



Cooperative Members' Perceptions of Cooperative Education in Tanzania's Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies: Insights from Sengerema and Ukerewe Districts

¹Odax Manumbu Lawrence and ²John Jackson Iwata

¹Department of Management, Moshi Co-operative University, Email: odax.manumbu@mocu.ac.tz

²Department of Knowledge Management, Moshi Co-operative University, Email: iwata2j@gmail.com

Abstract

Cooperative education plays a crucial role in the development of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS). Despite its significance, recent years have witnessed challenges in the cooperative sector being associated with the provision of education. However, the existing research has predominantly focused on the absence of cooperative education and poor participation among members, neglecting such members' perceptions towards education provided. As such, this study examines perceptions of AMCOS members regarding cooperative education. More specifically, the study determines members' perceptions of the cooperative education setup, implementation, and alignment of such cooperative education to cooperative principles. Employing purposive sampling technique, the study gathered data from 64 participants through focus group discussions and interviews. Qualitative methods were utilized for data analysis. Results indicated that AMCOS members harbor negative perceptions regarding the adequacy, approach, teaching methodology, target audience, and evaluation of cooperative education. Members reported dissatisfaction due to the lack of practical applicability, insufficient training duration, and perceived irrelevance of the content. The study concludes that the existing cooperative education programs are unfavorably perceived by members. Based on the findings, it is suggested that reforms in cooperative education delivery be implemented, advocating for inclusivity across all community groups. Additionally, facilitators ought to optimize the allocated time to ensure members derive maximum benefit from training aligned with educational objectives. Furthermore, agricultural and cooperative officers should frequently visit AMCOS to educate members on cooperative education matters. These reforms aim to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of AMCOS by fostering a positive perception and engagement among their members.

Keywords:

Cooperative education, Training, Cooperative organization, Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Society; Perception.

1. Introduction

Education and training are universally acknowledged and consistently been recognized as crucial instruments for societal development and transformation progress (Ijere, 2014). They serve as conduits in imparting knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes are cultivated within communities (Kiaritha, 2015). Recognizing their significance, various international organizations and collaborations, including the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), have endorsed the significance of education and training as catalysts for the efficient development and enhancement of cooperatives globally (Lawrence, 2024 & Hussain, 2014).

Cooperative societies are defined as independent and autonomous entities or associations formed by individuals who voluntarily come together to fulfil their common needs and aspirations through collectively owned and democratically controlled enterprises (ICA, 2016). Cooperative societies have a rich historical legacy akin to human civilization itself, with the first cooperative society established in Scotland in 1498 (Kiaritha, 2015). The historical

evolution of cooperatives worldwide mirrors that of human societies. However, the modern cooperatives emerged in England in 1844 with the establishment of the Rochdale Consumer Co-operative Society by the Rochdale Pioneers (Hancock & Brault, 2016; Lawrence, Komba & Iwata (2023a). Currently, cooperatives play a significant role in the global business landscape, offering employment opportunities and contributing to the improvement of living standards (Paul, 2024 & Mruma, 2014). With over 3 million cooperatives globally and approximately one billion individuals involved as members, clients, or employees of cooperatives represent a substantial socio-economic force (ICA, 2016).

In Africa, the history of cooperative societies spans from the colonial era and continued to evolve into the post-independence period, transitioning from state control to market liberalization (Hussain, 2014). In Tanzania, the history of cooperatives dates back to the 1920s, with the emergence of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Organizations (AMCOS) exemplified by the Kilimanjaro Native Planters Association (KNPA) being an early form of agricultural marketing cooperative organisation. Later, KNPA transformed into the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union (KNCU) in 1933, officially registering as a cooperative organization by amalgamating various primary coffee cooperatives in the Kilimanjaro Region (Co-operative College Moshi, 1993; URT, 2003). Subsequent to independence, various forms of cooperatives were established to support diverse operations within the agricultural sector and AMCOS in particular (Lawrence, Komba, Iwata & Rwekaza, 2023b; Rwekaza, 2018; Hancock & Brault, 2016).

