

Effective Planning for Rural Development in A Democratic South Africa: The Prospects of Rural Cooperatives

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Abstract

This paper explores the potency of rural cooperatives for the effective planning and implementation of rural strategies to address poverty. Rural cooperatives function as a participatory approach that provides the potential to equip and empower people in rural areas with various skills. Hence, rural cooperatives represent the means and strategies to unshackle rural people from the vicious circle of poverty. The contestation about a deadlock of rural development has become pertinent in the recent and ongoing political transformation in South Africa. This paper is grounded on the social capital theory and its ideals. As such, it depends on a literature review for its premise, argument, crux and purpose, as well as drawing up results and conclusions. The paper gathers information in respect of various scholars' notions on rural cooperatives and rural development from related articles, journals and books. The paper reveals that where the South African government is confronted and characterised by some form of upheaval and service delivery challenges, so rural cooperatives are fit to capacitate citizens to avoid depending on the government for scarce resources. The paper further reveals that rural cooperatives are deemed to ameliorate the long-standing patterns of developmental backlogs in almost all South African municipalities. The conclusion that can be made from this paper is that the authentic promotion of rural development in the formulation of a well-informed legislative framework, that is clear and unambiguous, can deal effectively with the challenges of rural cooperatives.

Keywords: rural cooperative; social capital theory; developmental local government; rural development



Introduction

South Africa, like many other third world countries, is battling with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Shava and Hofisi 2019). In order to meet rural development objectives, policymakers and researchers have recommended rural cooperatives as a strategy in rural areas that will enable citizens to participate in collective activities (Tregear and Cooper 2016). Kruss (2018) posits that South Africa is at the front-line of development planning, as is clear from an attempt at creating a reasonable, thorough, cross-government national methodology for the comprehensive turnaround of social ills through Innovation for Inclusive Development (IID). The purpose of this paper is to investigate the power of rural cooperatives for the successful planning and employability of rural methodologies to address poverty. Rural cooperatives operate by using a participatory approach, which gives the possibility to prepare and engage individuals in rural areas with different abilities. Accordingly, rural cooperatives are the methods and systems that individuals have to share in the ownership of progress, and to unshackle rural society from the endless loop of poverty. The contestation about objectives of rural development becomes appropriate within the ongoing political change in South Africa.

The principles and ideals of the social capital theory could not be circumvented to provide direction to rural cooperatives. Principles such as networks and norms, but to a larger extent the principles of “Ubuntu,” could offer a strategic analysis on how rural cooperatives could be sustainable and provide leeway to rural people. Thus, this paper is grounded on the social capital theory and its ideals. As the South African government is confronted and characterised by some form of upheaval and service delivery challenges, so rural cooperatives are fit to capacitate citizens to avoid depending on the government for scarce resources. This paper argues that the genuine and authentic form of a rural cooperative is deemed to ameliorate long-standing patterns of developmental backlogs in almost all South African municipalities. The main deficiency in terms of rural cooperatives is a result of inadequate funding and support.

This paper consists of nine sections, which include this introduction. The second section outlines the statement of the research problem, followed by the research methodology adopted in this paper, and a theoretical framework adopted in the paper. The fourth section discusses the characteristics of South Africa’s democratic dispensation. The fifth section unpacks the nexus between rural development planning and rural cooperatives, and the sixth section briefly provides the drive for effective planning for rural development. The seventh section entails the prospects and challenges of rural cooperatives in addressing rural poverty. The paper concludes and recommends that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, together with the National Planning Commission, should formulate sound policies on rural development planning according to areas’ context of need. The paper rejects the one-size-fits-all approach for the effective combatting of rural development problems.

