

Determinants of Access of Farmers' Cooperative Societies to Cooperative Training Programmes in Nigeria

Dr. Festus U. Agbo

Department of Agricultural Economics

University of Nigeria, Nsukka, NIGERIA

Tel: +2348066592181 E-mail: fuagbo4real@yahoo.com

Abstract: This paper seeks to identify the factors that determine the access of farmers' cooperative societies to cooperative training programmes. The study covers the entire country, Nigeria. Three hundred and sixty (360) cooperative societies randomly selected across the six geopolitical zones of the country were used for the study. Out of the 360 cooperative societies, 180 benefited from cooperative training while 180 did not. The three Federal Cooperative Colleges used for the study are; the Federal Cooperative College, Ibadan, the Federal Cooperative College, Oji-River and the Federal Cooperative College, Kaduna. Statistical tools used for data analysis include percentage, means and standard deviation. Levene's test for equality of means was used to ascertain if the differences in means between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are significant. Likert scale rating was used to ascertain how respondents perceive the effects of agency related issues that affect cooperative members' access to the services of cooperative training institutions. The Levene's test for equality of means confirms that the mean scores of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are statistically significantly different. Likert scale rating also confirms that cost of training, duration of training, entry qualifications and training delivery techniques affect cooperative members access to the training programmes of cooperative training institutions.

JEL Classifications: Q1, A2

Keywords: Cooperative training, Access issues, Farmers' cooperatives

1. Introduction

In Nigeria, institutionalized cooperative training dates back to 1943 when the Colonial Department of Agriculture in charge of cooperative matters started offering formal cooperative courses at the Moor Plantation, Ibadan (Oladeji, 1991). From this humble beginning cooperative courses are now offered in more than fifteen cooperative colleges, several polytechnics/colleges of technology as well as in many universities which either have full departments for cooperative studies or offer courses in cooperatives (Akinwumi, 1991; Agbo, 2006).

Cooperative training has not been as successful in Africa generally, and particularly in Nigeria, as in Europe where cooperative education began in local cooperative societies and preceded the actual incorporation of such cooperative societies (Bailey, 1960). By 1935 when cooperative activities were introduced in Nigeria emphasis was not placed on training of cooperative members but on government cooperative staff who were under instructions to register as many cooperative societies as possible to enhance the collection of agricultural raw materials for factories in metropolitan Europe (Nweze, 2002). After political independence cooperative activities in Nigeria followed the pattern laid down by the colonial administration with respect to government's

domineering influence over cooperative training and other critical inputs of cooperative development (Onuoha, 2002).

Cooperative training, however, received a big boost in Nigeria during her Third Development Plan (1975-1980) due to the government's desire to use cooperatives more consciously as instruments for achieving increased agricultural productivity and rural transformation (FMARD, 2009). Consequently, the Federal Government established three Federal Cooperative Colleges at Oji-River, Ibadan and Kaduna, respectively to provide cooperative education in Nigeria. Apart from the three Federal Cooperative Colleges, several state owned cooperative colleges have also been established.

Unfortunately, the Cooperative Movement in Nigeria has neither her own cooperative training institutions nor a controlling influence on any of the existing cooperative colleges. Over the years, cooperative training has as a result been directed, mainly, to government personnel with very limited opportunity for cooperative members and staff. This situation has left the management of cooperatives largely in the hands of illiterate officers and members leading to the poor performance of the cooperative sector of the economy (Berko, 2002).

Cooperative activities in Nigeria have grown in size and complexity thereby creating the need for professionally trained managers and other technically competent personnel. Provision of relevant cooperative training or recruitment of managers who have acquired the relevant competence for the management of cooperative businesses has become very necessary. Because of lack of sufficiently trained officers and members of cooperative societies government staff are in some cases seconded to state cooperative apex bodies thereby compromising the autonomy of such bodies (Okoye, 2002).

