

Co-operation InternationallyCOURSE MEMBERS AT THE I.C.T.C.

by

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"During the last 30 years the Co-operative College has provided courses for more than 1200 men and women from over 60 countries of the Third World. In that time the College has played a large part in training Co-operative officials who have gone on to make major contributions to the development of Co-operatives in their countries".

(Lauder, 1982)

There is more than one way to describe a course. The account may reflect the formal aspects of the curriculum, the experience of the course members, the values held dear by the staff or the opinions of the sponsors. A chapter under each of these headings would be required to do justice to a course, and it would be necessary to identify the degree of mismatch between the content and processes of learning, and the "reality" of the jobs to be done by course participants. Moreover, the conflicts between priorities for learning would need to be explored and the tensions between the formal and informal aspects of the course exposed. The final chapter would, perhaps, recount the subsequent career progress of course members.

Courses Offered

This short article encompasses no such grand aims. Instead a brief review is provided of the nine-month courses run by the International Co-operative Training Centre (ICTC) at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough, with special attention being directed to the characteristics of course members.

Diploma courses are offered in Co-operative Development and Management, Co-operative Accountancy and Financial Management, and Co-operative Education and Training. These courses lead to a Loughborough University Diploma in Co-operative Studies. There is a certificate course in Co-operative Management and Supervision also of nine months duration, and a range of three month courses in, for example, the Management of Agricultural Co-operatives and the Management of Consumer Co-operatives.

Modules and Special Studies

The Diploma courses were introduced in 1980 as successors to well-established Diploma and Certificate courses which had run for many years. The distinctive features of the new courses were a greater degree of specialisation and increased detail in the style in which course modules were specified. Each of the three Diplomas consist of about 15 modules, and there are around 30 to chose from. Some examples are "Co-operative Law", "Auditing" and "Integrated Development Studies". In addition, course participants undertake an investigation, or "special study" of a topic

closely related to their jobs. Recent titles include:

"The Development of Credit Unions in the Cameroons and their Economic and Social Impact"

"Co-operative Marketing of Fruit and Vegetables with Special Reference to Jordan"

"The Role of Co-operatives in the Distribution of Consumer Goods in Uttar Pradesh, India"

and

"Member Communications in Co-operatives in Nigeria, with Special Reference to Benue State".

These investigations consume about one-sixth of the time of participants on the Diploma Courses. There is an element of continuous assessment in the course but there are also examinations at the end of each of the three terms, plus a programme of visits and attachments.

Participative learning methods, discussions and case studies are a further feature of the ICTC courses. However, the frequent examinations and detailed syllabuses encourage course members to work at very high levels of pressure and concern for achievement. The courses, then, aim for high academic standards but also attempt to meet the needs of those Co-operative workers who have good practical experience but few paper qualifications (Yadav, 1981).

To summarise, the 9-month courses at ICTC are an alloy of theory and practice, and a mixture of systematic instruction towards clear objectives with discussion and exploration of the common problems of course members. In some parts of the Third World the problems of powerlessness and poverty seem at times to be insurmountable. Consequently the content of discussions tends to be of a serious and challenging quality. Who, then, are the students brave enough to tackle a programme of learning which has such intimidating proportions?

Course Members -

A comparison between course members on 9-month courses for the intakes in 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1980, 1981 and 1982 shows that the majority are men in their thirties and forties who are employed as civil servants. The departments in which they work are typically Government Departments of Co-operatives. It is not unusual for such staff to be seconded to manage Co-operatives directly, or to help supervise elections, or audit accounts. The roles they fill may be those of advisers, public guardians of the way a Co-operative is discharging its legal and financial obligations, or agents who stimulate and encourage the formation of new Co-operatives. Alternatively they may be appointed to managerial positions in Co-operative Societies, Federations or Unions. A substantial number of course members are, in addition, themselves members of Co-operatives or Credit Unions.

Tables 1 and 2, over, show the age and sex distribution of course members in greater detail:

Table 1 Numbers of Men and Women on 9-month courses at ICTC

	<u>1970/1</u>	<u>1971/2</u>	<u>1972/3</u>	<u>1980/1</u>	<u>1981/2</u>	<u>1982/3</u>
Men	31	31	28	34	43	39
Women	1	2	3	2	3	8
Totals	32	33	31	36	46	47

Table 2 Age Distribution of Course Participants

	<u>1970/1</u>	<u>1971/2</u>	<u>1972/3</u>	<u>1980/1</u>	<u>1981/2</u>	<u>1982/3</u>
30 yrs or less	15	8	11	10	14	15
31-40 years	10	19	15	18	20	20
41 yrs & over	7	6	5	5	12	12
Totals	32	33	31	33	46	47

The age distribution indicates that many course members are well advanced in their careers. In the last two years, for example, about 25% were aged 41 and over. The relatively small numbers of women on the courses is cause for considerable concern. These numbers reflect the widespread problems which face women who attempt to pursue careers. Whether the sudden increase to 8 women on the 1983/83 course is the start of a positive trend or merely a chance occurrence, remains to be seen.

