The perceived effects of field-based learning in building responsive partnerships for community development

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Abstract This paper argues for the use of field-based learning activities in the training of community-based extension workers (CBEWs). CBEWs are in a challenging position. They are expected to provide services to local communities in an integrated/coordinated manner. Thus, they require partnership skills to work as an effective group. Hermeneutic-phenomenological interviewing revealed that training systems in their current forms remain unable to address the partnership skill-needs of CBEWs. This paper argues for the re-orientation of the current training systems, to make field-based learning an integral element of the training systems.

Introduction

In developing local communities, one tradition is growing more valuable. This tradition is partnership. The most pressing needs and problems of local communities cannot be solved so long as community-based extension workers (CBEWs) and other concerned groups operate in isolation from each other. Thus, to harmonize activities of various stakeholders in the extension systems, the government of Botswana has devised a policy of coordination. As expressed in the government papers (Rural Extension Coordinating Committee [RECC] 1983), coordination as a policy has a number of implications for practice. First, it makes it central that all government extension departments work in unison. Moreover, it favours collaboration of the government extension departments with other interests groups such as NGO, private organizations, parastatals and other stakeholders in the extension system. Second, it makes it imperative that some means be devised to ensure that indeed partnerships are formed and are maintained. The challenge for engaging in coordination, that is,

the working together of the extension stakeholders, is made very important by the fact that the services provided by these stakeholders are linked; they also work with the same communities and for the same employer: the government.

In this paper, the discussion centres on a cadre of extension agents known as the community-based extension workers (CBEWs). In Botswana, CBEWs comprise agents from different extension departments such as social work, communication, education and information (IEC), health, community development, non-formal education, agriculture and rural area development. In the villages, they provide different services such as social welfare activities, primary health care, adult literacy, destitute schemes, counselling, orphanage projects, self-help projects and non-formal education activities. They also attend to juvenile cases. The nature of provision demands that they work together because the tasks they do overlap. To encourage formation of partnerships among CBEWs, a policy, called coordination, is being implemented. Coordination is defined as the harmonization of activities for the purpose of ensuring optimum collective contribution and for the achievement of a common end of developing local communities (Mooka, 1995). Such harmonization requires a higher sense of collective responsibilities on the part of CBEWs.

Important as it may sound, coordination as explained in this paper does not reflect what actually happens in practice. What partnership entails can only be known from CBEWs' perspectives because true partnership develops 'as the partners come know, not just each other, but the implications of their social act' (Littrel and Hobb, 1989, p. 48). Thus, hermeneutic-phenomenological interviews were conducted so that a better meaning of CBEWs' working together as partners in community development could be revealed.

The problem

Very often some policy-makers take for granted that CBEWs, by virtue of the work or services they provide, do work in close contact. This thinking is further corroborated by the literature that reveals that most of the conceptions of coordination in the political sense focus on its success impact and takes into account little consideration of the fact that 'working together is never simple' (Huxham, 1996, p. 4). The point being raised here is that in reality, partnership is not easy to establish and maintain and this might be the situation with CBEWs. The scepticism about the working relationships of the CBEWs has been heightened by the fact that the extension services are fragmented into sectoral responsibilities (Mooka, 1995). That is, the extension departments work in isolation from each other. For example, CBEWs

come under separate ministries, each with its own policies and resources, independent of the others. They are also 'answerable to different and sometimes conflicting authorities' (Mooka, 1995). One may then speculate that no amount of encouragement to have CBEWs work as partners would be of much use if coordination of activities is not encouraged from the ministerial and/or departmental levels (RECC, 1983). In a nutshell, we believe that fragmented activities at the ministerial and departmental levels do very little to encourage the spirit of active partnership among CBEWs at the village level. These autonomous practices have a high potential to suppress rather than encourage integrated extension services. Furthermore, practices of this nature beget problems such as duplication of activities, conflict among CBEWs, conflicts between CBEWs and the villagers and the unsound uses of scare resources (RECC, 1994). There is, therefore, a need to explore ways in which the extension services can be properly coordinated. Coordination instead of fragmentation can help minimize some problems cited in the literature. The challenge for this study was to come up with possible strategies that can be employed to ensure that CBEWs from different extension departments work together. These strategies should make it possible for the extension stakeholders to establish and maintain some professional competences and attitudes.