The importance of education within cooperative frameworks is underscored by its inclusion as a fundamental principle by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), with successive amendments reinforcing its significance (Lawrence, 2023a & Wilhoit, 2015). This emphasis on education originated and traces its roots to England in 1844 when the Rochdale Pioneers initiated their cooperative society prioritising cooperative member's education as foundational to cooperative success (Braunerhjelm et al., 2018; Harte et al., 2013; Gimenes et al., 2016). In Africa, educational initiatives for cooperatives have been established since colonial times, exemplified by institutions like the Jeans School in Kabete, Nairobi, and the Co-operative College Moshi (Kobia, 2011). Countries including Tanzania have formulated policies, rules, and regulations to ensure the smooth operation of cooperatives through establishing education and training institutions for enabling cooperatives to achieve their goals (Lawrence, 2023a; Anania & Rwekaza, 2016). Bee (2011) stresses the need for research on CE in Tanzania to cultivate responsible leaders through relevant management knowledge and entrepreneurial skills.

Previous studies on cooperative education and training including the Lawrence (2023b), Rwekaza (2018), Kinyuira (2017), Gimenes et al., (2016), Emaziye (2020) and Hussain (2014) have primarily focused on the importance of cooperative education to cooperatives employees, managers, and committee representatives. Despite the recognised importance of cooperative education (CE), these empirical studies have highlighted shortcomings in its implementation, particularly regarding members' perspectives (Rwekaza, 2018; Kinyuira, 2017; Gimenes et al., 2016; Hussain, 2014). The current study addressed this gap by examining AMCOS members' perceptions of CE implementation, recognising them as primary stakeholders and beneficiaries. Guided by Tyler's Curriculum Model, the study evaluates Cooperative Education through internal evaluation, focusing on members' perceptions across four key attributes (Tyler, 1969).

Studies from various regions, including America, Asia, and Africa, suggest that cooperative education faces challenges in implementation due to a lack of awareness among cooperative officials, and lack of consensus on what should constitute CE (Lawrence, 2023b; Rwekaza and Anania, 2016; Hancock & Brault, 2016; Bee, 2014) In Tanzania, despite governmental initiatives to establish cooperative education institutions, challenges in CE provision persist such as the establishment of Moshi Co-operative University and the Tanzania Co-operative Development Commission (TCDC) (Lawrence, 2024 & Ijere, 2014). AMCOS, in particular, face issues like member ignorance and uninformed decision-making, despite existing policies and educational institutions (Mruma, 2014; Chandy, 2013; Bwana and Mwakujonga, 2013). The current study seeks to uncover reasons behind persistence of these challenges from the perspective of AMCOS members, aiming to inform strategies for the development and sustainability of cooperatives in Tanzania.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognised importance of Cooperative Education (CE) in Tanzania's agricultural marketing cooperatives (AMCOS) as exemplified by existing literature, there exist significant gaps in its implementation and effectiveness. Most of the previous studies have primarily focused on the perspectives of employees, managers, and committee representatives on cooperative education provision, neglecting the crucial insights of AMCOS members who are the primary beneficiaries and owners of cooperatives. Furthermore, the existing literature highlighted discrepancies in CE provision, including non-standardised content, varying methodologies, and inadequate training modalities. These deficiencies hinder the fulfilment of cooperative principles and impede the socio-economic development potential of cooperatives. Therefore, this study aims at:

(i) Determining perceptions of AMCOS members regarding the current setup of cooperative education programs within their cooperatives.

- (ii) Examining AMCOS members' perceptions of the implementation of cooperative education programs within their cooperatives.
- (iii) Assessing the alignment between cooperative education provision and cooperative principles as perceived by AMCOS members.

1.2 Theoretical Review

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) developed by Albert Bandura provided a comprehensive framework to analyse perceptions of Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Organizations (AMCOS) members regarding cooperative education (CE) programs. Bandura's SCT emphasises the dynamic reciprocal action and reaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour, making it suitable for examining individual perceptions and motivations within educational contexts (Bandura, 1986). This Bandura's SCT theory comprises four attributes such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, observational learning and environmental influences.

The self-efficacy of the SCT posits that individuals' beliefs in their own capabilities to successfully execute tasks greatly influence their motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). In the context of cooperative education and training in AMCOS, self-efficacy reflects members' confidence in their ability to effectively participate in educational activities, influence the setup and implementation of cooperative education, and contribute to the sustainability of cooperatives. Additionally, the outcome expectations of SCT in this context suggests that individuals' expectations about the outcomes of their actions play a crucial role in shaping their behaviour (Bandura, 1986). In the context of CE, outcome expectations encompass members' beliefs about the benefits and consequences of participating in educational programs, including perceived improvements in knowledge, skills, and cooperative effectiveness.

