

Staff Development through Team and Competency Building

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Abstract

The study is a summary of the activities in change project to improve staff development through team building and competency building among the staff of a nonprofit organization in Ghana. The nonprofit is in the mission of developing streetchildren by giving them a better quality of life. The set of interventions that were conducted effected immediate observable changes in the team during the short duration of the study. Due to the initial success, the study is still in progress and monitored in terms of delivery.

Keywords: staff development , team building, competency building, non profit, organizational effectiveness

Introduction

Human resource is known to be the most important asset needed in any organization. It is the hallmark of the success of any organization and is worthy of investment. Improving the effectiveness of the organization in general and to the development of my staff towards team and competency building is a leadership responsibility. Leaders who are ‘conscious change leaders’ seek to develop a change mindset in the organization , hoping that over time it can achieve breakthrough results from change change’ (Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, 2010, p. 16) . Change Capability establishes the core competency of improving just about every aspect of business performance”.(Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, 2010, p. 107)

According to Eigege, everything depends on team building: the greater number of principles you and your team mates learn and are willing to practice; the more likely you are to be transformed from group of individuals into a winning team.(Eigege, 2005) A united force is generally believed to be powerful than individual force. With a good team we can accomplish the unimaginable. To enable the development of the competence of the workforce of the organization, there need to be a strong team spirit among staff. Even for individuals to be interested to develop their competencies, a team is needed.

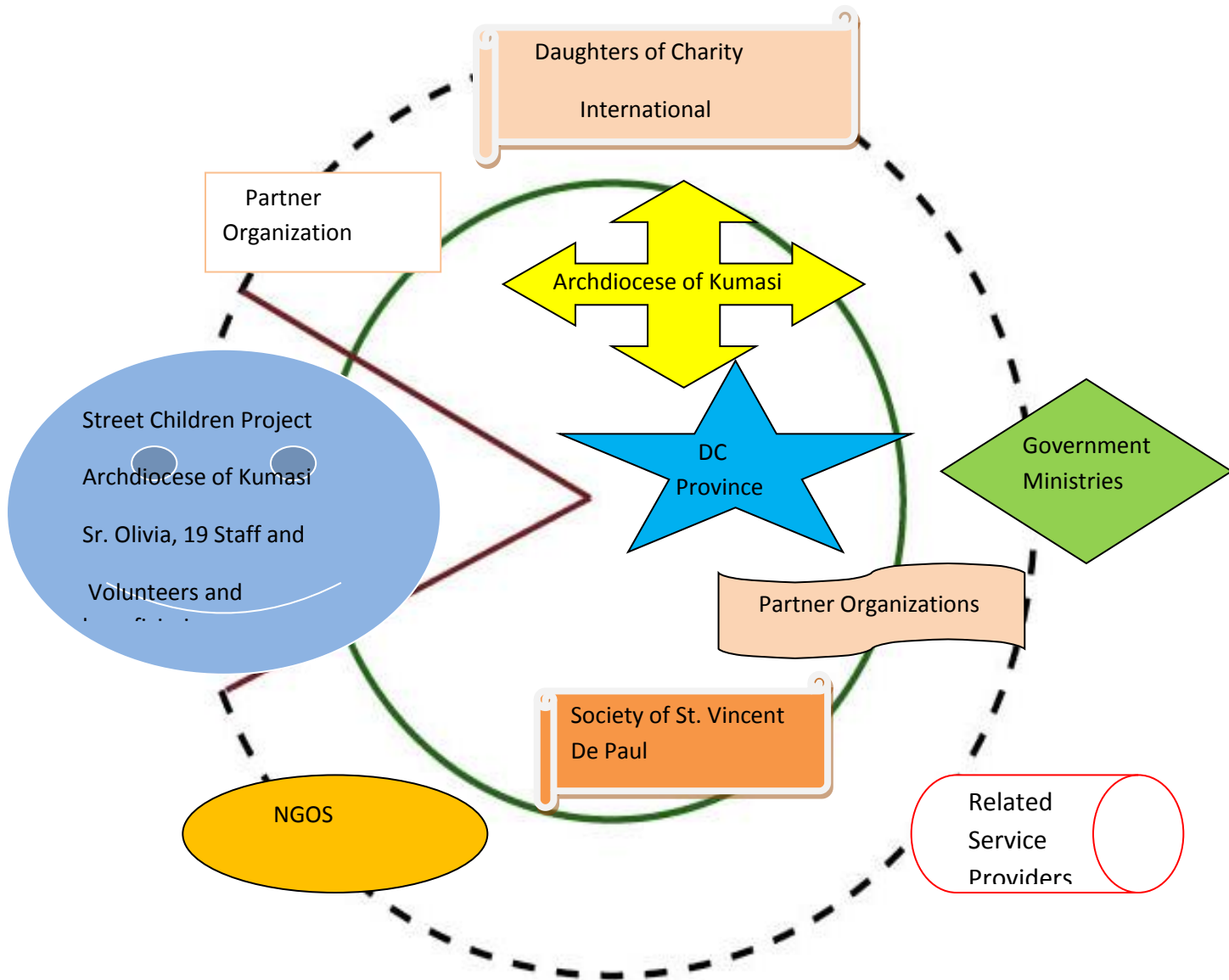
Competency building is another important index of organizational growth. Quite a number of the staff members in the organization under study have little professional