Conceptual framework

Conceptually, community development is a way of 'learning from each other and taking action together' (Chamberlain, 1993, p. 31). Chamberlain observes that, 'it is not only what's being done that is impressive, but how – against the odds; and why – the motivation and the spirit that produces such a determination to succeed' in community development (Chamberlain, 1993, p. 32). Ideally, CBEWs are linked together by a common goal of combining activities and working together so as to build good relationships and share available resources in the villages. The social-systems perspective (Blakely, 1989), a conceptual framework guiding this study, goes further to encourage partnerships of CBEWs with community members and other interest groups.

In community development, partners engage in activities embedded in the day-to-day interests and needs of the residents. In Botswana, for example, a CBEW is a field worker whose activities are carried out more in the community environments than in the offices (Mooka, 1995). Typically, CBEWs' work atmosphere is characterized by interactions, with other CBEWs, residents of a local community and community-located and interest groups such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector groups, voluntary organizations and parastatals engaged in community

development. A community is thus conceptualized as a 'network of people', linked by the way they live as a unitary group such as the ability and capacity to identify their 'needs, define problems, and plan and execute appropriate courses of action' (Campfen's, 1997, p. 24). CBEWs play a major leading role in uniting these relevant groups. This role requires clear and well-defined operational guidelines. CBEWs need to be equipped with skills to permit effective partnering and delivery of activities that are responsive to local conditions and needs (Hughes, 1984). Believing that CBEWs are the right people to furnish me with information about ways in which their partnership skills can be enhanced, I carried out this study to explore their experiences. The strategy suggested by the participants, field-based learning, focuses on plausible means of promoting complementarity rather than fragmentations among CBEWs. The strategy touches on issues of how to establish and maintain a connection of policies, philosophy, resources and logistical practices among the extension departments. It is through effective partnerships that a unitary community can be built and maintained.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative paradigm, phenomenology. Phenomenology is a study of lived experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 1990). The main assumption behind any phenomenological study is that individuals hold personal and unique consciousness about some concrete situations as experienced (Spielgelberg, 1975). Thus, this paradigm was used in this study because I believed that CBEWs had concrete experiences of their work and trainings which when explored could form a foundation on which effective strategies for enhancing their partnership skills could be built. The primary objective of this study was a direct investigation and description of the phenomenon of partnership as consciously experienced by the CBEWs. Thus, a full understanding of CBEWs' working together as partners in community development required an in-depth interviewing and probing of CBEWs' lived experiences. To this end, I conducted hermeneutic interviewing. It was through some careful questioning, listening, probing and sharing ideas with CBEWs that the 'quintessential' meaning of CBEWs' experiences was revealed (van Manen, 1990).

Selection and sampling

Purposive sampling was used. Purposive is a 'strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be [obtained] from other choices'

(Maxwell, 1996, p. 69), such as random or probability sampling. Through this sampling strategy, five districts of Botswana were selected as study sites.

I selected villages within areas of convenience to me; that is, areas that I could conveniently reach without many obstacles, such as lack of transport, poor roads and inaccessibility to phones. Goetz and LeCompte (1984), for example, state that 'all researchers choose populations or samples that are, for whatever reasons, as convenient as possible' (p. 73). In sum, the type of sampling for this study was purposive, using convenient and criterion-based techniques to arrive at the actual participants in this study.

Participation

Community-based extension workers, a cadre of the extension agents who work with local communities at the village level, were selected as 'information rich cases'. Patton (1990) explains information-rich cases as cases 'from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (p. 169). He states that if 'one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; [then] one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most' (p. 185). CBEWs were in a fit position to talk meaningfully about experiences of working with the local communities. A set of criteria was established to use in selecting the actual participants in this study and these were as follows: (a) the participant must be a community-based extension worker (CBEW) based at the village level; (b) the CBEW should be a government employee involved in community development work; (c) the CBEW should have worked at the village level for a significant time (six months and more) to be familiar with coordination structures, such as the Village Development Community (VDC), Village Health Team (VHT) and Village Extension Team (VET); and (d) the CBEW should have undergone some training in extension work. Participation by both males and females meeting the aforementioned criteria was considered. In all, participants totalled twenty-nine. There were fourteen (48%) social workers, seven (24%) cooperative officers, three (10%) agricultural officers, three (10%) health officers and two (7%) rural area development officers (RADO). The twenty-nine CBEWs included eighteen (62%) women and eleven (38%) men, all of them were Batswana.