While the observational learning highlights the importance of observational learning, where individuals acquire knowledge and skills by observing and modelling the behaviour of others (Bandura, 1986). In the context of cooperative education and training in AMCOS, observational learning may influence members' perceptions of the setup and implementation of educational programs based on their observations of peers, leaders, and external influences. Also, the environmental influences as an attribute of SCT recognises the significant impact of environmental factors, such as social norms, organisational culture, and support systems, on individuals' behaviours and beliefs (Bandura, 1986). Within AMCOS, environmental influences may shape members' perceptions of CE through factors like organisational policies, leadership practices, and community expectations.

Therefore, the SCT framework through its self-efficacy allowed for the examination of how members' self-efficacy beliefs influence their perceptions of the setup of CE programs in AMCOS. It should be noted higher levels of self-efficacy may lead to more positive perceptions of adequacy, target audience relevance, duration, and the nature of CE activities. Also, the outcome expectations enabled the exploration of how members' outcome expectations regarding CE implementation influenced their perceptions and motivations. Positive outcome expectations, such as anticipated improvements in cooperative knowledge and effectiveness, may enhance members' perceptions of CE implementation status. On the other hand, the observational learning and environmental influences facilitate the analysis of how observational learning and environmental factors shape members' perceptions of CE. In this context observing the experiences and behaviours of others within the cooperative, as well as external influences like governmental policies and community support, may impact members' perceptions of CE setup and implementation.

2. Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional research design was employed in this study to gather data from various study participants at a time without repetition. The design facilitated comparisons among different groups of participants and it ensured a high degree of precision in data collection (Chen, 2021; Garcia, 2019; Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Additionally, the cross-sectional design allowed for efficient utilisation of time and resources required for the study. Given the qualitative nature of the study's approach, an interpretivist approach was adopted to enable participants to freely disclose their experiences, thoughts and feelings without constraints (Lee, 2022 & Smith, 2020). This approach facilitated real-time follow-up on participant responses, fostering valuable conversations regarding the effectiveness of cooperative education as suggested by Smith, (2020).

Both primary and secondary data were collected using semi-structured interviews with board members, key informants and district co-operative officers, as well as, focus group discussions (FGDs) with members of the respective co-operative societies. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with board members, managers and district co-operative officers to gather insights into the setup and implementation of CE programs. These interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences (Lee, 2022 & Issacs, 2014). On the other hand, a series of focus group discussion sessions (FGDs) were conducted with active AMCOS members to examine their perceptions of CE programs. Each focus group comprised both male and female active members of a respective

AMCOS ensuring diverse perspectives were captured as per the reflections in the meeting minutes and AMCOS registers. Each FGD composed of four participants.

This study was conducted in two districts namely Sengerema and Ukerewe districts due to the varying statuses of AMCOS, with some being dormant despite the existence of CE programs. Only active AMCOS were included in this study. Purposive sampling was employed to select board members and district co-operative leaders based on their roles and responsibilities in overseeing AMCOS functions. The involved AMCOS from Ukerewe District included Murutunguru, Bukindo, Bugorola and Bwiro whereas from Sengerema District were Busulwagili, Irunda, Nyamtelela and Sima were researched.

The AMCOS formed a basic unit of analysis where thematic data analysis was utilised to analyse the collected data. This involved identifying patterns of meaning across the dataset that addressed the research questions. The process included data familiarisation, coding, and theme development and revision, ensuring robust analysis and interpretation of findings. On data quality control, several measures were implemented to ensure data quality. Triangulation of data collection methods enhanced the credibility and reliability of the findings. Additionally, during focus group discussions questions were interpreted into local languages, including Kiswahili and Kerewe, to capture responses from participants who were not fluent in English.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents findings focusing on the thematic areas of the objectives including determining perceptions of AMCOS members regarding the current setup of cooperative education programs within their cooperatives, AMCOS members' perceptions of the implementation of cooperative education programs and the alignment between cooperative education provision and cooperative principles as perceived by AMCOS members. Initially participants were inquired state their perceptions of the arrangement of Cooperative Education and Training. The assumption was that if members had positive perception on the ways cooperative education and training was structured, there would have a significant likelihood of sustaining the Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS). Conversely, if members had a negative perception on a set-up, there would have been a potential risk of cooperatives becoming sustainable. Therefore, aspects encompassed adequacy, the target audience, duration, and the nature of cooperative education and training under consideration.

