

Incorporating Effectiveness and Accountability for Member Good: Possible Choices for Cooperatives in Sub-Sahara Africa

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Abstract

Cooperatives are multifaceted phenomena that add value to the members, communities and economies at large. Cooperatives in comparison with profit-maximizing investor-owned firms are considered better at coping with economic crises, driving economic development and promoting social inclusion among communities. However, cooperatives are saddled with several imperatives challenging their effectiveness, accountability, transparency and organisational integrity for the provision of member goods. Members remain the foundation of the cooperatives. Despite, the cooperative organisational structure, the model has come under blistering criticism for not living up to the "member good maximization", a situation which undermines cooperative good governance and sustainability. Thus, this paper, accordingly, recommended that it is expedient that cooperatives in the region be strengthened for effectiveness through continued education and made a case for incorporating effectiveness and accountability in cooperatives in the region, to better serve the member good.

Keywords: *Cooperatives, sub-Sahara Africa, Accountability, Member Good and Possible Choices*

INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives are self-governing groups of people who want to work together to operate a business that is jointly owned and democratically run (Karakas, 2019). The cooperative movement (or "Co-ops") is a multifaceted phenomenon that benefits its participants as well as local communities and economies at large. Cooperatives build marketplaces, achieve economies of scale, and provide (long-distance) markets; manage risks (via pooling); increase market efficiency (e.g. through competition with traders with a high mark-up), reduce transaction costs (by standardising contracts and organising quality controls) and promote innovation (in niche products) and decreases prices volatility. In addition, cooperatives in comparison with profit-maximizing investor-owned firms, are considered better at coping with economic crises driving economic development in low-to-middle-income countries; reinvesting surpluses; promoting local communities and social inclusion and ensuring members' (democratic) participation (www.social.un.org). Cooperatives, fundamentally are controlled democratically by the members who use them. Members continue to be the cooperative's cornerstone, and the cooperative exists because of the needs of its members (Cook, Ratchford, & Griffith, 2017). Cooperatives enable members to take charge of their financial destiny by empowering them to support, fund, and define the cooperative's future while also establishing sustainable businesses that produce long-term prosperity and job growth (ICA, 1995).

Every cooperative needs a Board of Directors (BOD) which acts as the managing executive. The Board members are elected to run the cooperative on behalf of its members. The BOD is responsible

for the direction of the cooperative by complying with the ethical standards thus setting overall objectives and charting the cooperative's course, through the roles of other principal parties such as managers and employees. The manager serves in a variety of roles, including coach and player, leader and follower, educator and motivator, dictator and diplomat, mediator and magician, judge and jury, analyst and activist. The workers advertise the cooperative, transport goods, maintain proper records, inform others about the cooperative, and do many other things (USDA, 2011). The concept has been criticised throughout time for not living up to the demands of being effective, efficient, transparent, and result-oriented since most cooperatives in sub-Saharan Africa become moribund and out of existence, despite cooperative organisational structure. The region's cooperatives face several challenges, including poor human resource development, political abuse, excessive government involvement, high levels of autonomy and dependence on the state (Tanzania, Senegal, Nigeria, Burkina Faso), and internal political instability (Kwakyewah, 2016). The current state of affairs weakens effective government, encourages corruption, and devalues members. New approaches and mindsets are required to improve cooperatives in sub-Saharan Africa for the benefit of their members (Holubracik & Soviar, 2021).

A cooperative should never be an end in itself. The mission is always the promotion of its members. Member good is the sum of individual perceived benefits for members of a cooperative due to their membership. The greater the degree to which a co-op's benefits are in line with members' latent preferences and financial objectives, the higher the member value that results (Suter & Gmr, 2013). It's interesting to note that organisational references take into account the various roles that cooperating players perform, which lead to various expectations (Mazzarol et al., 2011). Members of co-op act as (1) an investor, the members are mainly interested in financial gain; (2) a patron, the members are looking for fair prices; (3) the role of owner, the member focus on control and underpinned by expectation of organizational democracy and 'procedural Justice'; and (4) every co-op member is also a member of the community, too. Cooperatives are known for being deeply ingrained in the neighbourhood, which can result in a virtuous loop and mutual loyalty. As a result, local economic development benefits its members in ways that go beyond the cooperative structure (Suter & Gmr, 2013). Members' position in co-op is paramount that ineffective processes used in the administration of co-op must yield place to more results-oriented management philosophies and practices. Management and members should be engaged in a relationship of trust. Transparency and member involvement can help with this. By paying attention to what the members have to say, management must be able to establish a relationship with the members and foster an open culture. For the cooperative to survive and grow, there must be trust and participation (Apostolakis & VanDijk, 2018).

