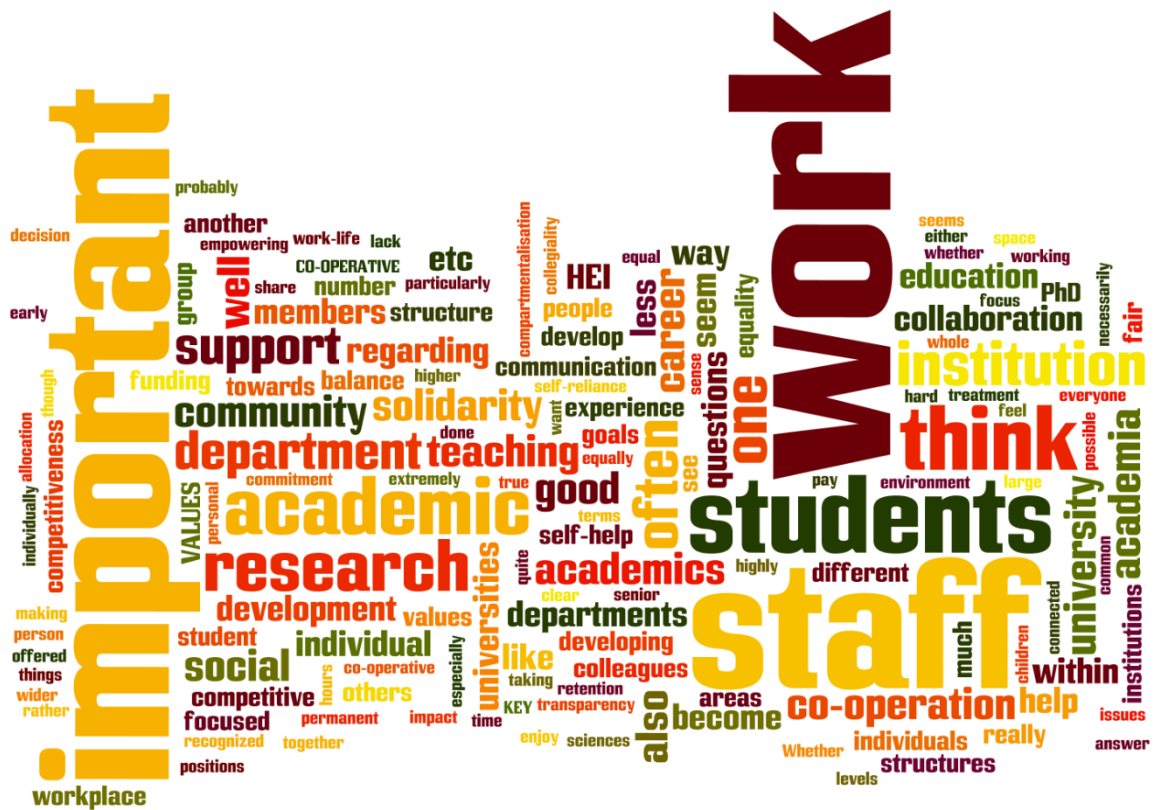


Realising the Co-operative University

A consultancy report for The Co-operative College



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Dan Cook

September 2013

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‘The peculiar characteristic, in short, of civilised beings, is the capacity of co-operation; and this, like other faculties, tends to improve by practice, and becomes capable of assuming a constantly wider sphere of action’

J. S. Mill¹

‘[W]e need the contribution of the world of culture, to develop stronger relationships between co-operatives and universities, between managers and co-operative scholars: we must involve young people in the process of change.’

Ivano Barerini, President ICA, 2004²

‘[The co-operative societies] all knew that the universities might do something toward improving them, but they might also be able to do some good toward improving the universities.’

Mr. Cunningham, Co-operative Congress 1874³

¹ (Mill, 1976, p. 698)

² (Quoted in Juby, 2011)

³ (Cunningham, 1874, p. 89)

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1 Introduction: aims, background & methodology

1.1 Aims

The purpose of this report is to look at the barriers and enablers to the realisation of a co-operative university. The idea is not a familiar one in the English HE sector, and that lack of familiarity is itself the most significant barrier encountered in the production of this report.

- 1.2 What does the term ‘Co-operative University’ mean? One of the purposes of this report is to define what we already know about the Co-operative University, and to define the modes that mutualisation might take in the HE sector. A further purpose is to posit questions that indicate where further work is required to define the idea of a co-operative university, and to begin to draw together the areas in which it might make a distinctive contribution.

1.3 Background

Universities, their funding, and access to them, are now a central public policy issue, and a significant growth industry in economic terms. Co-operatives are experiencing a global resurgence of interest, with the 2012 UN Year of Co-operatives coinciding with phenomenal growth in co-operative business, countering the trends of the global financial crisis.

- 1.4 At face value, universities and co-operatives have little in common. Universities are concerned with teaching and research: educational matters predominate, while commercial concerns are considered subsidiary to the academic mission, even where well-integrated. Conversely, co-operatives, are predominantly concerned with economic life: production; commerce; consumption; for the benefit of their members. Educational matters often

seem to have a subsidiary presence, despite education being a central principle of co-operatives.

- 1.5 Scratch the surface, and the similarities between the sectors become clear: universities and co-operatives each integrate freedoms with economic health and social purpose; each has a tendency towards robust debate and internal self-criticism; and each tends towards institutional stability needed to plan and survive long-term.
- 1.6 In terms of scale, the sectors are not dissimilar: co-operatives in the UK have a turnover of £37Bn⁴; while the HE sector represented by Universities UK turned over more than £27Bn⁵. Taking into account the widely-dispersed 'private sector'⁶ the difference is likely to be smaller.
- 1.7 Internal debates within the University and Co-operative sectors are at crucial and complementary junctures. Universities are debating governance, organisational and economic concerns: reduced government support; increased competition; high tuition fees; managerialism; casualization of the academic workforce. Universities everywhere are seeking ways to become more efficient and well-managed, while protecting academic freedom and ensuring access based on merit.
- 1.8 Co-operatives have a long history of success in economic life, based on the unique characteristics of their organisational form: they are famous for fair prices and good working conditions, and they 'are characterised by greater employee engagement, higher productivity, resilience to economic downturns and better connection with their local communities'⁷. Co-operatives are promoting their corporate form vigorously, through the Government's New Mutuels Programme, but internally, the co-operative

movement is debating the role of education in co-operation. Although a core principle of co-operation, and one which earlier co-operators prioritised at no small expense⁸, education is often considered to be under-researched, under-theorised, and under-valued by the wider co-operative movement, and its neglect (by universities, among others⁹) potentially detrimental to the movement's long-term aspirations. 'Unfortunately, today many co-operatives do not allocate adequate resources towards member education. In addition, a number of those that do often limit such expenditures to the education of board members.'¹⁰ 'Education needs to become recognised by the movement as central to the global renewal of co-operatives'¹¹. New research is needed to gather exemplars of existing co-operative education¹², and to transfer findings about the effectiveness of co-operative strategies from mathematics and evolutionary biology into the study of organisations and society¹³.

