Co-operative College **Paper 15**

co·operatives for development

Making Connections

Education for Co-operatives

By Linda Shaw

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> *"No form of education can be effective unless those who take part in it are clear in their minds about four things; its necessity, its purpose, its substance, and its methods."*
>
> W P Watkins (nd)

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Department for International Development for the funding that made this paper possible, as well as Stirling Smith and Gillian Lonergan for assistance with editing.

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the part of the UK government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries and works to get rid of extreme poverty. DFID has provided a grant to the Co-operative College for a three year research and policy programme called Co-operatives for Development. This paper has been prepared under this project but the views and opinions expressed are those of the author alone and not those of DFID.

All photographs are courtesy of the National Co-operative Archive at the Co-operative College, Manchester, unless otherwise stated.

Cover picture: Students at the Co-operative College of Kenya in November 2008. Courtesy of Samantha Lacey.

ISBN 978-0-85195-318-2

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Printed by RAP Spiderweb, Clowes Street, Hollinwood, Oldham OL9 7LY

Contents

Foreword 5

Education for Development 7
A starting point 7
Adult education and understanding learning 15
Rich traditions and international perspectives 17
Towards a Co-operative College 21
An international impact 25

Contemporary case study – the role of Co-operative Colleges in east and southern Africa 34
Governance 36
Curriculum and learning 36
Students 37
Outreach 39
Other providers 41

A Global Context 43
Building a typology of co-operative education 43
Co-operative Colleges 43
Co-operative Studies in Universities 46
Government Provision 47
Co-operative movement provision 48
Educating members 50

Bibliography 51

Footnotes 56

Foreword

Co-operative education, training and research institutions, especially those in Africa, are proud to read this important and timely publication on Co-operative Education for co-operatives, by Dr Linda Shaw of the UK Co-operative College. The publication is based on research carried out in co-operative education delivery institutions in East, Central and Southern Africa by the author. The research was part of the ILO COOP Africa Programme, supported by the UK Department for International Development.

The author traces the history of co-operative education, showing how co-operative education in commonwealth Africa is historically connected to the co-operative college model of the UK. Analysing the historical perspective of co-operative education, Dr Linda Shaw makes two important revelations. Firstly, there is very little documentation on co-operative education by research and academic discourse. As a result there has been little focus on what it is and who the target audience is. On the other hand, the author demonstrates that co-operative education in practice is rich of experience and design. As a result of the two conflicting realities, there is a lack of information on co-operative education generally, little discussion about co-operative education in academic literature and co-operative colleges themselves lack information about co-operative education. Despite this, co-operative education has been critical for co-operative development globally.

Dr Linda Shaw analyses these issues in the context of co-operative education delivery in commonwealth Africa and derives strong conclusions for the future. First, co-operative education should strongly be inclusive of members and boards. Second, co-operative education should address both national and international agendas for co-operative development now that a new confidence in the co-operative enterprise is emerging. Third, co-operative education is part of a formative process inculcating in the individuals the importance of using co-operative values and principles in carrying out co-operative business through group action. Fourth, co-operative education delivery needs to target its audience to members as well as boards.

This publication is therefore timely and critically useful because co-operative education delivery institutions have a starting point in making reflections on how to give a fresh emphasis to member education against a historical bias of providing education to managers and civil servants. The colleges and universities, will use this basic publication to link co-operative research and the design of co-operative education delivery in terms of content and methodology. Finally, the report will give policy makers insights on how to design appropriate co-operative education models where co-operative education delivery structures are lacking. Dr Shaw, correctly quotes W P Watkins that *"No form of education can be effective unless those who take part in it are clear in their minds about four things; its necessity, its purpose, its substance and its methods"*.

Professor Suleman Chambo

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Education for Development

A starting point

"Co-operatives are crying out for education" reported a co-operative development officer in Zambia recently. The same needs were also expressed by co-operatives across southern and eastern Africa. Why is this? Co-operative education has a long history within the region. In 1952, the East African School of Co-operation was started in Kenya for the training of government inspectors. Prior to this, the Kilimanjaro Native Coffee Union established a self financed Commercial College in Moshi, Tanzania, to train managers. Training on co-operatives was also being delivered for students at the Uganda Commercial College from 1949 onwards.

The stimulus for this paper, and some answers to the above question, comes from a review of current co-operative education in eastern and southern Africa. This is the first such major study carried out and is a part of the larger CoopAfrica progamme of the ILO supporting co-operative development across the region. The main focus of the research was to find out more about the work of Co-operative Colleges and the ways in which they provide education for the co-operative movements in their own countries.

The picture that emerged was an encouraging one with an estimated 5,000 plus students in co-operative education programmes across the region. These progammes were being delivered in eight countries by nine colleges and unversities. The countries were Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and Ethiopia. These institutions varied hugely in size, health and outreach capacity but co-operative education remained central to their activities and most institutions identified themselves as Co-operative Colleges. In addition, many colleges were also undergoing a process of growth and renewal.

Fitting these changes into the bigger picture of co-operative education proved a challenge. It proved extremely difficult to make any worthwhile comparisons

Students from the East African School of Co-operation, which was established in the 1950s at Kabete in Kenya

with the situation of co-operative education elsewhere in Africa or indeed globally due to a scarcity of accessible information about co-operative education. As a result of this absence, many questions about the broader aspects of co-operative education had to remain largely unanswered. How typical are the kinds of co-operative education provided in the region? Why is the Co-operative College model such a prevalent one? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college model overall? What is best practice in co-operative education and how can we find out about it? What distinguishes education for co-operatives from other forms of education for adults? What are the learning needs of co-operatives and how can they be met?

There is agreement on the global importance of education. Education is one of the main subjects of the Milliennium Development Goals but the education targets are linked to expanding school provision at the primary level and better access for girls. Therefore for those not familiar with the co-operative movement but interested in education and development these questions may, at first sight, seem of limited relevance. Co-operative education is surely only a minor type of educational provision. This is to underplay the global reach of the movement. With a global membership of nearly a billion, co-operatives and their members contribute to the livelihoods of nearly half the world's population. Co-operative education programmes, even if they reach only a small proportion of this number still have the potential to impact on the lives of many millions of people.

It is therefore not just the Co-operative Colleges that we lack information about. There is very little evidence or information about the general extent and nature of co-operative education. There is very little discussed in the academic literature on (international) development and within the co-operative movement itself there is little examination of or reflection about co-operative education. This paper takes some first steps towards remedying this absence. The starting point is the conviction that those involved in co-operative education need clarity over its 'necessity, purpose, substance and methods'.

There are also many definitions of what education actually is. I have used a definition developed by the UN Agency, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in line with the broad-brush approach adopted for this paper. UNESCO defines education as :

> *all deliberate and systematic activities designed to meet learning needs. This includes what, in some countries, is referred to as cultural activities or training ... education is understood to involve organised and sustained communication designed to bring about learning.*
> (UNESCO, 1997)

In the absence of a generally accepted definition of co-operative education, this paper also takes a broad definition of co-operative education as a starting point. This is to view it as 'educational provision by and for the co-operative movement'. The focus here is on educational provision which has a close relationship to co-operatives themselves and to the broader co-operative movement. It is not primarily concerned with education and the provision of information about co-operatives for a wider audience.

This focus on movement engagement is, as we shall see, a long standing characteristic of co-operative education. This is reflected in objectives in that there is a concern not only to meet learning needs of individual students but to make a wider organisational impact. This means education also intended

to assist co-operative enterprises themselves as well as to benefit the wider co-operative movement.