3.1 Perceptions of adequacy in cooperative education and training setup

Participants in this study were requested to provide their perceptions of the setup of cooperative education and training, focusing on adequacy, target, duration, and nature. In terms of adequacy, most participants expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting that cooperative education and training did not adequately meet the needs of Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives (AMCOS). This dissatisfaction was attributed to perceived shortcomings in the development and execution of cooperative education and training programs. Some participants criticised the lack of practicality and relevance in the training provided. Additionally, there were concerns about the collapse of AMCOS projects despite ongoing training efforts, indicating a disconnect between education and practical outcomes. During the interview session with participants in Bukindo AMCOS commented that:

“...this system of ours is not clear at all; I'm actually not satisfied with this kind of education which comes accidentally. I do not know whether it is an education or are just mere seminars. How can I for example get to know how to keep chicken or agricultural techniques through mere seminars of just an hour or 40 minutes? For me, I see this education as not helpful at all.” (Participant 1, Bukindo AMCOS, 3rd June 2019).

Another respondent from another AMCOS namely Busulwagili had this observation:

“Dear researcher, the education you are speaking about (cooperative education) has never been provided to us. And I'm sure that none of the members in this AMCOS can firmly stand and say that he or she has received a good cooperative education or that the cooperative education provided to us is good; maybe those who get allowances can say so.” (Participant 2, Busulwagili AMCOS, 23rd May 2019).

Regarding the target of cooperative education and training, participants generally disagreed that training was effectively directed towards prospective members, current members, management, and the board. Many felt that the planning and execution of cooperative education were primarily driven by management rather than the needs of the members. This lack of alignment with member needs was seen as a barrier to effective education. When asked, one respondent from Nyamtelela AMCOS said:

"Honestly, the training feels like it's just for the management. They plan it without really asking what we need. It doesn't help us members at all. Until they focus on our actual needs, it won't be effective." (Participant 5, Nyamtelela AMCOS, 28th May 2019).

This suggests that participants in this study expressed predominantly negative perceptions regarding the adequacy of cooperative education and training programs. This perception is attributed by various factors such as a perceived lack of practical applicability and relevance, the perceived underdevelopment of AMCOS in the context of the provided cooperative education and training and the discrepancy between expectations and reality was evident, echoing Mruma's (2014) discussion on cooperative sustainability challenges. Additionally, the situation may be linked with high expectations from the training compared to the actual outcomes. Scepticism towards the effectiveness of education aligned with Harte's et al., (2013) emphasis on aligning educational content with practical needs.

3.2 Target audience of cooperative education and training programs

Cooperative members who participated in this study were also requested to state the inclusivity of cooperative education programs, perceiving them to be the primary beneficiaries rather than management or any other person. In response to this question an interview participant from Msozi AMCOS one respondent commented that:

"The real target for cooperative education is to empower AMCOS member, but it is unfortunate that in practices it seems as if the targeted group is the management team of the cooperatives. And it has been a tendency that even the cooperative education and training individuals have been implementing the wants and will of the Nyanza Cooperative Union. This means that without Nyanza Cooperative Union, there is none among all those whom you are seeing capable of travelling through this lake, just for training" (Participant 4, Msozi AMCOOS, 7th June 2019).

This reflected a potential gap in program planning and implementation, resonating with Gimenes' et al., (2016) recommendation to extend education initiatives to include prospective members and the wider community.

3.3 Duration and modality of cooperative education delivery program

Another aspect which participants were required to analyse was the perception on the time allocated for AMCOS members' education and training. The aim was to measure as to whether the allocated time or duration allocated for education and training program was sufficient for instilling cooperative values and instincts. Results show that respondents expressed negative perceptions on the duration allocated for cooperative education and training programs, with many felt that the allocated time was insufficient for meaningful learning.

"The training sessions are way too short. We can't really learn anything meaningful in such a limited time. It's just not enough to cover what we need to know." (Participant 4, Murutunguru AMCOS, 4th June 2019).

Furthermore, respondents stated that insufficient time for delivery of cooperative education and training has in turn led to the rushed learning pace, limited practical application, and inadequate interaction with instructors. Another respondent during interview had this expression to comment on this "You know, we are not experts; those who plan these trainings are the ones to help us instead of coming back to ask us while we don't know anything." (Participant 4, Murutunguru AMCOS, 4th June, 2019). However, it was observed that some respondents, particularly those who had lower levels of formal education, struggled to gauge the adequacy of training time. The dissatisfaction with the time allocated for learning cooperative matters highlighted a critical AMCOS members' concern regarding the depth and effectiveness of training programs. This finding is in line with the argument by Hancock & Brault (2016) who advocated for tailored educational programs accommodating diverse individual members needs and capacities and that of the community.