Research procedures

Data collection
Phenomenological interviewing
To get CBEWs' experiences of working together (partnerships), hermeneutic phenomenological interviews were conducted. Interviewing provided

a platform for me to engage in face-to-face interaction with CBEWs and talk about what it means for them to work as community development agents. The interviews took place at CBEWs' workplaces. Flexibility with the use of either Setswana or English language, or mixing both languages was allowed in order to be consistent with CBEWs' day-to-day patterns of communication. Such flexibility enhanced active participation and facilitated personal engagement of CBEWs. It was easy for them to express themselves.

The interviews conducted in this study were guided by an interview guide. The tool ensured that questions asked were tailored to the research problem and that basically similar questions were asked in each situation. Questions in the interview guide were constantly modified to focus attention on the flow and on areas of particular importance to the study. The primary interviewing question was 'How do community-based extension workers describe their working relationships as partners in community development, and, what contributions do they believe their previous extension training programs have made to such working relationships?' The richness of the data was preserved through audio-tape recording and journal writing. Recording allowed for verbatim transcription and enhanced the credibility of this study.

During interviewing, a time came when I felt that no more new data were forthcoming because repetitions had begun to occur. I then applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) principle of redundancy. For qualitative researchers, redundancy (repetition of information) signals the end of data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba state that 'it is usual to find that a dozen or so interviewed, if properly selected, will exhaust most available information; to include as many as 20 will surely reach well beyond the point of redundancy' (p. 235). Having been satisfied that indeed redundancy was being reached, I then applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) advice that researchers should 'repeat until redundancy – and then just one more time for safety' (p. 219), then I stopped interviewing.

Data analysis

Analysis in this study meant 'working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 145). Actually, analysis proceeded through different stages and involved analytic techniques such as micro-analysis, open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1988). Also, I adapted some procedures of analysing data from Smith, Jarman and Osborn's (1999) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Coding procedures

Three coding categories of open, axial and selective (Strauss and Corbin, 1988) were used. At the end of this coding exercise, I came up with three broad categories of (i) Work Experiences, (ii) Training Experiences and (iii) Training for Coordination/Strategies for enhancing partnership. To arrive at these categories, I analysed data into discrete parts, closely examined them and compared them for similarities and differences. During this process, ideas and thoughts that were 'found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning were grouped under a category' (Strauss and Corbin, 1988, p. 102). A coded response ranged from a single word, a phrase to one or more paragraphs.

Research results

CBEWs who participated in this study were unanimous that there was need for them to work as partners in community development because, as a health educator said, 'the nature of work we do demands that we work together, the tasks that we do link and connect'. Another participant, a social worker, reiterated this point by stating that 'we work for one government', it is important for them to coordinate the tasks they do. Thus, the territorial or sectoral divisions of the extension service were seriously challenged by the participants. An information, education and communication (IEC) officer, for example, said:

> What I have observed is that people always want to look at things in an ideal way, but practically, things don't happen the way we pretend they are happening. Myself, I am not a nurse, or a social worker nor a rural area development officer, but you look at these people's area of work, you will realize that they are so comfortable and settled in their own territories. When you try to work with them it's so difficult. Let's say we have a HIV patient, as an information, education, and communication officer, you will find that I need the help of a nurse to provide a realistic and wholistic environment for the patient, but you'll find that the nurse is not willing or prepared to work with an officer from another department, then alone I fail because I can't provide clinically oriented or preventive measures.

The sentiment expressed by the IEC officer was also mirrored in a social welfare officer's experiences. She talked about her frustrations as she tried to get other extension workers at her work station to come together and work as a team: 'They demean and turn my efforts into sarcasm.' She further said: 'They look at you as an out of the ordinary – you deviate from the norm.' What, however, was particularly interesting was that CBEWs displayed great interest in seeing themselves work as a solid unit [*seopasengwe*] so as to demonstrate that "*Kgetse ya tsie e kgonwa ke go*

pataganelwa" (a Setswana proverb), as expressed by a rural area development officer (RADO). The literal translation of this proverb is 'The more hands, the easier to carry a (heavy) bag of locusts.' The proverb carries the meaning of 'unity is strength'. There seemed to be a fundamental urge among participants to see various extension departments working as a team. Participants thus suggested that the concerned extension departments should work out compatible and complementary training philosophies that can help promote and reinforce coordination rather than competition and fragmentations among themselves.

