

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL-BASED COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT: A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *This study explored the governance practices, management functions, organizational challenges, and knowledge management mechanisms of school-based cooperatives in Bukidnon, Philippines. Using a qualitative grounded theory approach, the research examined cooperative management practices in selected school-based cooperatives registered under the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA). Data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving cooperative officers, committee members, and hired management personnel. Findings revealed that the cooperatives generally complied with Republic Act No. 9520 and their respective constitutions and bylaws. However, gaps were identified in planning, succession management, policy implementation, internal control systems, and member participation. The study further revealed that knowledge management, continuous education, and organizational learning are critical drivers of sustainable cooperative governance. Based on the findings, a School-Based Cooperative Knowledge Management Model was developed to strengthen planning, organizing, leading, and controlling functions. The study contributes to cooperative governance literature by integrating knowledge management principles into school-based cooperative management. The findings also support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).*

∴ cooperative governance, knowledge management, school-based cooperatives, sustainability, cooperative management, grounded theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives play a significant role in promoting inclusive economic development, social participation, and institutional sustainability. In the Philippines, cooperatives are recognized as instruments for equity, social justice, and economic growth under Republic Act No. 9520, otherwise known as the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008. School-based cooperatives, particularly employee multi-purpose cooperatives in educational institutions, provide financial assistance, credit services, savings mobilization, and community development initiatives to their members. Despite the growing importance of school-based cooperatives, several management and governance challenges continue to affect their sustainability and operational effectiveness. Existing studies reveal that many cooperatives experience issues in strategic planning, member participation, succession management, policy implementation, and internal control systems. Furthermore, there remains limited scholarly research on the integration of knowledge management in cooperative governance and organizational sustainability. Knowledge management refers to the process of creating, sharing, utilizing, and managing organizational knowledge to improve institutional performance and decision-making. In cooperative organizations, effective knowledge management can strengthen governance systems, improve operational efficiency, enhance leadership development, and promote member participation. However, limited studies have examined how knowledge management contributes to sustainable cooperative management, particularly in school-based cooperatives. This study investigated the management practices, governance mechanisms, and organizational challenges of selected school-based cooperatives in the Philippines. It further developed a School-Based Cooperative Knowledge Management Model anchored on the functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The study is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[11.12], specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth),

and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), emphasizing the role of cooperatives in promoting sustainable institutional development.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Management Theory and Knowledge Management Theory.

Management Theory emphasizes the core management functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling [4]. These functions are essential in ensuring organizational effectiveness and sustainability. In cooperative organizations, management functions guide strategic direction, member engagement, operational processes, and accountability mechanisms. The study also adopted Knowledge Management Theory, which emphasizes the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge within organizations. According to [6], organizational learning and knowledge sharing contribute significantly to innovation, institutional growth, and sustainability. The theory supports the argument that continuous education, leadership orientation, strategic planning, and communication systems are necessary for sustainable cooperative governance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between cooperative governance practices, management functions, organizational challenges, and knowledge management mechanisms leading to sustainable school-based cooperative management.

The independent variables include:

Planning, Organizing, Leading, Controlling, Governance compliance, Knowledge management practices

The dependent variable is:

Sustainable school-based cooperative management

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the management practices and governance mechanisms of school-based cooperatives and develop a sustainable management model anchored on knowledge management. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do school-based cooperatives perform their management functions in terms of: a. Planning; b. Organizing; c. Leading; and d. Controlling?
2. What governance and management challenges are encountered by school-based cooperatives?
3. What differentiating management practices are observed among school-based cooperatives?
4. How does knowledge management contribute to sustainable cooperative governance?
5. What management model can be designed for school-based cooperatives?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may benefit the following:

1. Cooperative Officers and Members
2. The study provides insights into governance practices, operational challenges, and sustainable management strategies.
3. Educational Institutions
4. The study offers guidance in strengthening institutional cooperatives and improving organizational sustainability.
5. Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)
6. The findings may serve as a basis for policy enhancement and training programs for school-based cooperatives.
7. Researchers. The study contributes to the literature on cooperative governance and knowledge management.