3.4 Content relevance and frequency of cooperative education and training

Respondents in this study were also asked to express their concerns and perceptions on the content relevance and the frequency of sessions through which cooperative education and training was delivered. Results show that majority of the respondents reported infrequent access to training opportunities.

"We rarely get access to cooperative education training, and when we do, it's often not relevant to our needs. Most trainers focus on general topics, but our real problems are specific to our agricultural practices and market access." (Participant 3, Irunda AMCOS, 27th May 2019).

In support of the idea that cooperative education and training were not frequently provided to AMCOS. During interview, a participant from Muriti AMCOS expressed his views stating that "Let me tell you the truth, in this year, <https://sanad.iau.ir/Journal/ijasrt/>

you are the first person to visit us and ask about our progress. This means we do haven't trained in this year and actually we do not get training, and if we are lucky, it can only be once after some years." (Participant 2, Muriti AMCOS, 5th June 2019). From Nyamtelela AMCOS another respondent had this comment:

"On my side, I am nothing to comment than advising experts to frequently provide us education and training as it was in the years back. Otherwise, there will be no any progress with our AMCOS. It is my trust that education is among the important components of development. But as of now, as we do not get any education one should not expect any development. At least we (adults) got something in education during those days, the situation is terrible to these youngsters who get nothing. What do you expect if this is the case?" (Participant 1, Nyamtelela AMCOS, 28th May 2019).

This lack of regular training was seen as a barrier to skill development and organisational growth of the AMCOS, particularly during critical periods such as the agricultural harvest season.

Also, respondents in this study were asked to identify and interpret key areas of cooperative education and training. This meant to seek respondents' awareness on the content coverage during training. Specifically, respondents were asked to demonstrate the covered content. Results show that participants in this study managed to identify key areas of such education to include education and training on cooperative principles, member rights and responsibilities, leadership, management, and agricultural practices. However, majority of the respondents felt that the content was not effectively tailored to their needs and contexts, leading to doubts about its relevance and effectiveness. While some participants highlighted the disconnect between training content and the challenges faced AMCOS, another AMCOS member during interview commented that:

"I am not sure if the kind of education you are talking about counts. I can see as if the government is wasting time when it comes to the issue of providing education to cooperatives; there is actually nothing new. As you can see the go-downs are empty, cotton is not there and every year, the people are indifferent. When we get serious and when our education will be directed towards positive changes, we shall therefore say our education has helped us. Otherwise, I do not see if it is helpful in any way." (Participant 3, Irunda AMCOS, 27th May 2019).

Additionally, a participant during interview when asked to explain relevance of the cooperative education and training among AMCOS, expressed the following feelings:

"For sure, if you focus on our education systems specifically the cooperative education, it is too abstract. Taking of my example, I have been here for many years, but every time we go for training, things are the same just feeling in books. Now, in such kind of situation, do you think is possible for anyone to confidently stand in front of people and declare that cooperative education has helped us? I doubt" (Participant 2, Bugorola AMCOS, 6th June 2019).

This is an indication that in this study, participants perceived a disconnect between educational content and practical realities, particularly regarding market access and agricultural techniques. These findings concur with the Relevance Theory, emphasising the need for educational initiatives that directly address cooperative members' goals and challenges (Hjorland & Sefer-Christensen, 2002).

3.5 Cooperative education delivery methodology and evaluation processes

AMCOS members were asked to explain their perception regarding teaching methodology and the modality through which education was provided. Respondents in this study identified a mix of lecture-based and participatory approaches as the preferred methodologies, with limited use of interactive methods including role-playing. While some respondents expressed satisfaction with traditional teaching methods, others advocated for more participatory and mixed approaches to enhance engagement and learning outcomes. While majority of respondents were of the views that education and training was provided physically on an online basis, but few stated that it both online and offline approaches was used. A respondent from Mumbuga AMCOS in Ukerewe shared this sentiment: -

"It is true that there are some materials sent to us online; but it happens so when an instructor has taught and has gone; so, you can't say we learn through online means while it's just a way of making us get materials." (Participant 3, Mumbuga AMCOS, 2nd June 2019).