- 1.9 These two debates: about management in universities, and about education in co-operatives, are existential: they concern the central purposes of their sectors. Moreover, they are complementary in nature: the things that are under intense scrutiny within one sector have been largely resolved by the other.
- 1.10 Universities UK has already commissioned research into new corporate forms and group structures¹⁴. The advantages offered by co-operative structures should be a part of that debate. The potential complementarity of the co-operative and higher education sectors' strengths, and the learning potential each could offer to the other, would be profitable if recognised more widely. This report may therefore be of interest to:

- University staff and leaders with an agenda for organisational change;
- Members of the co-operative movement keen to find institutional mechanisms for putting education at the heart of co-operation;
- Teachers and students developing alternative models of higher education.

1.11 Methodology

Due to the exploratory nature of this report, looking into the possibility for new type of university, the methodologies employed were multiple. The breadth of the topic is so wide, that the methodologies employed cannot offer definitive answers, but mainly indicate areas where further work is necessary. In brief, the following methods were used:

- Interviews with a range of national-level co-operative sector and university sector stakeholders
- A survey of current and recent postgraduate researchers on co-operation and academic work
- Engagement with the literature
- Attendance at relevant events
- Extensive correspondence

1.12 Full details of the questions originally posited for the study, and the methodological approach used to meet them is given in Appendix B: Methodology.

⁴ (Co-operatives UK, 2013a, p. 8)

⁵ (UUK, 2012a, pp. 18–19)

⁶ BIS have found 674 private providers in a 2013 survey (BIS, 2013, p. 7)

⁷ (Co-operatives UK, 2013b, p. 2)

⁸ (MacPherson, 2007, p. 368)

⁹ Rory Ridley-Duff notes that Kalmi's discovery of the gradual disappearance of co-operative models from business and economics textbooks coincided with the increase of co-operatives in the economy (Ridley-Duff, 2012a, p. 7; Kalmi's work was originally pointed-out to me in an interview with Wilson, 2013a) while another potential explanation for '[t]his lack of interest relates to the academic division of labour. The study of public sector organizations has often been left to scholars of public administration while Business School academics usually have privileged the study of private firms. This is surprising given the central role that not-for-profit organizations such as hospitals, universities, and voluntary associations have historically played in the development of organization theory' (Ewan Ferlie, 1996a, p. 1). As private societies that have some of the characteristics of both private firms and public service organisations, it is easy to imagine that co-operatives did not fit neatly with either camp, and that this may be another source of their relative neglect by the academy.

¹⁰ (Emmanuel and Cayo, 2007, p. 219, in Ridley-Duff, 2012b)

¹¹ (Shaw, 2011, p. 75)

¹² (Interview with Shaw, 2013)

¹³ This point has been made to me many times, but the Co-operative College made the links for me first (Shaw, 2013; Wilson, 2013a). I was interested to read work three decades old that showed, via a modified simulation of the Prisoners' Dilemma game, how 'co-operation based on reciprocity' might have originated as an evolutionary advantage in an 'asocial world' (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981) and other work that brought this sort of exercise up-to-date, showing that increasing mutual rewards aids the development of co-operation, whereas 'increasing punishments does not' (Cheng, Zuckerman, Kuter, & Nau, 2010).

¹⁴ (Stanfield, 2009)

2 The co-operative movement and education

The co-operative commitment to education cannot be understated: the Rochdale Pioneers ‘made educational activities a major part of their approach’¹⁵ and from an initial investment in a reading room above their shop, 160 years ago, historians have recognised the ‘significance of education’ as being a ‘central pillar of co-operative values and activity’¹⁶ ‘enmeshed within virtually every aspect of the movement’¹⁷. The co-operative movement was part of the widespread ‘demands for common schooling’¹⁸ in the nineteenth century, and in the practical tradition of the movement’s founders, ‘pioneered popular education, which had been taken up by the [State] School Boards when it had proved successful’¹⁹. When the co-operative movement ceded many of its considerable educational resources to the State in the early twentieth century, there was a closer articulation of values between the movement and the State on educational matters, than exists today²⁰.

- 2.1 The principles of marketization evident within the State’s current education policies make co-operative reengagement with education a ‘positive duty, as well as an opportunity [...] to extend the principles of co-operation, but also to uphold the wider principles of democratic control of education, open accessibility and strong community relationships’²¹. This attitude derives from the principles to which all co-operatives adhere, which include democratic member control, and the provision of education, training and information²². True to its principles and values, the co-operative movement, through the agency of the Co-operative College, has developed models for academies and Trust Schools.

- 2.2 As the apex body for co-operative education in the UK, the Co-operative College intends to support the emergence of a robust co-operative education sector in the UK. Significant progress has been made at the primary and secondary phases with over 500 schools in England having adopted co-operative trust or co-operative academy models in five years. The Schools Co-operative Society, a secondary co-operative owned and controlled by co-operative schools has become one of the fastest growing networks of schools in the UK, and is larger than all school groups except the Church of England and Catholic Church schools²³, dwarfing the academy chains more frequently mentioned in the press.
- 2.3 A vibrant and sustainable co-operative education sector arguably also requires an equivalent presence at the tertiary phase, specifically in the university sector. It is to this end that the Co-operative College is prioritising ‘strategic partnership[s]’ and ‘[c]ollaborative working agreements’ with universities²⁴. This report supports this objective, by drawing together material to support discussions aimed at realising a co-operative university.
- 2.4 The UK’s mutual sector provides strong economic foundations for the planned work in education. Comprising around 5,000 businesses and organisations, co-operatives contribute around £37Bn²⁵ to the economy. Co-operatives have also shown that they are resilient organisations, capable of riding through troughs in the economy, and like universities tend to be long-lived organisations²⁶. Since the global financial crisis began in 2008, in the UK membership of co-operatives has grown by 36%,

the number of co-operatives by 28%, and the value of the co-operative economy has grown by 23%²⁷.

2.5 Moreover, an imminent Co-operative and Community Benefit Company Consolidation Act²⁸, and interest from the Cabinet Office Mutuals Team and BIS in new mutual models in public service delivery (including the £10m Mutuals Support Programme²⁹) indicates the availability of growing infrastructure support from the State for mutualisation initiatives.

2.6 **The higher education sector's current challenges**

Critical attention on the role of universities in society and in the economy is intense. A putative co-operative university would enter a vibrant, well-respected higher education sector which is undergoing 'radical' policy experimentation³⁰. Universities are now a competitive and highly stratified global industry³¹, their qualities are judged in the imperfect informational environment³² of international league tables³³, their capacities in research, innovation and workforce development considered essential to the logic of economic progress³⁴. Moreover, managers of universities increasingly express institutional purpose in terms of universities acting as social assets which support explicit economic objectives³⁵.