Due to their ability to re-energize the rural economy to the benefit of the vast majority of inhabitants, cooperatives are the key to changing the present development trajectories that are causing poverty to increase (Ojiagu, 2022; Uhuru Institute, 2013). However, political meddling, organisational problems, and corruption have hampered performance and accountability, making it difficult to maximise "member good." Members' participation in cooperative administration is diminished when there is political influence from outside the movement (Kyazze, 2010). However, concerns for making cooperatives in sub-Sahara Africa more effective and efficient institutions prompted the review and subsequent reforms in the region national cooperatives such as in Tanzania there was a 1976 modernization programme on (i) (CRMP); legal framework (ii) cooperative perform modernization program (CRAMP); government rethink on its earlier policy outlook on cooperatives and (iii) convergence of rural voices called the citizen manifesto in 2011 (Magigi, 2013; Uhuru Institute, 2013). In 2004 Keyan government addressed various legislative and policy reforms in the

cooperative sector aimed at improving corporate governance for member good (Owiye et al; 2014). Kenyan cooperatives also saw two major eras: state control and liberalisation, which sparked structural development and resulted in the demise of ineffective cooperatives (Wanyama, 2009). Evidence suggests that the National Cooperative Financing Agency of Nigeria (NCFAN), in collaboration with the Abuja Cooperative Federation, is coordinating cooperative reforms in Nigeria in order to promote the growth and development of the cooperative movement at all levels and to make cooperatives function for its members. Law, policy, regulation, practise governance, and financial inclusion will all be changed (NCFAN, 2020).

Despite the recent wave of reforms in sub-Saharan Africa, concerned parties believe that the cooperatives in the area are still far from being efficient and responsible in promoting member welfare. Evidence suggests that in addition to external supervision, many cooperatives in the area face internal difficulties. Cooperatives typically have a single level of organisational structure. Many smaller or more established cooperatives employ the one-tier system, which places elected members in daily administration duties while leaving a small number of decisions up to the members (Karakas, 2019; Cook, 2017). The cooperatives in the region do not give themselves the goal of producing a return on the capital provided by members, therefore the capital-based compensation of members is limited. This is another tendency that has an impact on member welfare. Another defence of the cooperatives' lack of competitiveness is based on their ownership arrangements, which to a significant part each cooperative organisation has fought for on its own in the fight for economic survival. Therefore, the benefits of unified action through the application of the cooperative principles among cooperatives have mostly gone unmet. The member-good is in peril because of this weak equity base (Ojenmark & Chabala, 1994).

Restructuring in corporate governance, which is a function of controlling a corporation that promotes justice, openness, and transparency in its obligation to stakeholders, was one of the cooperative institutions improvements that was recommended. Additionally, by concentrating on tasks that add value, strong corporate governance practises promote economic efficiency (Garzon & Castrillon, 2021). Further, the reforms touched on the growth and development of societies having full autonomy and professionalization of employees, as possible ways of addressing the "member god" challenge in the regional cooperatives.

This paper takes the position that these prescriptions alone cannot solve the challenge. Hence, new strategies and philosophies in addition would be required to make cooperatives in sub-Sahara more effective and accountable. For purposes, effectiveness means "doing the right things better" (or the power to procedure the desired result (Wilson et al., 2018; Fox, 1979). In addition, effectiveness indicates the attainment of stated goals and objectives measured in terms of results while accountability signifies answerability to "effectiveness" and "accountability" ethos in the cooperatives in sub-Sahara Africa is for the member management committees or board of directors and hired employees to resolve creatively their mental and logical crises (Yanuri-mirada 2019). It also means the ability to give accountable and responsible answers for an account (Ogundajo et al. 2019). The crisis manifests in the faltering shown by the cooperatives in adopting new management values, and ideas in which the cooperative bylaws are flexible on such stand. When this crisis is resolved intellectual cooperatives will make an appearance. This, no doubt will facilitate the adoption of new management perspectives for conducting cooperative business in the region.

