

Effect of Cooperative Education and Training on the Performance of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies in Ukerewe and Sengerema, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study explored the impact of Cooperative Education and Training (CET) on the performance of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) in Ukerewe and Sengerema districts, Tanzania, using the qualitative approach. The study sample consisted of 64 respondents who were selected using purposive sampling. Respondents were members of AMCOS in Ukerewe and Sengerema districts. Data was analyzed using qualitative thematic approach. The study revealed that CET has a positive impact toward effective implementation of set goals in cooperative organizations. The education helps leaders of the AMCOS to know the direction in which the organization should move. It is therefore concluded that without CET, cooperative organizations under investigation would have lost their direction. The study recommends that cooperative organizations should prioritize CET to help members understand their rights and responsibilities and improve the organization's performance. Leaders of cooperative organizations should take CET seriously to ensure that the organizations move in the right direction. Cooperative societies should periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their education and training programs so as to identify areas that need improvement and to ensure that the programs meet the needs.

Keywords: Cooperative education; cooperative training; Agricultural Marketing; Cooperative Societies.

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Introduction

Cooperative education and training (CET) has been a global agenda when it comes into the practice of cooperatives (Okoli & Ezenwafor, 2018). The history

of CET parallels that of formation of cooperative societies which owe their origin when people started living together. It was during this earliest lifestyle that people started to experience

environmental challenges brought by wild animals and other calamities. Therefore, people joined their efforts to overcome such challenges with their weak weapons, and in all these efforts, they were directing one another on what and how to do (Bitomio, 2012). This harmonious living is what brought about a sense of cooperation among people with the intention of cooperatively challenging nature (Bonner et al, 2009; Mbugi, 2019). Therefore, the modern days' cooperatives and their endeavors (including education and training) are the fruits of people's struggle against environmental challenges, strengthening production and attaining socio-economic development (Bonner et al, 2009; Bitomio, 2012).

As people kept living together and developing in various aspects, and when the earlier challenges were no longer available, people started to forget their earlier weapon, co-operation, and each person fought on his own. This led to division of labor (Ngibbombi, 1974). Therefore, since people were no longer working cooperatively, the communal (societal ownership) collapsed, giving birth to poor and rich classes. The rich exploited the poor, humiliated and dehumanized them (URT, 1982; Lenin, 1977). This was unfortunate to the poor. As a result, they had to rethink their efforts so as to fight against exploitation, humiliation and dehumanization. The act of rethinking and emphasizing one another what to do so as to avoid exploitation and humiliation qualifies to be called education and training. In the context of this study therefore, cooperative education and training refers to processes in which the Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) members and leaders are engaged in the formal or informal ways of acquiring knowledge (education) and skills (training) for the purpose of ensuring smooth running of the AMCOS, solve existing challenges or improve the quality of members' life.

According to Kiaritha (2015), establishment of the world's first formal cooperative society at New Lanark by Robert Owen during the first part of the 19th Century involved education and training in the form of mobilization (Bowen, 1958) and the modern cooperatives in England from 1844 when the Rochdale pioneers initiated their first cooperative namely Rochdale Consumer Cooperative Society (Chiasson, 1958). In order to ensure effectiveness of cooperative societies, the Rochdale Consumer Cooperative Society established seven principles of cooperatives in 1844 namely voluntary and open

membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community. Together with other principles, education and training sufficed as one of the core principles since cooperatives mandatorily provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives (Cardona, 2017; Soni and Saluja, 2016).

The idea of formal CET originated from England among the Rochdale Pioneers in 1844 as they started their cooperative society by firstly educating and training members (Soni and Saluja, 2016;). Providing education and training in cooperatives positively affects participation and enlightens members (Jimenez *et al* 2015; Miner and Cluillotte, 2014; Arayesh, 2011). The necessity of cooperative education and training as a cardinal principle continued even after the review of cooperative principles to reflect the societal needs (Kiaritha, 2015; Engelbrecht, 2003). In 1937, the International Cooperative Alliance came out with four principles of which education sufficed through knowledge of all other principles. Additionally in 1966 education was principle number six, and in 1995 amendments with seven principles witnessed the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) re-stating CET as principle number 5 (Bitomio, 2012 & Maddox, 2018).

