

Editorial

Bridging theory and practice

Anyone who reads this journal closely and who is particularly observant may notice a few slight amendments to the guidelines for contributors which are printed on the inside back cover of this issue. At first the changes might not appear major but they are intended to reflect an important feature about this journal, which differentiates it from most of the others to be found on the shelves of academic libraries. That is that, although we are an academic journal, this is only part of our purpose. Most academic journals are written by academics for academics. (Indeed, some cynics might question that proposition to the extent that, in academic circles, the primary intention of contributors is simply to be published in peer refereed journals; whether their papers ever find a wider audience than their referees is very much a secondary consideration.) That is not the case for the Journal of Co-operative Studies.

At the heart of our difference is the aim of the UK Society for Co-operative Studies, which publishes this journal, to act as a bridge between academic researchers and active practitioners of co-operation. Our contributors come from both backgrounds and it is our hope that their articles will stimulate both the academics and practitioners amongst our readership. If the Journal is to be fully effective in furthering a co-operative research agenda, it should be publishing academic contributions, which influence the practice of co-operation and practitioner inputs that help to ground academic research and ensure its relevance. At times, in the past, our journal has sometimes had a somewhat schizophrenic character with academics writing for academics and practitioners writing for practitioners. The Society's bridging

function requires all of our contributors to write for our whole readership.

To this end, our guidelines for academic contributors now emphasise our interest in receiving discussion papers, which advance our theoretical understanding of co-operation, as well as papers reporting the results of empirical research. We are also anxious to ensure that action research projects are reported to a wider audience. Such contributions will be subject to the same rigorous peer review as before. However, we plan to invite eminent practitioners to join our editorial advisory board and reviewers will increasingly be invited to consider the accessibility of contributions to our diverse readership and, where appropriate, to suggest revisions, which might help to ensure that they are more widely read. Whilst shorter articles from practitioners will not be subjected to the same formal peer review process, they may be circulated to members of the editorial advisory board for comments and suggestions, which may be fed back to the authors as part of the editorial process.

One new feature, which we hope will help to foster closer links between theory and practice, is that we are keen to include in future issues a few very brief papers, either from academics or practitioners which may be unorthodox, innovative or speculative in character. The ideas in such papers may still be at the formative stage. Contributors may wish to suggest propositions worthy of further research or which may help to stimulate debate and, generally to liven up the Journal for all of our readers.

Ian Pyper
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