- And their Jobs

The job titles of course members seem to suggest a standardisation of function which is belied, if nothing else, by the sheer diversity of the countries from which they come. Among the intakes for 1970, 1971 and 1972, two thirds of the participants had job titles based on the "theme" of Co-operative Officer or Inspector of Co-operatives. Other jobs were those of Assistant Registrar of Co-operatives, and the staff of Co-operative training institutions. In more recent years similar jobs continue to feature prominently. It is possible to discern a greater differentiation into specialist roles, particularly in the audit and accounting fields. Of the 46 course members in the 1981 intake, for example, 8 had job titles such as Internal Auditor, District Auditor and Examiner of Accounts. There are indications of further specialisation in project planning and management, and marketing.

It is difficult to tease out the precise number of course members who are not Government employees because of the practice whereby civil servants are seconded to Co-operative organisations. In 1970, however, every course member was a Government employee. In 1980 10 of the course members were working for Co-operative Societies, Federations or Unions and some of these were certainly direct employees.

Dilemmas and Paradox

Job titles and job descriptions conceal, in their formality and tidiness, the dilemmas which beset civil servants and managers in their

efforts to aid and develop Co-operatives. For Co-operative officers, one such dilemma is that their duties in law to enforce regulations concerning Co-operatives may conflict with their responsibilities to give friendly and helpful advice to Co-operators. The need to press for repayment of loans clashes with any expression of sympathy for farmers who have suffered loss through drought. The importance of spending time in the field, learning from and encouraging people struggling to establish Co-operatives, contradicts the requirement to be an efficient desk-bound administrator processing correspondence, keeping records and planning new policies.

Behind these dilemmas looms the larger paradox of Co-operative development. This has been deftly defined by Yeo (1981). Whereas self-reliance is a goal for Co-operators, an element of Government patronage is often the means to that end.

It would not be surprising if it were discovered that the officials and managers who attend courses at ICTC suffer from a particularly acute form of occupational stress known as the "cruciform effect", (Gowler and Legge, 1980). This occurs when jobs present irreconcilable challenges, from different quarters, to the people attempting to carry them out. (In passing, C.D.A. workers in this country might take note!)

Countries of Origin

The countries from which course members are drawn are summarised for the years under consideration in Table 3.

Continuity of commitment to the courses is evident in several cases and the range of countries is astonishingly diverse. The correspondence files are a stamp collector's dream and place ICTC at the centre of a network of international contacts.

Countries of course participants on Diploma and Certificate Courses

Table 3

	<u>70/1</u>	<u>71/2</u>	<u>72/3</u>	<u>80/1</u>	<u>81/2</u>	<u>82/3</u>
Afghanistan			1			
Bangladesh				3	7	6
Barbados		1	1			
Belize		1	1			
Botswana			1	3	1	
Brazil		1				
Brunei						3
Cameroons	1			3	2	3
Cyprus	1					
Ethiopia		1				
Fiji	2		2		1	1
Ghana	3	2	3			
Guyana	2					
Hong Kong			1			
India	2	2	2			8
Indonesia					2	1
Iran		1				
Iraq		1				
Jamaica	1	1	1		2	
Jordan	1					
Kenya	1	1	2	1	2	3
Kiribati		1	1	4	3	2
Lesotho				1		
Malaysia	1	3	3	2	3	1
Nepal			1			
Nigeria	4	5	1	13	12	7
Philippines	1	2				

Table 3 (cont)

	70/1	71/2	72/3	80/1	81/2	82/3
St. Lucia					1	1
Sierra Leone	1	1	1	1	1	
Solomons		1	1			
Sri Lanka	2	2				1
Sudan	2				2	1
Swaziland	1	1			1	
The Gambia	1	1	1		1	
Thailand			2	2		2
Tonga		1			1	
Trinidad	1	1			1	
Tunisia	1					
Tuvalu				1		1
Uganda			3			1
Vanuata	1		1		2	2
Zambia	2	2	1	2	1	3

Sources of Sponsorship

The principal source of sponsorship for course members is the Overseas Development Administration (ODA). In recent years there appears to have been a slight increase in the number of other sponsors. In 1980 a 3-month course on the Management of Agricultural Co-operatives, which attracted 16 participants, was fully funded by the European Development Fund of the EEC. An overall picture of the various forms of sponsorship is shown in Table 4, with regard to the 9-month courses:

Table 4 Sources of Sponsorship: 9 month coursesAgencies

	70/1	71/2	72/3	80/1	81/2	82/3
ODA	30	31	30	27	38	40
Own Government	2	-	-	6	6	5
International Agencies (FAO, ILO, EDF)	-	2	-	-	2	-
Other organis- ations (scholar- ships, private funding, Co- operative Societies)	-	-	1	3	-	2

The above data illustrate the key role which British Government sponsorship plays in supporting the overseas courses at the ICTC.

Future Directions

One continuing trend may be further specialisation in the work of many course members. Many of them may be seeking to combine technical expertise in agriculture, fisheries, dairies and distribution with practical generalist approaches to Co-operative development. There may, among future course members, be more people who are not directly employed in the Co-operatives sector but whose work requires a full appreciation of the problems and opportunities created by Co-operatives. Development planners and the credit management staff of banks may fall into this category. School teachers and lecturers in state education systems which are in the process of

introducing Co-operation into the curriculum are another expanding group of potential course members. The elected and appointed Directors of apex Co-operative organisations, aid workers in relief agencies, and counterparts to senior staff on development projects may also figure more largely on future courses at ICTC.

In 1983, there is no sign that demand for training in Co-operative management and development from less developed countries is slackening, nor that the problems and opportunities presented by Co-operative organisational forms are any less needful of new approaches, and rejuvenated staff.

References

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