The weak financial base of most cooperative societies in Nigeria and their small membership sizes make it difficult for them to sponsor members, officers and staff to training programmes of cooperative training institutions (Oladeji, 1994). This problem is accentuated by the fact that the cooperative movement itself is so impoverished that it cannot subsidize member education (Agbo, 2001).

Other obstacles facing cooperative training in Nigeria include the fact that cooperative training in the country is not based on a clear analysis of needs and therefore has not addressed the needs of the cooperative movement. Lack of awareness by cooperative members of opportunities for training existing in the cooperative training institutions is another major problem. Bottomley (1980) believes that for cooperative societies to have access to cooperative training some socio-economic variables like the type and size of cooperative membership, the sector of the economy that needs intervention, the levels of functional education and the level of assistance cooperative gets from the state must be fully addressed. Ambruster (2001) adds that the system of delivery and cost of cooperative training and mode of selection of those to benefit from training affect access to cooperative training very seriously.

From an earlier study (Akinwumi, 1991) it was established that cooperative members and cooperative staff put together constitute less than 2% of the overall intake of the Cooperative Colleges in Nigeria. It is important to find out whether this trend has changed. If not, what are the obstacles that hinder cooperative societies' access to the training programmes of cooperative training institutions in Nigeria? Do socio-economic characteristics of cooperative societies affect their access to the training programmes of the cooperative training institutions? What are the agency related problems that hinder access to training programmes? Provision of answers to these and other such questions is what this study has set out to accomplish.

2. Objectives of This Study

The broad objective of this study is to identify the factors that affect cooperative societies' access to the services of cooperative training institutions in Nigeria.

The specific objectives include to:

- i. identify the socio-economic characteristics of cooperative societies under study;
- ii. determine if these socio-economic characteristics affect the cooperative societies' access to the services of the cooperative training institutions;
- iii. identify the effects of the operational guidelines of the cooperative training institutions on access to their training programmes; and
- iv. use the result of the study to make recommendations on how to improve the access of cooperative societies to the services of cooperative training institutions in Nigeria.

3. Materials and Methods

The study covers the training activities of the three Federal Cooperative Colleges namely, Federal Cooperative College, Oji-River, Federal Cooperative College, Ibadan and Federal Cooperative College, Kaduna. These Cooperative Colleges were established in line with the three former Regions into which Nigeria was divided; the Ibadan College for the Western Region, the Oji-River College for the Eastern Region and the Kaduna College was for the Northern Region.

Sample selection was limited to the training programmes of the Colleges for three academic years namely 2004/2005, 2005/2006, and 2006/2007. Selection of cooperative societies studied was done in stages. First, the sample frame was prepared taking into account all cooperative societies that applied for training of their staff/members in each of the three Colleges within the three sessions under consideration. The second stage was the random selection from each of the three colleges of 60 cooperative societies whose applications for admission succeeded and another set of 60 cooperative societies whose applications failed. In other words 180 cooperative societies whose applications succeeded and another set of 180 cooperatives societies whose applications failed were randomly selected giving a total sample size of 360 cooperative societies for the study.

Table 1 Sample selection schedule

| Institution | Session | Total applied | Total Succeeded | Total Failed | Total Selected |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Federal Cooperative College, Ibadan | 2004/05 | 150 | 80 (20) | 70 (20) | 40 |
| | 2005/06 | 130 | 60 (20) | 70 (20) | 40 |
| | 2006/07 | 120 | 80 (20) | 40 (20) | 40 |
| Federal Coop. College, Oji-River | 2004/05 | 120 | 61 (20) | 59 (20) | 40 |
| | 2005/06 | 140 | 82 (20) | 58 (20) | 40 |
| | 2006/07 | 150 | 76 (20) | 74 (20) | 40 |
| Federal Coop. College, Kaduna | 2004/05 | 140 | 73 (20) | 67 (20) | 40 |
| | 2005/06 | 125 | 61 (20) | 64 (20) | 40 |
| | 2006/07 | 135 | 68 (20) | 67 (20) | 40 |
| Total | | 1210 | 641 (180) | 569 (180) | 360 |

Note: Figures in brackets are selections from each category

Source: Computed from the admission registers of the three colleges.