2.7 The future of universities is simultaneously assured and uncertain. Governments worldwide consider universities to be drivers of the economy, making universities integral to regional and national economic strategies³⁶. Universities are also recognised as being big businesses in their own right³⁷ with significant assets under professional management.

2.8 Greater numbers of students than ever before aspire to a university education. Universities are increasingly investing in their brands to

increase international student enrolments³⁸, and attracting capital for investment due to perceptions of stability³⁹.

- 2.9 Like co-operatives, universities have a track-record of longevity: of the 75 Western institutions continuously operating since before the Reformation (about 1520), 61 are universities⁴⁰. Perhaps because of this tendency toward the long view, or perhaps because of the relatively immature state of risk management in universities⁴¹, they are often criticised⁴² for being slow to make decisions and act in a cautious, risk-averse way. Despite long traditions, viewed from within, Universities are in a state of flux and experimentation.
- 2.10 University leaders seeking sustainable futures for their institutions face a challenging operational environment⁴³. High fees, increased competition and increased marketing to address more demanding consumer behaviour make the industry more volatile and financially-oriented. In the background, energy, commodity and wages bills are rising relentlessly, while productivity is already recognised as being high: Britain punches above its weight in research given the low proportion of GDP spent on universities. Reduced public funding offered *via* state-controlled market mechanisms and the pursuit of improving league-table performance creates a toxic atmosphere in which academics feel commoditised, with opportunity-costs for academic work.
- 2.11 Experimentation and innovation in the practices of higher education have never been more abundant, but not all are well-received by staff. Many recent innovations within universities have been managerial ones aimed at ‘strategic and cultural change’⁴⁴. However, these trends towards

managerialism have been criticised for making universities ‘bureaucratic, with declining trust and discretion’ and with academic roles demanding increasingly long hours to deal with administrative concerns. Other forms of experimentation and innovation include the growth of massive open online courses (MOOCs) challenging traditional university frameworks⁴⁵.

- 2.12 Elsewhere, many are questioning the long-term viability of universities as they are currently configured. The huge increases in fees in the US and now in the UK, along with the possibility for disruptive change presented by the internet have caused some commentators to predict a splitting-apart of universities into their component functions⁴⁶. Private providers operating slimmed-down versions of the university may be able to ‘deliver good (perhaps, even better) results at lower cost’⁴⁷ probably below £6,000. As tuition fees continue to rise around the world, equality of opportunity is eroded⁴⁸ and so plans to reduce tuition costs are laudable. However, the reconfiguration of the university does not necessarily serve egalitarian ends: it can just as easily serve the purpose of profit-seeking private capital.
- 2.13 There is dissent and dissatisfaction with this state of affairs. Little wonder, then, that investigation of⁴⁹ and experimentation with alternative forms of higher education have become more common. Radical examples include Tent City University and Occupy University; the Free University of Liverpool; the Social Science Centre in Lincoln; and the New University Co-operative in Canada⁵⁰.
- 2.14 In the mainstream, too, radical experiments are becoming the norm: Coventry University College, the New College of the Humanities and OpenLearn from the Open University are all examples of a new

willingness to play with organisational forms within established higher education, in search of ways to widen access to higher education, and in pursuit of efficiency.

2.15 The effects of these changes on academics is often perceived as negative⁵¹. There is widespread concern that universities have lost their role as conscience and critic of society, and that research integrity has been compromised, while the university tends to focus more on systems than on people⁵². Disapproval of managerialism and of the profit motive are endemic, meanwhile more PhDs are produced than academic jobs available, and casualization of the academic workforce undermines some of the essential values of the university. Academics are ‘dissatisfied with where the academy is going’⁵³ and at the increasing stratification of academic roles⁵⁴. Universities that forget that their staff are ‘not, by and large, motivated by the bottom line [...] have to be aware that the necessary shift to a more bottom-line driven culture does not drive out our greatest assets, or de-motivate our staff to the extent that they can’t work effectively [...] we have to pay close attention to what motivates our staff’⁵⁵. A recent major study on the changing academic profession has concluded that ‘the key leadership and management challenges are as follows:

- for leadership and governance, to re-engage academics in strategic decision-making,
- in managing diversity in the workforce and in the activities of the academic enterprise,

- attracting and developing talent: introducing flexibility in employment without creating unfairness and
- reconfiguring work design, workloads and working conditions.’⁵⁶

2.16 What leadership and management technologies might address academic concerns? How could we design planning processes that contribute to the ‘capacity of a university to make strategic choices’ while inspiring trust in their outcomes?⁵⁷ Many academics justifiably fear that neoliberal economic and managerial orthodoxies are ‘destroy[ing] participation and collegiality’⁵⁸. For some this existential threat demands a principled position of protest and resistance. There is, however, an affirmative alternative solution, rooted in self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. ‘Universities are by and large fantastically strong, resilient and adaptable institutions, staffed – and we shouldn’t underestimate this – by clever, committed people’⁵⁹. Utilising their talents to the full as owners of the enterprise, offers universities the co-operative advantage.

¹⁵ (MacPherson, 2007, p. 20)

¹⁶ (Vernon, 2011, p. 37)

¹⁷ (Woodin, 2011, p. 91)

¹⁸ (Woodin, 2011, p. 78)

¹⁹ (Vernon, 2013, p. 298)

²⁰ (Vernon, 2013, p. 304)

²¹ (Vernon, 2013, p. 304)

²² (ICA, 1995)

²³ (Thorpe, 2013)

²⁴ (The Co-operative College, 2013, p. 13)

²⁵ (Co-operatives UK, 2013a, p. 8)

²⁶ ‘Although co-operative enterprise is strategically different from its mainstream counterparts the co-operative business model has survived for centuries and has created many of the world’s largest enterprises.’ (Mazzarol, 2009, p. 39)

²⁷ (Co-operatives UK, 2013a, p. 13)

²⁸ (Snaith, 2013a, slides 11-13, 22-24)