Statement of the Research Problem

The National Co-operative Association of South Africa (NCASA 2004, 4) claims that cooperatives are being impeded by limited access to credit establishments, markets, start-up capital, development, and structure (Shava and Hofisi 2019). In any case, rural cooperatives may not be a definite solution to rural problems, but their contributions are meaningful as far as a measure to fight income poverty is concerned. They also promote community empowerment by using the participatory approach (Cook 1995; Liang et al. 2015; Lin and Ma 2006; Royer and Smith 2007; Tribl 2009). It has been argued that rural cooperatives assist in preparing the social capital of the concerned community so as to enable the society to unshackle financial problems (Okonkwo, Onyeze, and Ochiaka et al. 2019). Okonkwo et al. (2019, 246) posit that some of the challenges inhibiting rural cooperatives in combating rural poverty, are as follows:

- Management: For many cooperatives in South Africa the story has been that of embezzlement, abuse of office by officers, fraudulent conversion of property to personal use.
- Inadequate capitalization: Since cooperatives are inadequately funded, they cannot attract capable manpower. These adversely affect their performance.
- Poor service conditions of staff and members: This is when the staff and members are not working with a good cooperative spirit and honesty.
- Inadequate infrastructure: Similarly, due to inadequate finance, many cooperatives cannot provide themselves with adequate transport, storage facilities and public utilities. A cooperative with inadequate infrastructure facilities cannot alleviate poverty efficiently.
- Lack of total commitment by members: Some members display a high degree of apathetic attitude towards the affairs of the society.
- Embezzlement: In many societies, the corrupted officials embezzle the funds mapped out for the activities. (Okonkwo et al. 2019, 246)

Poverty is a worldwide issue and no nation on the planet is totally liberated from it; the only difference being that its seriousness differs among countries (Amangwai, Yahaya, and Tom 2019). The absence of future mindfulness is a noteworthy issue in the local, pragmatic rural development planning (Korompai, Szabó, and Nováky 2017). Poverty has become a significant issue regarding the development of countries the world over (Adjei 2016). Korompai et al. (2017) contend that poverty is a various and dynamic wonder; the accumulation of cumulating disservices. Many countries experience deficient methods for supporting rural development in poor districts and they have inadequate access to business markets where the poor can sell their products (Karimu and Dansabo 2017).

The most profound underlying driver of poverty is not the absence of assets, rather it is the absence of good administration which results from a reluctance of the pioneers in capacity to apply public resources viably to produce public goods (Egharevba et al. 2016). Thus, the appropriation of wealth and social enhancements is compelled through the previously mentioned eager conduct and practices that toss common society into

wretched poverty (Akindola and Ehinomen 2018). Poverty manifests in the absence of political leadership (Egharevba et al. 2016, 5379).

Research Methodology and Design

Research Design

No research investigation may be carried out without a research design. Research designs are critical for each study. Kumar (2011) considers research design as a systematic approach utilised to handle research challenges by academics. Pandey and Pandey (2015) discuss the frameworks utilised to gather and analyse data. Qualitative methods generally give comprehensive and detailed information to inform research investigation. MacDonald and Headlam (2014) claim that they may illustrate the sentiments of people and what they believe, without disclosing how many people feel or think thus. A qualitative research technique was used for this study, as covered briefly below.

Qualitative Design

Bryman (2012) states that qualitative research involves the gathering of social data, focusing on the meaning of the people investigated in order to provide helpful insight into local perspectives. They can contribute to rich cultural and environmental information (Mack et al. 2005). In qualitative research, the researchers utilise the ideas of interpretive or critical social science to emphasise the language of “cases and situations” and cultural meaning (Neuman 2014). The logic of ongoing research, following a non-linear approach, encourages qualitative research (Neuman 2014). The existing literature was systematically examined and summarised. This method was undertaken to examine peer reviewed journals, books, public legislation, and internet sources. In order to realise the aim of this study, the writer additionally adopted a qualitative research approach by using secondary information. The study has thus incorporated information obtained from generally available publications, reports, newspapers, books, and other sources.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework for development is a structured method of empowering the scientist to depend on a conventional hypothesis for reasonable clarification of specific phenomena and connections (Eisenhart 1991). This paper is epistemologically grounded and augmented from the social capital theory, which expresses that social capital encourages collaboration and coordination for shared mutual benefits (Teng 2018). Because of its multi-disciplinary history, social capital is characterised in different ways, yet most definitions accentuate a system and additionally a communitarian centre of hope (Story and Carpiano 2017, 113). Social capital theory gives an appealing logical point of view from which to consider the embeddedness of social capital for people in the rural setting (Lang and Fink 2019). Rural cooperatives and social capital theory cannot be separated.