This dual role for co-operative education is evident from the early days of the movement and is the subject of the first section of the paper. In fact the weakness of contemporary evidence is to some extent counterbalanced by the richness of much of the historical source material especially the holdings of the National Co-operative Archive collection held at the UK College[i]. They illustrate how, throughout its history, co-operative education, like the broader co-operative movement, has been profoundly shaped by international connections and influences. This can be seen in the formative role and influence of the Co-operative College model that, in many instances, can be traced back to its UK origins.

This paper, therefore, starts with an examination of the rich history of co-operative education and its international roots. This provides the necessary context for the following section which draws on the recent research to summarise the current situation of the Co-operative Colleges in east and southern Africa. The question of how they fit into the wider picture of co-operative education is addressed in the next part when some typical models for the delivery of co-operative education are suggested. The paper concludes with some thoughts on the challenges facing co-operative educators and then suggests a future research agenda.

The issues and questions about co-operative education that are discussed here reflect the overall lack of evidence about co-operatives globally. This has meant that, all too often, current views and perspectives on co-operatives are based on outdated evidence and perceptions. Typically this involves narratives of decline and perceptions of co-operatives as outmoded and inefficient organisations. Fortunately, this is now changing and there are a growing number of publications and related research programmes into the co-operative movement in the UK and internationally. In the UK, a recent study of the co-operative movement in recent British history is aptly titled *Taking Stock*, (Black and Robertson, 2009).

In the field of international development, there have been some major recent studies of African co-operatives as well as the financial co-operative sector. These studies have revealed the reach and continued viability of co-operatives (Develtere, Pollet and Wamyama, 2008; Cuevas and Fischer, 2007) though certain aspects, such as corporate governance, still remain largely unexplored. (Shaw, 2006) There has also been a focus on the impact that co-operatives can have in tackling poverty (Birchall and Simmons, 2009) and there is a growing interest in co-operative development for smallholder co-operatives. (Bernard, Gabre-Madhin and Taffesse, 2007)

The Co-operatives for Development Programme at the UK College is also helping to build the evidence and policy agenda for co-operative development internationally.

This 3 year project, funded by the Department for International Development, aims to support and strengthen the contribution that co-operatives make to poverty reduction globally. Co-operatives for Development therefore aims to:

- Undertake and stimulate research.
- Develop evidence-based policy inputs.
- Produce a range of publications.
- Provide capacity building support to colleges and other institutions in Africa.
- Provide technical support, especially to the African co-operative development sector.

www.internationaldevelopment.coop

There is every reason to expect interest in co-operatives will continue to increase in the wake of the impact of the current global financial crisis. The evidence that is emerging so far is of the resilience of the co-operative model (Birchall and Hammond, 2009) and, indeed, in many cases, of revival and renewal.

The co-operative movement itself has also helped to stimulate the increasing recognition of the strengths of the co-operative model by collecting better and more comprehensive data on co-operatives. This started in 2006 with the development of a list of the top 300 global co-operatives which revealed for the first time their size and scale. The 2008 list, for example, reveals that the

ICA Global 300 – Top 10 Co-operatives

Rank	Co-operative Name	Sector	Country	Turnover (USDm)
1	Zen-Noh (National Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives)	Food & Agri	Japan	56,408
2	Zenkyoren	Insurance	Japan	47,880
3	Crédit Agricole Group	Financial	France	38,473
4	National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF)	Financial	Korea	25,859
5	China National Agricultural Means of Production Group Corporation	Food & Agri	China	23,058
6	National Mutual Insurance Company	Insurance	USA	21,832
7	Edeka Zentrale	Retailing	Germany	21,806
8	Groupama	Insurance	France	19,648
9	Eureko	Insurance	Netherlands	18,872
10	Mondragon Corporation	Materials	Spain	17,669

ICA Developing 300 – Top 10

Rank	Co-operative Name	Sector	Country	Turnover (USD 000)
1	Communication of Thailand Saving and Credits Coop Ltd	Financial	Thailand	863,453
2	EGAT Saving and Credit Cooperative	Financial	Thailand	823,804
3	Chulalongkorn University Savings Co-op	Financial	Thailand	758,588
4	Cooperativa Medica del Valle y de Profesionales de Colombia	Health	Colombia	743,317
5	Thammasat University Savings and Credit Cooperative Ltd	Financial	Thailand	723,073
6	SALUDCOOP	Health	Colombia	590,653
7	Bank Kerjasama Rakyat	Banks	Malaysia	587,414
8	COLANTA LTDA	Food & Agri	Colombia	500,905
9	The Federation of Saving and Credit Cooperatives of Thailand Ldt.	Financial	Thailand	406,798
10	Thai Employees Saving and Credit Cooperative	Financial	Thailand	381,328

The Co-operative UK 100 – Top 10

Rank	Co-operative Name	Sector	Country	Turnover (£)
1	Co-operative Group	Retailing, Banking and Insurance	UK	9,114,300,000
2	John Lewis Partnership PLC	Retailing	UK	6,762,800,000
3	Midlands Co-operative Society Limited	Retailing	UK	853,724,000
4	The Midcounties Co-operative Limited	Retailing	UK	711,833,000
5	First Milk Limited	Food & Agri	UK	602,047,000
6	National Merchant Buying Society Limited	Building Industry Supply	UK	586,387,842
7	Milk Link Limited	Food & Agri	UK	522,839,000
8	East of England Co-operative Society Limited	Retailing	UK	441,187,000
9	Scottish Midland Co-operative Society Limited	Retailing	UK	389,417,000
10	Openfield Group Limited	Agriculture Grain Marketing	UK	371,079,000

Source: www.global300.coop
www.cooperatives-uk.coop/Home/about/theCo-operativeEconomy

300 top co-operatives are responsible for an aggregate turnover of 1.1 trillion USD which makes it equivalent to the size of the tenth largest economy in the world. (ICA, 2009) Collection of data on the largest co-operatives in the developing world is also underway. The collection of this data is now being replicated in different countries. In the UK, the latest figures from Co-operatives[UK] show that the top 100 co-operatives have total turnover of £28.9 billion pounds. (Co-operatives[UK], 2009) In the USA, the University of Wisconsin is currently carrying out a major study into the economic impact of co-operatives in the USA.[ii]

So far, this growing amount of research into co-operatives has only had a limited focus on co-operative education, teaching and learning. Articles on co-operative education, for example, scarcely feature in recent editions of the UK Journal of Co-operative Studies. The picture is better in Canada with some recent studies on co-operative education published by the University of Saskatchewan (Stefanson, 2002; Crewe, 2001) and education is a recurring theme in the work of Ian MacPherson. His development of the concept of Associative Intelligence – the 'special kind of knowing that emerges when people work together effectively' – helps to begin to address the challenge of identifying what is distinctive about co-operative education with a recognition of its collective dimension. (MacPherson, 2002)

Adult education and understanding learning

For co-operatives in the developing world, the low profile of co-operative education is particularly problematic given that education is now seen as a driver for both social and economic development. There is a growing recognition of the importance of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and innovative. The World Bank argues that:

> *Education is central to development and a key to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. It is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays a foundation for sustained economic growth … (it) promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation, and values of democracy and social cohesion.*
> (World Bank, 2009)

However the main focus has been on the development of school education especially at the primary level. A recent study of lifelong learning pointed out

that the needs of adult learners have been 'sidelined or ignored' in education policy and practice relating to international development. (Torres, 2002:11)

There has been a considerable amount of research and thinking about the nature of adult learning in recent years. There is much that can help inform a more in depth understanding of co-operative education.This includes the exploration of the interface between individual and organisational learning; recognition of the importance of the social context of learning and an appreciation of the different ways in which learning occurs.

