

Editorial

UKSCS is proud to part of an international network of co-operatives and co-operators, and this special edition showcases some of the research outputs emerging from the Co-operative Education conference organised by one of our sister organisations — the Co-operative College. The College, based in Manchester, UK, is an educational charity dedicated to the promotion of co-operative values, ideas, and principles within co-operatives, communities, and society. We would like to thank the guest editors from the College for their editorial contributions to this special edition:

- Dr Cilla Ross, Vice Principal: Co-operative education & research.
- Dr Sarah Alldred, Projects development manager.
- Dr Amanda Benson, Research co-ordinator.

Co-operative Education – a Special Issue

The Co-operative College's Co-operative Education Conference 2016 provided co-operators, educators and researchers with a unique event to share innovative ideas and models influencing educational practice within co-operatives, universities, schools and communities in the UK and worldwide. The themes of the two-day conference were:

- Shaping Co-operative Education Systems
- Character, Learning and Co-operation
- Learning for Global Co-operative Livelihoods

The two days were lively and well-attended, giving participants the opportunity to take part in a huge choice of presentations and workshops. Paper presentations on the first day ranged from developments in co-operative schools and building co-operative character to improving livelihoods in Africa through co-operative education. On the second day, presentations and workshops covered innovative co-operative models from schools to Higher Education, co-operative tools for the workplace, young people taking the lead through co-operatives and case studies from Sri Lanka to South Korea. This special issue of the Journal for Co-operative studies reflects the themes of the conference and includes 4 peer-reviewed papers and a commentary piece.

In our first peer-reviewed paper, Pushpa Kumbhat discusses the development of co-operative education and the relationship between three UK organisations in the interwar period: the Co-operative Union, the Worker's Education Association (WEA) and The National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC). All shared the aim of empowering the working class through education. This paper examines the Co-operative Union's vision of a co-operative commonwealth that underpinned its approach to adult education programmes. It goes on to review the Co-operative Union's relationship with both the WEA and NCLC to ascertain the extent to which their educational programmes were aligned to those of the Co-operative Union.

Deborah Ralls' article uses a case study from a UK secondary school to illustrate how changes in the school structure as it became co-operative have created a space for student "voice" to have a greater impact through changes to the way in which the School Council operates. This has also forced staff to accept a shift in power and to reevaluate their perceptions and valuing of student voice. Falls argues that the purpose and role of student voice is now differently perceived both by staff who have had to change the way in which they work with the Student

Council and also by students who now see the space as a tangible way to effect the changes which matter to them.

Keith Crome and Patrick O'Connor's piece argues that co-operation is more than simply a skill, it is a question of character, supported by the fact that education has always been at the heart of the co-operative movement. Drawing on Foucault and Sennett, they seek to illustrate their view that co-operative pedagogy has to go further than the post-Enlightenment value of creating autonomous learners with specific and measurable skills. In order to revitalise and expand the historical mission of co-operative education, it is necessary to recognise that co-operation goes "all the way down through our being".

Our final peer-reviewed paper by Simon Berge highlights the concerted efforts by the University of Winnipeg to introduce alternative business models into the education programmes provided to undergraduate business students through a Public Private Academic Partnership (PPAP) and the creation of a Business Chair of Co-operative Enterprises. His article touches upon the expectations of the different partners engaged in the partnership and the impact of this on the function of the role, underlining that additional clarity on the purpose of this type of post is required from the outset.

Each of these papers illustrates the increasing 'stretch and reach' of co-operative educational discourse at a time of global restructuring. Not only is the co-operative model enjoying greater prominence as a values-based alternative to capitalism, its interdisciplinary nature is attracting attention from a new generation of co-operative researchers and practitioners who see the extraordinary potential of co-operation for present times.

We would like to thank all of the authors for their contributions, both to the conference and to this special issue of the journal. It has been a privilege to take part in the guest editorship of this special issue, and we look forward in anticipation to next year's conference.

Dr Cilla Ross, Dr Sarah Aildred and Dr Amanda Benson
Co-operative College