

# ASSESSING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF CO-OPERATIVES IN CALABARZON, PHILIPPINES

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## ABSTRACT

*The study assessed the professional development needs of co-operatives in Calabarzon, Philippines from the practitioners' perspectives. The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Primary data were obtained from 156 respondents using semi-structured questionnaire, while descriptive statistics and logistic regression model were adopted for data analysis. Data indicate that the preferred course contents are operations management, financial management, and governance. The study reveals that respondents prefer shorter courses and a combination of on-campus, off-campus, and online programmes. Moreover, organisational performance is a strong motivation to go for training, while financial constraint is a big deterrent. The study also shows that the odds of enrolling in a co-operative training program are higher if respondents are co-operative members, programmes are shorter, and there are networking opportunities for participants. However, those who were educated, attended the programmes to enhance promotion, and registered for the programmes to comply with the requirement of their co-operatives had lower odds to enrol. Thus, this study recommends that customised, modular and ladderized programs are offered for cooperatives. Finally, there is a need to conduct a more comprehensive study in more areas to compare the impact of training between younger and older participants, and validate the effectiveness of training on organisational performance. The findings from such study are useful when developing training programmes that are relevant to co-operatives. These are also useful for academic institutions, training providers, and government agencies.*

**Keywords:** *Co-operatives, co-operative management, education and training, professional development*

## INTRODUCTION

The role of co-operatives in nation-building is widely recognised as these provide economic and social benefits to their members. The Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of Calabarzon (Region IVA) in 2019 was 4.5 per cent, and that of Mimaropa (Region IVB) was 3.9 per cent. It is noted that during the same period co-operatives in these two regions registered a growth rate in net surplus of 5.3 per cent (Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), 2018; CDA, 2019; Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), 2020). That is, the co-operative sector has a positive impact on the economic performance of the region. Moreover, co-operatives also boost local employment. In Region IV, the co-operative sector employed an average of 41 workers per co-operative in 2018 (CDA, 2018), even higher than its record of 25 employees per co-operative in 2017. This is an impressive performance considering that the whole region suffered a 5 per cent drop in employment for all sectors during the same period (PSA, 2018).

While there is an improvement in employment opportunities in the co-operative sector, much need to be done. Apart from increasing the number of jobs, there is a need to improve the quality of the labour force produced. In the Philippines, 36 per cent of the companies attributed lack of relevant skills to be the main reason why vacancies were not filled (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Asian Development Bank (OECD/ADB), 2017). To be competitive, enterprises like the co-operatives need a workforce with skills and specific competencies required by the industry. This could be done by providing programmes in professional development for the human capital of the organisations.

For co-operatives, it is crucial that the managers be competent professionals. There is a lot of literature on the role of education and training in the development of co-operative leaders, managers, and members. The co-operatives in the Philippines do not have enough professionals to run it. The Co-operative Development Authority (CDA), the authority governing the co-operatives in the Philippines, requires micro co-operatives with asset below PhP 3 million to provide two training courses totalling 16 hours, while bigger co-operatives with more than PhP 3 million assets need to provide 32 hours of training covering topics on fundamentals, governance and management of co-operatives (CDA, 2015). It is noted that credit co-operatives having at least PhP 5 million worth of deposit liabilities need additional 16 hours to cover financial, risk and credit management topics. Although co-operatives have the option of providing several other trainings for their staff, the rigour and extent of these trainings appear to be insufficient to enable them to run and operate a sustainable co-operative enterprise.

Compounding this issue is the lack of formal professional degree programmes for co-operatives in the Philippines. As of 2017, out of the total 1,943 HEIs in the country, only 12 schools were offering courses in co-operative management, both at the under-graduate and graduate levels (Commission on Higher Education (CHED), 2017). While managing co-operatives is comparable to other traditional investor-owned firms (IOFs), the co-operative model goes beyond the wealth-maximisation objective of IOFs, hence the need for a different approach in enterprise management to address the unique needs and demands of the co-operative sector.

In making the human capital of co-operatives more professional, the skills and competencies essential in managing co-operatives have to be properly identified and addressed. To date, there is a dearth of information on the professional development needs of this sector, especially from the perspectives of the stakeholders of co-operatives.

## Objectives

The general objective of this study is to assess the professional development needs of the co-operative sector from the perspectives of co-operative practitioners and professionals in Calabarzon, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify the core competencies of co-operative professional and specific skills necessary in managing co-operatives from the point of view of co-operative stakeholders and practitioners; (2) determine the preferred method of conducting educational programmes from the viewpoint of co-operative professionals; (3) examine the enabling and disabling factors considered by co-operatives when conducting development programmes; and (4) suggest recommendations for the development of a professional education and training programme for cooperatives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Importance of Continuing Professional Development

Mizell (2010) defined professional development as any job-related educational experience that improved the work performance of an individual. According to Colin (2012), continuing professional development (CPD) could be any form of learning at work and this may vary depending on the type of profession (e.g., CPDs of nurses and teachers were regulated by law, while labour market professionals were dependent on the requirements of the industry and companies). Guskey (2000) described professional development as activities that changed the original belief, knowledge, value, and ability of a learner. Professional development programmes, therefore, are activities that improve the knowledge, skills and attitude of an individual through further education or training.