Furthermore, the analogy of 'the parts of the body' was used by some participants to illustrate their desires to see different extension departments working to offset the fragmentation that currently exists. One social worker, for example, stated that 'when we work together, just like body parts, isn't that when the eye is hurting, the rest of the body is affected, isn't that so? That's why there is need for us to work together. When the cooperatives fail, the entire community suffers.' Thus, the general feeling was that for CBEWs to work effectively together, intersectoral and complementary training approaches reinforce coordination rather than competition among CBEWs. It would be pointless to expect CBEWs to work together effectively without relevant preparation. One participant stated: 'Just as our bodies are (giggles), I take that the arm has its own responsibilities and it works in relation with other parts. The arm wouldn't work effectively if its role is not defined.' The point here is that, for proper coordination to happen, each part (partner) has to have a specific role to play and these roles can be enhanced through well-structured and focused learning. Participants of this study agreed that CBEWs need proper understanding and necessary skills for coordinating their activities. A field-based training was suggested as an appropriate approach in enhancing partnership skills. There are a number of reasons given by participants for their preference for field-based learning activities. The discussion that follows explores both the rationale and essentials for using this technique.

Rationale for engaging in field-based learning

CBEWs are field workers

CBEWs in Botswana are workers whose operations take place in the local community environments rather than in offices. A typical work atmosphere of such a CBEW is characterized by interactions with other CBEWs, residents of a local community and community interest groups. CBEWs come from different extension departments and provide various services such as family welfare activities, destitute schemes, counselling, orphanage, self-help projects and attend to juvenile cases. The nature of provision

demands that they work together because the tasks they do link and connect, as explained by one of the participants. However, the greatest finding of this study was that CBEWs do not work collaboratively as expected. Participants of the study stated clearly that they are ill-prepared to work as partners in community development. Thus, they recommended that training, centrally organized, should be designed to equip them with skills for partnerships. The main feature of this training should be field-based learning. This type of arrangement can help CBEWs to organize themselves for partnership activities with people in the local community and workplaces. Arrangements such as placements in authentic work settings will permit CBEWs to group themselves into mini-interdisciplinary groups and work with local communities or with people in the workplace.

The independence of CBEWs as learners

CBEWs work under circumstances that are not easily amenable to strict rules. They are independent. The concept of independence means that they take initiatives and leading roles in community development activities. The implication of this conceptualization for trainers is that, in the learning environment, CBEWs should be freed from teachers as manipulators, controllers or conveyers of knowledge. The rising interest is to see teachers promoting the independence of CBEWs. For them, teachers are guides or facilitators. The point being made here is that CBEWs are capable of initiating and taking responsibility for their learning. They can work independently in organizing their field-based activities. Furthermore, such independence can be facilitated through open rules and regulations like giving learners freedom to express preferences and make choices of whom to partner with in authentic work settings. The driving forces behind choices for partnering should be CBEWs' work interests, preferences and careers objectives. Thus, field-based learning activities should not be a matter of ingesting teacher-defined and decontextualized content, but rather about giving opportunity to learners to express their interests and explore real-life situations.

While facilitators are expected to be sensitive to learners' interests and to give them control of organizing their field activities, precautions should be taken to ensure that indeed learners engage in worthwhile and meaningful activities. Questions that need to be asked include the following: Do learners' choices exhibit responsibility and commitment to their work responsibilities as partners in community development? Do learners' choices reflect commitment to explore and learn new and challenging work tasks? Do learners' choices exhibit preparedness to learn and engage new knowledge, skills and attitudes based particularly on prior work experiences? Do learners' choices reflect awareness of and sensibility

to training goals and resources available in the institution that houses the training? These questions can help guide learners to engage meaningfully in field-based activities.

Experiences as a foundation for engaging meaningfully in field-based activities

CBEWs are field workers who have abundant work experiences. They get into the adult education lore of learning to build on and use their experiences to further their own learning. The importance of field experiences gained under dynamic work circumstances always exceeds the fundamentals of theory-laden training. This point was emphasized by one of the participants who stated that 'Everyone has a job and an experience, so everyone can have equal chance of sharing experiences.' Therefore, teachers have to provide them with learning avenues that build sturdily on what CBEWs already know and can do given their actual work situation. Field-based learning is an avenue that provides opportunities for the learners to apply their prior experiences in authentic work environments and in turn allows them to generate and gain new knowledge from such application.