Scope and Delimitation

The study focused on selected school-based cooperatives in the Philippines. It examined governance practices, management functions, organizational challenges, and knowledge management mechanisms during the calendar years 2018–2019. The study employed a qualitative grounded theory approach using focus group discussions and interviews.

Definition of Terms

Cooperative Governance. Refers to the system of policies, leadership, and processes guiding cooperative management and decision-making.

Knowledge Management. Refers to the process of creating, sharing, and utilizing organizational knowledge for institutional improvement.

School-Based Cooperative. Refers to a cooperative organization operating within an educational institution.

Sustainability. Refers to the ability of cooperatives to maintain effective governance, financial stability, and organizational growth over time.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Cooperative Governance

Cooperative governance refers to the structures, policies, and processes that guide the operation and management of cooperatives. According to Birchall (2014), effective cooperative governance enhances accountability, transparency, and member participation. Governance mechanisms influence organizational sustainability and institutional trust.

The Cooperative Development Authority emphasizes democratic governance, member participation, and transparency as core principles of cooperative operations. Effective governance ensures that cooperative officers and

committees perform their functions responsibly.

School-Based Cooperatives

School-based cooperatives serve as economic and social organizations within educational institutions. These cooperatives provide financial assistance, savings opportunities, and welfare services to members while promoting cooperative values. Studies by [5] revealed that school-based cooperatives contribute significantly to employee welfare and institutional development. However, challenges such as limited participation, weak succession planning, and a lack of strategic management affect sustainability.

Management Functions in Cooperatives

[4] identified planning, organizing, leading, and controlling as essential management functions.

Planning. Planning involves goal setting, strategic direction, and decision-making. Strategic planning enables cooperatives to align organizational objectives with operational activities.

Organizing. Organizing refers to structuring responsibilities, delegating tasks, and establishing communication systems.

Leading. Leadership influences motivation, participation, and organizational culture.

Controlling. Controlling involves monitoring performance, evaluating policies, and ensuring accountability. Research by [5] emphasized the importance of periodic evaluation of cooperative policies and bylaws to ensure responsiveness to changing organizational needs.

Knowledge Management in Organizations. Knowledge management involves the creation, sharing, and application of organizational knowledge. According to [6], organizations that effectively manage knowledge achieve innovation and sustainability. In cooperatives, knowledge management includes leadership orientation, member education, policy communication, strategic planning, and organizational learning.

Organizational Sustainability. Sustainability refers to the ability of organizations to maintain operational effectiveness over time. Sustainable organizations exhibit strong governance systems, financial accountability, strategic planning, and continuous learning. The integration of knowledge management into cooperative governance promotes organizational resilience and long-term sustainability.

Related Studies. Recent studies on cooperative governance and organizational sustainability emphasize the role of leadership, knowledge sharing, and strategic management in improving cooperative performance. According to [2], cooperatives that adopt participatory governance and continuous organizational learning demonstrate higher institutional resilience and member engagement. Their study highlighted that cooperative sustainability is strongly linked to effective leadership structures and governance transparency. [10] emphasized that knowledge management practices significantly influence organizational commitment and cooperative sustainability. The study found that training, communication systems, and member participation contribute to stronger institutional governance. A study by [7], revealed that cooperative organizations that integrate strategic planning and leadership development are more capable of

adapting to economic and organizational changes. The authors stressed the importance of continuous education and organizational learning. In the Philippine context, [3], noted that cooperatives contribute significantly to local economic development and social inclusion. However, governance gaps, limited member participation, and weak internal control systems remain major challenges. Meanwhile, others [8], found that internal control mechanisms, audit systems, and policy implementation directly affect cooperative operational effectiveness and sustainability. Recent studies also associate cooperative governance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the International Cooperative Alliance (2021)[4], cooperatives support SDG implementation through inclusive economic participation, institutional accountability, and community development.