Structured questionnaires were used to obtain information on the 360 cooperative societies under study. The questionnaires sought to obtain information on the socio-economic characteristics of the cooperative societies such as membership size, gender of members, societies' shares and assets holdings, educational levels of officers and distance of cooperative societies to the training institutions. Information on the operational guidelines of the training institutions with respect to cost of training, duration of training, timing of training, entry qualifications for new students, categories of training programmes available and training delivery approaches/techniques were also sought.

Data collected were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation. Levene's test for quality of means was used to confirm if the mean values for cooperatives with access to training and those without access were significantly different. Likert rating scale was also used to gauge the cooperative members' perception of the effects of institutional guidelines on the access of their cooperative societies to the services of the training institutions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-economic Characteristics of Cooperative Societies under Study

The socio-economic characteristics studied (table 2) include age of the cooperative societies, membership size, gender of members, number of years of schooling of officers of the society, size of assets and share holding as well as distance of the cooperative society from the cooperative training institution.

Of the 180 cooperative societies without access, 156 were those with male members only while 24 had female members only with corresponding mean membership sizes of 23 and 22 respectively. Mean age for cooperative societies with access was higher (13 years) than that of those without access (11 years). This implies that cooperative societies with access had more years of operation than those without access. Cooperative societies with access had higher maximum values of shares (₦800,000) and assets (₦750,000) per society than those without access with values of ₦200,000 and ₦250,000 respectively. The implication is that the more buoyant a cooperative society is the more it is likely to be able to sponsor members or staff to cooperative training. The mean distance from the cooperative training institution recorded by cooperative societies that had access (51km) was lower than the value for those without access (67km). Thus the nearer a cooperative society is to the training institution the more likely it would be able to send her members/staff for cooperative training.

To ascertain if the differences in means between cooperative societies with access to training and those without access is significant, the Levene's Test for Equality of Means was carried out (Table 3). The result indicates that the differences in means for age, membership size, gender of members, sizes of assets and share holdings, and distance of cooperative society from a cooperative training institution were statistically significant at the 5% significant level.

Table 2 Statistical description of the Socio-economic characteristics of the Cooperative Societies under study

| | N Statistics | Minimum Statistic | Maximum Statistic | Mean Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Deviation Statistic | Variance Statistic |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Male with access | 156 | 15 | 30 | 23.27 | 0.452 | 5.641 | 31.824 |
| Male without access | 24 | 15 | 30 | 21.87 | 1.034 | 5.067 | 25.679 |
| Female with access | 30 | 15 | 25 | 18.50 | 0.725 | 3.972 | 15.776 |
| Female without access | 24 | 15 | 30 | 31.87 | 1.034 | 5.067 | 25.679 |
| Age with access | 180 | 6 | 26 | 12.57 | 0.261 | 4.894 | 23.954 |
| Age without access | 180 | 6 | 25 | 11.17 | 0.247 | 4.582 | 20.999 |
| Shareholding with access | 180 | 45055 | 800000 | 1.44E5 | 3357.852 | 45050.312 | 2.030E9 |
| Shareholding without access | 180 | 45050 | 200000 | 9.75E4 | 3304.670 | 44336.802 | 1.966E9 |
| Assets holding with access | 180 | 1000000 | 750000 | 1.87E5 | 3252.754 | 43774.435 | 1.916E9 |
| Assets hold. without access | 180 | 1000000 | 250000 | 1.50E5 | 3400.105 | 45617.190 | 2.081E9 |
| Size of liability with access | 180 | 2000 | 150000 | 7583.33 | 301.236 | 341.383 | 1.633E7 |
| Size of liab. without access | 180 | 2000 | 150000 | 7994.44 | 341.383 | 4580.133 | 2.081E7 |
| Distance with access | 180 | 20.00 | 100.00 | 50.7778 | 1.86019 | 24.95707 | 622.855 |
| Distance without access | 180 | 20.00 | 100.00 | 68.5558 | 1.61334 | 21.64524 | 468.517 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 24 | | | | | | |

Source: Computed from field data, 2008.