Rural cooperatives are a type of social capital, since they give access to assets through mutually coordinated efforts (Rooks, Klyver, and Sserwanga 2016). Normally, social capital is about the estimation of associations (Rooks et al. 2016). Social capital gives a cooperative theoretical focal point to understand the elements of a community's needs for rural strategy in fighting poverty (Hwang and Stewart 2017). The rural development edified literature argues that social capital has been associated with different advantages, one of the most significant being the capacity to improve the financial stability of people and collective standards of living (Norbutas and Corten 2017). Social capital increases the potential of poverty reduction strategies in low- and middle-income rural areas (Story and Carpiano 2017). Social capital is established in the structures of robust informal communities and in the connections among communities (Huang 2016).

Social capital facilitates bank loans to cooperatives (Yu and Nilsson 2019). The existence of social capital is useful in getting equity and borrowed money from members and other sources, as well as capital for cooperatives and members. Social capital exists in all cooperatives, investor-owned firms, and others, just as they all need financial capital. Social capital within a cooperative society is positively related to member satisfaction, which in turn is related to the size and degree of homogeneity within the membership and the size and complexity of the cooperative business (Yu and Nilsson 2019, 3). The cooperatives' resource basis is the social capital that the co-operative members have. The fact that cooperatives operate within a specialised field also shows social equity within cooperatives (Nilsson, Svendsen, and Svendsen 2012). This study is driven by the need for improved performance via the utilisation of social capital for rural cooperatives. Rural cooperatives are used by a large number of rural residents for tackling the challenge of income poverty. The idea of social capital may therefore be used to analyse rural cooperatives' contribution to the elimination of poverty on the basis of the social qualities accessible, such as "Ubuntu." Therefore, rural cooperatives are advocated because individuals who make up the cooperatives (members) may gain social capital in this manner (Kustepeli et al. 2020).

South African Democratic Dispensation

The South African (SA) government is driving the use of cooperatives as associations that could help improve the progress of small scale rural farmers and various communities in South Africa (Ortmann and King 2007; Tlakula 2016). Sections 24 and 27 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) entails the establishment of a framework for the use of a Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), which is a part of the administration of Local Economic Development (LED) strategy to defeat poverty in vulnerable areas (Shava and Hofisi 2019). Most rural cooperatives in South Africa comprise members from recently dejected masses, particularly elderly individuals and women (Tlakula 2016). Rural cooperatives, subsequently, value the help of government as highlighted in the NDP (2012–2030), according to which the South African government intends to support rural economies consistently by 2030 (Shava and Hofisi 2019; Shava and Maramura 2017). Okonkwo et al. (2019) note that rural

cooperative development is a reliable mechanism for the relief of unemployment and poverty, and for improving the wellbeing of rural communities.

