

# Editorial

This issue is a mix of the old and the new. We also take time to reflect on co-operative education in advance of the UK Co-operative College centenary anniversary in 2019. Before this, the first article from Adams and Doluschitz focuses on general services co-operatives in Germany. The paper is based on a survey of 178 co-operatives. The authors start with an overview of the foundations of the German co-operative movement tracing back to Raiffeisen and Schulze-Delitzch in the early 1800s. The general interest co-operatives that form the focal point for the research are those that offer a range of services and infrastructure support linked to what was considered new fields of educational, social, cultural or artistic activities and the authors provide an overview of the reasons behind the growth of these types of co-operatives. The paper provides interesting examples that serve to meet community needs, including providing meeting places, transport services, community ownership of local inns, and transfer of assets from municipalities, such as swimming pools. Figure 1 (p. 11) provides a useful breakdown of the main areas of activities covered by the sampled co-operatives.

Adams and Doluschitz's interest is in examining the motivations of founders both to encourage new developments and provide useful evidence of the image and effect of existing co-operatives. While there is some indication of response to withdrawal or threat of withdrawal of services as an impetus for start-ups, the authors also found a proactive, altruistic intent in some instances to solve local problems and address gaps and opportunities for new initiatives.

In the UK as elsewhere, co-operative and community relations have intertwined in various social and recreational activities, and education has been a consistent part of both member relations and development and in promoting co-operative values and principles. Reviewing the future of co-operative education in a 1996 issue of the *Journal* following the adoption of the revised Co-operative Principles at the ICA Congress in Manchester, UK (1995), Mervyn Wilson (the then Co-operative Education Services Manager at the Co-operative College, UK) comments on the widening of co-operative societies educational activities through sponsorship of community, social and cultural activities (p.7). Yet, he also points to the need for continuing and extending education and training programmes for members in order to be able to "contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives" (Revised Principles cited by Wilson, 1996, p8). This, he suggests, can be achieved through a flexible approach at different levels including partnerships with major providers such as the Co-operative College. For future needs and to provide a framework of support for teachers/educationalists, Wilson included the provision of resources to promote co-operation in schools; opportunities for personal development at local and national levels; experiential pedagogic approaches; and accredited qualifications for educationalists (p.10).

Recent changes in legislation in the UK have supported the development of 'free' schools and co-operative schools and academies and widening of further and higher education providers. In particular, the Higher Education and Research Act, 2017 which is seen as opening up opportunities in the UK for a co-operative education. The second paper uses this context to discuss whether a co-operative university could provide an antidote to what is seen by many academics and education commentators as a continuing academic capitalism. There are no solutions or conclusions offered, rather consideration of the challenges of how such an co-operative entity might viably operate within the confines of a system of benchmarking, assessment of performance (both of students and staff), and institutional control that, in many ways, increase divisions and inequalities between various stakeholders. The question of education as a public good is raised and no doubt will be returned to again in future issues, as will the consideration of what we mean by a co-operative university in terms of ownership and control, structure, processes, and pedagogical approaches.

As the UK Society for Co-operative Studies name suggests, the Society and its associated *Journal* have a long standing interest in learning and teaching, research and practice in and

with co-operatives. In 1996, the *Journal* had a special theme and several articles celebrating 50 years of the UK Co-operative College, taking its starting point the College's move to a new base at Stanford Hall, Loughborough. As well as a retrospective, contributors also contemplated not only the future of the College but also education, training and management development. There were several articles reflecting on the period 1946-1996. R. L. Marshall, for example, highlighted an early ambition for a focus on research rooted in the history of the movement and social aspirations. He reviewed the changes in the delivery of training and development — the what and for whom. During this period (1946-1977) enrolments shifted from a focus on domestic management development to international development with the development of a Diploma in Co-operative Development (Overseas) in conjunction with Loughborough University and by the early 1980s the recruitment of overseas students made a significant contribution to the running costs of the College at Stanford Hall (Todner, 1996). The College also had a network of relationships with universities mainly through their extra-mural departments which was a strong attractor for students. Towards the end of this period, courses offered were more problem-led in relation to management issues. Overall though, the aim included a commitment to an 'open intellectual community' to encourage open discussion, critical reflection and personal development. This latter is reflected in the experience reported in the short paper by S. P. Clarke from 1968. At the time, Clarke was the secretary and chief executive officer of Bradford District Co-operative Society Ltd and welcomed the relationship with Leeds University. In his article (reprinted in this issue), Clarke emphasises the value of university courses for co-operative managers. In particular he considers the facilitation of learning through a pedagogic approach that links theory and practice; that learning is an active process supported through a problem-based approach to practice issues faced by organisations and their managers. This active and experiential learning approach is echoed through other accounts of co-operators' experiences; recognising the political, historical and situated contexts of learning and the complexity of situations and events with which managers and others in co-operative organisations are faced.