Shape of Knowledgeable Cooperatives

Various organisations around the world, including cooperatives, have made improving operational performance one of their top priorities. The provision of education and training to enable the

implementation of everyday operations is one of the main techniques to increase the performance of various sorts of organisations (Anania & Rivekaza, 2018). It is expedient that cooperatives in the sub-Saharan be strengthened for effectiveness. Cooperative societies need the continuous provision of education and training to the board members and management as a means to build the capacity needed to attain the described needs and aspirations, including better provision of services to satisfy member goods. According to Gimenes et al. (2016), the application of cooperative principles, practises, and procedures as business practises, as well as cooperative education and training of members and elected management committee, members, managers, and employees, are all essential to the success of cooperatives. The fifth principle of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) (1995) is about 'Education, training and information. The cooperatives' guiding principles direct them to offer stakeholders training and education so that they can effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Members are responsible for educating the broader public about cooperatives and their advantages, with a focus on youth and opinion leaders. It sharpens the intellect, broadens the state of mind, expands the scope of vision, and builds up the character of an individual; a disposition to adopt new, researched, proven, and pragmatic management ideas; while training develops the skills and moderates one's capabilities (Anania & Rwekaza, 2018; Metu & Uzonwanne, 2017).

According to Anania and Rwekaza (2018), educated cooperatives are those where members are taught how to work together, participate in, and manage the cooperative they own. These cooperatives also encourage their members' understanding of how important it is for them to play creative and innovative roles within the organisation. Policy actors and programme executives in educated (intellectual) cooperatives think and act strategically in pursuing efficiency and effectiveness in the services provided to members and third parties, thus conveying management knowledge, and business and entrepreneurial skills. An educated cooperative will remain close to the community of domicility and create appropriate forums for communicating 'significance' to its relevant public.

Intellectual cooperative organizations will appreciate the need to study the environment in which they operate, to identify trends with capability for disrupting the achievement of set objectives. Cooperatives would recognize that in democracies the organs of governance utilize "sheared power" contexts in which no one person is absolutely in charge (enactment of equality). To put it another way, democracy is manifested within the cooperative community not only in its formal governance but also in the regular interactions of its members, whose relationships are founded on equality and mutuality and which are created, fostered, and sustained by the community's egalitarian institutional structure (OCDC, 2017). Once more, a sub-Saharan African intellectual cooperative will support "institutionalised cooperation relationships" between the cooperatives and its directorate as well as research centres that will not give up on their pursuit of cutting-edge concepts to address the cooperatives' challenges. Although sometimes more difficult to quantify, enhanced cross-sector cooperative collaboration has a wide range of possible benefits (Dopico & Rogers, 2016).

Additionally, as thinking cooperatives are investment-owned forms (IOFs), they won't accept "lethargic" members who refuse to adapt to changing internal and external situations and insist on "conducting business as usual." According to this theory, the foundation of the cooperative principle is a voluntary and open membership, but most of the time, members are not willing to accept the obligations of membership or to raise issues for consideration in the future. However, adapting to a changing environment is a wise strategy for avoiding accepting member vulnerability and underwhelming projects (Guidance notes to the Cooperative Principles <https://guides.co>).

As a result, environmental scanning is necessary as part of strategic planning because it undoubtedly provides information on the factors that will affect the cooperative's future. As a result, leadership must be proactive in identifying the cooperative's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to develop adaptive strategies or a backup plan for dealing with uncertainties (Zhang, Majid, & Foo, 2010).

Consider key "elements of governance excellence" include action orientation, heightened community awareness, and a thorough employee orientation that outlines expectations and duties for new workers (Barbour et al., 1984). The aforementioned might be included in the profile of intellectual cooperatives in the area and is therefore a component of its new cooperative management tenet that will be followed in the coming years. In cooperatives, maintaining 'ethical integrity' among individual actors and stakeholders is a further expectation in addition to the expectation of effective member good (Palazzo, 2007).