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- ²⁹ (Mutuals Taskforce, 2012, p. 20)
- ³⁰ (Jürgen Enders, in Matthews, 2013a)
- ³¹ (Marginson, 2006, pp. 17–27)
- ³² (Dill, 2007, p. 3)
- ³³ There is a growing literature on what university rankings do and don't measure, and what effects they have. Kris Olds and Susan Robertson have produced a short, though-provoking blog post on this topic (Olds & Robertson, 2011).
- ³⁴ (Gilead, 2012, pp. 1–2)
- ³⁵ (UUK, 2011)
- ³⁶ (OECD, 2004, p. 12)
- ³⁷ (OECD, 2004, p. 3)
- ³⁸ (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 301)
- ³⁹ (Amenta & Kieling, 2011)
- ⁴⁰ (Kerr, Gade, & Kawaoka, 1994, pp. 45–46)
- ⁴¹ (Shattock, 2010, p. 45)
- ⁴² The *Microcosmographia Academica* satirises the structurally indecisive university thus: '[T]he results of any course of action are so difficult to foresee, that certainty, or even probability, is seldom, if ever, attainable. It follows at once that the only justifiable attitude of mind is suspense of judgement; and this attitude, besides being peculiarly congenial to the academic temperament, has the advantage of being comparatively easy to attain. There remains the duty of persuading others to be equally judicious, and to refrain from plunging into reckless courses which might lead them Heaven knows whither. At this point the arguments for doing nothing come in; for it is a mere theorist's paradox that doing nothing has just as many consequences as doing something. It is obvious that inaction can have no consequences at all.' (Cornford, 1908, pp. 26–27)
- ⁴³ (Allen, 2012, p. 49)
- ⁴⁴ (Rosemary Deem, 2005, pp. 10–11)
- ⁴⁵ For a brief introduction to moocs, try (*Welcome to the Brave New World of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)*, 2013). Also (Armstrong, 2012; Christensen & Eyring, 2011, pp. 239–240; Olds, 2012)
- ⁴⁶ The argument that universities will be disrupted by technologically-enabled challengers who can not only teach at lower cost, but also access new markets not well served by traditional HE is explored a report by the Center for American Progress (Christensen, Horn, Soares, & Caldera, 2011) Many of the same ideas are explored in social-philosophical terms through the notion of the 'liquid university' an idea where the university becomes increasingly fissiparous under external pressures from the market and regulation (Barnett, 2011a).
- ⁴⁷ (Locke, 2012, p. 266)
- ⁴⁸ Growing inequality of access to higher education goes against the aspirations of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)
- ⁴⁹ One example of the interest in alternative forms of higher education is a project by two academics who have given up their jobs in order to make a film about the many alternative forms of higher education developing around the world. (Parr, 2013)
- ⁵⁰ (New University Co-operative, 2011; Occupy University, 2012; Tent City University, 2012; "The Free University of Liverpool," n.d.)
- ⁵¹ (Rosemary Deem, 2005, pp. 3–4)
- ⁵² (Watson, 2009, p. 69)
- ⁵³ (Matthews, 2013b)
- ⁵⁴ (Locke, 2012, p. 268)
- ⁵⁵ (E. Thomas, 2012)
- ⁵⁶ (Locke, 2012, p. 271; Shin, 2013)
- ⁵⁷ (Dill, 1996, pp. 51–52)
- ⁵⁸ (E. Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008, p. 343)
- ⁵⁹ (E. Thomas, 2012)

3 Imagining the Co-operative University

3.1 The Co-operative University is an institution *in potentia*, which already possesses the legal basis to acquire form. The central concepts of ‘Co-operative’ and ‘University’ are defined in legislation in most states, and this report will explore the case in England. A Co-operative University would necessarily meet the legal definitions of a co-operative and a university, simultaneously. What are these definitions?

3.1.1 Defining Co-operatives

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) defines a Co-operative as ‘an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.’⁶⁰ This definition was the product of an international effort to agree the common features of co-operatives worldwide. Co-operative enterprises ‘are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.’⁶¹ These values are put into practice by observing the principles of 1) Voluntary and open membership; 2) Democratic member control; 3) Member economic participation; 4) Autonomy and independence; 5) Education, Training and Information; 6) Co-operation among co-operatives, and; 7) Concern for community⁶².

3.1.2 Although in many states worldwide, co-operatives exist as a distinct legal form in their own right, in England there is a wide choice of organisational forms from which co-operatives can choose⁶³ including companies limited

by guarantee, companies limited by shares, community interest companies and industrial and provident societies (I&PS) the legal form that most closely represents the ICA co-operative principles⁶⁴. There is no intrinsic reason, therefore, why an organisation with a Royal Charter could not become a co-operative, subject to it being amended to encompass the principles discussed in 3.1.1 above.

3.1.3 Defining universities

The word ‘university’ is protected: companies and industrial and provident societies must seek permission if they wish to use this word, and ‘university title’ is granted by the Privy Council. The ability to award degrees is granted only after an extensive review process undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency. These are the distinguishing features of any university, but in addition there are regulatory frameworks that almost all universities engage in – access to the student loan book, sponsoring visas for international students, admitting students through UCAS, and so on – which although optional technically, in practice form a further level of regulation of normal university behaviour. The structure of the English HE sector is complex, and this report explores it more fully, in Appendix C: Analysis of the Higher Education Sector using Porter’s Five Forces. Appendix C explores the barriers to entry in the higher education sector, the leverage exerted by the principal suppliers and buyers of the sector’s services, the threat posed by alternatives to traditional higher education, and the nature of rivalry between the sector’s institutions.

3.2 **Co-operative principles are academic principles**

There is arguably a close alignment between co-operative principles and mainstream academic values. Stepping through each principle in turn demonstrates this, as follows:

3.3 *Voluntary and open membership* does not mean that the university is a free-for-all. 'Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.'⁶⁵ This means that the Co-operative University offers employment contracts (to staff members), and can have admissions policies for students that specify entry criteria for student members: the UCAS tariff points for entry to a Co-operative University can remain stable.

Other member categories could be devised, and the responsibilities of each member category for the University defined separately. Although more radical alternatives can be envisaged, the co-operative university could be similar to existing universities in these regards.

3.4 *Democratic member control* entails members becoming the owners, and controlling the direction the university pursues. This is often a difficult thing to accept for leaders used to calling the shots, but there is ample evidence that it works in a wide range of industries, including knowledge-based ones⁶⁶. There are various considerations around the governance structure: a co-operative is normally one member one vote, but in secondary co-operatives (which often have institutional members in the form of businesses or other co-operatives) other democratic arrangements

exist which divide governance responsibilities differentially between colleges of members⁶⁷.

- 3.5 *Member economic participation* is the vital principle, which prevents financial interests from controlling the organisation. In a co-operative '[m]embers contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.'⁶⁸ This subordinated role for capital is not altruistic. The co-operative exists to benefit the members, but since the members benefit through membership alone, it is usually in their interests to develop the co-operative rather than to exit with any share that may be owed them. This principle would create a new bond of common interest between academics and universities, bringing them closer together.
- 3.6 *Autonomy and independence* are at least as important to co-operatives as they are to universities. When co-operatives enter into agreements with governments or other organisations or raise capital, they do so in ways that preserve their autonomy and democracy, much as universities preserve their academic freedom when undertaking contract research work.
- 3.7 The provision of *education, training and information* for members and the public is a core principle co-operatives follow. Although universities

already observe this principle as part of their core purpose, it is possible that research and teaching about co-operation and done in co-operative ways could be factors that differentiate a co-operative university.