These approaches to adult learning draw on broader conceptualisations of learning which acknowledege the importance of the learning that occurs outside formal education courses. These types of learning draw on the shared knowledge, culture and experiences that develop among people in communities and workplaces. Sometimes called tacit knowledge, the challenge is how to recognise and develop this shared knowledge which frequently remains implicit and undervalued. A range of approaches have been recognised and created to capture it effectively. Stiglitz, for example, has called for tacit knowledge to be transmitted by special methods such as "apprenticeships, secondments, imitation, study tours, cross-training, twinning relations and guided learning-by doing". (Stiglitz quoted in Johnson, 2007:278)

A second and related set of understandings about learning have also had a wide currency recently. They concern the relationship of the individual learner to their wider organisational context. 'Communities of Practice' have become an influential way of conceptualising learning as they offer a 'third way' between individuals and organisations by focusing on groups as sites of learning. (Rogers, 2001) A community of practice can been defined as a group based on a shared enterprise and practices which can help the development of knowledge and skills which cannot otherwise be easily captured or stored. (Wenger,1998) They therefore also offer ways of recognising and sharing tacit knowledge within organisations.

At the level of educational practice, recent years have also witnessed the growth of business and enterprise education that specifically addresses the needs of enterprises and helps generate entrepreneurship. Once the preserve of university business schools, enterprise education is now frequently found in the school curriculum in many countries. All too frequently, however, these curriculum interventions typically do not include a consideration of the co-operative and mutual business model. It typically focuses on the development of individual rather than collective forms of entrepreneurship.

Even if co-operative education is largely absent from the academic and university agenda, support for education and training as the fifth co-operative principle remains widespread and uncontroversial within the movement. However this does not always translate into practical support and resources for education. The International Co-operative Alliance, the apex body for the global co-operative movement, does not have a specific sector or committee on co-operative education neither is there is a journal specifically dedicated to co-operative education.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Rich traditions and international perspectives

No one writing about co-operatives in general and co-operative education in particular, starts with a blank sheet. Co-operatives are situated within long, rich and often bafflingly complex histories – hardly surprising given the movement's longevity, continuing global presence and multiplicity of forms. Co-operative education is widely acknowledged to have played an important role in the development of co-operative movements around the world.

Education, therefore, is frequently referred to in the histories of co-operation but typically as part of larger studies and as one among a number of broader themes. There do not appear to have been any major studies of co-operative education in the twetnieth century, for example, published in recent years. In the case of the UK, existing historical studies of co-operatives in the nineteenth century have revealed the wide scope and shape of co-operative education and dipped into a rich seam of internal debate over its nature and direction. (Birchall, 1994) Much of the existing literature on the history of co-operative education, however, focuses on Robert Owen – hardly surprising

given his global stature and influence on education. (Silver, 1969; Donnachie, 2000; Bickle and Cato, 2008) The eminent historian, GDH Cole argued that "Owenism was, in its very essence, an educational movement" (Cole, 1944:71). Owen's influence on the Rochdale Pioneers is also well known and documented not least in the works of George Jacob Holyoake and many other historians of the movement. (Holyoake, 1871)

The first successful modern consumer co-operative was established in 1844 in Rochdale and this model formed the basis for the rapid growth of the movement in the nineteenth century. The Rochdale Pioneers Society always placed a high priority on education and thought that co-operatives should fund education themselves. In their own list of principles, they said "a definite percentage of profits should be allocated to education." (Co-operative Union, 1996)

As part of their services for members, and funded by themselves, the Pioneers set up a substantial library and newsroom, and by 1850, they were running their own school and adult education classes. By 1854 they had set up a separate education committee with a levy of 2.5 per cent of their surplus to finance it. (Birchall,1994)

Grays Co-operative Society reading room

Direct educational provision was not limited to the Pioneers and many societies funded basic education classes for their members in literacy and numeracy. Many opened libraries and reading rooms. In many cases, the education provided was of a general nature and not specifically related to co-operation. This was hardly surprising in the days before state funded and universal primary education provision in the UK.

Learning about co-operatives and co-operation would normally have occurred in a number of ways not the least through membership and the fact that many co-operatives were deeply embedded in their communities. There have also been a number of studies that have emphasised the variety of ways in which knowledge and learning about co-operation was transmitted as the movement grew rapidly in the nineteenth century. (Gurney, 1996; MacPherson, 2002) They included not only library provision but cultural activities such as choirs, drama groups, and public parades etc. Indeed the late nineteenth century has been characterised as a 'golden age' for co-operative education in the UK. (MacPherson, 2002) Even a cursory summary of the archives reveals the vibrancy and richness of informal learning opportunities for co-operators. For the majority of co-operators learning took place via their day to day engagement with their co-operative – some of it in formal classes, much of it via organisations such as Women's Guild, a range of cultural activities or through participation in the democratic processes of their society. As John Walton puts it, co-operatives developed:

> *an alternative system of provision not only of goods but of sociability expressed through dance halls, billiard halls, libraries, theatres, meeting rooms, women's and men's guilds, concerts, carnivals, sporting activites, children's summer camps, cinemas (including mobile ones, and showing the movement's own films), and even (mainly in the South Midlands) fish and chip shops.*
> (Walton, 2009:15)

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the introduction of compulsory primary education in the 1870s meant that the delivery of basic education for their adult members became no longer essential for many societies. Lively internal debates took place as to what the emphasis of co-operative education should be. Some argued that the achievement of universal primary education represented an opportunity for the movement to focus primarily on education for co-operators and freed "for the first time

all the educational funds and energy of the movement for their primary purpose, the making of Co-operators". (Bonner, 1970:118)

For others, the priority remained to deliver a broad based educational provision for adults that would help to develop better citizens. This was a strong current in the movement and one which was reflected in the way the co-operative movement was instrumental in the origins and early development of adult education in the UK in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Support from the co-operative sector played a key role in establishing both university extension provision and the Workers' Educational Association though recent studies have again tended to neglect the co-operative contribution. (Fieldhouse, 1998) Reports in movement journals, for example, record close collaboration in the provision of adult education between the WEA and co-operative societies in the 1930s.

By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, a patchwork of different kinds of co-operative education had developed across the UK. It was also true that during this 'golden age', the provision of formal education programmes remained low as only an estimated 14% of societies in 1896 provided structured classes and courses. This was widely perceived as a problem and there were calls for the development of more formal provision. In response, the Co-operative Union stepped in twice, in 1884 and 1896, to ensure better provision by developing a national progamme of courses in co-operative education. (Cole, 1944)

By the early twentieth century, these new programmes appear to have been well established with a detailed annual prospectus being produced. Courses listed in the programme prospectus for 1910 cover a wide range of classes and topics including academic subjects such as history and economics as well as more practical and vocational classes. The latter included subjects such as book-keeping and other work related provision such as the four stage programme for the training of employees. There were also "Classes for the study of the art of teaching". A course consisted of at least 14 lessons of one hour's duration and the Union provided the syallabus. Local societies were encouraged to put on at least one such course each year and, if possible, employ a tutor 'certifcated and approved' by the Union.

The Co-operative Educational Programme prospectus of 1910 also reminded societies that "educational work also includes the provision of concerts, training of co-operative choirs and all that goes to make up the SOCIAL LIFE of a Co-operative Society" and outlined two overall aims for co-operative education:

> *The objects of co-operative education are, primarily, the formation of co-operative character and opinions by teaching the history, theory, and principles of the movement, with economics and industrial and constitutional history in so far as they have a bearing on Co-operation; and, secondarily, though not necessarily of less import, the training of men and women to take part in industrial and social reforms and civic life generally. It deals with the rights and duties of men and women in their capacities as Co-operators, Workers and Citizens.*
> (Co-operative Union, 1910)

The emphasis here is on education for wider social objectives rather than individual betterment with both education for the development of the co-operative movement and also to encourage active citizenship.

