


Identification of Human Resource Development Policy Components in the Rural Cooperative Sector with a Socio-Cultural Approach

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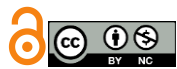
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The primary objective of this study is to identify and develop components of human resource development policies in the rural cooperative sector using a socio-cultural approach.

Methodology: This research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data were collected through interviews with experts in the field of rural cooperatives and human resource development. A meta-analysis was conducted to extract relevant indicators, which were then categorized using Atlas.ti software. The study further analyzed existing literature, laws, and regulations pertaining to rural cooperatives to support the development of the proposed model.

Findings: The study identified several key components essential for human resource development in rural cooperatives, including macro governmental policies, performance improvement of existing policies, and the examination of human resource conditions. The research highlighted the importance of intellectual and creative, ethical and behavioral, occupational and professional, and perceptual and attitudinal dimensions in human resource development. Additionally, social and cultural strategies such as producing and strengthening values, improving communication networks, and enhancing organizational culture were found to be critical. The macro environment, including prevailing governmental structures and laws, as well as the supportive structure within rural cooperatives, were also identified as significant factors.

Conclusion: The research concludes that effective human resource development in rural cooperatives requires a comprehensive approach that integrates socio-cultural principles.

Keywords: Public policy, human resource development, rural cooperatives, socio-cultural approach

1 Introduction

Organizations in our era have taken on roles and missions beyond their traditional functions, and new tasks have been assigned to them in the political and social environment. In addition to performing technical duties, they must be increasingly sensitive and aware of their socio-political environments (Adhikari et al., 2018). Managers of such organizations must expand their insights and awareness of external issues and understand the policies and guidelines of the society in which they live. Today's managers can no longer confine themselves within the organizational circle and ignore socio-political reflections. One crucial aspect in this regard is paying serious attention to public policies. Public policy is a set of activities undertaken by governments to change their economy and society (Audretsch & Belitski, 2017; Audretsch et al., 2019).

Uncertainty in the neoclassical policy-making model can increase unpredictability in forecasting outcomes. However, by providing new policy tools, improving predictions regarding the impact of existing policies, and creating diverse public policies, sustainable development of the country can be achieved. Sometimes, though, it is neglected with minimal investment, even though it can accelerate economic development (Hustedde, 2018; Miles et al., 2016; Miles & Morrison, 2020).

Policy-making in human resources traditionally acts as a foundation for forming an effective and competitive economy for any country and can lead to sustainable development in other sectors. Human resources, as one of the factors of production, perform multiple tasks that cannot be objectively done by any other factors. They act as a collection of abilities, study market conditions and external and internal business environments, determine and optimize production structures, motivate the workforce, and align organizational activities with goals of increasing production and profitability based on competitive formation (Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Thompson et al., 2018).

In the current era, designing and implementing comprehensive rural development policies are fundamental to empowering and sustainably improving the livelihoods of rural households (Bosworth & Turner, 2018). Since the economic growth of many businesses is based on entrepreneurship, it seems necessary to create an environment conducive to the growth of individuals who turn ideas into products and knowledge into industry (Corrente et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurship in rural areas creates the ability to combine abundant rural resources to create and generate value, which helps grow and strengthen economic opportunities in local communities (Cunningham et al., 2018).

Research shows that if the development process is properly managed, it brings high added value to the organization. If not utilized, it becomes a new threat, leading to inefficiency and divergence from the growth trajectory (Gries & Naudé, 2011). However, merely relying on the optimization of functions cannot prevent the inefficiency of human resources. In today's era, characterized by exponential and continuous changes, employees are always confronted with new situations and need skills and abilities beyond job requirements to be effective in these contexts (Haines, 2016).

One of the modern roles of human resource management may be the development of innovation and entrepreneurship. In this regard, many governments worldwide believe that entrepreneurship is the key to economic development, which is why many governments have turned to implementing entrepreneurship development programs (Hathaway, 2016). Entrepreneurs play a key role in economic development and social transformations. Many studies have confirmed that entrepreneurship can be taught and its importance in fostering entrepreneurial individuals (Hustedde, 2018).