- 3.8 *Co-operation among co-operatives* is the principle of engaging with the institutions of the broader co-operative movement, and where possible forging economic links with other co-operatives. For universities this might involving other co-operatives in the supply of services, of catering, residences and other services required by the university, potentially a way of encouraging university professional services to realise the benefits of both integrated and entrepreneurial approaches.
- 3.9 *Concern for community* is the principle of working for the sustainable development of the community. Universities are already leading the way to more sustainable ecological practices, and engagement with their publics through a variety of means. Most universities would rightly claim to observe this principle already, and some have embedded it very deeply in their missions⁶⁹. However, communities' role in the university is often limited by the practicalities of engagement. Co-operative membership structures offer the opportunity to reinvigorate and make meaningful community support.
- 3.10 The close alignment between co-operative values and mainstream academic values facilitates the recognition of the Co-operative University as a workable proposition. A university that observes the principles outlined above, and encodes them in its governing documents could be said to be a co-operative university (we will investigate how this could be achieved in a later section).

3.11 Issues around membership, democracy, governance and culture would have to be debated by a university considering becoming a co-operative. Accordingly we will investigate these domains in later sections. We will also explore further the legal and financial matters to be addressed by a co-operative university.

⁶⁰ (ICA, 1995) The official definition is also reproduced in full at Appendix A: ICA Co-operative principles

⁶¹ (ICA, 1995)

⁶² (ICA, 1995)

⁶³ (Co-operatives UK, 2009, p. 10)

⁶⁴ (Co-operatives UK, 2009, p. 24)

⁶⁵ (ICA, 1995)

⁶⁶ Examples of co-operatives in knowledge-based industries include the consultants ARUP (Co-operatives UK, 2013b, p. 4) the design company Calverts (<http://www.calverts.coop/>) and the *Caire*-Co-operative of Architects and Engineers in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Maccaferri, 2011), to name a few.

⁶⁷ Sometimes referred to as ‘Somerset rules’ these allow for the governance to be divided into non-equal weightings (Ridley-Duff, 2012a, p. 21). Mondragon University in the Basque Country is an example of a mixture of primary and secondary, following a form of Somerset Rules. With two-thirds individual members and one third institutional members (by weight of voting) the university incorporates many of the best features of democratic membership, with the fast turnover student members counterbalanced by the longstanding institutional members, and staff somewhere in between the two.

⁶⁸ (ICA, 1995)

⁶⁹ As the signatories to the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement shows: <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto/signatories>

4 Governance, size and shape

- 4.1.1 There is already some interest in new forms of governance and management practice along loosely co-operative lines. Within the HE sector, a recent paper on the idea of a Trust University explored the possibility of a new corporate form for universities⁷⁰. In terms of management practices, governance systems like Holacracy⁷¹ are social technologies that attempt to prioritise productivity and efficiency by creating a sort of ‘operating system’ for avoiding workplace politics and becoming a more purposeful organisation. Ideas such as these are interesting, and applicable within a co-operative environment, but they do not necessarily change the ownership structure of the organisation, or the subordinated nature of labour in a capitalist organisation. Since HE is a labour-intensive industry, labour efficiency (rather than capital efficiency) represents the most logical area for universities to invest in⁷².
- 4.1.2 Questions of governance, and organisational size and shape were among the most stimulating for interviewees and for respondents to the survey. These factors interrelate, and so I will tackle them together in this section.
- 4.1.3 Questions of governance relate directly to membership: in a co-operative members control their organisation through democratic processes, but some members will necessarily have a longer-term commitment than others. Since students outnumber staff in universities, a strict system of one-member-one-vote might skew the democratic structure in favour of the shorter-term interests of students as opposed to the longer-term interests of staff. That is not to say that a student-run co-operative university is inconceivable⁷³, but the longer-term commitment of staff is

probably necessary to see-through some of the longer-term activities which are integral to university activity.

4.1.4 Membership

Who are the members of the co-operative? Older universities have a very wide group of members already, as most Charters define the academic staff, students and others as members of the organisation. This distinction does not exist for Higher Education Corporations formed after 1992. A number of interviewees drew on the early history of universities, drawing on the ideas of the *universitas scholarium* and *universitas magistrorum* as medieval forerunners of the students' union and idealised worker co-operative university respectively⁷⁴. In a future co-operative university, who would the members be?

4.1.5 The idea of a multi-stakeholder co-operative resonated most closely with all interviewees. In England, 'a multi stakeholder model has been developed for schools – parents/carers, staff, learners and the local community of the stakeholder groups, together with institutional partners from local organisations.'⁷⁵ And embodies two key principles: '(a) [a]n ethos based on the globally shared co-operative values as reflected in the Statement on the Co-operative Identity and (b) [m]echanisms for the direct engagement of key stakeholders in governance structures through membership and a members forum'⁷⁶. This model is arguably transferrable to the 'more regionally based universities [...] where the majority of students continue living at home'⁷⁷. The example of Mondragon University offers a working example, of a university that operates as a

‘multi-stakeholder co-operative with three stakeholder groups[:]

- 1) Students
- 2) Staff
- 3) Supporters (i.e. co-operative movement).

Each stakeholder group puts forward 300 people to the General Assembly who then [elect] 4 members each to the Governing Council’⁷⁸

4.1.6 *Staff membership*

Given their expertise, and the extant examples of employee governance at Oxford and Cambridge, it seems likely that staff would demand a stake in the institution. The co-operative university embodies many of the ideals of ‘[a]cademic populism’⁷⁹ and there is a strong likelihood that it would be popular with members of UCU⁸⁰. However, one academic interviewee noted that academics are generally less loyal to their university than to their discipline⁸¹ (a widely-recognised point⁸² and one which new public management methods such as the research assessment exercise have exacerbated⁸³) with the implication being that incentivisation might be required to change this. The position of professional services staff is less clear: it is possible to envisage a co-operative university where the current divide between academic and ‘non-academic’ staff exists (co-operatives are ‘not in essence philanthropic [...] and u]nder some conditions [...] may exploit employees⁸⁴), but this is probably undesirable in a well-run university, and in any case would likely be resisted by professional services staff⁸⁵.

In the Mondragon model, there is no distinction of staff membership by category, and for the harmonious operation of the university and in-line with co-operative values of equality and solidarity, this is the best way to envisage the staff membership of the co-operative university.