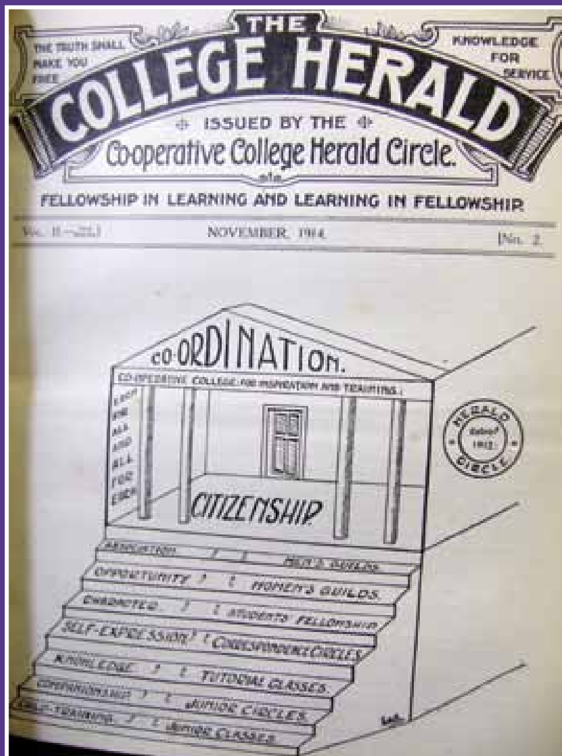
Towards a Co-operative College

The Co-operative Union ran a wide ranging and progressive progamme of co-operative education – so the question arises as to why there was a campaign to establish a fully fledged college?

There appears to have been growing support for the establishment of a college in years leading up to the First World War. There was even a publication called the *College Herald* which reported on the progress of the campaign. The college was envisaged as remaining under movement control but offering education at a higher level. The aim was still to develop co-operators:

> *Education of university standard is essential if we are to equip ourselves properly … and that education must be provided in an institution which we control entirely, and which will be as much concerned with making students good co-operators as with making them efficient industrial and commercial leaders.*
> (The College Herald 1914 p3 vol ii no 2)

This was an ambitious vision and reflected the strength and power of a co-operative movement at the height and power of its influence. There may



The Co-operative College Herald section of The Wheatsheaf in 1914 – making the case for the establishment of a college.

The Wheatsheaf, November 1914

Objects of a Co-operative College 1933

To complete the scheme of Co-operative Education by providing a centre for higher education in the specialised subjects required for the full equipment of the co-operator and the further development of efficiency in the Co-operative Movement.

To provide a centre for the cultivation of the co-operative spirit, the generation of enthusiasm for the application of co-operative principles and the inspiring of students for service in the cause of Co-operatiion; to assist in all possible ways in the diffusion of a knowledge of co-operative principles and practice and the cultivation of a healthy co-operative opinion; and to co-operate with, and help, all existing organisations having these objects.

To undertake investigations and research that are calculated to aid the general development and progress of co-operation, and stimulate the application of co-operative principles in the solution of social problems.

also have been a desire to emulate the example of Ruskin College which had been set up in 1899 by the younger Trade Union movement. The co-operative movement was already represented on the Board at Ruskin.

A Co-operative College was not formally established until after the war in 1919 and the first home of the College was Holyoake House in Manchester, the home of the Co-operative Union. The numbers of students remained relatively small in the early years at approximately 20 to 30 long term students. Most of the students were residential and lived in College hostels located two or three miles away. International students were present in the initial intake and remained a valued part of the College intake. Typically this included two or three students from European countries with similar numbers from outside Europe, especially India. In addition, there were exchange programmes on a regular basis with other co-operative education institutions in Europe. These included exchange students from the People's College in Demmark and the 'English Week' Summer School at the Swedish Co-operative College.

The College worked closely with the education department of the Co-operative Union. It appears to have managed the Union correspondence courses catering for up to 3,000 students a year. The success of this programme was noted by Swedish visitors and then copied by the Swedish Co-operative Union in the 1930s. Many of the College students and staff went on to teach within the movement and several became leading writers on co-operation such as Arnold Bonner, Will Watkins and H J Twigg. Watkins was later to become Director General of the International Co-operative Alliance.

For students at the College, education at the College, as elsewhere in the movement, also included activities beyond the formal curriculum such as visits to local societies, cultural and social events as well as an old students' association. In addition, there were the formal exchange programmes with European Colleges. This is an approach that has a modern feel in many ways since it aligns closely to the current emphasis on devising educational strategies to encourage the sharing of tacit knowledge, as mentioned earlier.

Co-operative College students outside Holyoake House in the inter-war years.

Just after the Second World War, the College moved to Stanford Hall, situated in the countryside of the English midlands near Loughborough. The new site provided much larger residential and teaching accommodation in a former stately home. During the same period, many trade unions also moved their education departments to similar locations. For the College, this move did not substantially alter its role or patterns of provision. The emphasis remained on residential courses for students who were sponsored by the movement and now spent up to two years at the College. The majority of them were destined for employment within the larger consumer societies especially at higher managerial levels. In 1960, there were programmes in three main areas of study: the social sciences, training to become a Secretary of a society, and retail management.

At the same time, member education continued to be offered at individual society level both outside and as part of the Co-operative Union scheme. By contrast, the College was not successful in offering long-term education programmes for members and elected directors though attempts were made. For example, in 1967, the College Principal reported that:

> *We have not been able to establish at the College a substantial service to Co-operative democracy - though we have tried. Courses for Directors of Societies were offered, regarded as very useful but failed to attract participants.*
> (Marshall,1967:3)

This pattern of provision lasted right up until the 1990s and the relocation of the College back to Manchester in 2001. Although a comprehensive archive collection about the College exists, as yet there is no there is no study of the history of the institution or of the educational role of the Co-operative Union.

An international impact

This short review of the history of co-operative education in the UK is not simply relevant for those interested in the history of the UK co-operative movement. British co-operative histories have a wider relevance for the development of co-operative education internationally. This is typically viewed as a result of Britain's role as an imperial power with its extensive colonies in Africa and Asia. This colonial legacy is still apparent even today in contemproary co-operative systems and legal frameworks. This influence was not limited to the British. A recent study identified the legacy of four separate colonial, and hence co-operative, frameworks in Africa: British, French, Belgian and Portugese. (Develtere, Pollet and Wanyama, 2008)

However, studies of the history of development have also highlighted that the transmission of knowledge and institutional forms also happened outside the formal actions of the colonial governments. National development strategies in countries such as India were influenced by other forms of non state actors such as universities, missionaries, foundations. These have been characterised as "transnational development regimes". (Sinha, 2008) Though it has yet to be properly researched, the co-operative movement clearly provides one of the best examples of such transnational agency as even a cursory survey of co-operative histories reveals.

Thus from the earliest years of the movement, there is plenty of evidence as to how co-operators visited each other's countries "to find out what forms co-operation was taking and to take the lessons home". (Birchall, 1994:50) Histories of co-operation are replete with examples of the ways in which ideas and inspiration flowed across national boundaries. The study of consumer co-operation in Europe, *Consumers Against Capitalism*, provides many examples of such exchanges. (Furlough and Strikwerda, 1999)

Such exchanges were not limited to exchanges between European and American co-operatives. In 1897, an Indian visitor, Madhusudan Das, toured the UK and European co-operative movements, a trip that included Manchester. He was:

> *... taken away by surprise … in fact the ... store … was practically laying down … the Co-operative Commonwealth … at the same time he had the unique and much sought after privilege of directly interacting with George Jacob Holyoake, the towering and astounding celebrity of the time.*
> (Patnaik, 2005:1)

Following his return to India, Das was instrumental in setting up the first consumer co-operative in the country in the state of Orissa. He is also acknowledged to have been one of Gandhi's mentors.