Rural cooperatives present an enabling step for rural communities to totally explore the advantages of the rural areas, to create employment, and to upgrade rural household income (Kasabov 2016; Nel and Rogerson 2005; Shava and Hofisi 2019). In South Africa, rural cooperatives have not yet prolonged the fight against poverty, mostly because of using common failed initiatives (Rena 2017). Rural cooperatives have not yet brought about a solution to poverty because of financial irregularities in communities, confined capacities among cooperatives' members, and poor management of budgetary resources (Shava and Hofisi 2019). There is a realistic opportunity in South Africa for rural cooperatives to offer a public opportunity within poor communities to positively partake in the rural economy (Rena 2017). Rural cooperatives can make a contribution in a significant part of LED programmes, but management and financial problems destroy the potential impact of cooperatives (Royer 2017; Shava and Hofisi 2019). Most South African rural regions are confronting the challenges of unemployment, desperation and inadequate administration of service delivery. Development workers and researchers have considered rural cooperatives to serve as a solution (Ncube and Monnakgotla 2016). In South Africa, rural cooperatives can fight gender inequalities and strengthen financial management systems in rural settings (Shava and Hofisi 2019). Clearly, cooperative banks have workable solutions for reaching rural development objectives through rural enhancement by creating opportunities for local economic development (Jayasree and Gangadharan 2016). The debilitated state of affairs within rural cooperatives in South Africa is confusing the society within which the department can start Local Economic Development activities in their communities (Shava and Hofisi 2019).

Rural Development Planning and Rural Cooperatives

Rural development planning is a process of including the local society in tackling their societal issues (Asdaghpour and Amiri 2016). Rural development reasonably rises above agricultural development as an innovation strategy, farming efficiency and development intercession (Fredericks 2012). Asdaghpour and Amiri (2016) note that rural development planning is a procedure intended to improve the social and monetary standards of local populaces. Rural development without a doubt boosts development across all provinces in a country like South Africa; however, this is a dream that will not be realised. One of the biggest problems that need to be addressed in underdeveloped countries, is income poverty. Internationally, rural cooperatives are regarded as fitting to address the challenges of income poverty (Nefale 2016). Several underdeveloped nations and first world nations' rural cooperatives are a significant source of household income, adding to income equality between rural communities and the easing of poverty in rural areas (Ma et al. 2018). Nefale, (2016) states that it is accepted that most rural countries that are almost living in poverty, rely upon rural cooperatives for their daily living and income generation.

In China, rural cooperatives are regarded as out-of-home work (Ma et al. 2018). Rural cooperatives are available to rural households in less developed countries, and are also significantly dependent on their income generation methods to both the households and community (Berchoux and Hutton 2019). Consequently, in Somalia, rural cooperatives are known as microfinance sources, which render financial administration to low income, poor, and poor self-employed individuals. Such budgetary administration incorporates investment funds and credit. However, it can likewise incorporate other monetary administration, for example the protection, as well as the movement of instalment administration and settlements (Omar et al. 2011). Rural cooperatives have broad immediate and aberrant effects on farming development and rural development (Singh 2016).

Effective Planning for Rural Development

Rural development has now become acknowledged as a sine qua non for national development strategies and social government assistance is giving extraordinary attention to programmes that benefit the poorer sections of the population (Shakur 2018). It is argued that planning and execution could be considered as major deciding factors corresponding to the results of a rural development process (Maluleke and Asha 2018). From a planning point of view, strategy and practice for rural development have over and over again been described as a “one-size-fits-all approach”; however, more recent research has uncovered that planning was not goal oriented (Scott, Gallent, and Gkartzios 2019). For rural development objectives to be met, it will require an effective planning approach that improves the participation of local people in rural matters of concern regarding their development (Pappalardo, Sisto, and Pecorino 2018). The requirement for increasingly successful planning for rural development necessitates a move away from the existing rural conditions and a nuanced planning reaction that is spatially separated (Scott et al. 2019). Effective planning in a rural development domain tries to improve a strategy to deal with development planning and to guarantee community ownership and the sustainability of development negotiations (Abdul-Rahaman and Adusah-Karikari 2019). Community participation has been identified as a viable driver of rural development in the process of growing rural economies (Brown and Wocha 2017). It is noteworthy that in the past, planning was mainly sectoral, with practically no cooperation from the rural communities; the exact population group that the planning framework was intended to serve (Pappalardo et al. 2018).