The Possible Choices

How can cooperatives in sub-Sahara Africa become more effective and more accountable for member good? How can the board of directors; elected management committee, managers and hired employees within the cooperatives cope with the challenges and turbulent environment in today's contemporary world and possibly well into the future? How can cooperative organizational and institutional integrity be developed and sustained by members and in the public domain in the region to ensure confidence by members and users or third parties? These are fascinating and strategic questions. The position is taken in this paper that to address the concerns contained in the questions, cooperative leaders in sub-Sahara Africa need to make a clean break with outmode and unproductive management methods and routines, that were neither approved by the general meeting nor by the specific cooperative bye-laws, and opt for "thinking and acting strategically" about cooperative management in the region. Implicit in this statement is that important possible choices which are "non-procedural", "non - non-progressive" and "non-disrupted" have to be made to bring about the needed changes and result in cooperative management.

The possible choices are hereby discussed

1. Adoption of strategic planning for cooperative effectiveness: The professional, lead practising and career executives who run these organisations must adopt strategic planning as a key management technique if they are to increase the success of cooperatives in sub-Saharan Africa. It is well known that strategic planning is effective in helping cooperatives handle change and uncertainty (Bholah, 2018, Scott Madden Management Consultants, 2015, Nam Ken & Rapp, 1997). Strategic planning is essentially goal-oriented and concentrates on particular quantifiable actions. The production of essential decisions and activities that define and affect the success of the organisation is based on current, accurate facts and future assumptions. Strategic planning is used in cooperatives to promote proactive behaviour as opposed to reactive behaviour (Scolar, 2018, Nam Ken Rapp, 1997; Bryson, 1988). In order to increase efficacy and manage the "twisting changes," uncertainties, and turbulence that define the business environment in which cooperatives operate, cooperatives in sub-Saharan Africa must establish strategic planning capabilities. The region's companies are subject to instability, which forces the cooperatives to take a range of actions. These cooperatives must first approach strategy in a whole new way. Second, in order to deal with the uncertain environment, cooperatives must put their insights into practice. Third, in order to establish the foundation for the acceptance and execution of their strategies, cooperatives must develop the logic required (Hatungiman, Rumeci, & Bahizi, 2022). If cooperatives are to carry out their missions

and satisfy their members, they serve in the years to come, their leaders will need to be effective strategists, according to the changing contexts in which they work today (Gurcharanjit et al., 2021). Cooperatives need to cover the following considerations adequately:

- Where the cooperative is and where it is going in the future?
- How do cooperatives serve the stakeholders? In general, what are the basic economic, social and cultural needs to satisfy? In what particular way should the cooperatives meet the expectations of the stakeholders?
- What are the most desirable qualities of those who will lead the cooperatives in the future?
- An appreciation of the internal and external environments within which cooperatives operate, the opportunities and threats posed by these environments; internal cooperative strengths and weaknesses; the political, economic, social and technological trends (PESTS) which can affect cooperative plans and the achievement of objectives (Namken & Rapp, 1997)
- What resources will the cooperative need to achieve its goals?
- Vision of success (Hatungimana et al, 2022).

A strategic planning capability can be built in cooperative organisations in sub-Sahara Africa by creating a special staff unit which would be responsible for furnishing cooperative leaders with sufficient “policy and planning intelligence” through a “thorough situation analysis”. This way inefficiencies of effecting changes through “trial and error” adjustments would be made away with as cooperatives are mobilized toward a “new strategic posture” for enhanced effectiveness and accountability.

2. Fostering the Entrepreneurial Spirit in Cooperatives: Innovation and creativity are the roles of the entrepreneur (Abdulahi et al., 2017; Schumpeter, 1934). Cooperatives can be supported and moulded by good creative ideas. A thoughtful encouragement of the entrepreneurial spirit among cooperative members can liberate creativity and innovation among members. In the attempt to create future entrepreneurs, cooperative entrepreneurship is crucial (Norliana, et al., 2019). As a result, in a successful cooperative, at least a certain percentage of members (2%) will have the courage to pursue economic prospects. As a result, entrepreneurial behaviours are associated with entrepreneurial values. Values serve as the foundation for comprehending attitudes and motivations, and they can affect how behaviour is perceived when conducting business (Zulfikri & Iskandar, 2021). The creation of a cooperative enterprise is cooperative entrepreneurship. The potential of the participating entrepreneurs to mix various talents and competencies is possibly the biggest benefit. The interaction between the entrepreneurs is essential to the success of cooperative entrepreneurship (Mc Donnell et al., 2012). Cooperative leaders are challenged and encouraged to come up with fresh suggestions for how to manage their particular cooperative more successfully while fostering the development of inventive and creative members. For example, entrepreneurial cooperative leaders can specifically challenge members and employees, to generate ideas on

- Innovative means of realizing cooperative ideals and mobilizing resources. Additionally, members can be asked to generate ideas on more efficient and effective service delivery modalities and operational procedures critical to the success of a member-oriented administration. Regularly the cooperative leaders can consider meeting in a typical "Theory Y" setting to examine new ideas generated and how can the ideas be harnessed to ensure improved cooperative performance for member good.