The transmission of co-operative ideas and models also included education. MacPherson has commented that the "international dimensions of intellectual traditions of the co-operative movement is the least explored among scholars". (MacPherson, 2007:415) This is clearly not for lack of evidence. We have already seen how, in the case of the UK, patterns of co-operative education had the potential to be transmitted internationally through the role of the College. It is likely that international students played a key role in this transmission.

Though much more research is needed it is clear from the College publications that several of the Indian students continued to work in the co-operative sector on their return to India. It seems likely that they played a role in the committee set up in 1933 "to formulate a scheme for the establishment of a Central Co-operative College in Madras" as reported in the magazine, *Co-operative Educator*, in October of that year.

The international work of the College increased greatly after the Second World War. The post war Labour government viewed co-operatives as playing an important role in colonial development strategies. Co-operatives had an important role to play in what has been described at the post war 'welfare and development' approach to colonial development. (Kelemen, 2007) In 1946, for example, the Secretary of State for the Colonies recommended the establishment of Co-operative Departments in each colony headed by a Registrar. Despite this, there has been little academic attention paid to Labour's approach to co-operative development in the colonies. (Kelemen, 2006)

Within the wider context of colonial co-operative development, education was viewed as playing a critical role. In 1947, the influential Fabian Colonial Bureau argued that the Co-operative Registrar should be regarded as the head of a department of adult education. Registrars had extensive powers of control and management of the co-operative sectors. Education was an important part of this and was to be used to help ensure that co-operative development went in the right direction. This was an important role as the registrar needed to ensure there was adequate:

> *control and education of the colonial people, to whom the co-operative society is a strange and possibly a dangerous instrument.*
> (Fabian Colonial Bureau, 1946: 143)

There were also more informal linkages developing. Uganda provides a good example of this. In the late 1940s, the governor of Uganda on a visit to the UK, met the Co-operative Union, which agreed to organise training for students from the Uganda Commercial College, and to ensure that the Co-operative Wholesale Society would purchase goods from Uganda, when co-operatives were well-established. In a very different vein, in the late 1940s, Fenner Brockway, an active campaigner against British colonialism, helped to organise a farmers' organisation in Uganda that was run on co-operative lines, although not registered as a co-operative. This group, known as Abalimi Ltd, was successful and "achieved more for farmers than the government Co-operative Department".

The UK College also played a direct role in colonial co-operative development by providing specific courses for colonial students. Under a scheme launched in 1947, students from the colonies were funded to attend Co-operation Overseas – a nine-month programme. The curriculum included courses on co-operative organisation, agricultural economics, legal issues, and auditing. It also offered the opportunity to "examine British institutions and values".

> ***Special course for colonial students*** - The first special sixth months' course for students sent by the Colonial Office from the Colonies is being instituted in the session 1947-8. This course, for which about 10 students are expected, will deal particularly with Co-operative agriculture,

> marketing, and credit, and in consultation with the Colonial Office an appropriately experienced and qualified tutor being appointed to the College staff. In addition, it is anticipated that more British Colonial Officers will be sent to the College for special study and training.
> (Co-operative Union, 1947:69)

From 1962 onwards, there were specially designed Certificate and Diploma programmes for international students for which the curriculum was listed as

> Economics (with particular reference to conditions in developing countries); Survey of Co-operative Organisation; Book keeping; Accounts and Audit; Modern Economic and Political History; Statistics; Principles of Law (both general and Co-operative); and Control and Organisation of Co-operative Societies.
>
> For the Diploma three additional and advanced subjects will be required: Economics of Co-operation; Ideals and Principles of Co-operation; International Co-operation.[III]

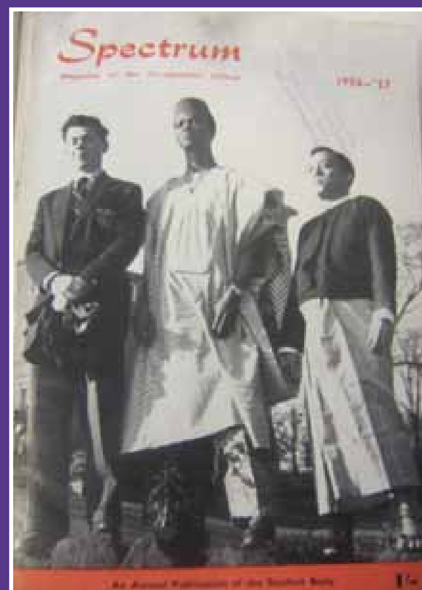
Students from the colonies were central to the work of the College for many years and comprised around a third of the annual student intake. International students, on their return to their home countries, normally went on to become civil servants such as Assistant Registrars. The programme continued in the post independence period with continuing support from the UK government and lasted until the 1980s.

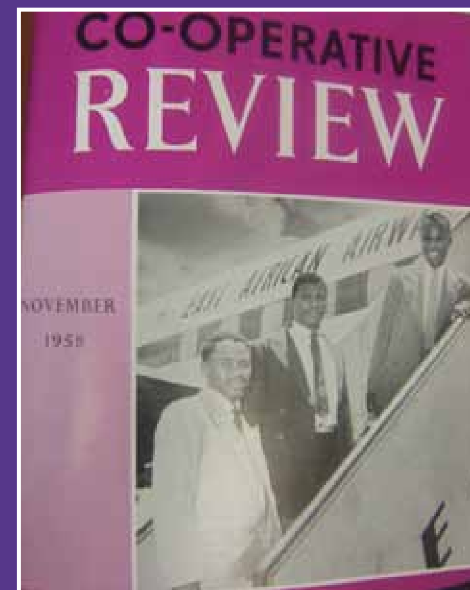
The College magazine *Spectrum*, produced by the students, includes many articles providing a fascinating insight into student life and regularly featured articles about and by the international students. There were regular photo features on the visits students made to UK co-operatives and about becoming familiar with daily life in the UK.

Studying at the College was clearly a very formative experience for students shaping their views on co-operatives and national development. In *The Co-operative Review* of 1952, for example, an overseas student writes:

> *This what co-operation means to me. The movement is giving my country the advantages of self education and of experience and, above all, agriculture.*[IV]

Writing in 1960, Shamsul Huq from Pakistan, indicates how for many students, the College became the preferred model for co-operative education.





TOP LEFT:
International students on the cover of the 1956-7 edition of Spectrum, the Co-operative College magazine
Spectrum, 1956-7

TOP RIGHT:
Tanzanian students embarking on their journey to the UK to attend the Co-operative College
Co-operative Review, 1958

RIGHT:
International College students visiting a co-operative retail society
Spectrum, 1957-8

Stanford Hall Library

The last dream should be the establishment of a high grade Co-operative College in every country. Such a college will not only train high ranking officials of the co-operative organisations but also leaders of co-operative thought and opinion who will carry the movement forward on its next steps forward to its goal of social betterment. From such a college will come people not only technically equipped to face the gigantic task before us but mentally equipped and imbued with a strong faith in the movement.
(Huq, 1960: 27)

The UK College model was adopted by many of the newly independent states of Africa and Asia. The exception was in the Caribbean where only one College in Guyana became operational though there were plans for one in Jamaica that foundered at the last minute. (McLaughlin, 2008)

Most of the new colleges seemed to follow the UK model in providing residential, tertiary level courses with a broadly similar curriculum. They did not offer full degree programmes but certificate and diploma programmes as was the case in the UK. On occasion, staff from the UK College were seconded to African Colleges to help in their establishment. Colleges were established in ten African countries: Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Botswana, Uganda, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Swaziland and Zambia. There may well have been others.