Furthermore, another member from Bwiro AMCOS had this comment:

I have a slightly different perspective when you talk about TV and radio programs. Of course, FOR ME, I like listening and following what goes on through televisions, but you can't say we are taught online when there is no agreement between us and a person training. First when you ask me if I know him; I

will say no. So, I don't see if there is any learning through those ways you say (Participant 1, Bwiro AMCOS, 9th June 2019).

Furthermore, regarding the modality of cooperative education and training delivery, majority of respondents reported to have received training through physical means, such as face-to-face lectures, with limited online components. Also, there were a mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the used modalities, with some expressing satisfaction with traditional lecture-based methods and others advocating for more interactive approaches. One of the study participants reported: -

“Both online and offline means of education and training were effective for training AMCOS members and facilitators has sometimes been providing materials to leaders after the lecture. This has basically been done When they finish teaching, where they do provide us with pamphlets, but there are others members who get access of some materials from our leaders when they are sent by the facilitators online. Together with all these, we are still learning through radios and Television” (Participant 2, Sima AMCOS, 24th May 2019).

While some acknowledged the presence of online materials, they did not consider them as primary modes of education delivery, some members were unfamiliar with the ways cooperative education and training was delivered. This was also illustrated by one of the study participants during interview that:

“Just to look at our education system, it is too abstract. I have been here for many years, but everything we go for training, things are the same; feeling in books. Now, in this situation, can anyone confidently stand in front of people and declare that it helps us? I doubt.” (Participant 2, Bugorola AMCOS, 6th June 2019).

Finally, when they were required to state their perceptions on the evaluation process for the delivered cooperative education and training, their responses were basically negative. Majority of the respondents criticised lack of summative evaluation and documentation of training outcomes. This lack of formal assessment was seen as a barrier to accountability and improvement within cooperative education and training programs. One of the participants reported that:

“When they finish teaching, they always provide us with pamphlets without any assessment. Thus, I am wandering they would be able to establish the successfulness of provided training.” (Participant 2, Sima AMCOS, 24th May 2019).

Therefore, dissatisfaction expressed by respondents regarding the delivery method communicated the importance of adopting learner-centred approaches that promote active engagement and problem-solving among AMCOS members. Furthermore, the absence of summative evaluation processes raised concerns about the effectiveness and accountability of educational initiatives, aligning with the recommendations by Lucid (2017) regarding the importance of documentation in assessing program effectiveness.

3.6 Discussion

In this study, the perceptions of cooperative members regarding cooperative education and training among the Tanzania's agricultural marketing cooperatives (AMCOS) were studied. The focus was on the thematic areas aligned with the study's objectives. Therefore, this section on the discussion of the findings is structured on the thematic areas of the study objectives, while integrating insights from the results, relevant literature, and theoretical frameworks.

To start with the adequacy of cooperative education and training, the findings revealed a predominantly negative perception among AMCOS members regarding the adequacy of such education programs in meeting AMCOS and their members' needs. This dissatisfaction maybe has its stem from various factors including the discrepancy between expectations and reality, as well as the perceived lack of practical applicability and relevance of the training. Such findings are in line to Mruma (2014), who highlighted the developmental challenges of cooperative education within the context of cooperative sustainability. Furthermore, the scepticism expressed by participants regarding the effectiveness of cooperative education and training echoes the notion proposed by Harte et al., (2013) who emphasises the importance of aligning educational content with practical needs and learning theories.

Basing on target of cooperative education and training programs in this study area show that the participants' scepticism regarding the target audience of such programs draw a broader issue of inclusivity within cooperative education and training programs. The perception that cooperative education and training programs primarily benefits management rather than all members reflects a potential gap in program planning and implementation. This finding aligns with the recommendations by Gimenes et al., (2016) who observed the importance of extending cooperative education and training initiatives to include prospective members and the wider community. It is within this context

then, failure to address this inclusivity may hinder the cooperative's ability to foster a sense of ownership and engagement among its members.

Furthermore, the perception of inadequacy regarding the duration of cooperative education and training delivery program highlights a critical concern regarding the depth and effectiveness of training programs. This means that participants' dissatisfaction with the limited time allocated for learning cooperative matters suggests a need for more comprehensive and sustained educational efforts. This finding is in line with the argument by Hancock & Brault (2016) who emphasized the importance of tailored educational programs that accommodate the diverse needs and capacities of cooperative members. Moreover, the neutral response from some participants provides extra weight to the challenges of engaging illiterate or minimally educated members in educational initiatives, emphasizing the need for customized approaches, as suggested by Bee (2011).

