

## Editorial

The three peer-reviewed papers in this edition reflect varying international perspectives on co-operation. Two relate to primary research undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago and in Africa, and the third arises out of the experience of a group of Finnish researchers. The two shorter papers, on the other hand, relate more directly to the UK co-operative sector, with a report on the Co-operative Societies of South Wales Collection at Swansea University and a piece on the *Co-operative Review*, the annual report on the size and scope of co-operative enterprise in the UK. Readers' attention is particularly drawn to the book reviews in this issue, one of which relates to the publication, *New Views of Society: Robert Owen for the 21st Century*, edited by Molly Scott Cato and Richard Bickle, which was launched at the UK Society for Co-operative Studies international conference in New Lanark in September 2008, organised to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Robert Owen. The book contains a number of papers written by regular contributors to this journal.

The paper by Anthony R Bowrin and Raul Raghunandan on the assessment of the quality of internal controls in credit unions in Trinidad and Tobago introduces an important issue which has not been covered in any great detail for credit unions in other countries. It is of particular significance for the British credit union movement, where the introduction of a culture of compliance and control has been a key feature of the development and strengthening of the sector. It is interesting, however, how the authors conclude that one of the primary findings of their study was that credit union size plays a critical role in the quality of internal control systems and of supervisory (internal audit) committees. This replicates the British experience that small credit union often struggle to implement the level of control and compliance mechanisms fundamental to the operation of a safe and sound financial institution.

Fredrick O Wanyama, Patrick Develtere and Ignace Pollet's paper on the contribution of co-operatives to poverty reduction in Africa since the 1990s is based on data that was collected from eleven African countries in 2005 under an Essential Research for a Co-operative Facility for Africa study and coordinated by the Higher

Institute for Labour Studies (HIVA) at the Katholieke University of Leuven, Belgium. There is reference to a range of co-operative enterprises, including credit unions and savings and credit co-operatives (SACCOs), and endeavours to show that *co-operatives have significantly contributed to the mobilisation and distribution of financial capital by creating employment and income-generating opportunities*. It is heartening to read of such advances in the co-operative sector and the real contribution co-operatives make to tackling poverty and disadvantage. However, it would have been good to hear more of some the real challenges, losses and setbacks the sector has also surely equally faced in Africa. For it is often out of what has not worked, new advances can emerge.

The third paper, written by Iiro Jussila, Pasi Tuominen, and Juha-Matti Saksa Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland, offers a theoretical discussion on the relation between co-operative ownership and the strategic management of the business. For as they argue, who owns an organisation and why, should make a difference to the strategic management of that organisation. Clearly this is a central question to the nature of co-operative enterprise per se.

The two shorter papers are particularly important contributions as for they both document aspects of the co-operative movement in the UK. Katrina Legg, Assistant Archivist at Swansea University outlines the background and content of the co-operative collection, which contains a wealth of information about co-operative history in South Wales. Alan Middleton offers an insightful and honest analysis of the current performance of the aspects of the co-operative enterprise in the UK.

Finally, readers' attention is also drawn to the tribute to of Dr Robert Leckie Marshall who was joint-editor of this Journal, and its predecessor, for 28 years. The fact that the Journal is now a respected academic publication throughout the world owes much to the dedication of Dr Marshall.

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