Although education and training are closely related and interdependent, Kunhu (2011) described education as something that improved the intellect and developed a person's character, while training pertained to the application of knowledge to enhance the skills, abilities and competencies of an individual. Anania and Rwekaza (2018) in their study emphasised the importance of education and training in the development of learners, the dissemination of relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes to the co-operative members, and the honing of employees and officers to be effective service providers. Lebowski (2015) attributed co-operative education to improvement in loan repayment of credit cooperatives. Gathigia (2008), on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of education and training in grooming better and more responsible leaders.

Education and training benefit co-operatives in various ways. Well-informed employees of co-operatives are able to share and learn from their experiences, successes, failures and strengthen their positions in policy-decisions. Educating members about their rights, responsibilities and membership benefits can enhance their participation in co-operative activities, patronise co-operative products and services, and contribute to goal achievement (Wilson, 2014). Even orientation is positively correlated with improvement in employee performance (Wabala, Gachunga, Odhiambo & Muchiri, 2019). Educating co-operative officers, the board of directors (BOD), managers and staff increases their skills, knowledge and competencies, hence the ability to properly plan, implement and manage the activities of co-operatives. Co-operatives need to invest in education and training as it positively improves its performance (Kinyuira, 2017; Ronoh, Samson, Kibas & Kibati, 2018). It is also important to acquaint youth to the value of co-operation, enhance their interest on co-operatives and involve them from young in order to continue the legacy of co-operatives.

In reality, however, co-operatives often do not see the true value of training and education, but regard these as being “wasteful expenditures” for the organisations (Borzaga and Galera, 2012). Moreover, officers, managers and employees are often the ones sent to undergo co-operative education, while members were neglected (Metto, Mahonge & Komba, 2020). The same was observed in the study by Pratiwi and Rahmah (2020), where members showed a poor understanding of their duties and obligations as co-operatives owners due to lack of training.

### **Co-operative Training in the Philippines**

To promote and encourage co-operatives to undertake education and training for their members, R.A. 9520 (2009) mandated all co-operatives to set aside at most 10% of their net surplus as Co-operative Education and Training Fund (CETF) for members, officers and employees. The Co-operative Development Authority also requires co-operative officers to undergo mandatory training according to Article 44 of RA 9520. Under memorandum circular no. 2015-09, members of the board of directors, officers and general managers or chief executive officers of all types of co-operatives are mandated to complete the required training during the first half of their time in their posts (CDA, 2015). If officers fail to comply, CDA could impose ineligibility on these officers to run for a post in future. On top of that, CDA could also penalise the organisations for continued disregard of this rule by not issuing the Certificate of Compliance (CoC). CoC is a document issued by CDA every year to co-operatives that had been compliant with all rules mandated by the authority. This document is also necessary for claiming tax exemptions (CDA, 2016).

To institutionalise the implementation and standardise the education courses and training programmes for co-operatives, CDA set guidelines for training providers as stated in the Memorandum Circular 2015-10. Institutions from (1) academe such as state universities and colleges (SUCs) and higher education institutions (HEIs); (2) public institutions like national government agencies and local co-operative development offices; (3) private organisations, for instance, NGOs, training institutes, foundations, and advocacy co-operatives; and (4) union and federations or secondary co-operatives whose members are primary co-operatives could apply for this accreditation (CDA, 2015). Only those who could pass the qualifications are given the authority to conduct mandatory training, and these accredited training providers (ATPs) must follow the prescribed programme curriculums set by CDA. As of April 2017, there were 138 ATPs all over the country with region IV having the most number (20%), followed by National Capital Region (16%) and almost half were training providers from the co-operative section (e.g., unions, federations and advocacy co-operatives), followed by various government offices (38%) (CDA 2017).

### **Practitioner Inquiry in Designing Professional Development Programmes**

While the literature has highlighted the importance of professional development, some of the programmes associated with it are disconnected from real-life situations, fragmented and non-cumulative, and fail in achieving their goals (Cohen & Hill, 2000). Harootunian & Yargar (1980) noted that one of the most important considerations in crafting professional development programmes was ensuring that the learners’ needs were met. This could be done through a practitioner inquiry. This is a process of asking practitioners to examine their work and needs in order to understand their practice better (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). This type of inquiry stimulates acceptance, commitment and enthusiasm from the learners (Joyce et al., 2020). Gathiaga (2008) took note of the importance of the perspectives of professionals and

practitioners in developing a more relevant and engaging programme. Moreover, he also believed that feedbacks from the actual users would establish a more effective performance and evaluation system of the delivered programmes.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employs a mixed research method for its data collection, analysis and interpretation. In particular, an explanatory sequential mixed method was used which combined and integrated quantitative and qualitative data by first conducting a survey, then built on the result of the quantitative analysis by doing more in-depth scrutiny using qualitative data (Creswell, 2014).