East Asian countries have made progress in creating cooperative institutions in specific areas. Discussions on cooperative initiatives and projects are organized in separate policy domains. Notably, there are significant differences in the progress of cooperative initiatives and the degree of institutionalization among various policy areas. These differences stem from various factors, including political bargaining among participating governments, commitments and pressures from governments and trans-regional forces, the creation and development of norms and collective principles based on shared identity, consideration of domestic political and economic interests, and the scope and involvement of non-governmental actors (Miles et al., 2016; Miles & Morrison, 2020).

According to Bellone and Neigro (1980), public administration is based on the fundamental assumption that although the process of value formation is carried out by individuals, values are imposed on them through various socialization processes. Thus, the "normative human" is a creation of the social system and environment. Social and cultural theory emphasizes that learning principles are based on social and cultural foundations. The human mind and

mental development are shaped in a social and cultural context, playing an undeniable role in the learning process. This perspective paves the way for qualitative research by transcending the Cartesian mind-body dualism. The methods and approaches of this perspective are developed towards understanding meaning in a participatory process considering the socio-cultural context (Miles et al., 2016).

Undoubtedly, public policy and its process represent a fundamental aspect of government and governance and the activities of non-governmental institutions and groups. There is always a policy that regulates the behavior of individuals in society at both individual and community levels. Public policy has a very broad scope and covers the interests of a large number of people. Public policy plays a crucial role in growth and development and is the essence of good governance (Neumer et al., 2019). Researchers believe that training human resources must be organized. Based on the socio-cultural approach, individuals living in a community learn various issues through interaction with others. In other words, learning is formed from the external environment (society) and internalized within the individual. Cultural and social activities are viewed as essential processes through which human cognition is shaped and completed. This approach emphasizes the role of human agency in the growth process. Therefore, cognitive growth in human resources can result from external and social factors, which are locally reconstructed based on individual needs (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2019). Considering the importance of the subject, this study aims to identify the components of human resource development policy in the rural cooperative sector with a socio-cultural approach.

2 Methods and Materials

This research is applied in terms of its goal and uses a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach. An exploratory approach is utilized. The method of collecting the required information in the literature review stage involved library studies, internet searches, and reviewing articles, theses, and other credible scientific databases. Studies in the document section included reviewing all laws and high-level documents on general policies of the system, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and other relevant regulations.

The research will be conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the research was conducted qualitatively, with the research community consisting of expert opinions from academic and executive elites. A non-probability purposive

sampling method was used to select interviewees, specifically theoretical sampling. Given the qualitative nature of part of the research, thematic analysis was used to assess validity and reliability using credibility and confirmability criteria. In the second stage, key themes were extracted and analyzed using Atlas.ti software and qualitative grounded theory analysis, resulting in an initial model of human resource development policy in the rural cooperative sector with a socio-cultural approach.

In the qualitative data analysis stage, qualitative data were first collected from in-depth interviews with research participants. In the open coding process, many themes were extracted, which, through an iterative data analysis process, were reduced to fewer categories.

3 Findings and Results

Underlying Causes of Human Resource Development: The causes of human resource development in rural cooperatives include factors or events leading to the occurrence or expansion of a phenomenon. In this research, based on the participants' perspectives, the underlying causes of human resource development in the rural cooperative sector include macro governmental policies, improving the performance of existing policies, and examining the conditions of human resources.

Category of Macro Governmental Policies: Factors that have caused the human resource development policy model to be emphasized include creating social justice, especially in rural communities, increasing employment in rural areas, and the government's goal of increasing the share of cooperatives in the economy, particularly production cooperatives and the development of the agricultural sector.