Without a doubt, participatory planning is a method used for improving the effective planning and execution of rural development exercises (Abdul-Rahaman and Adusah-Karikari 2019). Effective planning communicates the need to realise the impact coming from the use of a rural development approach, and acknowledges that it must be a procedure of empowerment (Pappalardo et al. 2018). The focal point of rural development is aimed at discovering approaches to improve the lives of the rural populace, which is aimed towards empowering investment (Brown and Wocha 2017). The term “planning” is something more than the formulation of objectives and

definitions of a system (Shakur 2018). Successful planning represents the composed use of every single accessible asset material and non-material. It requires an understanding of certain preordained step-by-step developing objectives (Shakur 2018). If the objective of development is to decrease destitution and hardship, improving planning and execution ought to be process situated, people centred, organisation focused, and dependent on viable planning approaches (Maluleke and Asha 2018). Effective planning has a crucial position in rural development (Yuan and Chen 2017).

Prospects and Challenges of Rural Cooperatives in Addressing Rural Poverty

Rural Cooperatives are seen as significant modes of community development, since they arrange local resources into well-coordinated ways and structures to permit them to be representative of a greater organised community (Fairbairn et al. 1991; Wilkinson and Quarter 1996; Zeuli and Radel 2005). Rural cooperatives, in an indirect manner, use other strategies through the activities of cooperatives in assisting people who are suffering from income poverty to be engaged in activities that will enable them to generate income trade and opportunities created by cooperatives (Mhembwe and Dube 2017). The acceptance that communities will depend on rural cooperatives to accomplish rural development objectives, other than employment and income, is reflected by (Fairbairn 2017): “All things considered, what number of residents ... plunk down and state, ‘What our area needs is a more vote-based system: how about we structure an association to improve the personal satisfaction inside the society and to expand the community’s inward ability to make a further impact by systematising the rural development process’” (Christenson 1989; Flora, Flora, and Fey 2004; Green and Haines 2002; Littrell and Hobbs 1989; Zeuli and Radel 2005). Rural cooperatives fight income poverty and budgetary vulnerability among poor people (Chivasa 2018). Rural development advocates for establishing rural cooperatives that have a spacious base of community backing and serve the enthusiasm of numerous in the community (as opposed to cooperatives that serve the enthusiasm of a small portion of society) (Zeuli and Radel 2005).

Through rural cooperatives, there is an expanded open door for communities to lessen hunger and poverty. This is done by empowering the farmer to profit from the start by expanded market influence; to catch up with chances to move the rural cooperatives’ monetary activities up the worth (flexibly) chain; and to pick up the advantages of a higher yield—an incentive during the time spent from harvest to the grocery store (Davis 2000; Ibrahim and Ngina 2019). The social and monetary commitments of rural cooperatives to their communities are positively recognised. To a great extent community challenges of poverty are addressed collectively as cooperatives are grounded on the concerted efforts by the community (Egerstrom 2001; Nadeau and Wilson 2001; Zeuli and Radel 2005). The commitments of rural cooperatives towards the alleviation of income desperation have been considered, with rural households moving towards a stable income (Tilahun et al. 2016). The cooperative commitment to

human capital development (instruction, aptitudes, and experience) might be its most generous community development power (Zeuli and Radel 2005).

In the rural setting of third world nations, where no single prevalent income source is available, rural jobs will be exceedingly upgraded, and rural households will use rural cooperatives, which may consolidate cultivating, extraction of timberland products, with the backing of rural cooperatives to meet their major necessities and advance their opulence (Belcher, Achdiawan, Dewi 2015). Rural cooperatives make customary business openings all the more, especially for the youth in the rural sector (Tilahun et al. 2016). Rural cooperatives give a less developed country financial markets that enhance the potential of beneficial outcomes for farmers (Wossen et al. 2017). As demonstrated by Allen and Staehle (2006) and Chivasa (2018), one of the genuine goals of such planning is to “serve the poor whose income is rare and less strong and who may not be full-time experts and assist them with managing their households’ income and provide a significant contribution to life-cycle events.” The fundamental goal of rural cooperatives is improved access to profit among rural developing families in South Africa (Sinyolo and Mudhara 2018).