### **Data Collection**

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire survey, interviews with key informants (KIIs), and focus group discussion (FGD) among co-operative managers, members of the board of directors, public and private business partners, graduates of co-operative programmes, and other concerned stakeholders. The data collected from respondents pertained to the socio-economic characteristics, preference of programme content and delivery, and other considerations in pursuing professional development. Scores and ranking of importance were determined using a Likert scale from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important. An importance rating is a priority that respondents attach to certain criteria and usually measured using a scale (Headrey, 2014). The KIIs and FGDs were conducted to obtain more insights into the professional development needs of the industry.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data were analysed to provide descriptive statistics on the participating co-operatives and socio-economic profile of respondents, presented in the form of percentages and cross-tables. A logistic regression model was also used to analyse factors influencing decision to enrol in co-operative development programmes.

### **Study Area and Sampling Size**

The study was conducted in Calabarzon or Region IV-A, the southwestern region of the Luzon Island, as this region had the largest number of ATPs in the country (CDA 2017). Calabarzon is composed of five provinces, namely, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon provinces.

A sample of 156 respondents was randomly selected from 260 co-operative participants trained by the Institute of Co-operatives and Bio-Enterprise Development (ICOPED) with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The number of co-operative stakeholders was selected purposively from the total population of ICOPED training in the same period that included other non-co-operative stakeholders (e.g., students, youth, etc.).

The study population covered the following individuals: (1) participants who had completed professional development programmes such as training, short courses, and/or degree programmes

on co-operatives; (2) co-operatives professionals and practitioners or stakeholders or partners from the government, private, academe and training institutions who had direct or indirect involvement in promoting and making decisions and policies related to the professional development of co-operatives; (3) those who held positions of power and/or could influence other members to enrol in education and training programmes; and (4) those having sizeable information on the activities and performance of their co-operatives. To have full representation from the co-operative stakeholders, respondents were selected from (1) co-operatives (e.g., managers/staff, members of the BOD, regular members); (2) government and private partners; and (3) academe (e.g., faculty members, researchers, and graduate students).

## Empirical Framework

A binary logistic regression predicts the probability that an observation falls into one of two categories of a dichotomous dependent variable based on one or more independent or predictor variables that can be either continuous or categorical. This study used a logistic regression model to predict the willingness of respondents to enrol in a professional degree programme on co-operatives (called an event), based on a set of potential factors influencing their decisions.

The odds of an event occurring is defined by the following equation (Sperandei, 2014):

$$p/(1 - p) = e^{(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_m x_m)}$$

The parameter  $p$  is the probability of an event (i.e., to enrol) while  $(1 - p)$  is the probability of the event not happening (i.e., not to enrol). Taking the logarithm of the odds function results in a linear regression function called the logit function:

$$\log \frac{p}{(1 - p)} = Z_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_m x_m$$

The  $\beta_0$  are the predictors,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept and  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$  are the linear regression coefficients. The predictors are educational attainment (number of years of schooling); co-operative membership (1-member, 0-non-member); presence of enabling factors, namely, scholarship, short program duration, online delivery, networking opportunities, off-campus venue (1-with, 0-without); and motivating factors, namely, mandatory requirements and promotion (1-yes, 0-no).

The estimated logit equation for this study is thus written as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Z_t = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 * year_{schooling} + \beta_2 * membership + \beta_3 * scholarship + \beta_4 \\ & * short_{duration} + \beta_5 * online + \beta_6 * network + \beta_7 * offcampus + \beta_8 \\ & * satisfy_{mandatory_{reqt}} + \beta_9 * promotion \end{aligned}$$

Each estimated regression coefficient ( $\beta_i$ ) is the expected change in the logarithm of odds or the logit score of enrolling in a co-operative degree programme for a unit increase in the independent variable, while holding all other variables constant.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

More than half (56%) of the 156 respondents were females, coming mostly from the provinces of Laguna (55%) and Batangas (27%) (Table 1). The age for the sample ranged from 21 years to 74 years with an average age of 46 years. The average ages of male (45.5 years) and female (46.2 years) respondents were about the same. Further, the average age of respondents from the co-operative sector was the highest at 48 years, followed by that from the private sector (46 years), that from the academe (45 years), and that from the government (42 years) (Table 2). It is noted that the average age of coffee farmer-members in Cavite, Benguet and Mountain Province was much higher at 57 years (Cruz et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the participants of FGD were relatively younger, but this has to be confirmed in future studies.