Category of Improving Existing Policy Performance: One of the effective factors in presenting the human resource development policy model in the rural cooperative sector is the government's longstanding issues with the rural cooperative sector. This includes a lack of attention to the efficiency of laws and regulations in the rural cooperative sector and insufficient consideration of the effectiveness of policy implementation tools in this area.

Category of Examining Human Resource Conditions: Human resources are the most valuable assets of an organization for the flourishing of talents and continuous achievement of excellent performance. Issues related to this area are directly connected to the success or failure of the organization. Multiple assessments at various levels have

indicated that the current conditions for human resources in this sector are not favorable.

Dimensions of Human Resource Development in the Rural Cooperative Sector: The core of this research is based on the development of human resources in various dimensions within the rural cooperative sector, which includes intellectual and creative, ethical and behavioral, occupational and professional, and perceptual and attitudinal dimensions.

Category of Intellectual and Creative Dimension: Intellectual and creative development requires creating an environment conducive to the widespread adoption of logical and creative thinking among employees. The ability to generate new ideas can save the organization from monotony and routine.

Category of Ethical and Behavioral Dimension: Training on adapting and adjusting to various organizational conditions, especially respecting others and controlling behavior during crises, is one of the desirable ethical and behavioral factors in an organization. Creating a culture of prioritizing collective and group interests over individual interests forms the basis of cooperative organizations. This prevents unfairness among employees. Another important factor in rural cooperatives is preventing feelings of depression, sadness, and fear during problems, which often leads to members' discouragement from continuing activities. Creating a sense of honesty and integrity among employees can enhance the organization's social standing among members and others, thus increasing the organization's social capital.

Category of Occupational and Professional Dimension: In the occupational and professional dimension, the primary requirement for the work and performance of employees is through professional and specialized training. Organizing training courses for managers, inspectors, and cooperative members to acquire necessary job skills is essential for maintaining existing cooperatives. Another important factor in rural cooperatives is that employees must understand that success is not solely material and must recognize both material and spiritual factors of success. Familiarity with and use of modern technologies in production, especially in the production and maintenance of agricultural products, aims to improve work processes and coordinate employees with continuous changes in this field.

Category of Perceptual and Attitudinal Dimension: Attention to changing attitudes towards forming behaviors and logical actions, creating a flexible attitude in acquiring new knowledge and forming new perceptions, creating a

correct understanding of cooperative thinking considering equal rights and clear economic objectives of these organizations, and forming a comprehensive view of cooperative organizational processes are among the factors considered in the perceptual and attitudinal dimension.

Social and Cultural Strategies: Social and cultural strategies include producing and strengthening cooperative values, especially among rural communities. One important aspect is creating and strengthening communication networks to transfer culture and knowledge within the cooperative sector. Serious attention to strengthening organizational culture as a key factor in human resource development in the rural cooperative sector is essential.

Category of Producing and Strengthening Values: Producing and strengthening values for cooperative activities in the rural sector includes increasing public awareness and enriching the environment through media, enhancing the role of education in institutionalizing cooperative culture from a young age, reinforcing the identity of rural cooperatives based on accepted values and principles of the local community, providing opportunities for cultural exchange among people from different regions, focusing on training human resources in family cooperatives as a clear manifestation of social life, creating a rich culture, and addressing the social aspects of rural cooperation to enhance collaboration and problem-solving. Organizing exhibitions, educational workshops, and seminars to promote and strengthen cooperative values among rural populations is also crucial.

Category of Strengthening Communication Networks: Creating and strengthening communication networks among rural cooperatives is one of the critical aspects of this area. Organizing educational courses for cooperative members to enhance skills collectively, creating motivation and empathy among employees to address the material and spiritual needs of rural cooperative members, fostering a desire for knowledge transfer among members, and a willingness to learn new skills are essential.

Category of Strengthening Organizational Culture: Creating a culture of collaboration in learning and sharing information, supporting cooperative values among employees, creating a conducive cultural and ethical environment for nurturing and enhancing employees' inner traits as a prerequisite for development, focusing on local needs in designing training programs for human resources, emphasizing cooperation culture for rapid and equitable rural development, and focusing on research-oriented

culture among rural cooperative employees are important aspects of strengthening organizational culture.