Therefore, cooperatives' ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others are reflected in the current context of the provision of education and training in cooperatives (Limnios, *et al.*, 2018; Soni and Saluja, 2016). Additionally, to ensure smooth running of cooperatives and empowering members through education and training, ICA established cooperative rules, laws and regulations. The 1993 ICA's cooperative decree insisted that some of the cooperative society's excess should be set aside for education, training and information in the cooperative organizations ((Ogundele et al, 2021; Clamentina *et al.*, 2015; Wilhoit, 2015; ICA, 2014).

The introduction and practice of formal cooperative education in Africa is closely associated with the development of cooperative movement, of which cultivation of traditional agricultural export crops mostly coffee, cotton and tobacco was crucial

(Amendah and Clamp, 2014). Thus, the colonial administration in Africa had to establish institutions that could offer education and training to cooperative managers, governors and AMCOS members for best preparing raw materials for industries in Europe (Fulton, 2000). Therefore, the third world countries had a policy of educating cooperative members to augment MELs, in East Africa; Jeans School was built in 1951 at Kabete in Nairobi to train co-operators prior to the establishment of cooperative centers at Mzumbe Morogoro in 1957 and the Cooperative College Moshi in Kilimanjaro in 1963 (Kobia, 2011).

In Tanzania, cooperative education has its origin during colonial times. In 1948, the Cooperative College UK provided study places for the senior and middle level personnel (Seimu, 2015; Sizya, 2001). The training of lower-level cadres, ordinary members and leaders, were left to the cooperative movements in which the established colleges were responsible (Cooperative College Moshi, 1970). During independence and after the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Cooperative Education was regarded as a tool for rural transformation; hence such education and training in cooperative societies were for instilling the sense of socialism and self-reliance among cooperative members. Literature such as Seimu (2015); Donge (ND), Cooperative College Moshi and Afro Aid (1991) and Cooperative College Moshi (nd) show that it was during that time the cooperative movement reached to the peak of success where the movement contributed to the socio-economic development by building of schools and construction of roads.

Unfortunately, the cooperative movement in Tanzania was dissolved in 1976. The reasons for the dissolution were stated by Mwl. J. K. Nyerere in his speech to the first Cooperative Union meeting at Diamond Jubilee in Dar es Salaam on 25th February 1985 that although the government was wrong, it was due to very slow registration and reluctance to form massive unions and poor education and training among leaders (Washirika' 1985) Having passed through various traumas including that of dissolution of cooperatives in 1976, cooperative education was thereafter reinstated to help the society improve its social and economic status (Mshiu, 2014). Today, institutions offering CET including MoCU, Cooperative Audit and Supervision Corporation (COASCO), the new Tanzania Cooperative Development Commission (TCDC),

cooperative departments in the districts and regions as well as Savings and Credit Union League of Tanzania (SCULT) were established. It is within the context of establishing the aforementioned institutions and strategies that cooperatives' running, management and operations would have been improved for their sustainable development (Mruma, 2014; Mshiu, 2014; Maghimbi, 2010).

In this regard, the Tanzania's government took various efforts and initiatives to establish cooperative education providing institutions including building the Moshi Cooperative University (the then Cooperative College Moshi) as well as setting and implementing various policies and programs on cooperatives. The established policies and regulations include the Cooperative Societies Act number 27 of 1968, regulation No. 57 stating that subject to consent of the registrar, a registered society may by resolution in the general meeting, appropriate from its funds and expend or any charitable educational or medical purpose or such other object as the minister may approve an amount not exceeding fifty per centum of the annual balance of that society (URT, 1964).

Similarly, the Cooperative Societies regulations of 2015 Section 69 (i), notice number 272 published on 17th July 2015 states on the first and the second regulation that every registered cooperative society shall provide education and training and that for the purpose of implementing its education and training programs, pursuant to sub regulation (i), any cooperative society shall, with approval of the general meeting, establish a special fund set aside for financing its education and training programs (Co-operative Societies Act, 2013). Similar policy statements are stated in the proposed National Cooperative Policy (2002) and the Microfinance Policy (2000). All these efforts' emphasis was on employing educated personnel with a formal education in cooperative or empowering cooperative members through sectoral education for the management and sustainability of AMCOS.