**Table 1:** Socio-Demographic Profile of Participants

|                     | Male      |            | Female    |            | Total      |            |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
|                     | No.       | %          | No.       | %          | No.        | %          |
| <b>Study Sites</b>  |           |            |           |            |            |            |
| Cavite              | 4         | 6          | 12        | 14         | 16         | 10         |
| Laguna              | 35        | 51         | 51        | 58         | 86         | 55         |
| Batangas            | 22        | 32         | 20        | 23         | 42         | 27         |
| Rizal               | 4         | 6          | 3         | 3          | 7          | 4          |
| Quezon              | 3         | 4          | 2         | 2          | 5          | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>68</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>156</b> | <b>100</b> |
| % of total          |           | 44         |           | 56         |            | 100        |
| <b>Membership</b>   |           |            |           |            |            |            |
| Member              | 66        | 97         | 77        | 88         | 143        | 92         |
| Non-mem             | 2         | 3          | 11        | 13         | 13         | 8          |
| <b>Age (years)</b>  |           |            |           |            |            |            |
| 30 below            | 7         | 10         | 15        | 22         | 22         | 32         |
| 31 - 40             | 18        | 26         | 18        | 26         | 36         | 53         |
| 41 - 50             | 21        | 31         | 17        | 25         | 38         | 56         |
| 51 - 60             | 12        | 18         | 26        | 38         | 38         | 56         |
| > 60                | 10        | 15         | 12        | 18         | 22         | 32         |
| Average age (years) | 45.5      |            | 46.2      |            |            |            |

**Table 2:** Age Profile of Respondents by Sector

| Age (years) | Academe |     | Private |     | Coop |     | Government |     | TOTAL |     |
|-------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|------|-----|------------|-----|-------|-----|
|             | No.     | %   | No.     | %   | No.  | %   | No.        | %   | No.   | %   |
| 30 below    | 4       | 29  | 2       | 8   | 13   | 12  | 3          | 16  | 22    | 13  |
| 31 - 40     | 1       | 7   | 8       | 32  | 27   | 24  | 3          | 16  | 39    | 23  |
| 41 - 50     | 2       | 14  | 6       | 24  | 28   | 25  | 6          | 32  | 42    | 25  |
| 51 - 60     | 4       | 29  | 7       | 28  | 25   | 22  | 5          | 26  | 41    | 24  |
| > 60        | 3       | 21  | 2       | 8   | 19   | 17  | 2          | 11  | 26    | 15  |
| TOTAL*      | 14      | 100 | 25      | 100 | 112  | 100 | 19         | 100 | 170   | 100 |
| Average     |         | 45  |         | 46  |      | 48  |            | 42  |       | 46  |

\* Multiple Responses

### Participation in Trainings

Almost all (96%) of the 143 co-operative members surveyed said that their co-operatives provided internal and external training for their officers, members and staff. When asked to identify the type of training provided, 86 per cent confirmed that they received mandatory training from various training providers, while 12 per cent received short and specialised courses from these sources (Table 3). Generally, the training providers were from CDA (45%) and local government units (32%) across all types of training programmes.

**Table 3:** Distribution of Co-operative Trainings by Training Type and Training Providers

|                                 | Mandatory |     | Long Training |     | Short Training |     | TOTAL |     |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----|---------------|-----|----------------|-----|-------|-----|
|                                 | No.       | %   | No.           | %   | No.            | %   | No.   | %   |
| Total responses*                | 119       | 86  | 3             | 2   | 16             | 12  | 138   | 100 |
| % of member-respondents (n=143) |           | 83  |               | 2   |                | 8   |       | 96  |
| <b>Training Provider</b>        |           |     |               |     |                |     |       |     |
| LGU                             | 46        | 31  | 1             | 33  | 7              | 33  | 54    | 32  |
| CDA                             | 65        | 44  | 2             | 67  | 10             | 48  | 77    | 45  |
| SUC                             | 16        | 11  | 0             | -   | 2              | 10  | 18    | 11  |
| NGO                             | 7         | 5   | 0             | -   | 0              | -   | 7     | 4   |
| Coop                            | 13        | 9   | 0             | -   | 2              | 10  | 15    | 9   |
| Total*                          | 147       | 100 | 3             | 100 | 21             | 100 | 171   | 100 |

\* Multiple Responses

Legend: LGU = Local Government Unit; CDA = Cooperatives Development Authority; SUC = State University and Colleges; NGO = Non-Government Organizations; and Coop = Cooperatives



When asked who should attend training, almost half of the respondents (48%) believed that members of the board of directors should be given first priority, followed by members and managers, in that order (Table 4). Further, equipping officers had to be knowledgeable and skilful in operating and managing co-operatives and were identified to be vital for the future development of the organisation. This study is of the opinion that members' education should also be emphasised because they play an important role in the co-operatives, were loyal and committed to the success of the co-operatives. Gathiaga (2008) observed in his study that participants of training were not limited to officers. Members were also encouraged to pursue further training and studies in order for them to understand their role in the development of their organisations. Last on the priority list were the managers because they already had the technical background and knew when they applied for the job. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they do not need to improve on their skills and competencies.

