

The what and how of community based rehabilitation (CBR) in the African decade of persons with disabilities

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(book review)

Reviewed by James E. Olayi

The paper is an expert piece of information bothering on community based rehabilitation practice as an option of service to persons with disabilities in and around the African continent. The writer presented a vivid explanation of the meaning and concept of community based rehabilitation looking at the persons and recipients point of view by highlighting some feature of operating community service and emphasising that the practice is less expensive but more effective in reaching out to beneficiaries.

For ease of understanding of readers, the writer looked at studies and works by other educators which aimed at modifying behaviours and lives of exceptional children, most of which are focused on handicapped children managing essentially school based system and with very few attempting to meet the needs of the clients when removed out of institutional environments. Stressing that this is where the disabled individual will finally come to live eventually in a community situation. The paper did not fail to recognise the role of homes and/or boarding houses where itinerant social workers and house parents care for and render desired services to inmates, as well as observing that although these are still very few, they are a departure from the strictly regimental institutions.

Examining the question of apathy against rehabilitation, the author noted that this may be due to the fact that most of the countries rate special needs attention to handicapped children very low on their priorities. The writer posited that as long as this attitude prevails, there can be no appreciable achievements by way of widespread community attention and participation in this project. Another reason

of hindrance advanced in this paper is the lack of skilled and competent personnel and infrastructure or both.

Because of the African decade of persons with disabilities (1999–2009), the author of this article has taken time to present in-depth information of the emergence of the African decade of persons with disabilities and the role of African Heads of state and Governments to the declaration of this decade and the commitment of members. The declaration and later adoption of this decade was in the words of the writer “The result of the recommendations of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission of the OAU now AU”. Again, the writer pointed out that the goal of the decade is full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in Africa, with the objectives of formulating or reformulating national policies and programmes that encourages the full participation of PWDS in social and economic development. To create or reinforce National disability coordination committees and ensure effective representation of disabled persons and their organizations. To support community based service delivery in collaboration with International Development Agencies and Organizations. To promote more efforts that encouraged positive attitudes towards children, youth, women and adults with disabilities and the implementation of measures that would ensure rehabilitation access, education, training and employment as well as to cultural and sport activities and access to the physical environment. To develop programmes that would alleviate poverty among people with disabilities and their families among others.

The paper also highlighted the strategies for the implementation of the decade to rests on the shoulders of Government, Ministries and departments, DPOs, Specialized agencies of OAU or AU, Regional economic communities, the UN and its specialized agencies, Organization of employees and workers, NGOs, Religious organizations, Individuals committed to the full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in the African continent.

In understanding the concept and operations of community based rehabilitation and services, the writer urged readers to do so by considering the various schools of thought about it. This view point according to the writer originated from some specialized agencies of the United Nations notably the ILO, UNESCO and WHO. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) represents an effort to entrust members of the immediate family of a disabled child and the community with the task to perform a rehabilitation process so simplified in a way that those responsible can carry out therapeutic exercises and produce and use simple aids and services. Other details include planning CBR, programme objectives of CBR, programme ideology, distinguishing features of CBR, factors and consideration when planning CBR, strategies for implement, selection of staff, training of staff and volunteers, training materials, implementing the programme and evaluation of the programme.

This knowledgeable and rich piece of information was concluded by the author by stating that CBR is important for economic viability and the validity of the socio-cultural aspirations of persons with disabilities in Africa in particular and the world in general. Therefore, for more details, I recommend to all scholars of special needs education to obtain and read the article.

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