However, the effectiveness of such education members, managers and the board in cooperative societies especially the AMCOS in this study area, is questionable. It is the author's experience in the study area that members were not well equipped with proper education for smooth running of AMCOS. Subsequently, most AMCOS in Ukerewe and Sengerema are managed and governed by people who did not go to school for formal

education in cooperative studies and only few have very low levels of education, especially the primary education. The low level of education (particularly cooperative education) has been considered among the reasons for underperformance of many AMCOS in this area. Additionally, basing on the changing nature of science and technology whereby the world now is fast moving to the intensive use of ICT and its applications, uneducated personnel are considered as incapable resources for running AMCOS in the modern world. Likewise, uninformed members in the contemporary world are very dangerous in the sustainability of AMCOS (Lema & Mutagwaba, 2018; Raphael, 2019).

Furthermore, a number of cooperative organizations which have not invested enough in cooperative education and training to cope with the contemporary world have been continuously experiencing unsustainable trends, of which some are rendered dormant (TCDC, 2017). An informal communication with the Mwanza Regional Assistant Registrar of Cooperative showed that in Ukerewe District, out of 13 registered AMCOS, only three were active while in Sengerema, out of 19 registered AMCOS, only 13 were active. This is very dangerous for the prosperity and sustainability of cooperative movements in the region and the country as well. Based on the context described, it is important to investigate why the development of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) in the study area has not been encouraging despite various education initiatives aimed at improving cooperative supervision and management. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify factors that influence the development of AMCOS in the study area despite education initiatives, and to provide recommendations for improving their development and performance.

Theoretical Review

This study was informed by the Naturalistic Model by Ralph Tyler in 1949. Tyler's Naturalistic Model postulates that an education program ought to be evaluated before, during and after its implementation because evaluation serves as a monitor within the program to review the progress in learning from time to time. According to Tyler (1949), education evaluation helps in building the program itself, assessing the achievements of such a program, making improvements upon its effectiveness as well as providing valuable feedback on the design and implementation of the program.

The model consists of four attributes in the names of rationales; displayed in forms of questions. The first question is "What education purposes should learners seek to attain? In this question, it is implied that the prior set goals make the education system focus on what it was meant to accomplish even before it runs. In this study, this question was useful in assessing the determinants of cooperative education and training (CET). The second question is 'what educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?' This question seeks to assess the inputs and efforts made to run education and training programs. In this study, this question assessed effectiveness of education in terms of competences and experiences of facilitators. The third question is 'how can this educational effectiveness depend on the methodologies used in teaching or training? This question helped in assessing effectiveness of CET in terms of delivery methods. The last question is 'how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained or not?' This question was useful in assessing the impact (effectiveness) of CET (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013; Gray & Gibbons, 2019)

Methodology

This section covers various processes through which the research was conducted.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional design with a qualitative approach to investigate the existence of dormant cooperative societies in Sengerema and Ukerewe Districts of Mwanza Region.

Study Area

This study was conducted among AMCOS in Sengerema and Ukerewe Districts as the Mwanza Region Cooperative Education and Training Committee emphasized shortage of cooperative education and training to co-operators by these districts. However, even within that emphasis in the region, there is still some evidence on the existence of dormant cooperative societies in this study area. According to URT (2018), the two districts were among the underperforming districts in terms of cooperative societies' development of the AMCOS which were confined in this study based on two criteria namely registration status and the cooperative education reception status. Therefore, out of 13 registered AMCOS in Ukerewe District, only three active AMCOS namely Bugorola, Murutunguru and Musozi were confined and formed a basic unit of analysis in this study. In Sengerema District, out

of 19 registered AMCOS, thirteen namely Busulwagili, Butonga, Buzilasoga, Chamabanda, Ibondo, Igulumuki, Ilekaniilo, Irunda, Ishishang'olo, Nyamatongo, Nyamtelela, Nyasenga and Sima were included in the study.

Instruments

Data for this study was obtained from a variety of sources, including documents such as National Cooperative Societies' statistics for the years 2015, 2017 and 2018, key informants, such as district cooperative officers, regional cooperative education and training committee members and stakeholders like Nyanza Cooperative Union and CRDB Bank. Additionally, individuals with cooperative education and training knowledge were consulted. To gain further insight into the perspectives and experiences of AMCOS members, eight focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted. Following the method outlined by Faulkner and Trotter (2017), data saturation was reached after four sessions. Each FGD session involved six to eight participants, as suggested by Stewart et al. (2007) as an ideal number for managing the discussion and obtaining sufficient information. Pandey and Pandey (2015) and Saunders et al. (2012) also recommend a similar number, as too few participants may limit the discussion, while too many can make it difficult to manage.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the data collection tools was ensured through a thorough review of literature and input from experts in the field. The reliability of the study was achieved through triangulation of data sources and methods. More specifically, in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study findings, the authors decreased threats of credibility by triangulation of data. To increase dependability, the researchers provided an audit trail by describing in detail how data was collected, how categories were delivered and how decisions were made throughout the enquiry. Application of the "good rich thick description" ensured transferability of findings into other areas apart from the areas researched.