Research Gap

Existing literature focuses primarily on financial performance and governance compliance of cooperatives. Limited studies examine the integration of knowledge management in school-based cooperative governance. This study addresses this gap by developing a knowledge-based management model for sustainable cooperative management

Synthesis

The reviewed literature suggests that effective governance, strategic planning, organizational learning, and member participation contribute to sustainable cooperative management. However, gaps remain in succession planning, policy implementation, and knowledge sharing. The present study integrates knowledge management into cooperative governance to develop a sustainable management framework.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative grounded theory research design. Grounded theory was appropriate because the study aimed to develop a management model based on the experiences and practices of cooperative officers and members.

Research Participants

The participants included:

Board of Directors, Committee officers, Hired management personnel, Cooperative members. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in cooperative management.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected school-based cooperatives in the Philippines.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered through: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In-depth interviews. Document analysis, Interview protocols were used to guide discussions.

Data Analysis. Thematic analysis and grounded theory coding procedures were employed. Data were analyzed through:

Open coding; Axial coding; Selective coding. Themes and categories were identified to generate the management model.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability

were ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer validation.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study.

Confidentiality and voluntary participation were observed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Governance Practices of School-Based Cooperatives

The findings revealed that cooperatives generally complied with Republic Act No. 9520 and their constitutions and bylaws. The general assembly remained the highest decision-making body. However, attendance and participation during meetings require improvement. Newly elected officers lacked proper orientation regarding their functions and responsibilities. Nonetheless, most officers demonstrated compliance with governance functions.

Management Functions

Planning: Planning emerged as one of the most challenging management functions. Cooperatives experienced difficulties in conducting meetings, strategic planning sessions, and training activities. The absence of succession planning and onboarding mechanisms affected leadership continuity.

Organizing: Organizing challenges included limited participation among committee members and insufficient coordination.

Leading. Democratic leadership practices were observed. Decisions were commonly made through voting and consultation. Continuous education and training were identified as essential in strengthening leadership effectiveness.

Controlling. Internal control systems existed but lacked comprehensive procedures for audit implementation and feedback mechanisms.

Knowledge Management Practices. Knowledge management emerged as a critical factor in sustainable cooperative governance. Continuous learning, policy communication, training, and organizational orientation improved operational effectiveness. The findings suggest that knowledge-sharing mechanisms enhance organizational accountability and member participation.

Organizational Challenges

The major organizational challenges included: Limited member participation; Weak succession planning; Insufficient policy implementation; Lack of internal audit procedures; Limited training opportunities; Communication gaps

Proposed School-Based Cooperative Knowledge Management Model. Based on the findings, the study developed a School-Based Cooperative Knowledge Management Model anchored on planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.

The model emphasizes:

Strategic planning; Organizational learning; Leadership orientation; Continuous education; Internal control systems; Communication mechanisms; Knowledge sharing. The model highlights knowledge management as a central mechanism for sustainable cooperative governance.

DISCUSSION

The findings support previous studies emphasizing the importance of governance compliance, organizational learning, and leadership development in cooperative sustainability. The integration of knowledge management into cooperative governance contributes to stronger institutional accountability and operational effectiveness.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary. This study explored governance practices, management functions, organizational challenges, and knowledge management mechanisms in school-based cooperatives. Using a qualitative grounded theory approach, the study identified gaps in planning, policy implementation, succession management, and member participation. The study further developed a School-Based Cooperative Knowledge Management Model for sustainable governance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: School-based cooperatives generally comply with Act No. 9520 and organizational by-laws; Planning and controlling functions remain the most challenging management areas; Knowledge management significantly contributes to organizational sustainability and governance effectiveness; Continuous education, leadership orientation, and strategic planning are essential for sustainable cooperative governance; A knowledge-based cooperative management model can strengthen institutional sustainability.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are proposed:

Cooperatives should strengthen internal control systems and audit procedures; Continuous education and training programs should be conducted for officers and members; Strategic planning and succession management mechanisms should be institutionalized; Cooperatives should adopt knowledge-sharing systems and communication mechanisms; Future studies may employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to validate the proposed model.

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Conflict of Interest Statement. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement. This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and approved by the appropriate institutional research ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their

involvement in the study. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes.

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