Macro and Micro Environmental Conditions: Strategic management literature widely emphasizes the role of environmental conditions in implementing new strategies. The environment is analyzed at macro and micro levels. Thus, examining macro and micro environments and their impact is essential for evaluating the factors influencing the implementation of new strategies in the public sector. Macro environmental conditions in this area include two basic categories: the prevailing governmental structure and laws and regulations. The internal environment includes the organization's willingness and capability to implement the strategy, which encompasses human resources and organizational structure.

Category of Prevailing Governmental Structure: The impact of bureaucracy on the formation, life, and performance of cooperative organizations is significant. Reviewing the role of the government and the extent of these organizations' dependence on government departments is another aspect. The government must streamline related organizations to provide better services. Meritocracy and adherence to laws in holding organizational positions in related organizations are other major and influential reasons in this area. Another issue in the macro environment is the complexity and multiplicity of decision-making centers in the rural cooperative sector.

Category of Laws and Regulations: Non-implementation of laws and regulations, delays, or subjective implementation are other problems in the macro environment. A comprehensive approach is needed in setting and implementing educational regulations regarding job skill development in the rural cooperative sector. The lack of adequate monitoring mechanisms to follow up and implement approved laws in the rural cooperative sector is a significant concern.

Category of Human Resources: The primary focus in this category is the employees' morale and motivation to provide services, their beliefs and attitudes towards cooperation, and their education and experience related to their jobs.

Category of Supportive Structure: The organizational structure in this area, including associations and unions

spread across the country, can be beneficial for policy-making and human resource development. Having a supportive structure and the ability to attract or continue collaborating with efficient and skilled employees are part of the organizational structure.

Rural Cooperative Development: This includes developing individual skills in the organization, increasing rural cooperative productivity, enhancing social and cultural aspects in rural areas, and developing economic infrastructure in rural areas.

Category of Developing Individual Skills in the Organization: Increasing individual skills in one or more areas, responsibility, and personal motivation, enhancing capabilities and professional awareness, improving social and behavioral competencies related to communication and human skills, and fostering cultural interactions and sharing job knowledge and experiences with others are crucial.

Category of Increasing Rural Cooperative Productivity: Rapid access to skilled local human resources to reduce production costs, reducing individual profiteering among managers and employees, correct use of modern technologies in production, distribution, and sales of cooperative products, and preventing resource wastage while promoting creativity as a core value in the new century are essential aspects.

Category of Social and Cultural Development in Rural Areas: Educating and training rural people for productive employment, ensuring gender equality and increasing women's participation in rural employment, establishing social and economic justice, alleviating poverty, improving access to health and educational services, and promoting diverse cultures and equality are crucial aspects.

Category of Developing Economic Infrastructure in Rural Areas: Creating a healthy environment for improving the local economy (improving and strengthening water, electricity, gas, and transportation networks), developing local marketing to access sales markets and supply chains for rural cooperatives, and enhancing agricultural and productive economies considering the existing potential in rural communities are crucial aspects.