**Table 4:** Distribution of Training Beneficiaries by Position

| Position | No. | %   |
|----------|-----|-----|
| Officers | 82  | 48  |
| Managers | 41  | 24  |
| Members  | 48  | 28  |
| Total*   | 171 | 100 |

\* Multiple Responses

**Course Content and Skill Development**

The study shows that the top three programme contents in a co-operative training programme are operations management, financial management and accounting, leadership and governance (Table 5). For efficiently managing the resources of the organisations, operations management was identified to be the most important course content. Therefore, co-operatives should seriously consider having their workforce trained in operations management. This course content was mentioned in the top three preferences by all the groups. Further, co-operatives and those in the private sector cited financial management to be an important topic to help them manage their financial assets in order to make their enterprises sustainable and successful. Human behaviour in organisation (HBO) and leadership and governance were also preferred course contents cited by respondents. Learning how to motivate employees and members, establishing a climate of trust and improving members' commitment and loyalty were the objectives identified by respondents who gave high ranking for HBO and leadership and governance. Strategic management and marketing were also included in the top three preferences of those in the co-operatives and government groups to help co-operatives sustain their enterprises and be resilient. This preference on program content coincided with the study by Rohayati and Wulandari (2017), who identified marketing, production and operations, and new product development as priority areas needed by MSMEs. In Gathiaga's study (2008), financial analysis and management, administration and governance, marketing, and investment analysis were rated to be top areas for inclusion in a co-operative education programme.

**Table 5:** Scores and Ranking of Importance by Content and Sector, Calabarzon, 2020

|                                | Academe     |      | Private     |      | Coop        |      | Gov't       |      | Total       |      |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
|                                | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank |
| <b>PROGRAM COURSE CONTENT</b>  |             |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| Operations Management          | 1.15        | 1    | 1.31        | 3    | 1.05        | 2    | 1.07        | 3    | 1.17        | 1    |
| Finance & Accounting           | 1.21        | 6    | 1.25        | 1    | 1.03        | 1    | 1.07        | 4    | 1.22        | 2    |
| Leadership & Governance        | 1.18        | 4    | 1.38        | 7    | 1.11        | 4    | 1.00        | 1    | 1.23        | 3    |
| Strategic Management           | 1.33        | 8    | 1.31        | 5    | 1.09        | 3    | 1.07        | 6    | 1.29        | 4    |
| Risk Management                | 1.45        | 12   | 1.31        | 6    | 1.13        | 5    | 1.13        | 8    | 1.33        | 5    |
| Marketing                      | 1.45        | 10   | 1.38        | 8    | 1.14        | 6    | 1.00        | 2    | 1.35        | 6    |
| Entrepreneurship               | 1.36        | 9    | 1.56        | 11   | 1.16        | 7    | 1.07        | 5    | 1.36        | 7    |
| Human Behavior in Organization | 1.18        | 3    | 1.25        | 2    | 1.22        | 9    | 1.27        | 11   | 1.37        | 8    |
| Credit & Banking               | 1.45        | 11   | 1.38        | 9    | 1.16        | 8    | 1.20        | 10   | 1.38        | 9    |
| Project Management             | 1.18        | 5    | 1.31        | 4    | 1.28        | 13   | 1.33        | 14   | 1.43        | 10   |
| Rural Institution              | 1.48        | 13   | 1.75        | 15   | 1.43        | 15   | 1.47        | 15   | 1.43        | 11   |
| Economics                      | 1.55        | 14   | 1.56        | 12   | 1.22        | 10   | 1.13        | 7    | 1.48        | 12   |
| Information Technology         | 1.15        | 2    | 1.63        | 13   | 1.25        | 11   | 1.27        | 12   | 1.48        | 13   |
| Social Enterprise              | 1.55        | 15   | 1.50        | 10   | 1.25        | 12   | 1.20        | 9    | 1.49        | 14   |
| Community & Environment        | 1.27        | 7    | 1.63        | 14   | 1.35        | 14   | 1.33        | 13   | 1.53        | 15   |

\* Ratings of the level of importance from 1 to 3 with a score of 1.0 being the most important.

Source: Survey Data

**Table 6:** Scores and Ranking of Importance by Skills and Sector, Calabarzon, 2020

|                                   | Academe     |      | Private     |      | Coop        |      | Gov't       |      | Total       |      |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
|                                   | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank | Ave. Score* | Rank |
| <b>SKILLS FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>     |             |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| Leadership skills                 | 1.18        | 1    | 1.25        | 3    | 1.11        | 4    | 1.13        | 4    | 1.23        | 1    |
| Teamwork                          | 1.27        | 8    | 1.25        | 4    | 1.08        | 1    | 1.07        | 3    | 1.23        | 2    |
| Analytical skills                 | 1.24        | 5    | 1.25        | 2    | 1.09        | 2    | 1.07        | 1    | 1.25        | 3    |
| Networking skills                 | 1.21        | 4    | 1.13        | 1    | 1.09        | 3    | 1.27        | 9    | 1.32        | 4    |
| Organization skills               | 1.24        | 6    | 1.50        | 7    | 1.16        | 8    | 1.20        | 7    | 1.33        | 5    |
| Entrepreneurial skills            | 1.27        | 7    | 1.31        | 5    | 1.15        | 5    | 1.07        | 2    | 1.34        | 6    |
| Negotiation & Conflict Resolution | 1.21        | 2    | 1.56        | 10   | 1.15        | 6    | 1.13        | 5    | 1.34        | 7    |
| Communication skills              | 1.21        | 3    | 1.56        | 11   | 1.15        | 7    | 1.13        | 6    | 1.34        | 8    |
| Flexibility                       | 1.27        | 9    | 1.50        | 8    | 1.18        | 9    | 1.27        | 10   | 1.34        | 9    |
| Time Management skills            | 1.33        | 11   | 1.44        | 6    | 1.25        | 10   | 1.27        | 8    | 1.40        | 10   |

\* Ratings of the level of importance from 1 to 3 with a score of 1.0 being the most important.