3. Accelerating strategic partnerships with universities/institutions on cooperative

Research: According to Ketilson (2011), cooperatives represent principles that are appealing to many people and relevant to academic study. Therefore, cooperative leaders in the region should use universities and sister agencies/institutions in "gathering-enriching-relevant-intelligence" through research to increase the quality of cooperative performance for member-good in sub-Saharan Africa in the twenty-first century. The compelling reasons for linkages of cooperatives with research institutions are witnessed on these premises:

- Cooperatives as a microcosm of society show the intersection of political and economic affairs.
- The universities enjoy the credibility to articulate agendas propose priorities even establish methodologies (Nze & Nkamnebe, 2003). This creates a mutual exchange of ideas that are interesting to researchers and cooperatives. Leading to connected themes and areas.
- The university and other research institutions have a rich array of trained manpower, knowledgeable in areas which cooperatives need that envisions a future in which people are empowered (Ketilson, 2011).

Through research cooperative innovation tends to emerge regardless of section. Moreover, cooperative spread and growth and regional cooperative data sets are shared.

4. Originating Environmental Scanning capabilities. Environmental scanning involves a process that helps organization sense what is happening in their environments that could influence future decisions:

Thus, the development of environmental scanning capability in sub-Saharan cooperatives will be vital in proving their performances. Cooperatives in the region can consider their components in environmental scanning; trends in the marketplace; competition that provides advantage; technology that may impact cooperatives in the future; members base changing; economic happenings that may affect future business and many more components (Jiang, 2015).

Cooperatives will undoubtedly assume an anticipatory position when they participate in routine scanning operations to monitor the external environment for opportunities and dangers, which will boost opportunities. Each regional thematic committee for cooperative research should think about stepping up to the plate by identifying important issues and trends that pose real or potential threats, analysing and interpreting those issues and trends, and producing data that can be used in the decision-making process (Nze & Nkamnebe, 2003). Situation reports made regularly to the management committee and at the annual general meetings can improve the management of cooperatives for member goods.

5. Strict Adherence to the Byelaw for cooperative Accountability and Integrity: Every organisation must assume accountability for its employees' sincere and moral behaviour towards others, including open communication, sharing of commitments, and reporting on progress. One of the distinguishing characteristics of democracies is accountability, which is even more true in a democratic, member-controlled system where the ideals are codified in a byelaw (While, 2017). The model executive's actions are made possible by the cooperative bylaws. It serves as the owner's manual, a compass in rough seas, and a road map to everyday life. These views suggest that cooperatives in the area carefully abide by their particular bylaws, which lay out the principles of accountability for organisational effectiveness. The bye-laws, which also address the members, purpose, performance, and advancement, set forth how the cooperatives are to be operated daily.

Cooperative integrity does not act opportunistically, but decisions and actions are consistent with the espoused social values seen in the byelaws which are not contrary to the cooperative Act, hence,

adherence to this most important document each cooperative society enthrones transparency and removes processes cloaked in secrecy. Therefore, searching for the most efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished in line with the cooperative byelaws stipulations for member good is a desirable behavioural trait that should be internalized by cooperative leaders.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on ways to incorporate effectiveness and accountability in sub-Saharan Africa cooperatives. The mission of the cooperative is always the promotion of its members. Member good is always the perceived benefits for members of a cooperative due to its membership. The better the provided benefit of the cooperative matches the member's latent preferences and economic goals the bigger the resulting member value. It is expedient that cooperatives in the region be strengthened for effectiveness through continued education. Further, ideas were advanced for incorporating effectiveness and accountability in cooperatives in the region, to better serve the member good. Cooperatives embody values that are attractive to many people.

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