Additionally, the negative perception of cooperative education and training relevance among participants communicate the disconnect between educational content and the practical realities faced by AMCOS members. The observation that education fails to address pressing issues such as market access and agricultural techniques reflects a critical gap in program design and delivery. This finding concurs with the Relevance Theory which emphasizes the need for educational initiatives to directly address the goals and challenges faced by cooperative members (Hjorland & SeferChristensen, 2002). Furthermore, the dissatisfaction expressed by participants regarding the delivery method highlights the importance of adopting learner-centered approaches that promote active engagement and problem-solving (Collier, 2016).

Finally, the absence of summative evaluation processes within cooperative education and training programs raises concerns about the effectiveness and accountability of educational initiatives. Participants in this study call for transparent evaluation mechanisms and documentation of outcomes for the purpose of underscoring the need for rigorous assessment frameworks that measure the impact of education on cooperative performance. This finding aligns with the recommendations by Lucid (2017) who recommends the importance of documentation in assessing program effectiveness and informing future decision-making.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is therefore concluded that the findings of this study shed light on the perceptions of cooperative members regarding cooperative education and training in Tanzania's Agricultural Marketing Cooperatives (AMCOS) in the Sengerema and Ukerewe districts. This conclusion draws from the four objectives of the study, which included assessing the adequacy, relevance, modality, and evaluation of cooperative education. Thus, from these perspectives, it is evident that cooperative education and training offered in AMCOS is negatively perceived by members, indicating a significant gap between the expectations and the reality of educational provisions. The dissatisfaction spans across various aspects including adequacy, relevance, modality, evaluation, content, target audience, duration, and teaching methodology. Furthermore, several recommendations have been provided including:

(i) There is a need to reform cooperative education and training strategies to ensure inclusivity, targeting not only to current members but also to prospective members and the wider community. This can be done by engaging diverse groups within the community, AMCOS can enhance sustainability through increased membership and positive perception towards cooperatives.

(ii) Facilitators of cooperative education and training should design programs that maximize the utilization of the allocated time to ensure that AMCOS members derive maximum benefit. This may involve tailoring content delivery methods to accommodate varying literacy levels and learning styles among members.

(iii) Both formative and summative evaluation methods should be incorporated into cooperative education and training programs to assess effectiveness and ensure accountability. The absence of summative evaluation jeopardizes the sustainability of both the cooperative education and training process and AMCOS themselves. As noted by Da Luz (2015), summative evaluation is essential for making informed decisions, understanding learner's comprehension, and maintaining the quality of education.

(iv) AMCOS and relevant stakeholders should cooperate in prioritizing continuous innovation and improvement in cooperative education and training programs to ensure adequacy, relevance, and inclusivity. This may involve revising content/topics, adjusting training frequency, adopting learner-friendly modalities, and enhancing teaching methodologies.

(v) Finally, agricultural and cooperative officers should actively engage with AMCOS members by visiting different societies to provide education on cooperative principles and practices. This engagement can foster trust, confidence, and collaboration between members and their leaders, thereby promoting the sustainability of cooperative societies.

Hence, addressing the identified gaps in cooperative provision is crucial for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of AMCOS in Tanzania. Furthermore, through implementing the recommended strategies and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, AMCOS can fulfil their mandate of empowering members and driving agricultural

development in the region. Also, it is crucial to adopt a more participatory and contextually relevant approach to cooperative education and training including involving members in program planning and decision-making, tailoring training content to meet their specific needs and challenges, and adopting more interactive and engaging teaching methodologies. Furthermore, there is a need for more robust evaluation processes that incorporate both formative and summative assessment methods to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

This study highlights the need for further research to explore strategies for improving the relevance and effectiveness of cooperative education programs within AMCOS. Future research should investigate the development of tailored educational content that addresses the specific practical needs of cooperative members, including market access and advanced agricultural techniques. Additionally, examining the impact of various teaching methodologies, such as interactive and participatory approaches, on member engagement and learning outcomes would be beneficial. Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term effects of cooperative education on the sustainability and performance of AMCOS are also recommended. Furthermore, research should explore the role of continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms in enhancing the quality and accountability of cooperative education programs. Finally, investigating the potential benefits of integrating digital learning tools and resources to complement traditional training methods could provide valuable insights into modernizing cooperative education.

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