

Capabilities of Government Co-Operative Supporting Organisations in Dissemination of Innovations to Primary Co-Operative Societies in Tanzania

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Abstract

In this study, innovation has long been credited as an engine for organisational growth and competitiveness. Consequently, throughout the globe, innovation-oriented governments have been cognisant of their roles and commitment in enabling the designing, nurturing, promotion and dissemination of innovations. Such governments set innovation policies and regulations, finance innovation projects and researches, provide provisions for property rights and train innovation intellects, among others. It is from the recognition of such multiple roles that some governments have formed some strategic and sectorial organisations to facilitate some of their innovation mandates. Amongst such organisations in Tanzania are the government's co-operative supporting organisations (GCSOs). Nonetheless, the relationship between GCSOs capabilities and innovations dissemination to PCSos particularly in Tanzania was not known. In order to appraise the GCSOs in delivering their entrusted mandates, research on them become an imperative undertaking. This study assessed the capabilities of GCSOs in dissemination of innovations to primary co-operative societies (PCSos) in Tanzania. Thus, the study was set to:

- Investigate the extent to which GCSOs are able to commit various resources to enable innovations dissemination to PCSos
- Establish the innovation value chain status of GCSOs for 10 years period (2007-2017)
- Analyse the approaches applied by various GCSOs in enhancing innovations dissemination to PCSos

The GCSOs enjoy government support in terms of resources to facilitate, among other mandates, the innovation chain activities. Despite such support, few innovations have been disseminated from GCSOs to PCSos rendering the possibility that GCSOs have limited capabilities in disseminating innovations. It was expected that the availability of the direct government resources supports in terms of financial, human, physical and technological resources to GCSOs will enhance effective innovations dissemination to PCSos.

The study was conducted in Kilimanjaro, Dar es Salaam and Dodoma Regions for the reason that it is where the targeted study organisations are headquartered. The study employed a qualitative approach whereby case study design using multiple case studies (MCS) was used. Primary data were collected using key informant (KI) interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), documentary review and direct observation. Data was analysed using content analysis. The Atlas computer software facilitated analysis of data from KIs and FGDs. During the analysis, the outputs of the coded transcripts were generated followed by its interpretation while guided by the study research questions and theories.

Summary of Innovative Findings

On GCSOs Resources Capabilities for Innovations Dissemination to PCSos

The study findings revealed that;

- ✓ most of the GCSOs had important resources but which were not adequately utilised for innovation activities. There was also lack of incentives to support innovation activities amongst GCSOs executives and personnel, lack of formal and comprehensive systems to reward innovation activities and undue influencing

- external factors including inadequate government resources commitment.
- ✓ GCSOs that are primarily mandated to support PCSOs were less organised, in terms of facilitating innovation activities, as compared to the quasi-co-operative based organisations. For instance, TaCRI has a department responsible for innovations transfer and innovation is part and parcel of its core mandates. On the other hand, VETA has strived to the extent of formulating its own innovation policy in an attempt to formalise innovation activities. None of the efforts were recorded in TCDC and MoCU, which are primarily mandated at enabling co-operative growth and development in Tanzania, innovation activities inclusive.

On innovation Value Chain Status of the Studies GCSOs the findings revealed weak innovations progression from lower nodes of innovation chains i.e. ideas generation to dissemination. This was coupled with neither institutionalised nor user-oriented approaches regarding innovations dissemination among studied GCSOs. Regarding innovations Dissemination Approaches among GCSOs in Tanzania; the study findings revealed that there were neither institutionalised nor user-oriented approaches regarding innovations dissemination among studied GCSOs. Most GCSOs were not prioritising resources for innovations dissemination to PCSOs, and their innovation value chains were poorly linked towards innovations dissemination to PCSOs. Further, there were neither deliberate efforts among studied GCSOs regarding formal organising, resources commitment and implementation of innovation dissemination activities nor inclusive efforts on PCSOs engagement on the same.

The usefulness of the findings is based on its contribution to theory and body of knowledge as follows.

- The study contributed to the existing literature on capabilities of GCSOs in innovations dissemination in that resources availability alone is not sufficient enough to enable successful innovations dissemination. This is because other attributes including willingness and or determination to implement desired innovation activities and availability of innovation incentives among others are equally important. This implies that for GCSOs to be able to undertake effective innovation interventions such aspects must be considered altogether
- The study contributed further on the existing innovation value chain studies (however limited particularly in Tanzanian context) among government co-operative supporting organisations. The study revealed weak progression of innovations from lower nodes of the studied GCSOs innovation chains to the higher nodes confirming that weak innovation chains among studied organisations contributed into few innovations dissemination to end users (i.e. PCSOs).
- The study contributes on the existing literature regarding inclusive innovations dissemination approaches among GCSOs. This is specifically on the necessity for inclusive and institutionalised innovations dissemination approaches and targeted users' innovation needs.

Regarding the theories, the study provided vast contribution as follows;

- The Resource Dependence (RD) Theory provides evidence of “resources dependence syndrome” in most of the studied organisations in that as the government maintains the majority of resources then GCSOs become dependent on them. This was so because some study participants expressed concern that their organisations were not able to undertake innovations dissemination activities simply because they were not provided with the special resources package from the government labelled

“innovation resources”. This scenario was prevalent in most of the GCSOs despite the fact that some resources were available in all studied organisations but unutilised for innovations dissemination to PCSOs.

- Carrot and Stick (C&S) Theory complimented the RD Theory in that while resources are crucial in enabling innovations dissemination to PCSOs, some incentives in form of “carrots and sticks” i.e. rewards and punishment are equally important in reinforcing innovations dissemination. The study findings emphasised that for incentives to have meaningful outcomes, it should focus on both the ends (outcome based) and the means (process based) unlike the revealed scenario whereby the focus is largely on the ends.
- Innovation Value Chain (IVC) Model confirmed that weak innovation chains among studied GCSOs contributed into few innovations’ dissemination to PCSOs.
- Multi-Dimensional Innovation (MI) Model confirmed that limited interactions between GCSOs as innovation technical side and PCSOs as innovation demand side partly explain as to why few innovations are disseminated to PCSOs.

- Areas of results immediate application opportunities

The findings generated from this study adds knowledge to the National Co-operative Development Policy (CDP) in Tanzania. There has been a concern among co-operative stakeholders that the current Co-operative Development Policy (CDP) of the year 2002 needs to be revised to cater for the rapid change in the socio-economic environment relating to co-operative development. Therefore, the study findings made a contribution towards this policy area by calling for the reviewing of the current policy to ensure a tangible and comprehensive component that provides innovation enabling environment and tasking of the GCSOs to mobilise and utilise resources and other appropriate requirements specifically for innovation activities. This includes provision of enabling environment such as the suggestion for establishment of special innovation fund from the central government and mandatory establishment of the co-operative innovation research, design and dissemination units or departments in all GCSOs. The review should also incorporate a component at which the CDP and other related policy such as the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy in Tanzania can coherently work and be translated into practical application at GCSOs and PCSOs levels. This may include providing a provision for organising all GCSOs to work as a team toward a common innovations’ dissemination agenda.