Creating a climate for structured field-based learning

The challenge for extension trainers is to create opportunities for direct experiences in the form of placements in authentic work settings. CBEWs can learn 'best about working together and sharing experiences by actually . . . making connections with people in the field', said one participant. This type of connection has an advantage of creating a culture in which learning activities are publicly recognized and valued. Additionally, connecting classroom training with the world of work helps deepen learners' own learning by sharing what they do in the classroom with people in authentic work places. The challenge is to create a learning climate in which learners take classroom experiences to the field, and also bring field experiences to the classroom. In this way, work responsibilities and challenges are added to the learning environments and training becomes meaningful and challenging. In order to create a collaborative environment in which learners assume responsibility for their field-based learning activities, a number of things must be in place, some of which are discussed in the discussion that follows.

Teacher–learner essentials

Both teachers and learners have specific roles to play in procuring, preparing for and carrying out field-based learning activities. For the success of these learning experiences, facilitator–learner behaviour congruence

should prevail. For example, the facilitator should respect students' choices, and students must be open, free and genuine in sharing their experiences with the facilitator. Learners' self-evaluation (positive and negative) should be considered a positive method of appraisal. Facilitator's evaluation of learners' progress should also be conducted. Teacher–learner essentials can be created through a number of strategies, two such strategies are discussed below.

- Establishing teacher–learner rapport and trust

A better way of building rapport with adult learners is to interact with them – listen to, understand and respect their views. Interaction with learners can be done prior to or during training sessions. One of the participants, for example, suggested that 'comprehensive departmental, ministerial, and service-wide consultation exercises with extension workers can be done to help policy-makers gather relevant information about CBEWs' learning needs. Furthermore, such an exercise can help trainers and policy makers to understand, appreciate and address the actual challenges and problems of CBEWs' working relationships.' The other way of developing rapport is for facilitators to provide opportunities for learners to talk about their learning and their expectation of how such needs can be addressed through training. From this sharing, facilitators can learn a great deal about learners' backgrounds, learning needs and expectations.

Understanding and respecting learners' needs is one good step towards building strong rapport between an adult teacher and the adult learners, and among learners themselves. To build rapport also requires that teachers should be approachable and open. In so far as teaching approaches are concerned, teachers should select those that stimulate interaction and relationship-building. Methods such as dramatization, role-play and excursions can help build a good working relationships between teacher and learners and among learners. These methods are best suited to CBEWs' needs for they allow participants, both teachers and learners, to share their authority and to help promote collegiality and mutuality.

- Facilitating learners' independence and authority

Learners who engage in field-based learning activities are responsible for selecting and procuring their field placement with minimal supervision from the facilitators. Because students are responsible for procuring their own sites, they must convince potential hosts that they possess a certain degree of professional expertise. In other words, students must be viewed not as students per se but as professionals. They are at an early state of professional maturity when compared with their facilitators. Learners, therefore, should be helped to assume this responsibility as independent

adult learners. They should be allowed to gain and handle authority over ownership of field-activities. In this way, they are assured that their participation is valued, respected and worthwhile.

Curricula essentials

- Preparation for field-based learning activities

Field-based learning requires that CBEWs meet in a central place. A central place can provide opportunities for CBEWs from different extension departments to meet face-to-face and share work experiences in collegial and collaborative atmosphere. Sharing experiences is particularly important because it can help learners gain an understanding of what makes each of them unique in respect to work experiences and expertise. Such sharing will also provide a picture and a sense of the diverse settings or contexts of their work. In addition to sharing experience, learners can explore relevant literature to keep themselves abreast of current information and technologies employed in the work-life of extension agents. This may help them to evaluate diverse perspectives from the literature in terms of their applicability and usefulness to the extension services. Such evaluations are important in informing learners about different theories guiding the field.

The facilitator's role in preparing for field-based learning is vital. Facilitators have the responsibilities of developing a tentative syllabus based on the resources and the constraints of the institution hosting the training (availability of transport, facilities and logistical issues). The syllabus addresses critical components of the learning exercise such as ways in which field-based activities are planned and carried out. Students and the facilitator negotiate the syllabus and these negotiations are expected to be continuous based on the CBEWs' experiences in the field.