In the case of skills, the respondents viewed leadership skills, teamwork and analytical skills as highly important in a co-operative programme (Table 6). Respondents from the co-operative sector also ranked networking opportunities as one of the vital elements for co-operatives to possess and exhibit. The participants of FGDs and KIIs echoed the same feeling when they stated that some learners attended and pursued development programmes to meet potential business contacts, suppliers, clients, and strategic partners. Gathiaga (2008) also identified the importance of leadership, entrepreneurship and marketing skills among co-operatives. The results also show that there was a preference for interactive assessment activities grounded on real-life scenarios and experiences as effective delivery methods for co-operative training. Rohayati & Wulandari (2017) made the same observation in their study which showed that practitioners preferred programmes that simulate real-life learnings such as study tours, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.

### **Program Duration and Venue**

In terms of programme duration, 62 per cent of the respondents preferred a shorter one, as short as three months across all sectoral groups (Table 7). When asked about the factors affecting their decision to pursue professional development programs, 34 per cent of the respondents identified programme of shorter duration as an enabler. This was in line with the preference of 62 per cent of the respondents who had a preponderance for 3-month long training. It is interesting to note that the second most preferred programme (14%) is a 3-year formal education, also across all sectoral groups. This implies that offering a degree programme with relevant and attractive content as well as other considerations may be appealing to the co-operative stakeholders.

While some studies showed that longer programme duration could positively impact learning as in the study of Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) on intellectual learning sensitivity, there was also a growing demand for programmes with shorter duration (Anderson et al., 2006). Boudersa (2016) in her study proposed that program duration should conform to the demands of the learners based on their convenience and availability, while the delivery must be interactive, sensible, and purposeful. Furthermore, observations from the KIIs revealed that co-operative learners preferred short programmes to accommodate their daily responsibilities in the respective co-operatives and suggested that a modular and step-up approach (ladderised) would prove effective for the sector. In this way, the learners would be able to complete the necessary components of a full degree programme, which they could not do under the normal degree programme due to their busy schedules.

In the case of training venue, most of the respondents (43%) preferred a mixed of on-campus, off-campus and online programmes. For the academe and private institutions, there was a preponderance for on-campus and mixed venues, while co-operatives and government respondents favoured the mixed venues combination. Results of the FGDs showed that participants preferred a combination of different venues and delivery formats mainly for convenience.

**Table 7:** Distribution of Respondents' Preference for Training Duration and Venue by Sector

|                         | Academe   |            | Private   |            | Coop       |            | Gov't     |            | TOTAL*     |            |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
|                         | No.       | %          | No.       | %          | No.        | %          | No.       | %          | No.        | %          |
| <b>Program Duration</b> |           |            |           |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |
| 3 months                | 10        | 71         | 18        | 72         | 71         | 63         | 7         | 37         | 106        | 62         |
| 6 months                | 0         | -          | 1         | 4          | 15         | 13         | 4         | 21         | 20         | 12         |
| FE** 1 year             | 1         | 7          | 3         | 12         | 10         | 9          | 3         | 16         | 17         | 10         |
| FE** 2 yrs.             | 1         | 7          | 0         | -          | 2          | 2          | 1         | 5          | 4          | 2          |
| FE** 3 yrs.             | 2         | 14         | 3         | 12         | 14         | 13         | 4         | 21         | 23         | 14         |
| <b>TOTAL*</b>           | <b>14</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>170</b> | <b>100</b> |
| % of Total              |           | 8          |           | 15         |            | 66         |           | 11         |            | 100        |
|                         |           |            |           |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |
| <b>Program Venue</b>    |           |            |           |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |
| On-campus               | 5         | 45         | 12        | 50         | 33         | 29         | 1         | 7          | 51         | 31         |
| Off-campus              | 2         | 18         | 4         | 17         | 29         | 25         | 2         | 13         | 37         | 23         |
| Online                  | 0         | -          | 0         | -          | 4          | 4          | 1         | 7          | 5          | 3          |
| Mixed                   | 4         | 36         | 8         | 33         | 48         | 42         | 11        | 73         | 71         | 43         |
| <b>TOTAL*</b>           | <b>11</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>114</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>164</b> | <b>100</b> |
| % of Total              |           | 7          |           | 15         |            | 70         |           | 9          |            | 100        |

\* Multiple Responses; \*\*FE = formal education

### Factors Affecting Attendance of Professional Development Programmes

Regardless of the co-operative groups they belonged, the most important consideration why respondents decided to attend training programmes was to learn knowledge and skill that would help improve organisational performance (49%), while satisfying mandatory training requirements was the second most cited reason for attending (21%) (Table 8). During the FGDs, it was observed that participants who attended merely for compliance tended to have low levels of engagement and participation during the training proper. Meanwhile, more than half (56%) could not attend training courses that were held typically during working days because of their busy work schedules. It is plausible that by adjusting the training schedules, more co-operatives would be willing to send their employees for training.