4.1.7 *Student membership*

Students are the next obvious category of member. In the Mondragon model students have an equal voice with staff. Students' Unions would certainly wish to work with the university's senior managers to define an appropriate role for students in the governance of the institution, but the implications of their membership is unclear. Students tend to be present at the university for a few years only, and hence do not have to live with the consequences of their decisions, whereas staff, who are (presumably) there for much longer, might be perceived as having a greater stake⁸⁶. If there is a hierarchy of stakes in the university, are these desirable? A 'John Lewis' model of workers co-operative university⁸⁷ might have appeal among students, who may value the opportunity for greater *voice* within, more than they would value *control* of, the university⁸⁸. Further research is needed to determine the preferences of students, and to engage them in a dialogue about the purposes of the university⁸⁹. Enthusiastic students would present a strong enabling argument.

4.1.8 *Other membership categories*

The possibility of other membership categories is less clear. There are a variety of possibilities: alumni, businesses, members of the general public, other educational organisations such as schools, and so-on, could be considered potential members⁹⁰.

- Alumni membership offers a distinct advantage for the university. The co-operative principle of member economic participation⁹¹ requires that continuing membership depends on continuing economic engagement. Consequently, membership might engage alumni, encouraging not only philanthropic giving, but ongoing engagement, too. However, alumni tend to be less-closely connected with their *alma mater* than other categories of member: Stakeholders ‘have to put something at risk’⁹² but alumni have arguably, within a year or two of leaving university, extracted much of the pecuniary advantage that it offers them. Nevertheless, in the US alumni represent a powerful force in university finances.
- Businesses already feature on the governing bodies of universities, and universities require their professional expertise. A model of business membership of a co-operative university exists, at Mondragon where businesses account for four places on the 12-person Governing Council. The Mondragon model appears to make for a very stable form of governance, with the shorter-term interests of the student body counterbalanced by the longer-term interests of the businesses and staff. The interrelation of these groups is also important because they have active economic interests: current students are future employees, and businesses work alongside university staff on projects.
- Schools and colleges could prove important members of a co-operative university: the relationship would hold benefits for all, contributing to widening access to university, and supporting the

professional learning of teachers and others in the rapidly-growing co-operative schools movement⁹³.

- The public could become members of the co-operative university. By asking communities to become members of the university, opportunities are opened-up for communities to develop the kind of university they want, and for universities (which are often already the biggest employers in the area) to grow deeper community roots.

4.1.9 Democracy

Being a co-operative requires that decisions are made democratically.

There are arguments for and against democracy in the workplace, and different conceptions of how a democracy might work.

4.1.10 All co-operatives adhere to the International Co-operative Alliance Values and Principles (see Appendix A: ICA Co-operative principles) and any university seeking to become a co-operative would have to embed these in its governing document. Democratic control of the organisation is a key value and principle, and potentially represents one of the most significant barriers for senior university managers whose management style does not fit with co-operative principles⁹⁴.

4.1.11 In the literature on charities, it is claimed that ‘institutions acting for public, voluntary and charitable interests [...] either express reservations, or come out against [proposals for workplace democracy]’⁹⁵. These reservations may be related to a desire in charitable organisations ‘to maximise the funds available for charitable projects’⁹⁶ (and hence seek to limit the extent to which employee-members may benefit from the successes of the

organisation). These concerns are arguably less applicable to universities which, unlike most charities, and in common with co-operative businesses, are classic “‘integrative’ organisation[s]. The distinctive characteristic of such organisations is that they do not have a single aim”⁹⁷. Handy defines universities as classic co-operative environments⁹⁸ and cites the ‘stereotype of the professor’ as the typical person best ‘managed’ co-operatively: ‘[h]e does what he has to, teaches when he must [...] he regards the organization as a base on which he can base his own career, carry out his own interests, all of which may indirectly add interest to the organization though that would not be the point in doing them’⁹⁹.

- 4.1.12 In the literature about co-operative businesses, there is a consensus that “the ‘problem of collective decision-making’ [...] has largely been solved”¹⁰⁰, and that as part of the democratising package of co-operative values, leads to ‘benefits to its members in the form of enhance[d] access to markets or to goods and services. It is also designed to offer its members financial benefits through improved pricing and to achieve increased productivity from greater economies of scale and scope.’¹⁰¹. Furthermore, the ‘commitment of the Cabinet Office New Mutuals team to employee led models [has been made] in view of the business benefits when staff see themselves as key parts of the organisation’¹⁰².

- 4.1.13 The requirements of workplace democracy may be considered as either an onerous burden, or as a source of strength; depending on arguments around efficiency and transaction costs. A traditional view is that the costs of operating an internal democracy are a burden upon co-operatives, making them less efficient than organisations which do not undertake this sort of

activity. However, in ‘professionally argumentative’¹⁰³ organisations like universities this argument is untenable: purposeful internal debate is more efficient than attempting to manage dissent.

- 4.1.14 The advantages of workplace democracy, in any case, may outstrip the administrative burdens, by offering advantages such as employees who identify with the organisation’s goals and are creative in their pursuit of them¹⁰⁴. In a survey of 122 current or recent research students, we found that 73.8% of respondents found the idea of workplace democracy either ‘very attractive’ or ‘attractive’, and this preference was fairly stable (between 70% and 76%) regardless of time spent in employment, with preference for democracy rising slightly in line with increased experience of the workplace, and with no discernible correlation with age. Gender was a significant variable, with 15.9% more women than men finding workplace democracy an attractive or very attractive idea¹⁰⁵. Approval ratings for workplace democracy were strongly positively correlated with desire to become an academic. This, and the very high approval ratings for workplace democracy among all categories of respondent indicate that universities should consider workplace democracy a potent offer for recruiting and retaining tomorrow’s academic staff.