According to Bhuiyan et al. (2017), rotating saving schemes and credit cooperatives offer money to use for creation purposes and, therefore, can thoroughly concentrate on the fiscal and social needs of poor people, being a provider of credit to the poor borrowers. Rural cooperatives are a pragmatic and engaging strategy for giving the poor access to credit (Bhuiyan et al. 2017). The only sources of financial support to the lower income families are rural cooperatives (Feather and Meme 2018). The pooling of economic resources at the rural level helps to create saving assets (Feather and Meme 2018). Rural cooperatives are seen as having a beneficial impact on social and financial development through their “convincing venture supports actuation” (Feather and Meme 2018). The creation of community work and the plan of business openings diminish the risk of poverty, which rests upon the organised activities of rural cooperatives (Steiner and Atterton 2015). Cooperatives fabricate local human capital through part instruction and authority openings at the level of top managerial staff (Zeuli and Radel 2005).

Solidarity among people from rural areas can ensure the rationality of rural cooperatives to fight against the challenges that come with income poverty. The solidarity needs to win generally, in light of the fact that, independently, people are at risk of income poverty. Collectively, they can fight desperation levels and accomplish a mutual target. Co-agents are committed to directing rural cooperatives in a manner presently being prescribed as the “best course” to transformational development: positioning individuals to be responsible for their own destination and helping them to bring profits to their communities; expanding dynamic, trust and responsibility through community based investment; giving them a productive association with the private sector; assembling and securing resources at the community level; restricting the job of government; and cooperating to resolve issues (Okonkwo et al. 2019, 239). The call for rural development ought to be conceivable through rural cooperatives (Kwai and Urassa 2015). Rural

cooperatives are seen as significant apparatuses for improving the living and working states of both genders (Ibrahim and Ngina 2019).

Poor local developmental government coordination inside state divisions planning activities of cooperatives, hinders asset distribution, which has seen various cooperatives fail to succeed (Shava and Hofisi 2019). Cooperatives help communities by subjugating a basic limit to business progress leading to the absence of significant worth income (Zeuli and Radel 2005). Cooperatives can deliver solutions through the implementation of local economic development programmes. Cooperatives, as argued by Birchall (2013), are more convincing than various other financial improvement programmes, on account of their inclusivity (Shava and Hofisi 2019).

Rural cooperatives create financial benefits which enable a local monetary strategy (Zeuli and Radel 2005). Cooperatives assume a tremendous activity in serving poor people in finding a way out of poverty (Tlakula 2016).

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from this paper is that the use of social capital theory can speed up the progress of rural cooperatives in making viable contributions towards fighting poverty. The study undertaken aimed to comprehend the challenges that rural cooperatives come across. The author recommends that politicians and senior public officials should cease declaring empty financial support (Singh 2016). Considering the literature perused above, it is clear that rural cooperatives are assuming an immense responsibility by using social capital to promote social change for the poor society. It can additionally be suggested that the government should strengthen rural cooperatives monetarily. Mismanagement of financial resources emerging from rural cooperatives ought to be given central attention for the betterment of the governance systems of rural development.

Effective planning assumes a crucial position in the betterment of rural areas; this should be participatory planning, as people will be empowered. The paper recommends that a one-size-fits-all approach or solutions will perpetuate poverty. For rural development to be realistic, effective planning must be done in accordance with the aspects of a specific area's context. The paper uncovered that it is exploitative behaviours of public authorities that are at the forefront of rural development stagnation. The democratic dispensation in South Africa did not lead the country to more effective planning, considering the quest for a better standard of living. Spatially, it has inherited the apartheid planning legacy. It is, therefore, necessary that government officials must avoid empty promises of pledging funds without channelling the financial resources. The paper concludes by rejecting the one-size-fits-all approach to the rural development problems and challenges faced by the rural cooperatives.

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