**Table 8:** Factors Affecting Attendance to Co-operative Training Programme by Sector

| Motivation              | Academe |    | Private |    | Coop |    | Gov't |    | TOTAL |    |
|-------------------------|---------|----|---------|----|------|----|-------|----|-------|----|
|                         | No.     | %  | No.     | %  | No.  | %  | No.   | %  | No.   | %  |
| <b>Enabling Factors</b> |         |    |         |    |      |    |       |    |       |    |
| Promotion               | 5       | 18 | 10      | 19 | 29   | 15 | 4     | 10 | 48    | 15 |
| Networking              | 7       | 25 | 4       | 8  | 23   | 12 | 10    | 25 | 44    | 14 |

|                           |           |            |           |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Improve org'l performance | 12        | 43         | 24        | 45         | 100        | 52         | 18        | 45         | 154        | 49         |
| Satisfy CDA requirement   | 4         | 14         | 15        | 28         | 39         | 20         | 8         | 20         | 66         | 21         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>28</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>191</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>312</b> | <b>100</b> |
| % of Total                |           | 9          |           | 17         |            | 61         |           | 13         |            | 100        |
| <b>Disabling Factors</b>  |           |            |           |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |
| No time                   | 2         | 10         | 2         | 6          | 20         | 14         | 3         | 14         | 27         | 13         |
| Free during weekend only  | 9         | 43         | 23        | 74         | 79         | 56         | 10        | 45         | 121        | 56         |
| Financial constraints     | 8         | 38         | 4         | 13         | 33         | 23         | 6         | 27         | 51         | 24         |
| Venue is far              | 2         | 10         | 2         | 6          | 9          | 6          | 3         | 14         | 16         | 7          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>21</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>141</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>215</b> | <b>100</b> |
| % of Total                |           | 10         |           | 14         |            | 66         |           | 10         |            | 100        |

\* Multiple Responses

This unwillingness of learners to engage meaningfully in professional development was also observed in a study by Richards (2002). He identified low perceived benefits, low regard towards training and increased work as hindrance to individuals from engaging in professional development.

This study found financial constraint (24%) was the second most cited reason for not engaging in training. It could be the reason why members were likely to attend training only if the trainings were sponsored by donors. This finding was in line with that of a study by Gathiaga (2008), which identified sufficient budget as a crucial factor contributing to whether an organisation pursued further education and training for its workers. Boudersa (2016) also pointed out that lack of financial support discouraged potential participants from attending training programmes. Mwita (2019) also discovered that financial limitation was one deterrent that staff of Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies in Tanzania did not participate in training programmes. Thus, in order to help those with financial constraints, co-operatives could be encouraged to invest in the development of their workforce using their Co-operative Education and Training Fund (CETF). In fact, co-operatives were required to set aside from their net surplus for education, training and other activities that were deemed essential for the advancement of their members, officers and employees. The result of FGDs also showed that participants did not see the value of the training in terms of their personal development, except to get the certificate of attendance required by CDA.

### **Factors Affecting Decision to Enrol in Formal Co-operative Programmes**

The study seeks to empirically assess the factors affecting decision to pursue formal professional co-operative development programmes using the logistic regression model. The logistic regression would show the odds of the event happening (i.e., pursue co-operative programme), which was the ratio of the proportions for two possible results, namely, enrol or not enrol in a formal co-operative program.

Table 9 shows the results of the logistic regression model estimated from the study data. The factors that positively affect the decision to pursue a development degree programme in co-operatives were membership in co-operatives, short training duration, and networking opportunities. Years of schooling, mandatory requirement and promotion did not in any way influence respondents to enrol.

The overall model was statistically significant as shown in (Table 9). The likelihood ratio chi-square of 21.57 with a *p*-value of 0.017 shows that this model had a better fit than an empty model (i.e., a model with no predictors). Each regression coefficient represents the expected change in the odds of the outcome (i.e., the decision to enrol or not in a co-operative programme) associated with a unit change in the predictor variable when all the other variables held constant.

The results show that the factors that positively affect enrolment decision were co-operative membership, short duration programme, and the availability of networking opportunities for participants. Meanwhile, the odds of enrolling were lower for those already having high level of education, those who just wanted to comply with CDA’s mandatory requirement, and those who were after promotion.

