, Ogu/Bolo, Opobo/Nkoro, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Okrika, Omumma, Khana, Gokana, Etche, Eleme, Emohua, Degema, Bonny, Asari Toru, and Akuku Toru. As one of the Niger Delta States, about 70% of the State is crisscrossed with rivers, with a population projection of 33,616,000 in 2010 (Niger Delta Development Master Plan 2006: 17).

Apart from crude oil, sources of the State's economy include agriculture and commerce. United Nations Development Report (UNDP) (2006:1) state that, "the Niger Delta region accounts for about 79.5 percent of government revenue and 95 percent of foreign exchange revenue". The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (2006) also observed that, "the region has fertile land which supports agriculture all year round". Although Rivers State as one of the Niger Delta States is blessed with mineral resources and a fertile land for agriculture, the region is still underdeveloped. Most of the communities in Rivers State are in the rural areas and they lack basic amenities such as hospitals, schools, roads, pipe-borne-water, and electricity. According to Ikiriko (2005:82) as quoted by Jaja (2007:183) "there is no road to Bonny, Opobo and Buguma". Interestingly, these are economically important communities in the State. Most of the rural community members are poor and the rate of unemployment is high. This obviously may have forced them to take to social vices are succor. There has been the problem of insecurity in the region as youths engage in pipe-line-vandallisation and kidnapping. Infact, there has been conflict between the youths and the multinational oil company. Despite the efforts of many development agencies, private sector organizations, oil companies and government organizations to transform the region socially and economically, the people of the region are still poor. UNDP (2006:2) noted that "the region's human development index remains at a low value of 0.564 which shows that, the longevity of life, knowledge and decent standard of living is low in the region:. However, community development programmes such as vocational or skill acquisition programmes, leadership training, agricultural extension, cooperative, infrastructural development among others that would have been used to solve these problems already mentioned have failed due to untrained and unqualified community development officers.

Rivers State as one of the Niger Delta State have been suffering from poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness, conflict between the youths and oil companies, kidnapping and insecurity of life property. The people also lack basic amenities. There have been community development programmes/projects by the government, nongovernmental organizations and oil companies but these programmes have not been effective as most of the programmes/projects are abandoned, misused, discontinued and mismanaged. These problems arise from the fact that most change- agents are untrained and unqualified although the government has been sending community development officers to human resources development programmes for training. These programmes help to develop human capacity by enhancing human resources. Ake (1992) divided human resources into three broad groups to include the professional, managerial and administrative at the topmost level; technical, supervisory and sub-professional personal at the middle level, and craftsmen, artisans, operatives and manual workers at the lowest levels. In order for us to appreciate whether human resource programmes are available or not, this study seeks to investigate how human resources development programmes such as induction courses, refresher courses, retraining programmes, seminars, workshops, conferences, on-the-job training and professional training in universities and colleges provided by the government for community development officers can enhance effective community development. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the benefits of human resource development for effective community development. Specifically this study will: Identify different types of human resources development programmes for community development officers in Rivers State. It also, ascertains if community development officers benefit from these human resources development programmes.

2. Research Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in the work. The research design is adopted in this work since the research is on the impact of human resources development for effective community development in Rivers State. According to Wali (2002) a survey research design is used to ascertain the current status of a problem or phenomenon by studying a true representative of the population. Thus, the design handles situational problems and suggests solution to them.

The population of the study consists of community development officers in the study area. Six local government Areas (LGA) in Rivers state were randomly selected for the study. Two hundred (200) respondents comprising one-hundred and eighty (180) community development officers in the six selected Local Government Areas in Rivers State and twenty (20) community development officers in Rivers State Development Centre for Women Affairs in Port Harcourt. The sampling technique used for the study is random sampling technique because it gives every person in the population of study equal opportunity to be selected for the study. The selection of population

by Local Government Areas was carried out thus: Ahoada East Local Government Area (Ahoada)- 30 community development officers, Bonny Local Government Area (Bonny) – 30 community development officers; Andoni Local Government

Area, (Nngo) – 30 community development officers. In all data for 190 respondents was used for analysis which was carried out through descriptive statistics.