Table 1*Information Obtained from the Qualitative Stage*

Dimensions	Components	Indicators
Causes of Human Resource Development in Rural Cooperatives	Macro Governmental Policies	Increasing employment in the rural sector due to the presence and development of rural cooperatives; Creating social justice with a focus on rural development; Importance of rural cooperation, especially the development of the agricultural sector in the economic development program
	Improving Existing Policy Performance	Efficiency of laws and regulations in the rural cooperative sector (bylaws and executive guidelines); Efficiency of tools for implementing human resource development policies (organizations, unions, and guilds as executive arms)
	Examining Human Resource Conditions	Regular assessment and enhancement of human resources in the rural cooperative sector at provincial and national levels; Reviewing and commenting on reports regarding human resource conditions
Dimensions of Human Resource Development in the Rural Cooperative Sector	Intellectual and Creative Dimension	Creating a conducive environment for widespread logical and creative thinking among rural cooperative employees; Training a workforce capable of improving and achieving optimal job process efficiency through individual creativity
	Ethical Behavioral Dimension	Training employees on adapting and adjusting to organizational processes; Training employees on respecting others and controlling behavior during crises; Training employees on prioritizing collective and group interests over individual interests; Providing necessary training to counteract unfairness, selfishness, and a sense of cunning among employees; Training to counteract feelings of depression, pessimism, sadness, and fear during problems; Training to create and strengthen a sense of honesty and integrity among employees
	Occupational Professional Dimension	Ensuring optimal work and performance through specialized and professional training; Implementing educational programs for managers, inspectors, and cooperative members; Training employees on individual success factors in the organization (material and spiritual); Training on the use of advanced equipment and technology in production to adapt to changes
	Perceptual and Attitudinal Dimension	Providing necessary training to create a flexible attitude towards improvement and transformation upon acquiring new knowledge and converting it into organizational perspective; Training to form rural cooperatives based on individuals' personal desire and equal rights with predetermined economic objectives; Developing necessary training to expand a comprehensive view of organizational issues and processes among employees; Developing necessary training to enhance employees' ability to link processes, identify gaps and redundancies through perceptual skills
Social and Cultural Strategies	Producing and Strengthening Values	Enriching the environment to increase public awareness of the importance of rural cooperation through mass media; Enhancing the role of education and higher education in social development and cultural formation in the rural cooperative sector; Strengthening the identity of rural cooperatives considering the accepted values and principles of the local community; Providing opportunities for cultural exchange between local people and people from other regions; Special attention to training human resources in family cooperatives as the clearest manifestation of social life; Creating a rich culture and addressing the social aspects of rural cooperation to enhance collaboration and problem-solving; Organizing exhibitions, educational workshops, and promotional seminars
	Strengthening Communication Networks	Improving and developing communication networks among rural cooperatives (forming regional groups and organizations); Conducting training courses in the form of local and professional learning groups; Motivating employees for mutual dependence among members to meet their material and spiritual needs; Translating objectives into individual and group goals (creating desire and motivation for learning and teaching new skills among employees)
	Strengthening Organizational Culture	Creating a culture of collaboration in learning and information sharing with a focus on team success; Creating a suitable cultural and ethical environment for nurturing and enhancing individuals' inner traits as a prerequisite for development; Special attention to local needs in designing training programs for human resources and enhancing individuals' skills based on regional production and agricultural activities; Emphasizing culture as the main factor for rapid and equitable development; Emphasizing fundamental values among employees, especially supporting and protecting cultural values and patterns (expanding cooperation and collaborative culture)
Macro Environment	Prevailing Governmental Structure	Bureaucracy's impact on the performance and speed of educational program implementation; Reviewing and revising the role and responsibilities of the government (as a supporter and policymaker of activities, not as a manager of the cooperative sector); Streamlining the rural cooperative organization in practice (as a guide and supervisor, not an implementer of educational programs); Lawfulness and meritocracy in holding organizational positions
	Laws and Regulations	Comprehensive approach in setting public educational regulations and addressing local needs in training; Full implementation of supportive laws and regulations to address educational and promotional issues in rural cooperation; Adequate monitoring mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of public educational laws
	Existing Cultural Context in Rural Areas	Employees' morale and motivation to provide services and perform duties cooperatively; General beliefs and attitudes of rural people towards cooperation; Matching education and job experience at the rural level
	Supportive Structure	Having a supportive structure for the determined policies (existence of rural cooperative administration networks, associations, and guilds in all areas); The organization's ability to attract or continue collaborating with efficient, skilled, and specialized employees