**Table 9:** Logistic Regression on Factors Affecting Decision to Enrol or Not in Professional Co-operative Programmes

| Factors                | Odds Ratio | Std. Err. | p >   z |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|---------|
| years of schooling     | 0.831      | 0.082     | *       |
| membership             | 3.650      | 2.441     | *       |
| scholarship            | 1.485      | 0.554     |         |
| short duration         | 2.462      | 0.968     | **      |
| online                 | 0.546      | 0.271     |         |
| network                | 2.718      | 1.239     | **      |
| off campus             | 1.615      | 0.666     |         |
| satisfy_mandatory_reqt | 0.469      | 0.177     | **      |
| promotion              | 0.493      | 0.203     | *       |
| _cons                  | 3.028      | 4.783     |         |
| Number of Obs          | 156        |           |         |
| LR chi2(7)             | 21.57      |           |         |
| Prob > chi2            | 0.017      |           |         |
| Pseudo R2              | 0.100      |           |         |

\*\* and \* denote significance levels of 5% and 10% respectively.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-operatives are enterprises owned, managed and financed by members and whose goods and services are developed for use by members. These enterprises are distinct and different from the traditional commercial businesses as their main reason for establishment goes beyond the wealth-maximisation objective of the investor-owned firms. Thus, managing co-operatives calls for a different approach that addresses and supplies the unique needs and demands of this sector. In the Philippines, co-operatives have not been run professionally that much. While there are available training programmes for co-operatives, some of which were even mandatory, the training topics appear to be insufficient, courses are few and duration is short. Compounding this issue is the lack of formal degree programmes for co-operatives, with only 12 out of 1,943 HEIs/SUCs offering co-operative management degree programmes. On top of this, there is also a dearth of literature on the assessment of co-operatives' professional needs from the perspectives of the industry stakeholders. Thus, this study aims to assess the professional development needs of the co-operative sector from the point-of-view of co-operative practitioners and professionals in Calabarzon.

Results obtained in the study indicate that respondents prefer the following programme content: (1) operations management; (2) financial management and accounting; (3) leadership and governance; (4) strategic management; (5) marketing; and (6) human resource management. They also prefer programmes that develop leadership, teamwork, analytical skills, and networking opportunities for learners. In terms of programme duration, the majority of the respondents favoured a short one as they could not stay away from their daily responsibilities for long at any one time. The preferred venue, on the other hand, is a combination of on-campus, off-campus, and online platforms. On the factors affecting the attendance of training programmes, the top considerations were improving the performance of their cooperatives and satisfying mandatory training requirements. Meanwhile, things such as unavailability of time during weekdays (for programmes conducted during working days) and financial constraints discouraged participation.

The study also made an empirical analysis on the factors affecting the decision to enrol or not in formal professional development co-operative programmes. Results showed that factors that positively affect enrolment decision were co-operative membership, shorter program duration, and availability of networking opportunities for participants. In other words, the odds to enrol are higher for co-operative members, if the programme offered is of short duration, and it provides networking opportunities for participants. Conversely, the odds to enrol are lower for those with higher educational background, those who attend just to fulfil CDA's requirement, and those who are merely seeking promotion.

From the findings in this study, it is recommended that the programmes offered be customised to include relevant degree programmes for co-operative management and other special needs and demands. This study also suggests that the training programmes for co-operatives be developed as modules and offered in step-up stages in line with RA 10647's Ladderized Education Act of 2014. This Act offers opportunities for technical-vocational and HEIs programmes to students and employees (Official Gazette, 2014). It is also recommended that the programmes are of short duration, but are vital components of a full co-operative degree programme. Moreover, this proposed programme is ladderised in that it is interfaced with batches of clustered courses, where participants would earn certificates or diplomas upon completion of a certain number of modules. They would then be given the option of upgrading the diploma course to a full degree upon the



fulfilment of all the programme requirements. In this way, participants could intermittently take short modules between work schedules until they earn the full degree.

These findings are useful to co-operative managers and officers in planning and prioritising their human capital investment. Co-operatives may also consider looking into the priority topics identified in the study that have not been included in the mandatory courses set by CDA. Building networks and linkages may also motivate co-operatives to be open-minded in forging strategic partnerships with other co-operatives and stakeholders. To encourage participants from co-operatives to attend professional development courses, it is crucial to incorporate into the courses interactive assessment activities grounded on real-life scenarios and experiences. Similarly, co-operatives should do the same when developing their own in-house training and seminars. Academic institutions, secondary co-operatives (e.g., unions and federations), training providers, CDA and other government agencies that provide extension services to co-operatives may also use the findings of this study when modifying and augmenting their current training programmes for a more effective, responsive, relevant and customer-oriented approach.

With respect to the findings on financial constraints, co-operatives may be motivated to invest in human capital development of their workforce using their CETF. However, enforcing the use of this fund for such purpose requires strong policy and collaborative supports from CDA, LGUs, and other co-operative stakeholders.

Due to limited time and budget, the study only covered training participants of ICOPED during the study period and the study areas were relatively close to the researcher. It is worthwhile to conduct further studies to: (1) determine whether enlarging the study areas to include other regions will lead to the same results or that it would be area-specific findings; (2) find out if preference varies between different types of co-operatives; (3) confirm if co-operatives prefer sending relatively younger participants for training and if they are more investment-worthy than their older counterparts; and (4) assess if co-operative training has positive impacts on participants' and organizational performance.

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