3. Results and Discussion

Human Resources Development (HRD) Programmes

Table 1: Human Resources Development (HRD) Programmes for Community Development Officers in Rivers State

Questionnaire items	Responses				Mean	Remarks
	SA	A	D	SD		
1. Your employer sponsors you to workshop.	- -	190 100%	- -	- -	2.50	Accepted
2. Seminar is one of the human resources development (HRD) programmes for community development officers in Rivers State	109 57%	37 19%	22 12%	22 12%	3.20	Accepted
3. You are allowed to for in-service training/on-the-job training	136 72%	38 20%	10 5%	6 3%	3.60	Accepted
4. Your employer sponsors degree programmes for community development officers in higher institutions	19 10%	72 38%	70 37%	29 15%	2.40	Rejected
5. Your employer grants you study-leave with pay.	18 9%	20 11%	140 74%	12 6%	2.20	Rejected
6. Your employer allows to attend refresher courses/re-training programmes	97 35%	19 10%	57 30%	47 25%	2.60	Accepted
7. Orientation courses/induction programmes are among the HRD programmes for newly recruited community development officers.	38 20%	72 38%	27 14%	53 28%	2.50	Accepted
8. Weekend study/short courses are among the training devices for community development officers in Rivers State	7 4%	4 2%	91 48%	88 46%	1.60	Accepted
9. Symposium is another HRD programme for community development officers.	55 29%	54 28%	36 19%	45 24%	2.60	Accepted
10. Computer literacy is one of the training devices for community development officers in Rivers State	125 66%	50 26%	10 5%	5 3%	3.60	Accepted
Grand mean					2.70	

Criterion mean (midpoint) = 2.50; any mean score < 2.50 suggests rejection of the item statement, while any mean score ≥ 2.50 suggests acceptance of the item statement

Table 1 shows that the grand mean in respect of the human resources development programmes provided for community development officers is 2.70 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore accepted that there are HRD programmes for community development officers in Rivers State. Furthermore, table 1 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 10 have mean responses above the criterion mean of rejection and are accepted. Analysis of item 1 shows that 100 percent of the respondents agreed that their employer sent them to workshops and the mean score for item 1 is 2.50 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore accepted that community development officers are sent to workshop by the government. Analysis of item two

showed that 57 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, seminar is one of the HRD programmees for community development officers in Rivers State while 19 percent of the respondents agreed. 12 percent of the respondents disagreed that; seminar is one of the HRD programmes for community development officers while 12 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.20 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. Thus, it is accepted that, seminar is one of the HRD programmes for community development officers in Rivers State.

Analysis of item three showed that, 72 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, they go for in-service training and on-the-job training while 20 percent of the respondents

agreed. About 5 percent of the respondents disagreed that, they go for in-service training and on-the-job training while 3 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.60 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore, accepted that in-service training and on-the-job training are among the HRD programmes provided for community development officers in Rivers State. Analyses of item six showed that, 35 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, their employer send them for refresher courses/re-training programmes while 10 percent of the respondents agreed. 30 percent of the respondents disagreed that their employer send them for refresher courses/ re-training programmes while 25 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.60 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore, accepted that community development officers for refresher courses/re-training programmes. Analyses of item seven showed that 20 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, Orientation courses/induction programme are among the HRD programmes for newly recruited community development officers while 38 percent of the respondents agreed. 14 percent of the respondents disagreed that, Orientation courses/induction programme are among the HRD programmes for newly recruited community development officers while 28 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.50 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore, accepted that Orientation courses/induction programme are among the HRD programmes for community development officers. Analyses of item nine showed that 29 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that Symposia is another HRD programme for community development officers in Rivers State while 24 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.60 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore, accepted that Symposia is another HRD programme for community development officers in Rivers State.

Analysis of item ten showed that, 66 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that computer training is one of the training devices for community development officers in Rivers State while 26 percent of the respondents agreed. About 5 percent of the respondents disagreed that computer training is one of the training devices for community development officers in Rivers State while 3 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.60 which is

above criterion mean of rejection. It is therefore, accepted that, computer training is one of the HRD programmes for community development officers in Rivers State. Thus, the HRD programmes for community development officers include workshop, seminars, on-the-job training, in-service training, retraining programme, refresher courses, orientation courses, induction programme, symposia and computer training.

However, items 4, 5 and 8 on table 1 have mean responses below the critical mean of acceptance and are thus rejected. Analyses of item four showed that 10 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that their employer sponsors them to go for degree programmes in higher institutions while 38 percent of the respondents agreed, 37 percent of the respondents disagreed that their employer sponsors them to go for degree programmes in higher institutions while 15 percent of the respondents strongly disagree, with a mean score of 2.40 which is below the criterion mean of acceptance. It is therefore rejected that, community development officers who go for degree programmes in the higher institutions are being sponsored by their employer.