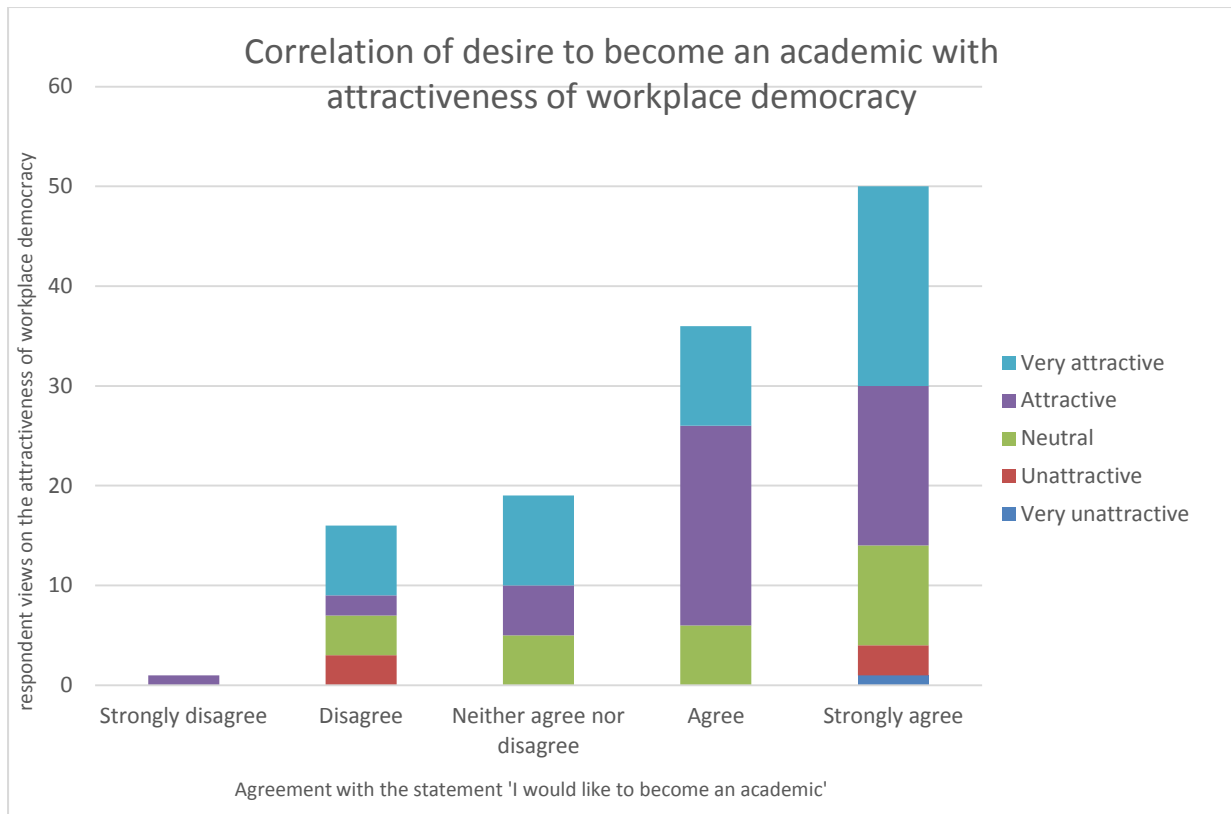


Figure 1 Correlation of desire to become an academic with attractiveness of workplace democracy

4.2 Size and structure

The size and structure of an organisation affect how it goes about its business. Keynes advocated that ‘the ideal size for the unit of control and organization lies somewhere between the individual and the modern state’¹⁰⁶ while Pugh found that size was a driver of different kinds of organisational culture¹⁰⁷, and Handy notes that the larger an organisation is, the more authoritarian and structured it is perceived to be¹⁰⁸. Research on organisations has offered insights into the role that size plays in organisational effectiveness. At some successful firms, business units are not permitted to grow larger than 200 people in size, to avoid having to create bureaucracy to ‘keep poorly motivated disconnected employees on track.’¹⁰⁹

4.3 In our survey on the attitudes of current and recent research postgraduates, we asked two sets of questions that asked about respondents' beliefs about the extent to which their university supported co-operative values¹¹⁰. Although respondents generally believe that their Department upholds co-operative values better than their University, there are exceptions. Firstly, a stark difference exists between views on the value of self-responsibility and other values. For other values, departments are believed to uphold co-operative values more than the university, but universities are believed to uphold the value of self-responsibility to a greater extent than departments. This possibly indicates that departments can feel a little 'cosy' and that accountability is held to be an attribute of the centre of the university. It

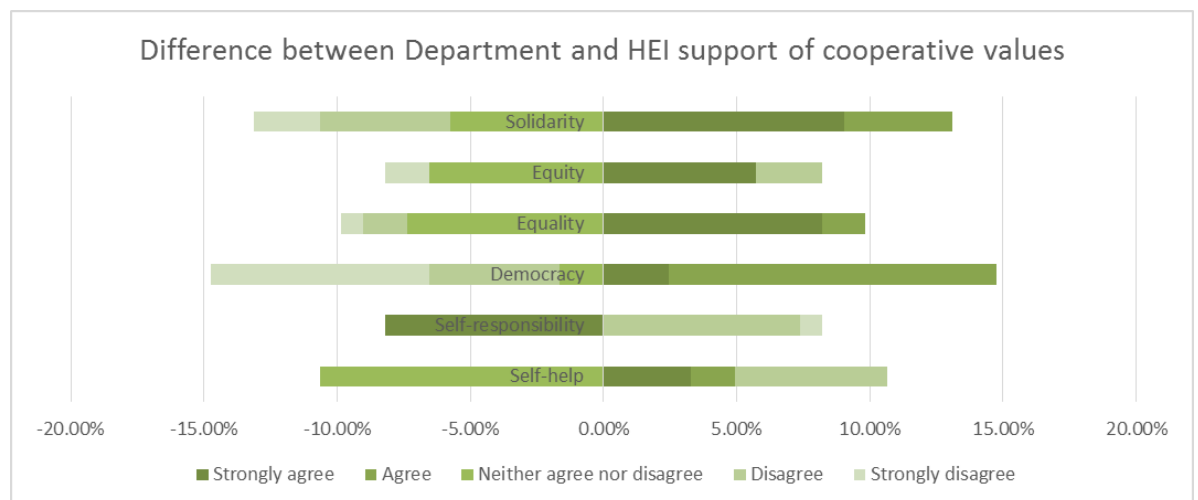


Figure 2 Difference between Department and University support of Co-operative values

would be interesting to see if we got the same results if we re-ran the study at the University of Mondragon. Secondly, there is far more ambivalence about universities' support of the values than the departments: respondents are less sure about the university's values than the department's. This finding has implications for communications within the university.

- 4.4 In the Mondragon Corporation there are rules on size of organisation. Following previous problems '[t]he co-ops learned a lesson. The lesson that they learned was that there comes a size, when however intelligently and sophisticatedly the structures have been arranged, co-op communication will break down and disputes will be liable to take place. So, from then on, it was decided that except in exceptional circumstances, no co-op would be allowed to exceed 500 people, and if there was a danger of that happening then every effort would be made to split-up the enterprise into independent component units.'¹¹¹ At Mondragon University, there are four faculties, and each is configured as a co-operative in its own right¹¹².
- 4.5 The implication of these ideas about size is that the university, unless it is very small, might face breakdowns of communication and co-operation. (and if too small, might not be resilient enough to survive). What possible structures are there for the co-operative university? Three main structures, arguably, exist for most modern universities: unitary, federal, and network structures.