Statistical Treatment of Data

In this study, a simultaneous data collection and analysis approach was utilized. The interview and FGD data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. The process of analysis involved three stages: data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. Qualitative descriptions and interpretations were documented in the fourth step,

where data was further analyzed using Atlas.ti 7 computer software. Specifically, the software was used to assist in the coding and categorization of the data, as well as in the identification of themes and patterns across the data set. This helped to ensure a systematic and rigorous approach to the analysis of the qualitative data, and increased the transparency and reproducibility of the study's findings.

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Ethical Considerations

Consent was obtained from the participants after confirming their availability and willingness to participate in the study and be recorded according to their schedule. The study ensured confidentiality of the participants and maintained their anonymity by using codes. Moreover, ethical clearance was sought from the relevant institutional review board before data collection took place.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of cooperative education and training (CET) on the performance of AMCOS, using a qualitative research method, specifically content analysis of data generated from FGDs and KIIs. The study measured the effectiveness of CET on enhancing core purposes, meeting attendance, leaders' commitment, internalization of cooperative principles and regulations, conflict resolution, and members' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. Results were analyzed using Atlas.ti 7 and documented through qualitative descriptions and interpretations.

Respondents were firstly asked to state whether CET in their cooperative organizations had an effect on implementing prior set goals. From the FGD findings, it was revealed that CET is an engine towards attainment of the AMCOS prior set goals.

One member reported that “cooperative education and training has enabled members to ensure storage of crops, marketing, selling, understanding rights and responsibilities, supervision of processing related activities, provision of education and training, supplying farm inputs and visiting members’ farms for inspection and quality control.” During interview, one board member in Sengerema district said: “...Although education is not frequently provided, at least in our AMCOS, it has helped us as leaders to know the direction into which we are supposed to locate the organization.”

The implication behind these findings is that without CET, cooperatives would have lost direction. These findings correspond with those of Hussain (2014) who reported that proper member education in cooperative societies helped a number of cooperatives in Nigeria to produce goods and deliver services, satisfy genuine needs of members and promoting co-operation, relations, participation and interpersonal connections.

Respondents were further asked if CET has contributed to changing the attendance rate in their meetings. Responses under this aspect were obtained through FGDs and interviews with board members. In FGDs, members reported that CET has improved their attendance in meetings after receiving the education and training. One member of the FGD in Sengerema District had the following to say:

Having been educated frequently, especially on the aspects of our rights, responsibilities and obligations as members, we became aware of the need to attend meetings regularly. Today, these meetings are a forum for discussing, questioning and approving various affairs about our cooperatives.

Interviewed leaders and staff members also indicated that previously members were attending less in meetings as they did not see the importance of doing so. A board member, for instance, had this to say: “...There are some changes. Since conduction of training and mobilization, members have been attending meetings regularly compared to the time when they were not trained. Since when we stopped training, the attendance rate declines slowly.”

These findings suggest that education and training in the cooperative organizations helps members to

be active in attending meetings. This is very important since decisions and plans are always done in meetings. These findings concur with those of Anania and Rwekaza (2017) who found that members were more interested in knowing about the progress and operations of their SACCOS in Moshi through meetings, after being educated and trained.

Respondents were further asked to state their views on how cooperative education is important in understanding principles and regulations used in running cooperative movements. A FGD in Ukerewe District revealed that principles and regulations underlying AMCOS are enhanced through cooperative education as he said by one of respondents:

...What you are saying is obvious; there is no cooperative organization that does not train its members to adhere to their principles and regulations as well as principles of international and national authorities in cooperatives. As I said before, our instructor used to inform us that cooperative education among other things is a guide for the operation of cooperative societies, and that is what is.

A board member further reported that through cooperative education, AMCOS members get knowledge and skills to participate in their organizations: “...Through education, cooperative societies get active members for their sustenance since rules and regulations for running AMCOS are learnt. Also, through cooperative education, people make choices whether to continue with membership or not. Membership without education brings conflicts.” A member of one FGD further reported that “with education, members get to understand what is wrong and what is right, what is accepted and what is not accepted.”