training in the areas they work. Most of them have learnt on the job and stand to benefit from ongoing training on the job. Thus, competency building would be of immense help towards improvement in service delivery. The impact directly or indirectly make transformational change possible as everyone would see the need for change and be part of the planned change process.

Limitation of Project

This project has been initiated to meet the academic requirement for a Masters Degree in Leadership in Mission. As an academic requirement, the project was carried out within a specified time. On the contrary, team / competency building were ongoing programs that needed to be undertaken over an extended period of time and indeed all the time, with the delivery of various training modules. Some workshops were organized within the space of time amid many other responsibilities that needed to be attended to. A second limitation was that being the director of the organization, having someone else facilitate training for my staff to enhance sharing and interaction was initiated. An environment where staff could relate freely and encouraging staff to relate with ease with the leader, encouraged everyone in the learning process and in the sharing of knowledge so that the entire organization can move in unison. Experts were also invited to facilitate some of the training sessions. Getting every staff member to be present at every workshop was another limitation. Sometimes one or two people were away for very cogent reasons. To overcome this limitation, flexibility was practiced in order to adjust and to adapt to each situation. Sometimes workshops were rescheduled to accommodate the schedules of the staff. They were conducted when staff members were all present and members were very cooperative and open to these adaptations in schedule.

The Systems Map



Focal System

The focal system within which this project was situated was the Street Children Project (SCP). The SCP is a church owned organization which offers care, education and rehabilitation services to children in street situation in Kumasi. The Project is situated within Kumasi Metropolis. Kumasi is the second largest city in Ghana and a major commercial center for Ghana, thus it attracts immigrants from all over Ghana including children. Kumasi has been identified as a major transit point in the trafficking of child labor. (Kumasi 2010)ⁱ

It is estimated that there are over 10,000 street children in Ghana.(Council, 2002)ⁱⁱ Majority of the children/youth on the street of Kumasi are girls between the ages of 5 to 23. These children live on the streets and hire themselves out for a variety of cheap labour including commercial sex activities, in order to make some money for sustenance.

The organization works to support the children on the street, to motivate them to leave the street and assist them reintegrate into their families or foster families, take up sponsorship in education or skill training for children who leave the street. The SCP has 19 full time staff and regularly benefits from services of both local and oversea volunteers. The Organization was established in 2005 by the Catholic archdiocese of Kumasi under the management of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul (DC).

Vision

We envisioned a world where all children live, grow and are cared for within their homes; that no child spends its childhood on the street.

Mission

The Street Children Project is committed to assist children on the streets of Kumasi, by reaching out to help them explore other options in life, offering enabling services to motivate them towards reintegration, empowering them by providing opportunities for education, and enterprise development.

General Objective

The goal of Street Children Project is to assist children in street situations towards rehabilitation, through street education, reintegration into their families and access to basic education/skill training.