Rural Cooperative Development	Developing Individual Skills in the Organization		Responsibility and personal motivation to perform job duties efficiently; Enhancing skills and professional-technical awareness and integrating skills to empower human resources at a professional level; Improving social and behavioral competencies regarding communication and human skills (intra- and inter-organizational relations); Enhancing perceptual and experiential competencies regarding cultural interactions and sharing job knowledge and experiences
	Increasing Cooperative Productivity	Rural	Speeding up comprehensive development in rural cooperation by quickly accessing skilled local human resources to reduce production costs; Reducing individual profiteering from cooperative resources among managers and employees; Correct use of modern technologies in production, distribution, and sales of cooperative products; Increasing organizational productivity and preventing resource wastage in cooperative organizations
	Social and Cultural Development in Rural Areas		Developing education and skills training for rural people for productive employment; Ensuring gender equality and increasing women's participation in rural employment; Establishing social and economic justice, alleviating poverty, improving access to health and educational services, and promoting diverse cultures and equality
	Developing Economic Infrastructure in Rural Areas		Creating a healthy environment to improve the local economy (improving and strengthening water, electricity, gas, and transportation networks); Developing local marketing to access sales markets and supply chains for rural cooperatives; Strengthening agricultural and productive economies considering the existing potential in rural communities

4 Discussion and Conclusion

Education and human resource development are crucial for enhancing work skills and individuals' ability to adapt and be flexible with changing conditions. To function as valuable workforce members, individuals must constantly expand their abilities, knowledge, and skills (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2017). Public administration is based on the fundamental assumption that the value formation process is carried out by individuals, but values are imposed on them through various socialization processes. Thus, the "normative human" is a product of the social system and environment. In designing rural cooperative development policy models, selecting appropriate tools is one of the most important steps for the success of policies and public guidelines. The research results and the creation of the initial model indicate that the development of rural cooperatives depends on implementing human resource development components with a socio-cultural approach (Spigel, 2017).

According to socio-cultural theory, learning principles are based on social and cultural foundations. The human mind and mental development are formed within a social and cultural context, playing an undeniable role in the learning process. Human resource development without specialized training is difficult; communication can meet some educational needs of applicants, thus effectively creating new job and skill opportunities in society (Spigel & Harrison, 2018).

Undoubtedly, public policy and its processes represent a fundamental aspect of government, governance, and the activities of non-governmental institutions and groups. There is always a policy regulating individual and community behavior. Public policy is very broad in scope and covers the interests of many people. Public policy plays

a crucial role in growth and development and is the essence of good governance. Development and progress in economic, political, social, and cultural fields require educated individuals to guide the government and society, strengthen culture, innovate, manage new technologies, and ensure security. Therefore, the growth and development of human resources are of utmost importance. Undoubtedly, governments play a significant role in creating the right conditions for training human resources.

Training high-quality human resources with creative thinking who can convey their ideas and strive to solve societal problems ultimately contributes to improving their own and others' lives. Developing countries have realized that no progress is meaningful unless rural communities also advance and develop. New scientific theories consider rural entrepreneurship as one of the driving forces behind the progress and development of rural social and economic systems. This issue has gained increasing importance and is seen as the greatest lever for developing rural areas. Experts believe that rural development can serve as a new strategy to reduce poverty, unemployment, and migration from rural areas, playing a crucial role in sustainable rural development (Thompson et al., 2018).

Strengthening the infrastructure for human resource development in the rural cooperative sector with a socio-cultural approach can help address economic threats and promote the culture of cooperation in the country's economy. It can also secure the economy based on local economics, increase productive employment, and enhance welfare in rural areas with an emphasis on Islamic culture for better goal achievement and problem-solving.

Researchers believe that human resource training must have organized characteristics. According to the socio-cultural approach, individuals living in a community learn various issues through interaction with others. In other

words, learning is formed externally (by society) and internalized within the individual. Cultural and social activities are viewed as essential processes through which human cognition is shaped and completed. This approach emphasizes the role of human agency in the growth process. Therefore, cognitive growth in human resources can result from external and social factors, which are locally reconstructed based on individual needs.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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