Table 3 Levene's Test for equality of means of Socio-economic characteristics of cooperative societies with access and those without access to the Service of Cooperative Training Institutions

| Socio-economic Characteristics | Mean | Std Error | t-Statistics |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| AGECOOP | 6.522 | 0.739 | 8.825* |
| NENSUZE | 8.818 | 1.835 | 4.805* |
| MEMGENDER | 2.000 | 0.655 | 3.055* |
| ASSHOLD | 54848.485 | 11631.409 | 4.716* |
| SHAREHOLD | 99610.112 | 44683.238 | 2.229* |
| DISAGENCY | 32.58824 | 7.76876 | 4.195* |

Notes: 1. *Significant at the level of 5%;

2. AGECOOP = Age of Cooperative, MEMSIZE = Membership size, MEMGENDER = Gender of Members, ASSHOLD = Asset holding, SHAREHOLD = Share holding, DISAGENCY = Distance to the training agency;

3. Computed from field data, 2008.

4.2 Effects of Operational Guidelines on Access to the Services of Cooperative Training Institutions in Nigeria

Operational guidelines considered in the study include (1) cost of training (2) duration of training, (3) timing of training (4) entry qualifications for new students, (5) category of training programmes available and (6) training delivery approaches/techniques.

To ascertain how these operational guidelines affect the access of cooperative societies to the training programmes of the Cooperative Colleges a Likert rating of respondents' perception was conducted using the presidents and general secretaries of the cooperative societies under study as respondents. Likert scale of 5 points was adopted. The 5-point scale was graded as very serious effect = 5, serious effect =4, Undecided = 3, Not serious effect = 2, Not very serious effect = 1.

The mean score of the respondents based on the 5-point scale was $5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 15/5 = 3.0$. Using the interval scale of 0.05, the upper limit cut-off point was $3 + 0.05 = 3.05$; the lower limit is $3 - 0.05 = 2.95$. On the basis of the limit, any mean score below 2.95 (i.e. $MS < 2.95$) is taken as "Not serious effect"; those between 2.95- and 3.05 are considered of "serious effect" (i.e. $2.95 \leq MS \leq 3.05$) while any mean score greater than or equal to 3.05 (i.e. ≥ 3.05) is considered of very serious effect."

Table 4 presents the summary of the mean distribution of the perception of how the operational guidelines of cooperative training institutions affect the access of cooperative societies to their training programmes.

Table 4 Mean distribution of the effects of the operational guidelines of Cooperative Training Institutions

| Operational Guidelines | Beneficiaries Means | Non-beneficiaries Means |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Cost of training | 2.94* | 4.12*** |
| Duration of training | 2.18* | 3.06** |
| Timing of training | 2.24* | 2.86* |
| Entry qualifications | 2.71* | 3.23*** |
| Types of training available | 3.03** | 4.16*** |
| Training delivery method | 3.27*** | 4.08*** |

* Stands for not serious effect (NSE)

** Stands for serious effect (SE)

*** Stands for very serious effect (VSE)

Source: Computed from field data, 2008

Cost of training was perceived by non-beneficiaries as a very serious constraint. This agrees with existing literature (Agbo, 2010; Akinwumi, 1991) on the effect of cost on access to training. Moreover, most of the societies under study have asset holding and share holding of not more than ₦800,000 and ₦750,000 respectively. Asset holding and shareholding are indications of the financial health of a cooperative society that will enable it to fund member education.

The duration of cooperative training in the cooperative colleges is at least one calendar year. Most of the cooperative societies could not afford to have their staff stay away from their duties for a whole year. This might explain why the issue of duration of training was perceived as a serious constraint by non-beneficiaries.

Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries did not see the issue of timing of training as a serious constraint. This is in spite of the fact that the training programmes fall within the farming seasons.