Initial Scanning of the Focal System using SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Youthful vibrant staff members
- Staff members interest in ministry
- Staff have experience in their work areas
- Committed Staff members
- Clear mission

Weakness

- Fixation to existing procedures
- Low educational standard of some staff

- Tribal cliques
- Over sensitivity to diversity
- Lack of trust
- Lack of interest to learn
- Poor team spirit

Opportunities

- Availability of on the job training from partner organizations
- Support from Daughters of Charity Provincial team
- Periodic evaluation from Funding Agencies
- Accessibility of training materials

Threats

- Partner organization discontinue support for staff training
- Possible transfer of current Director
- Excess workload of Director

Root Problems/Life Giving Forces

Vulnerable poor children spending their childhood on the street need assistance, rehabilitation, counseling services, motivation, therapeutic interview etc. To provide these services staff need support of each other as they have to perform most of these tasks in teams. To provide standard service and achieve best practice, staff needs to be competent.

Problem Statement:

To improve organizational effectiveness through competency and team building

Change Project Design

Current Status

Statement of Possibilities:

To Improve Organizational Effectiveness through Team/Competency Building

- Organization Vision
- Mission
- Goals and Objectives

Appreciative Inquiry

SWOT Analysis



Change Process

Team Building Exercises:

Group dynamics using

- Appreciative Inquiry
- SWOT Analysis
- Presentation on modules- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Leading effective meeting
- Presentation on owning my organization
- Using Non- violent communication
- Modeling appreciative culture
- Use of Session Plan Model at meetings, briefing sessions and training workshops

Competency Building Exercises:

- Training through Workshops:-
- Making effective presentation
- Time Management
- Creativity Techniques



Desired State

Evident of Bonding among staff members and management

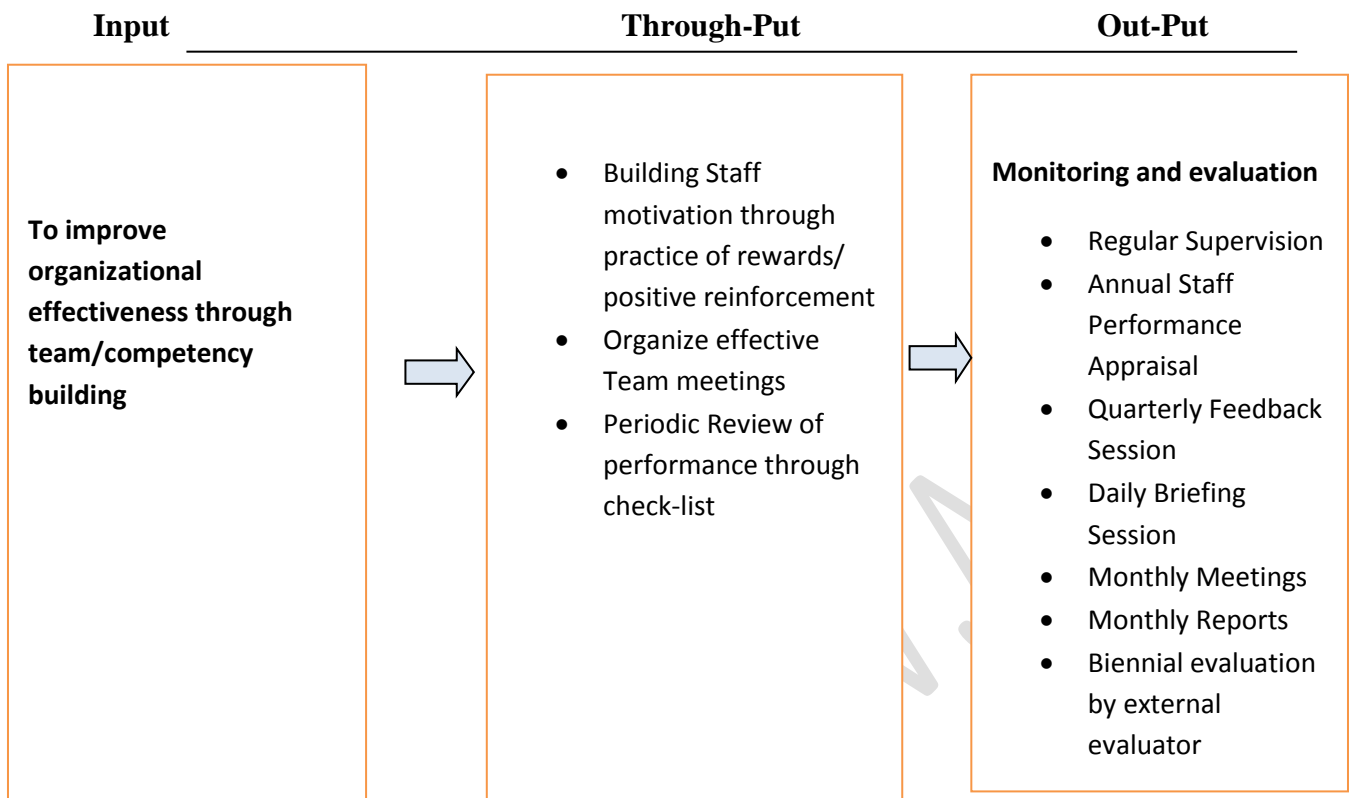
Staff is able to handle crucial conversations
Staff is able to handle crucial conversation
Staff can relate cordially with one another using friendly and non-violent language