Generally and in line with the sponsorship and development of programmes, training and education provision in the UK and elsewhere is focused on consumer co-operatives and retail societies. In 1978, just after the Swedish Co-operative Union & Wholesale Society education facility Vår Gård's 50th anniversary, the then Principal Gunnar Dahlander provided an overview of the consumer co-operative education and training. The Co-operative College Vår Gård was established in Saltsjobaden in 1925 although by the mid-1960s most of the basic training was transferred to local societies. The Society — Kooperativa Förbundet (KF) — also attracted university graduates as trainees with opportunities to become store managers and, like the UK co-operative societies offered a junior management training scheme for young entrants with more experienced learners expected to also act as 'local staff trainers' as their own training progresses (Wiggins, 1978). The paper, re-printed in this issue, provides an overview of the structure and aims of the training. Vår Gård was acquired by KF in 1924 and hosted residential programmes, short courses as well as programmes stretching over a number of years for its member associations' staff. Of key importance for Dahlander was a common view of the goals and function of education and training in the movement. In particular, he remarks on the complexity of achieving this within a large federated structure and points to the need for a needs-related and far sighted system that operates at all levels and different sectors (of the consumer movement in this instance, but this could be extended across the sectors). This is also, he suggests, guided by the ideological principles towards greater democracy and employee satisfaction at and in work that strives to meet both the needs of the individual and the organisation; a process that needs the engagement of all stakeholders. He points to risks of short-termism and potential disregard of societies' relationship with and responsibilities to the wider movement, and the role of education, in part, as a counter to this. Member training continued to reside within KF until 1985 when it was merged with Vår Gård. Like Stanford Hall (sold in 2001 when the College moved back to Holyoake House, Manchester), Vår Gård is no longer the training facility for staff and managers. It is however still owned and used by KF, as well as offering high quality conference and hotel facilities. The number of co-operative retail societies has continued to fall since 1910 (see Table 1, p 33) although the number of employees

and members has risen considerably over the same period. KF remains Sweden's largest co-operative membership organisation (around 29 consumer associations with over three million members (for up-to-date figures, see annual reports and information — <https://kf.se>).

To conclude this issue's focus on education, we include a review of Davidovic's 1967 book on University teaching of co-operation in various countries. The book is still available mainly in library archives. The book reports a large survey of different types and levels of programmes and education offerings across north, central and south America, Europe, Asia and Africa and this is a theme that we would like to continue in future issues.

In 2015, Andrew Bibby's book, *All Our Own Work*, was reviewed in this *Journal* (vol, 48, no 3, Winter 2015) and in 2017, he gave a talk on Jesse Gray at the annual UKSCS conference in Newcastle upon Tyne. Here, we have a short essay based on that presentation. Bibby takes us through some of the contributions made by Gray to the British co-operative movement between 1854 and 1912 as well as his links to the Hebden Bridge fustian co-operative.

To bring us to more recent times, there is a review of a publication from a new initiative by the Co-operative Press. Published in 2018, Gosling's *The Fall of the Ethical Bank* examines the near collapse of the UK Co-operative Bank. Our final contribution is a review of the paperback edition of Zed Book's *Business and Society: A critical introduction* from Birch, Peacock, Wellen et al., which offers an historical overview of capitalism and corporate power from a range of perspectives including sociological, heterodox economics, geographical, ethical, political and legal.

## References

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The *Journal* welcomes contributions on co-operative education, management, governance and leadership, and related subject areas of relevance to the co-operative sector. This includes worker, consumer, retail, housing, credit, insurance, information technology, environmental and other forms of co-operative endeavour; international co-operation; and other sectors within the social economy, including mutual businesses, co-operative banks and building societies, community businesses and member-based non-profits. We are keen to receive submissions that link theory and practice, and particularly new developments from co-operators internationally.

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**Editor**