Nonetheless there were some significant differences in the ways the colleges developed. Some followed the UK model more closely than others. They also differed in their relationship to the government. In the UK case, the College viewed itself as a part of the movement and the government, though funding areas of work, played no role in the governance of the College. The African and Asian colleges lacked this autonomy and support from the co-operative movement for the simple reason that a strong and autonomous co-operative movement failed to develop in many countries. Co-operatives became part of the state system. However, a co-operative sector controlled by the state and responsible for delivering state determined development goals did not prove successful in fostering the development of successful enterprises. Instead, protected markets and limited autonomy frequently led to inefficiency and corruption.

This process has been aptly described as the development of cooperatives without co-operators. (Develtere et al, 2008) On completion of their programmes, students continued to go on to become civil servants within government co-operative ministries rather than co-operators working for an autonomous co-operative movement.

In the years since independence, many African countries have endured some difficult times. So have their co-operative sectors. By the 1980s, the limitations of a state centred development model had become apparent. Consequently when the wave of market liberalisation and structural adjustment programmes began to sweep across Africa, the state controlled co-operative model came under pressure.

In some cases, state support for the co-operative sector was withdrawn abruptly and, as a result, many co-operatives simply collapsed. In Uganda and Zambia, for example, governments privatised co-operative assets and forcibly closed down co-operative enterprises. In other countries, many co-operatives simply found it difficult to adjust fast enough to survive in newly competitive market environments.

Co-operative Colleges, therefore, had to survive in a more challenging environment and try to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. In most cases, they have had to cope with a 'double whammy' of a reduction in the capacity of co-operative movements to resource a programme of education and training together with a decline in government support for their work.

As mentioned earlier, by the late 1990s contact between the UK College and its African counterparts was practically non-existent. This meant that when the UK College decided to revive connections with the African Colleges in 2004 the difficulty of obtaining up to date information became apparent very quickly. There was neither an Association of Colleges or even easily available contact details. Most Colleges appeared to have only a minimal presence on the internet, if any at all. It was not clear how many Colleges had survived and were still active in providing co-operative education. Indeed the UK College itself was also struggling to survive at this time. It seemed unlikely that all the African Colleges would have survived.

Fortunately it soon became apparent that, contrary to first expectations, all of the original group of Colleges have survived to date as providers of co-operative education.

List of Colleges

Co-operative College	Date Founded
Moshi College of Co-operative and Business Studies, Sokoine Road, PO Box 474, Moshi, Tanzania http://www.muccobs.ac.tz/	1963
Co-operative College of Swaziland PO Box 1393 Mbabane	1976
Uganda Co-operative College PO Box 10, Kigumba, Masindi	1954
Co-operative College of Kenya PO Box 24814-00502 Karen, Nairobi www.cooperative.ac.ke	1967
Katete College of Agricultural Marketing, Katete College of Agricultural Marketing PO Box 550099, Katete, Zambia	1950s
Co-operative College, Lusaka, Zambia Leopards Hill road, PO Box 50208 Luasaka, Zambia	1979
Co-operative Development Centre (CDC), Botswana Private Bag 0083 / P.O. Box 86, Gaborone	1972
Lesotho Co-operative College PO Box 1774 Maseru 100	1978

Contemporary case study – the role of Co-operative Colleges in east and southern Africa

That the Colleges have survived at all is a tribute to the resilience and commitment of many of the College staff and from the wider movement.

They are now in a position to both support and to benefit from the renewal of the co-operative movement now apparent in Africa as elsewhere. This is happening in several ways including the rapid growth of financial co-operatives such as SACCOs (Savings and Credit Co-operatives). At the same time there is an improving regulatory framework supported by the ILO Recommendation 193. This has facilitated the development in recent years of several commercially successful producer co-operatives that are able to supply domestic and international markets. (Develtere et al, 2008) This revival remains uneven in its reach but is clearly beginning to gain momentum.

There has also been a growing recognition of the need for effective educational provision for co-operatives and particularly in relation to financial and agricultural co-operatives. The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) which is supported by 30 major development agencies, has called for much more training and support for board members of credit unions. In addition, a recent report from the World Bank has specifically called for more donor support for Co-operative Colleges. (World Bank, 2007:54) The importance of education and support for the Colleges is an integral part of the CoopAfrica programme funded by the UK Department for International Development.[v] To understand better the current situation of the Colleges and their capacity to meet the educational needs of the wider movement, a review of the Colleges was initiated by the CoopAfrica progamme.

The following section reports on the key findings of this review into the Co-operative Colleges of East and Southern Africa which was carried out by a team from the UK College from September 2008 to March 2009. The intention was to obtain up to date information of the situation and competencies of each college, together with their capacity for outreach work.

The research methodology involved a literature review (as mentioned earlier in providing the stimulus for this paper) and field visit to each college to collect the data. This was obtained through a mixture of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with college students, staff and wider stakeholders together with the collection of relevant documents and policies. A full report of the research and its findings will be published by the ILO later in 2009.

The visits revealed how, over the years, the Colleges have developed in different trajectories. Today the Colleges are very heterogeneous and display considerable diversity in their direction, governance and capacity for outreach. They also vary considerably in size, courses offered, facilities available, student body, and access to resources. The largest one has over 2,000 students whilst one college has currently only 34 students. All the colleges have retained a residential focus.

Though there was clearly no simple and dominant model of co operative education, overall the Colleges could be categorised into two main types. Firstly, colleges which are financed exclusively by the government and remain part of government departments, tied into their organisational and administrative structures. Secondly, colleges operating at degree level which tend to be more autonomous with their own organisational and governance structures, as well as a wider range of sources of income. The exception is Ambo University in Ethiopia with a long history as a general agricultural college and which has only recently developed a co-operative studies department. It is planning to establish a separate Co-operative College.

a) Colleges offering degree programmes – operating (or seeking to operate) in the Higher Education Sector:
   - Ambo University, Ethiopia
   - Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies, Tanzania
   - Co-operative College of Kenya, Nairobi

b) Colleges operating as part of government departments and offering certificate and diploma programmes:
- Lusaka College, Zambia
- Katete College, Zambia
- College of Lesotho
- Uganda Co-operative College
- College of Swaziland
- Co-operative Development Centre, (CDC), Botswana

All the institutions have varying levels of outreach provision together with research and consultancy work which are not necessarily linked to a specific organisational form. The following summary provides an overview of the key findings from the research.

Governance

Governance models vary but on the whole there were reasonably good standards of governance and management. This was especially true for Colleges that had accountability to wider stakeholders built into their governance systems. This was typically via a Board or advisory council. Some Colleges remain under the direct control of the ministry responsible for co-operatives and report directly to that department. Broadly speaking, Colleges in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania had more autonomy compared with their neighbours in Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana and Swaziland. Funding dependence on the government can often lead to a lack of motivation for programme development and also to the risk of increased vulnerability to changes at government level. Some Colleges, for example, derive no benefit from extra revenue generation, and are obliged to give any additional monies raised from entrepreneurial activities, such as room rent or additional teaching courses, directly to the government.

Curriculum and learning

For most Colleges, the delivery and assessment modes of their education programmes tended to be based on a traditional 'chalk and talk' approach. There can be some interactivity during lectures but this is limited by teaching styles and often by traditional lecture theatre arrangements. In many of the institutions reviewed, the course content of many programmes had not changed much for several years. The extent of the focus on the co-operative sector varied within the curriculum. Much of the focus was on generic business or agricultural studies. This would appear to reflect the lack of sufficient academic as well as teaching and learning resources on co-operatives – a problem not just for the African Colleges but one familiar to many providers of co-operative education. In much of the core provision for students, the co-operative focus had been greatly diluted and had only a small presence within the curriculum. The content and teaching styles adopted standard academic approaches with a strong emphasis on lectures.

