



USEFULNESS OF COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHOD

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Abstract:

This research article highlights on community needs assessment used in higher education. Community is defined as a geographic area; however, it can also be based on shared interests or characteristics such as religion, race, age, or occupation. Community requires assessment identifies the strengths and resources available in the community to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. The assessment focuses on the capabilities of the community, including its citizens, agencies, and organizations. It provides a framework for developing and identifying services and solutions for organizing educational programs and activities and building communities to support and nurture children and families. A community assessment may be limited to a compilation of demographic data from census records, results of surveys conducted by others, and informal feedback from community partners. Or, assessments may be expanded to include focus group discussions, town meetings, and interviews with stakeholders, and telephone or mailed surveys to partnership members and the community. Therefore, the community needs assessment method is very important while implementing any educational programs and activities within the community.

Keywords: Community, Assessment, Needs, Educational, Types and Tools.

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Introduction

Communities are typically defined by a geographic area. However, they can also be based on shared interests or characteristics such as religion, race, age, or occupation. People within a community come from different backgrounds and have unique cultures, customs, and values. Utilizing this wide range of ideas and wisdom is critical to assessing the community's needs and strategizing areas for improvement. Before you conduct a community needs assessment, you should have a clear understanding of the different cultural groups within a community and how to best work with them to solve the community's issues. A community needs assessment provides community leaders with a snapshot of local policy, systems, and environmental change strategies currently in place and helps to identify areas for improvement. With this data, communities can map out a course for health improvement by creating strategies to make positive and sustainable changes in their communities. The objectives will dictate how the needs assessment is to be designed and conducted. Needs assessments can either document the current situation for a group or for a target population. A needs assessment is often conducted for a specific group, organization, or business in order to improve the effectiveness or productivity of the group related to its mission. Assessment objectives relate to the objectives of the organization. For a company, organisational assessments learn how to close a training or performance gap (Gupta et al., 2007).

Donaldson. J. (2016), in this needs assessment for Extension professionals. This publication is a guidebook on how to organise needs assessments. It provides details of the three phases of conducting an effective needs assessment: exploration, assessment, and utilization. Different methods for each phase are provided, such as document reviews, individual and group methods (such as key informants, personal interviews, questions for interviews, or committees), focus groups, surveys, open listing sessions, brainstorming, concept mapping, among others), interpretation of results, and communicating the results of the needs assessment. Each section contains useful tools to design, conduct, and interpret effective needs assessments. Kerka, S. (2003). Community asset mapping. The Educational Resources Information Centre. The author describes asset mapping as a method for documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a community, where assets may be people, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses, or informal organisations (as cited by Berkowitz & Wadud, 2003). The asset-mapping approach draws on appreciative inquiry; recognition of social capital, participatory approaches to development, collaborative economic development models, and efforts to strengthen civil society. The author lists and describes resources that can help community educators use asset-mapping approaches for programme planning.

Direct and indirect assessments: A direct needs assessment is accomplished through formal research that gathers data from clients. An indirect approach uses secondary data or asks surrogates (advisors) for their opinions about priority needs and issues. The direct assessment will result in data that is more specific to the needs of individuals and can be quantitative in terms of probability and confidence. However, direct research requires considerably more resources to design and also requires institutional approval to conduct. Direct assessment should be conducted periodically for major programme efforts. An indirect assessment can be conducted at any time when an advisory committee is meeting and does not require the same level of investment in the design, implementation, and analysis as the direct assessment. However, even with a non-formal assessment, if the results are to be credible, procedures must be followed, and findings must be carefully documented.

Objectives of the present research article:

1. To explore community needs assessment as a method in the education system.
2. To comprehend the method of assessing community needs.
3. To know the community and its available resources

The three types of elements of the community needs assessment are as follows.

Policy Change: This involves laws, regulations, rules, protocols, and procedures that are designed to guide or influence behaviour. Policies can be either legislative or organizational. Policies often mandate environmental changes and increase the likelihood that they will become institutionalized or sustainable.

System Change:

This involves change that affects all community components, including social norms of an organization, institution, or system. It may include a policy or an environmental change strategy. Policies are often the driving force behind system change. Examples are implementing a national school lunch programme across a region or provincial school system or ensuring a hospital system becomes tobacco-free.