Substantive features of field-based training programmes

- Local interest

Facilitators in extension training are challenged to explore content areas in ways that permit the intermingling of theory and field-based (local) content. CBEWs believe that there is so much happening in their communities that they 'don't need books...We need to talk about what is happening to us', stated one participant. When learners talk about what is happening to them, learning is concrete and discussion in the classroom becomes stimulating and engaging. The contention made was that a typical class in which learning does not relate to local environments has little value or responsiveness to challenges and problems that CBEWs are likely to

encounter in real work situations. Furthermore, learning devoid of local issues builds artificial learning that does not apply easily to authentic work challenges. Artificial learning, such as 'bookish' contexts, according to Zlotkowski (1996) can only approximate the complexity of real-world situations. Therefore, a curriculum based on direct practical experiences and knowledge may best address problems that CBEWs are likely to meet in their respective work environments.

- Placements in authentic work settings

Placement means connecting formal content with the ever-changing conditions of the real work environments. The high levels of particpation and interaction inherent in placement activities have great potential to build partnership skills. Other pedagogical advantages that accrue from placements are heightened interests in learning. When trainees know that what they learn has real application in the lives of local communities, they are motivated to learn. Furthermore, placement makes it possible for direct and immediate experiences to be incorporated in the training programmes; they can build a sense of unity among participants.

- Interdisciplinary groupings

File-based activities allow for mini-interdisciplinary projects between CBEWs and the local community members. Such projects are ideal in promoting partnership skills. Furthermore, these types of activities open opportunities for CBEWs to meet with villagers outside the formal work environment; this may help ease some tensions and conflicts reportedly existing between some CBEWs and the local villagers. Interdisciplinary grouping means the working together of extension workers from different extension departments, for example, during field-based learning a CBEW working as health assistant and another working as a counselor, can work together on behalf of an HIV/AIDS patient. The counselor might provide ongoing support to the patient while the health assistant may offer relevant counselling assistance. Furthermore, 'a team of CBEWs can organize, co-lead and work on some projects' suggested one of the participants. Importantly, these types of groupings can help CBEWs realize that they have different but complementary job tasks that make it necessary for them to coordinate their activities in the villages.

- Sharing and evaluation time

Certainly, learning opportunities have to be provided for CBEWs to share their field-based experiences. Such opportunities give learners the chance to reflect, re-think, and generate new knowledge to fit their world of work. During sharing, each learner brings knowledge and experiences

from respective work sites and this might help CBEWs see the linking of tasks and the connection among themselves and learn from such connections. Teachers might relearn theories of the formal training in the context of learners' experiences and, in turn, learners can relate theories they explore in class to the realities of field-based activities. During sharing time, a teacher actually not only teaches, but continually learns from learners (Freire, 1973).

Support essentials for field-based learning activities

Support features that are deemed necessary for the success of field-based learning activities include institutional support and reputation, sponsorship and field receptivity.

- Institutional support

Institutional support refers to the responsiveness of the institution housing the extension training to the requirements of the training. For instance, for learners to prepare and engage in field-based learning activities, responsible institutions have to provide for regular and prolonged visits to the learning site. Transport, materials and other support services have to be arranged and provided. Without a proper and adequate institutional support and commitment, the proposed field-based learning may not materialize or unfold as intended.

- Institutional reputation

In addition to the institutional support, another element, institutional reputation, is necessary in facilitating field-based activities. If a department housing training has a long and favourable reputation in the professional preparation of extension and community agents, this reputation will aid field receptivity.

- Field receptivity

For field-based training experience to succeed, there should be a variety of contexts to accommodate the diversity of interests and career aspiration of CBEWs. It has to be noted that CBEWs themselves come from different extension departments and diverse working environments. Prospective sites, that is potential hosts, must know the benefits to be derived from being hosts. The point being made here is that organizations would be receptive to learners when they perceive them as valuable contributors. During training, CBEWs are expected to work in collaboration with people in the field. For example, plan together. In this way, learners will develop partnership skills.

Conclusion

As a response to previous training whose most significant feature has been fragmentation and uncoordinated contents and arrangements, CBEWs who participated in this study recommended that a centrally organized training that employs field-based learning should be organized. The general concern was that autonomous practices do not augur well for partnership activities. It is argued that extension workers from sectorally organized training programmes emerge with different orientations, knowledge and attitudes that may be conflicting, thus, making working together difficult. CBEWs need appropriate skills to enable them work together effectively and earn the trust of the public. They need clear and well-defined guidelines to permit effective partnerships and delivery of activities that are responsive to local conditions and needs. Field-based learning can provide an opportunity for the kind of working together that CBEWs would like to see happening among themselves and with other relevant groups.

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