By contrast a closer linkage with the vocational education sector in Zambia had resulted in a thorough overhaul of the existing College curriculum. The new curriculum will be grounded in participatory approaches and best practice in vocational learning.

The majority of Colleges still needed to develop more effective strategies to identify and meet the learning needs of the wider co operative sector. There was a lack of capacity to deliver education and training to assist the development of strong, innovative and well-run co operatives. Learning about entrepreneurship and business development was generally lacking as were programmes intended for co-operative directors and members which could help to improve standards of governance.

For the courses currently being delivered, Colleges generally offered good or high quality teaching. All Colleges recognised the importance of ensuring an understanding of co-operative values and principles with their students and tried to embed it in their curriculum. However, though many of the younger staff are adequately qualified, they appeared to have little knowledge or experience of co operatives. Specialist knowledge and experience of co-operatives tended to be the province of the older members of staff.

There is a continuing pressure for Colleges to run programmes to meet popular demand for generic business courses for school leavers. This may help create a future lack of leaders and professionals specifically trained to work for the co-operative sector.

Students

This growing tendency for Colleges to concentrate on the provision of business education for school leavers, however, has helped to guarantee an income when the co-operative sector was not able to finance training by

Students at Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies 2008
Courtesy of Julie Thorpe

the Colleges. Indeed demand for places was at an all time high for many of the Colleges with real pressure being put on their physical resources and infrastructure especially in terms of IT provision and hostel accommodation.

This has meant that students do not necessarily come from co operative backgrounds, nor do they necessarily go onto co operative work destinations. As regards post course employment, a diminishing capacity of co-operative ministries to provide job destinations was reported. Despite this, employment in the co-operative ministry remained a key aspiration for students. Unfortunately the destinations of students were not being tracked by the colleges, so little is known about what graduates do after they leave. It is thought that many do not go on to co-operative organisations, but elect instead to work in conventional businesses.

Innovative approaches in co-operative education

The Co-operative College of Kenya has developed an innovative programme for students to tackle HIV/Aids related issues.

Ambo University is planning to establish a centre for co-operative leadership

Uganda Co-operative College is providing training and support to assist co-operative development in southern Sudan

Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies is running a Rural Microfinance Capacity Building project to assist rural MFIs to become more effective.

Katete College of Agricultural Marketing is developing a degree level programme in co-operative management.

The Zambia Co-operative College is becoming recognised as the main national provider of education for co-operatives by the national vocational training authority.

In Botswana, major new investment in the College will improve library, accommodation and classroom facilities.

In Swaziland, the College is working with an NGO to develop training for unregistered co-operatives.

In Lesotho, former College students have set up their own co-operative to provide consultancy and business services to co-operatives and the private sector.

Outreach

In many Colleges, with the notable exception of Botswana and Tanzania, there has been a very limited outreach education provision for the wider co-operative sector whether staff or members. The Colleges in Tanzania and Botswana both have long histories of off-campus provision for the wider movement. The Tanzanian College still has a network of 18 regional centres delivering outreach programmes but they remain under resourced and need more support. The Co-operative Development Centre in Botswana also runds an extensive outreach progamme working with a significant number

of people in the movement. The courses include ones designed for village leaders, members and committee members.

In all countries, interviews with a range of stakeholders revealed an urgent need for much more education and training for the wider movement to underpin co-operative development. This included education for co-operatives' staff, directors and members as well as for the agencies that work with them eg government co-operative promotion staff, NGOs, etc. A co-operative development officer in Zambia reported that co-operatives sector are "crying out for training" and this was a common theme in all the countries.

Field work with co-operative members in Ethiopia carried out by Ambo College 2007
Courtesy of Ambo College

The experience of Ambo University in Ethiopia, however, indicated that with the right support, Colleges could start to develop effective training for the wider co-operative sector. Under the England-Africa Partnerships Scheme, a UK consortium consisting of the UK College, the University of Reading and the Lorna Young Foundation worked with staff and post graduate students from Ambo to develop teaching materials. Based on participatory research and curriculum development methods, a suite of 18 courses was developed and successfully trialled. As a result, Ambo University has been contracted by the Federal Co-operative Agency to develop more co-operative education programmes for the wider sector.

Other providers

The picture of co-operative education is further complicated by the existence in several countries of a range of other providers as well as the colleges. For example, Co-operative Ministry staff often provide basic orientation about co-operatives but frequently they themselves often lack basic knowledge and information about co-operatives (eg Ethiopia), or the time to deliver much at all (eg Tanzania and Zambia). The exception here was Lesotho where Ministry outreach staff played an effective role in education and development work for the co-operative sector.

Several Colleges still have Ministry staff attending their courses, though the numbers have diminished overall. Again there were exceptions, with Ministry staff still comprising up a third of the overall student body in the Lusaka College in Zambia.

In most countries, national co-operative apex bodies were weak and not in a position to support the Colleges or provide education themselves (the exception being Uganda). Thus an obvious partner for Colleges to provide wider educational provision for the movement is lacking. Engagement with the newer SACCO sector tended to be limited. Two ecouraging exceptions, however, are Tanzania and Uganda where the Colleges were developing programmes for the sector.

This short summary cannot do full justice to the situation of the Colleges and the still considerable intellectual, social and physical capital they represent. They clearly show great potential to provide education and support for the co-operative movement. All also recognised the importance of outreach work as core to their identity as Co-operative Colleges. In addition, all recognised

the centrality of co-operative values and principles and incorporated them into the curriculum. This was coupled with sometimes surprisingly high levels of awareness of the Rochdale Pioneers and their story. Indeed at times, it seemed as if there were higher numbers of young African students aware of the work and achievements of the Rochdale Pioneers than was the case in the UK.

A Global Context

Building a typology of co-operative education

That the Co-operative College model has proved a viable one is evidenced by the fact of their survival. Indeed, that the model still remains influential is indicated by the fact that the development of a Co-operative College is currently being considered in countries such as Rwanda and South Africa as a way of kick starting co-operative educational provision. This raises, however, the question of whether the college model is the best way for a government to channel resources into co-operative education.

It is in response to this live issue that the following typology has been developed to contribute to the debates over different options by discussing the main institutional forms for providers of co-operative education. Four main types of provision have been identified:

- Co-operative Colleges
- Co-operative studies in universities
- Government provision
- Co-operative movement provision

Co-operative Colleges

As we have seen, the dominant college model was based on the UK experience. This was based on a single site college and the provision was intended to train future co-operative leaders and managers rather than delivering extensive provision at a grassroots level for members and directors. This model was also adopted in the countries of south and south east Asia. Most of the colleges appear to have developed along the same lines. The key difference appears to be that, unlike the UK College, they have been government rather than movement Colleges funded by and reporting to co-operative ministries.

The histories of the other Colleges in Europe has yet to be researched in this context but they seem, like the UK, to have developed in close relationship to, and with support from, already established national co-operative movements and apex bodies. Colleges were established in a number of countries including Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Germany and Switzerland as well as the UK. A College was also established in Canada in the 1930s (Crewe, 2001) and there were moves to set up a College in New York in 1937 specifically copying the UK model. There were also two Co-operative Colleges in China reported as being in existence in 1949 in the *Co-operative College Magazine* of that year. (Wang, 1949)

Some of these Colleges have not survived as dedicated colleges for the co-operative movement. The reasons for this merit further research and, to some extent, their disappearance undoubtedly reflects the fluctuating fortunes of the co-operative sector. However this decline may also reflect the capacity of some of the larger co-operatives to run their own training provision. In the case of Canada, Crewe reports that both these factors played a role as well as growth in co-operative membership delinked from an understanding of core values and principles. The College struggled without a clear "sense of purpose and with questionable solidarity with those in the larger coop movement". (Crewe, 2001:31)

The UK College, for example, had to radically revise its modus operandi as a residential college in the late 1990s as it struggled to both sustain its historic house and develop courses for the movement. Stanford Hall was sold in order to allow the College to move back to Manchester (its original home) and concentrate on renewing its co-operative education programmes within the UK. In addition, provision has developed in several new directions –

- The launching of new vocational educational programmes for the co-operative sector based on a workplace delivery model.
- The development of work with schools and young people.
- Work to develop wider access to and programmes based on the Rochdale Pioneers Museum and the National Co-operative Archive.
- A renewed international programme, including raising awareness of international issues for UK co-operative members.