Environmental Change: This type of change relates to the physical, social, or economic factors designed to influence people's practises and behaviours. Examples of alterations or changes to the environment include Physical: Structural changes or the presence of programs or services, including the presence of healthy food choices in restaurants or cafeterias, improvements in the built environment to promote walking (e.g., walking paths), the availability of smoking cessation services to patients or workers, and the presence of comprehensive school health education curricula in schools.

Social: A positive change in attitudes or behaviour about policies that promote health or an increase in supportive attitudes regarding health practises, including an increase in favourable attitudes of community decision-makers about the importance of non-smoking policies or an increase in acceptance of exposure to second-hand smoke from the general public.

Economic: The presence of financial disincentives or incentives to encourage a desired behaviour, including charging higher prices for tobacco products to decrease their use or the provision of non-smoker health insurance discounts.

Needs assessment cycle:



Source: https://www.google.com/unity-needs_pw_final_9252013.pdf

A thoughtful process for assessing community needs:

- Impact. Insights about how education and training can impact your audience
- Approaches. Knowledge about educational approaches that may be most effective.
- Awareness of existing programmes and gaps in available training to enable efficient resource utilisation
- Outcomes. Information about the current situation that can be used to document outcomes
- Demand. Knowledge about the potential demand for future programmes and products
- Credibility that the programme is serving the target audience is an important part of communicating greater competence and professionalism to funding authorities who want to know a programme or product's impact.

Steps involved in community needs assessment:

1. Plan for needs assessment: Identify and assemble a diverse community team and develop a team strategy. Define the community to assess (e.g., region, village) and Identify community sectors to assess (e.g., healthcare, schools)

2. Conduct the needs assessment: For guidance on how to conduct a needs assessment (for example, how to prepare for and conduct interviews and focus groups.
3. Prepare tools for data collection: Develop a rating scale, and Make a team decision on ratings.
4. Data Analysis: Consolidated data should be recorded and reviewed. Enter the data, total the data, and summarise the data.
5. Make a plan of action. • Compile a list of community assets and needs. Prioritize requirements and Develop and prioritise strategies for improvement. Create an action plan for top priority strategies.

Types of community needs assessment:

1. Individual Interviews: Conversation with a Purpose is conducted between two people, either face-to-face or by telephone.
2. Focus Groups involve gathering information and opinions from a small group of people (8–10 per group). Group discussions often provide insights that might not emerge in interviews.
3. Observation: A data collection method that allows you to use the events around you to gather clues and generate conclusions about specific locales or experiences.
4. Mailing self-completion questionnaires to a targeted group of people (e.g., a client's customers or people living in a certain area)
5. Telephone Survey: Collection of data from a sample population using a standardised questionnaire by telephone.
6. Face-to-face survey: A face-to-face survey is a telephone survey without the telephone. The interviewer physically travels to the respondent's location to conduct a personal interview.
7. A group of potential respondents is invited to participate in completing a web-based survey, and their responses are submitted electronically via the Internet. Mailing self-completion questionnaires to a targeted group of people (e.g., a client's customers or people living in a certain area)

Research methodology:

The researcher used a survey-based descriptive research method. In this research article, the researcher has used secondary data which is available by using thesis on Shodhganga, books, annual reports of NGOs and some online data has been considered for this present research article.

Analyze data:

Analysis is a systematic process. Begin while the group is in session. Listen for inconsistent comments and probe for understanding. Listen for vague or cryptic comments and probe for understanding. Consider asking each participant a final preference question. Offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation. Within hours, they analyse individual groups. Backup tapes and send a copy to transcribers for computer entry if a transcript is wanted. The analyst listens to the tapes, reviews field notes, and reads the transcript if available. Prepare a report of the individual focus group in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes. Share reports for verification with other researchers who were present at the focus group.

Conclusion:

A community needs assessment should focus on a particular geographic area, sectors within that area such as

health care and work sites, and community components to assess within each sector, such as nutrition, chronic disease management, and educational programs. A combination of two or more data-collection methods is recommended at each site to confirm or support initial findings. While implementing educational programmes in the community, needs assessment methods are very effective and save effort, money, and travel time, so they recommend using need assessment methods before implementing any educational activities in the community.

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