Therefore, the education given enabled participants to become active members in their cooperatives. These findings concur with what Kinyuira (2017) established in Kenya that members of different cooperative societies including AMCOS are internalized with rules, principles and regulations which are normally used in running cooperative societies.

Respondents were further asked to state whether or not CET eradicated conflicts and settled disputes in their cooperatives. In response to this question, one

member of a FGD revealed that: "...Without education and training, conflicts cannot be avoided. Education, regardless where it is being offered, is important in avoiding and solving conflicts and misunderstandings among people in the whole community." It was further reported by one board member during an interview that conflicts in cooperatives result from various sources including members' rights, duties and obligations. This board member reported the following, particularly: "...Education is important as it helps members to understand some matters in AMCOS such as knowing their rights and responsibilities. Without education and training, conflicts arise." These findings concur with those of Clamentina *et al.* (2015) which showed that in Nigeria; most of conflicts in cooperative societies resulted from some people not understanding what is to be done. With cooperative training and education, some conflicts were reduced.

According to literature, ignorance of rights and obligations can pose a danger to the success and sustainability of cooperative organizations (Alila *et al.*, 2015; Jaeger & Krause, 2015). Previous studies also found that cooperative education and training can play a crucial role in enhancing members' understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the cooperative organization (Alila *et al.*, 2015; Brondani & Schneider, 2017.) In this study, responses from the FGDs showed that the majority of AMCOS members reported that CET helped them to understand their rights and responsibilities. However, there was one respondent who expressed ignorance of their rights and responsibilities, although they acknowledged that CET could influence their understanding. The study also found that cooperative education and training can easily make people aware of what they are supposed to do and what they are supposed to get. Additionally, one interviewee emphasized the importance of knowledge on members' rights and responsibilities for the survival of a cooperative organization. This was supported by a board member in Ukerewe District, who reported that some members had withdrawn their cooperative society's membership due to ignorance of their rights.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that CET has a positive impact toward effective implementation of set goals in cooperative organizations as it helps in terms of storage,

marketing, selling, processing-related activities and visiting members' farms for inspection and quality control.

The education helps leaders of the AMCOS to know the direction in which the organization should move. It is therefore concluded that without CET, cooperative organizations under investigation would have lost their direction.

CET plays a crucial role in promoting active member participation in cooperative activities. This is accomplished through provision of regular education and training for members to maintain high attendance rates at meetings.

CET enhances the understanding of principles and regulations underlying the cooperative movements. It also reduces conflicts among cooperative members.

Finally, CET plays an important role in enabling members to understand their rights and responsibilities. This understanding is important for survival of cooperative organizations and for active participation of members in decision-making and daily operations. Lack of knowledge about rights and responsibilities can lead to withdrawal of membership.

Recommendations

In the light of the study findings and conclusions, cooperative organizations should prioritize CET to help members understand their rights and responsibilities and improve the organization's performance. Leaders of cooperative organizations should take CET seriously to ensure that the organization moves in the right direction. Negligence and ignorance of members can lead to a decline in the organization's services. Cooperative organizations should enhance the frequency and quality of CET programs to increase member awareness and motivation using various training methods such as mobile learning and online platforms, to reach more members and encourage leaders and staff to prioritize member education and training as a means of promoting cooperative development. Additionally, cooperative organizations should establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the impact of CET on member participation and to identify areas for improvement.

Cooperative societies should prioritize education and training programs for their members. The

programs should aim at enhancing members' understanding of cooperative principles and regulations, as well as principles of international and national authorities in cooperative movements. Cooperative societies should ensure that their members are aware of the importance of education and training in promoting the sustainability of their organizations.

Cooperative societies should periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their education and training programs so as to identify areas that need improvement and to ensure that the programs meet the evolving needs of their members. Cooperative societies should further provide regular education and training opportunities to their members to maintain members' interest and participation in cooperative activities.

Co-operative organizations should invest in CET so as to enhance the capacity of their members to participate actively in running the cooperatives. This will require the development of appropriate CET programs that are tailored to specific needs of cooperative members, and the allocation of resources for implementation of such programs.

Cooperative societies should develop effective procedures for conflict resolution and ensure that all members are familiar with the procedures. Cooperative education and training should include information on members' rights and responsibilities as well as laws and policies governing cooperative societies. This will help members to exercise their rights, participate in decision-making and hold leaders accountable for misconduct

Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of CET on cooperative societies and to identify best practices for design and implementation of CET programs.

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