Organizational Effectiveness

Staff delivers quality service
Staff produce quality/timely reports
Staff report to work on time

Staff carry out their jobs with minimum supervision

Note: All indicators are at 90% level of accomplishment after one year (beyond study time limitations)



Interventions Carried Out

In the last few months the following intervention plans have been carried out in relation to the planned change project:

Team Building Exercises

- 1) Organization of one day workshop on team building for staff. During this workshop all 19 staff and 4 volunteers attended. Team building exercises carried out which included sharing on “my river of life”, “Can I tell you who I am?” the longest line, and some trust building exercises such as sharing on “I like the way you...” and “Making a wish list for each other”

Result

The above workshop and the exercises introduced have already yielded some results. Staff expressed the exercises helped them let down their guards and connect deeper with each other. Some expressed it helped them know, appreciate and understand each other more deeply. It became evident that staff members were beginning to relate more closely and showed empathy towards one another.

2) Introduction of some Team Building practices

The practice of staff sharing sessions groups during the briefing sessions, staff meetings and in decision making was implemented .

Result

The above practices enhanced staff relationship which was evident in improved listening attitudes towards one another.

3) “Owning My Organization”

A one day workshop was organized on the topic “Owning my Organization” One of the exercises we did was SWOT Analysis. SWOT was used to analyze the organization.

Result

Participants expressed appreciation on workshop learning. Some said it was the first time they had shared that deeply with colleagues. Others expressed the opportunity to reflect on the various aspects of the organization has made them appreciate the organization more and deepened their sense of ownership and belonging.

4) Affirmation Session

As part of this project a workshop on “Growing through positive stroke” was conducted using the process of Appreciative Inquiry (AI).

Result

This workshop was attended by all 19 staff and 2 volunteers. The participants expressed that it was an eye opener as they never knew there were so much good and blessings within the organization and within staff members. Staff expressed they felt deeper appreciation for the organization and great sense of motivation for the service. There was already evidence of the staff taking responsibility for the organization, evident of some staff members taking initiatives. Staff members seem to be more concerned about the functioning of the group and the organization. Some evidence of interest to preserve what they have in the organization. This comes across in the way members of staff spoke about the organization to outsiders. Some staff admitted openly that the AI made them feel appreciated themselves. It was from this workshop that staff diagnosed the need to improve relationships among the staff and expressed the need to build staff competency through ‘on the job training’

5) Workshop on Giving and Receiving Feedback

A one day workshop for staff on “Giving and Receiving Feedback” using the module “Leadership for Peoples Development” was organized. The workshop was attended by all 19 staff and 1 volunteer.