Entry qualification for the basic certificate course offered in the Cooperative Colleges is at least 5 credit passes in GCE or the School Certificate Examination. Most of the members of the cooperative societies nominated for training were found to be deficient in one area or the other of the required subjects. Entry qualification was perceived by non-beneficiaries as a very serious constraint.

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries perceived as a serious constraint and a very serious constraint respectively the issue of types of cooperative training available in the college. None of the colleges offers short courses designed to address specific training needs of farmers' cooperative societies.

The training programmes obtainable in the colleges are all residential, no outreach programmes and no week-end programmes. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries perceived the issue of training delivery method as a very serious constraint.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study shows that both socio-economic characteristics of cooperative societies and the operational guidelines of cooperative training institutions affect the ability of members of farmers' cooperative societies to access the training programmes of the colleges. It is therefore necessary for promoters of cooperative societies to take proper cognizance of the socio-economic characteristics of cooperative societies so promoted with respect to age, asset holding, share holding and distance to the services needed by the cooperative societies. There is also the need to re-visit the operational guidelines of the cooperative training institutions to take note of cost of training, duration and timing of training, types of programmes available as well as the training delivery techniques.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations have been made:

- It is important to re-iterate the fact that promoters of cooperative societies need to pay attention to socio-economic issues bordering on economies of scale in size (membership) of the cooperative society, the level of capitalization (shareholding), and diversification of investment portfolio (asetholdings).
- The Cooperative Colleges should restructure their curricula and syllabi to accommodate the needs of farmer-members of cooperative societies who need specific intervention programmes. Short courses are likely to be more useful than a year round training programme as presently offered.
- Training programmes need to be subsidized to be affordable by cooperative societies and their members. In addition, there is need for pedagogical shift from the chalk and board teaching technique to the use of ICT by the cooperative colleges. By this, a wider audience would be reached and training effectively executed with minimal teacher-student contacts.

References

- [1] Agbo, F.U. (2001). The Status of Cooperative Studies in Cooperative Colleges, *Nigerian Journal of Cooperative Studies*, 2(1): pp. 15-26.
- [2] Agbo, F.U. (2006). Coordinating of Cooperative Education in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. Paper presented at ACEMS Career Guidance Seminar, IMT, Enugu, June 10.
- [3] Akinwumi, J.A. (1991). Harmonization of Cooperative Education for Effective Cooperative Management. *Report submitted by the Nigeria-EEC Cooperative Education Project*, FMARD, Abuja, Nigeria.
- [4] Akinwumi, J.A. (1991a). Situational Analysis of Cooperative Development in Nigeria. *Report submitted by the Nigeria-EEC Cooperative Education Project*, FMARD, Abuja, Nigeria.
- [5] Ambuster, P. (2001). Cooperative Banks in Europe: Values and Practices to Promote Development. *IRU Courier* (3), pp. 10-13.
- [6] Bailey, J. (1960). *The British Cooperative Movement. England*. Oxford University Press.
- [7] Berko, S.Y. (2002). The Nigerian Cooperative Societies Decree of 1993: An Overview and some critical observations. *Nigerian Journal of Cooperative Studies* 2(1): pp. 27-30.
- [8] Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development (FMARD, 2009). *Cooperative Policy for Nigeria*, Abuja, Government Printer.
- [9] Nweze, N.J. (2002). Rural Development in Nigeria: Past Approaches, Emerging Issues and Strategies for the Future. *Nigerian Journal of Cooperative Studies*, 2(1): pp. 41-45.
- [10] Okoye, C.U. (2002). Financing Cooperative Enterprises in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Cooperative Studies* 2(1): pp 10-14.
- [11] Oladeji, M.O. (1991). Review of the Nigerian Cooperative Movement, Illorin, *ARMTI Seminar Series* No. IV, pp 15-19.
- [12] Oladeji, M.O.(1994). Cooperative Education and Cooperative Development in Nigeria. Illorin *ARMTI Seminar Series* No. VI, pp 21-23.
- [13] Onuoha, E. (2002). A Critique of the Draft Cooperative Policy Paper for Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Cooperative Studies*, 2(1): pp. 30-38.