Colleges have played, and clearly continue to play, a vital role in the provision of co-operative education globally. They have had the benefit of close

A Co-operative College assessor working with a Co-operative Group staff member as part of the new vocational learning and assessment programme.
Courtesy of Samantha Lacey

connection to movement but whilst maintaining a degree of independence and retaining support from the government and the co-operative movement. This has been a difficult balancing act to maintain and one not helped by weak connections between the Colleges themselves. This is now being remedied in the case of the African Colleges but needs to be addressed at global level as well.

Nonetheless, the Colleges in Africa and elsewhere continue to provide a valuable intellectual and educational resource for the movement – the key challenge for them is how they can adapt effectively to meet the learning needs of a co-operative movement undergoing a process of growth and renewal.

Regional workshop for staff of East African Colleges in 2009
Courtesy of Stirling Smith

Watkins also emphasised the two way role of a college – not only exerting influence externally and internationally but also serving as a "channel through which international influence can be brought to bear upon the co-operative movement at home". (Watkins, 1952:10) This is perhaps even more important today.

Co-operative Studies in Universities

In their search for survival, some of the Colleges have begun the journey of transforming themselves into universities. As institutions, the university model for co-operative education is, of course, not new. There are a number of long established university departments of co-operative studies many of whom have close linkages to the wider movement.

University provision is frequently linked to agricultural universities especially in USA, Canada and Netherlands. There is a much weaker presence in Business Schools and university departments specialising in international development.

At the same time, university departments have the advantage of having a degree of closeness between the teaching and research processes (at least in theory) and it is critically important for research and scholarship to underpin and inform co-operative education. At the same time there can also be tensions with an academic agenda in relation to the needs of the movement whether in relation to timeframes, curriculum and relevance. Effective dissemination of academic research findings to wider audiences always presents a challenge. However the links co-operative studies departments tend to have with the wider movement can reach wider audiences than is common across many academic disciplines. This has also been fostered by the work of the Committee for Co-operative Research which is linked to the global co-operative apex body, the International Co-operative Alliance.

Co-operative education can be provided by universities in several different ways:

- Offering courses for mainstream undergraduate university students as part of degree provision.
- Courses for the wider movement using a number of vehicles including summer schools, ongoing courses for co-operatives and their members, short courses, organise conferences, provide consultancy, expert advice and research services.
- Undertaking research and analysis on co-operatives – this can take the form of stand alone academic research or it can be intended specifically to inform and support co-operative development.
- Dedicated programmes at post graduate level which focus specifically on co-operatives and/or the wider social economy.

A list of some of the major universities engaged in co-operative studies is provided in the appendix.

Government Provision

Education for co-operatives is also delivered by government services – most commonly in the form of agricultural extension services. In the USA, for example, the Department of Agriculture has been mandated since 1926 to disseminate knowledge about co-operative principles and practices. This has involved co-operative training programmes, publications and educational materials typically directed at grassroots co-operatives and their boards.

Agricultural extension provision in Africa, as mentioned earlier, involves educational work with village and regional level co-operative ministries. In the Africa Colleges research, this was reported on as being frequently under resourced. As part of their role, many staff have to deliver training but often can have limited teaching skills and little understanding of co-operatives. In addition, there has been a steep decline in the provision of traditional agricultural extension services in recent years.

Co-operative movement provision

Apart from Colleges, co-operative movements have developed other ways of ensuring educational provision. This has happened in several different ways. Firstly, some co-operatives run their own education and training programmes for members and staff. This inevitably tends to be the preserve of the larger and more successful co-operatives and is common in Europe, North America and Japan. It remains fairly limited in regions such as Africa though some of larger financial co-operatives in Kenya deliver their own education programmes. By contrast, however, the majority of financial co-operatives in the developing world simply do not possess the resources or capacity to ensure appropriate training for their board members.

In house training being carried out by the UK Co-operative Group
Courtesy of the Co-operative Group

Co-operative apex bodies have also taken on the role of delivering education themselves. This was the case in the UK for many years. Some co-operatives (especially co-operative unions) can also benefit from training from other providers such as NGOs – often via engagement in Fair Trade supply chains. Problems sometimes occur when the training providers lack co-operative background and be unaware of co-operative identity and governance requirements. This situation is not helped, of course, by the current lack of capacity for outreach by many Co-operative Colleges.

Given the lack of research into this type of provision it is difficult to make generalisations. Drawing on the UK experience, it appears that the type of education delivered in-house will frequently be designed in response to the immediate business training needs of the co-operative and focused on provision for staff. At its best, such provision can be highly relevant and responsive to current learning needs; at its worst it can mean a very narrow agenda and a very short term focus. Training and education budgets are often the first to be cut during hard times. Frequently the training offered is fairly generic and does not involve much engagement with co-operative values and principles.

Several large and successful co-operatives have realised the benefits of developing effective and comprehensive education programmes for members. Examples of this include the member education provision of the UK consumer co-operative the Co-operative Group, the education programmes of the Rural Electricity co-operatives in the USA.

These four models have arisen in different contexts and meet different educational needs. There is also no simple blueprint for ensuring the development of effective co-operative learning and teaching. However if measured against the earlier definition of co-operative education as 'by and for the co-operative movement', it is apparent that some models have a greater potential to serve the educational needs of co-operative movements than others. This relates in part to the degree of movement ownership and engagement but also to the extent to which co-operative values and skills can be embedded within the institution and within the curriculum.

Educating members

Whatever the type of provider of co-operative education, it appears that education for members and directors has not often been a priority even for well-established and relatively wealthy co-operative sectors. This may begin to change with a growing recognition of the links between a distinct co-operative identity and business success.

From the UK perspective, it remains crucial to ensure the provision of effective member education as this provides sure foundations for the development of member participation – critical to the long term health and sustainability of co-operatives. Despite considerable change in the ways that the UK College has provided co-operative education in recent years, there is still recognition of the centrality of member education. It is fitting that the College is housed in Manchester in Holyoake House named in honour of George Jacob Holyoake, co-operative leader and thinker who argued in the 1880s:

> *It is surely part of co-operative education to instruct a member in the duties he will be called upon to discharge, and the reasons which should influence him. For instance, money has to be voted at our meetings. To whom? – for what? And why? Are worthy of consideration.*
> (Holyoake, 1880)

The provision of good co-operative education needs to embody many things but amongst them needs to be the centrality of values, movement engagement and education for members.

Clearly there needs to be far more reflection about the 'essentials of good co-operative education' by both practitioners and academics alike. For countries such as Rwanda and South Africa, looking to prioritise the development of co-operative education in a systematic manner, the challenges are formidable. The wider role and potential of co-operative education in helping to underpin the renewal of the co-operative movement globally makes addressing these challenges even more imperative.

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Footnotes

I For more information on the National Co-operative Archive see www.archive.coop

II http://reic.uwcc.wisc.edu/sites/all/summary-report.pdf

III "The College and Co-operation Abroad" in *Co-operative Review* 1961 pp423-4

IV "Colonial Students at Stanford" *Co-operative Review* 1952 p135

V For more information visit www.ilo.org/coopafrica

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DFID Department for International Development