Analyses of item five showed that 9 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that their employer grant them study-leave with pay while 11 percent of the respondents agreed. 74 percent of the respondents strongly disagree, with a mean score of 2.20 which is below the criterion mean of acceptance. It is therefore rejected that, community development officers are granted study leave with pay. Analyses of item eight showed that 4 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, Weekend study/short courses are among the training device for community development officers in Rivers State while 2 percent of the respondents agreed. About 48 percent of the respondents disagreed that, Weekend study/short courses are among the training device for community development officers in Rivers State while 46 percent of the respondents strongly disagree, with a mean score of 1.60 which is below the criterion mean of acceptance. It is therefore rejected that, Weekend study/short courses are among the training device for community development officers in Rivers State. Therefore, study-leave with pay, Sponsored leave of absence for academic or professional studies, Weekend study and short courses are not among the training device for community development officers in Rivers State.

Benefits derived by community development officers from HRD programmes.
Table 2: Showing Percentage of Responses and Mean on benefits derived by community development officers from HRD programmes.

Questionnaire items	Responses				Mean	Remark
	SA	A	D	SD		
11. Human resource development (HRD) programmes has helped you to improve your skills and competence in organizing community development programmes	52 27%	88 46%	28 15%	22 12%	2.9	Accepted
12. HRD programmes have provided you with opportunities to acquire new skills and techniques for organizing community development programmes	66 36%	54 28%	52 27%	18 9%	2.9	Accepted
13. HRD programmes provided by Rivers State government has made you a better professional or expert in community development	38 20%	72 38%	27 14%	53 28%	2.5	Accepted
14. You are now computer literate through computer training provided by your employer	76 40%	79 41%	5 3%	30 16%	3.1	Accepted
Grand mean					2.90	

Criterion mean (midpoint) = 2.50; any mean score < 2.50 suggests rejection of the item statement, while any mean score ≥ 2.50 suggests acceptance of the item statement

Table 2 shows that the grand mean on the benefits of community development officers from HRD programmes is 2.90 which is above the critical mean of rejection and it is therefore accepted that community development officers benefit from HRD programme. Moreover, items 11, 12, 13 and 14 in table 2 have mean scores that is above the criterion mean of rejection. Item eleven shows that 27 percent of the respondent strongly agreed that HRD programmes have improved their skills and competence in organizing community development programmes while 12 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.90 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is accepted that community development officers have improved their skills and competence in organizing community development programmes through HRD.

Item twelve shows that, 36 percent of respondents strongly agreed that, they have been able to acquire new skills and techniques through HRD programmes while 28 percent of respondents agreed. About 27 percent of respondents disagreed that, they have been able to acquire new skills and techniques through HRD programmes while 9 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.90 which is above the criterion 1 mean of rejection. It is therefore accepted that HRD programmes have provided opportunities for community development officers to acquire new skills and techniques to perform their job.

Item thirteen shows that, 20 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that, HRD programmes provided by the government have made them better professional while 38 percent of the respondents agreed. About 14 percent of the respondents disagreed that, HRD programmes provided by the government have made them better professional while 28 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.50 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is accepted that, through HRD programmes, community development officers are better professionals. This agrees with the assertion of Leonard and Naddler (1990) who observed that an organization that does not have people with the appropriate competence will have difficulty achieving the benefit of that segment. Watkins (1992) noted that human resources includes but not limited to training, career development and organizational development. Whereas Heathfield (2008) stated that human resource development is the framework for helping employees develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities.

Item fourteen shows that, 40pecent of the respondents strongly agreed that, they are now computer literate through computer training provided by their employer while 41 percent of the respondents agreed. About 3 percent of the respondents disagreed that, they are now computer literate through computer training provided by their employer while 16 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 3.10 which is above the criterion mean of rejection. It is accepted that computer training has made community development officers have; improve their skills and competence, acquire new skills and techniques, become computer literate and have become better professionals or practitioners.

Conclusion and recommendations
The study concludes from the findings that workshop, seminar, in-service training/on-the-job

training, refresher courses/re-training programmes, orientation courses/induction programmes, weekend study/short courses, symposium and computer literacy are human resources programmes that community development officers participate in. It is also concluded that the following benefits have been derived from HRD programmes: Human resource development (HRD) programmes have helped to improve skills and competence in organizing community development programmes, HRD programmes have provided opportunities to acquire new skills and techniques for organizing community development programmes, HRD programmes provided by Rivers State government has made them better professionals or experts in community development, enhanced computer literacy through computer training provided by your employer. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that more HRD programmes be provided regularly for community development officers in order to improve their skills and competence. Also, study leave with pay should be encouraged to update the knowledge of those who may have been employed earlier without adequate requisite credentials. It is also suggested that weekend and short courses be encouraged among community development officers.

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