Result

There was lots of interaction and sharing. It was remarkable how members of staff shared more freely. Small group exercises were carried out with ease and fun. Participants expressed that they had come to know that feedback is a way of helping one to grow and feel more disposed to receive feedback henceforth. After the session, it was noted that staff members were more appreciative and relaxed receiving feedback. Some staff have exercised some courage to give feedback themselves even outside the workplace. Follow-up task was carried out by all participants (Asking for feedback from someone in the organization) and during the monthly meeting staff remarked that they found the exercise helped them to be more open to one another and to trust one another.

6) Use of “Session Models” at Meetings, Daily Briefing and Weekly Review

The Session Model: (Enter→Link→Discover→Apply) was used in almost every training session and it was introduced to the staff- who then started using the model, particularly the ‘Enter’ stage during meetings and other sessions.

Result

The Session Model helped staff to connect with one another at sessions and dispose themselves to engage in the session, a better expression is “unfreeze” The model made it easy to take in input and to make sense of new learning as well as making them practical and applicable.

Competency Building Activities

1) Time Management

A one day workshop was facilitated on Time Management. The workshop was well facilitated by an expert and the staff engaged actively during the process.

Result

After this workshop every staff became conscious of time wasters, the importance of planning /prioritizing work, the need to follow schedule/ action plan, the value of time etc.

Staffs begun to show value for time. This was expressed in their punctuality to work, commitment to organized schedule and prioritizing of work as well as timely submission of reports.

2) Creativity Techniques

The staff were introduced to some creative techniques to help them deliver their jobs competently, confidently and creatively. At one of the monthly meetings, a volunteer made a presentation on “How to prepare teaching materials for value talk”. Value Talk is a daily activity which is carried out at the Street Children Centre and on the street, to educate children on various topics such as sex education, sexually transmitted diseases, Child Right, etc.

Result

Remarkable improvement has been noted on the presentation of value talk. Children enjoyed the value talk more as some staff took time to prepare materials and presented the talks in creative ways. It made the children curious about what was coming each day.

3) Counseling Training

Counseling is one of the activities carried as part of the organization's services. Children are supported and assisted to process their experiences through counseling. To enable the staff update and sharpen their skills, two staff members were sent for an update counseling workshop. On return they shared the workshop learning with all at a half day workshop.

Result

Staff members update counseling skills and all staff shared in the learning. Staff who participated in the training expressed that they felt more competent as they were more attuned to current trends in counseling.

4) Enhancing staff motivation through practice of rewards/ positive reinforcement

Staff motivation is necessary in building staff competency. People are more open to learn and apply learning to work situation if they are well motivated. A poorly motivated staff, no matter his qualifications and skills acquired, may not have the fervor to put to use his/her abilities. This is accomplished through affirming efforts of staff, recognizing their performances and initiatives, sometime just by verbal appreciation and sometimes by giving needed support as a reward for some good turn.

Result

The staff were generally happy and proud when their efforts were recognized and affirmed. It made others put in some extra effort to perform their duties well. The management team planned an award giving ceremony at Christmas that also provided an opportunity for staff to know their efforts were recognized and appreciated. The result of rewards/ positive reinforcement was not immediate though, but it added up over a period of time.

Summary

The entire process of setting out to develop staff through team and competency building in itself has helped deepened relationships among the staff who felt that the leaders cared and valued their contributions to the organization. Staff members expressed gratitude after every workshop session. The openness and willingness of staff to learn and to put to practice workshop learning, has encouraged and motivated the leaders to be committed to

ongoing staff development through team and competency building. Boyatzis and Mckee stated that people who managed their own development intentionally are poised to make good choices about what they need to do to be more effective, and be more satisfied with their lives.(Boyatzis Richard & Mckee Annie, 2005, p. 87)

Another remarkable learning that emanated from this change project was the development of a Growth Mindset, individually and as a team . A Growth Mindset helped them see the good in the other and develop trust. According to Tabrizi and Terrell, people with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be developed and cultivated.(Behnam Tabrizi and Michael Terrell, 2013, p. 11) Organizational change involves moving from the known to the unknown (Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C.G, 2005, p. 157), and the staff and the leaders were ready to make this move and take the organization to great heights.

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