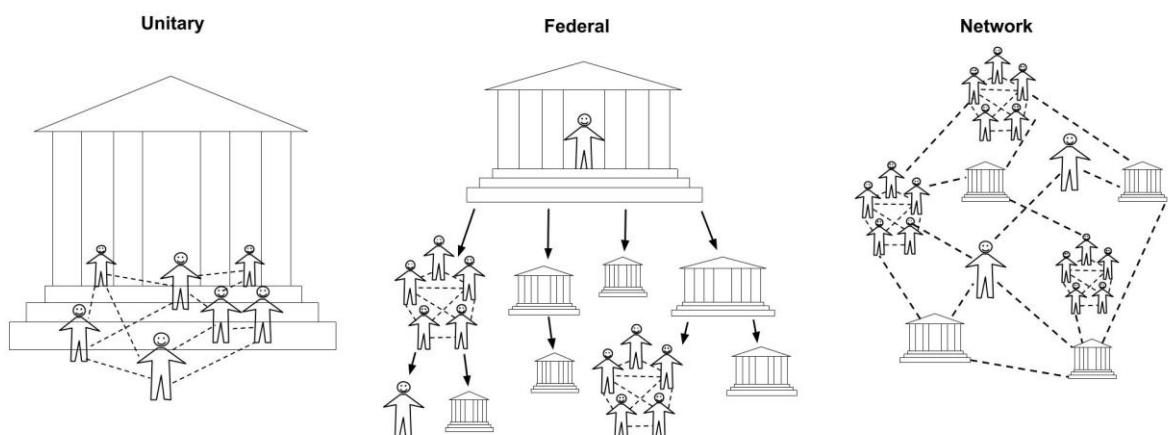


Figure 3 Unitary, Federal and Network university structures

4.5.1 *Unitary*

The Unitary model is the most familiar – of an autonomous institution, with a campus housing all the necessary services for the achievement of academic work. The university has a single governing body, and is a single corporate body. Expensive to set-up, slow to develop, and rarely for sale, the main possibility for this sort of institution becoming a co-operative is through a process of cultural change, towards the perceived advantages of the co-operative model. Familiar examples include universities like Keele, Southampton, Reading, Liverpool and Hull. Some universities of this type will have client relationships with colleges and other organisations, but these federalised aspects are peripheral.

4.5.2 *Federal*

The federal university structure is that of an umbrella organisation. Familiar from the University of London, the former structure of the University of Wales, and many of the statewide systems in the US, the federal structure is an institution of institutions. Each institution will have its own governing body, and the federal university will have a supreme governing body. Many tracks and sizes of institutions can be permitted, with some large, multi-faculty universities that might be considered unitary elsewhere, and smaller institutes and colleges, each with different educational purposes, and perhaps different ‘brands’. Federal universities do contain some aspects of the network, shared services and geographical distribution, but these are not its core. If a federal university were to become a co-operative, it would be as a result of a special set of circumstances, such as a consortium of colleges deciding to act together to

create a secondary co-operative structure as part of a process of gaining degree-awarding powers (as happened in Mondragon). The Federal idea does have merit, because '[a] federation is a structure designed to create transparency around issues of local accountability and central efficiency, which are of great significance for member commitment and loyalty. For this reason, a federated co-operative structure can often count on better member support and be more resilient and viable than a centralized co-operative, which may look simpler on paper.'¹¹³

4.5.3 *Network*

The network university is structured as a plexus of interconnections, with nodes of activity, and distributed functions. It thrives on shared or distributed services, modularity and connectivity, and there are many paths to it and through it. The network can also act as a federation, by incorporating other institutions within itself, or enabling autonomous institutions to use its structures. The classic example of this type of structure is the Open University, and its analogues worldwide. Another example is the former Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA)¹¹⁴. The network university has the advantage of having structures and processes that support co-operation between its parts. For a network university, the advantages of co-operation are drawn more starkly: the difficulties of managing peripatetic teachers at a distance replaced with a flexible, distributed and more obviously self-managing workforce; contracts superseded by commitment; and the newfound capability of leveraging the contacts and networks of members into new educational opportunities, linking workplaces, schools, and civil society organisations

together in a web of co-operative learning that connects ‘the will to know with the will to become’¹¹⁵.

- 4.6 Unitary, Federal and Network co-operative structures are each feasible for the co-operative university. However, the network possesses greater co-operative advantages. It also has the most to gain in reduced transaction costs and increased commitment from tutors becoming owners; it has the structures in place to permit accreditation of a wide variety of educational opportunities; and it encourages autonomy at a number of levels: individual autonomy, group autonomy, internal autonomous networks, and autonomous institutions that lie largely outside it¹¹⁶. The network is also uniquely open and porous¹¹⁷, because by allowing other institutions to have awards validated by it, it opens itself to the possibility of ‘dissent, challenge and change’¹¹⁸ by learning from the organisations to which it is linked. Just as the Open University piloted modern technologies and management techniques ahead of other universities, the world’s network universities now stand at a unique advantage among ‘universities [that] are able to adapt their own culture and business model to the great age of participation coming - to be co-operative themselves as institutions, why not - then this can become a learning air that all the students, all the community in the life of a university, breathes.’¹¹⁹

⁷⁰ One governance possibility raised in the literature is that of the Trust University (Boden, Ciancanelli, & Wright, 2012). The proposal is to place the university’s assets in a non-revocable trust, which benefits staff and students, in a similar mechanism to the John Lewis model. While this model has attractions, it raises two points that bear further consideration for any university considering this route, and which I believe make it a sub-optimal model in comparison with a true co-operative. The first issue is that of democratic accountability. In a Trust structure, the University is owned by a Trust, and the trustees bear responsibilities to oversee the terms of the Trust are carried out. However, there is a danger in this that a paternalistic attitude to the management of the university’s assets prevails, and while the benefits of an asset lock and defined ownership and purpose would be attained, the ownership would, in effect, be the through the Trustees, with the members as beneficiaries. This indirect form of ownership means that members will express their views through a form of employee council, or similar. Trustees are not necessarily elected, which means that democratic representation of the members tends

to occur at Board level. Certain voting rules can also result in an undemocratic Board, despite employee ownership. This situation could lack legitimacy in the eyes of the workforce, and misalign the university with its members' interests. The second issue with the idea of a Trust University, is that it does not necessarily address the problems of managerialism raised in the paper that proposed the idea. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the observations that Adam Smith made about the observable prudence of owner-controller-workers in firms is not generalizable to the idea of a Trust, where control and ownership are a step removed from the members. Secondly, this separation of labour and capital does not provide the most appropriate setting for improving strategic decision-making processes and engaging academics in the long-term development of the university. Thirdly, while a distinction is made between administrators (helpful) and senior management elites (forcing scholars to engage in performative neo-liberal agendas) in fact this is a simplification and misunderstanding of the role of management, and I argue that while remuneration of senior managers has indeed increased, and that senior leaders may be increasingly treating universities as 'just another corporate form', that there is still a need to engage with the market, in order to be a viable organisation. The creation of a Trust does not change the need to recruit students, win research contracts, and do the many other activities that both pay wages and which are seen by many as indicators of success. In a co-operative university, the organisational responses to these challenges are democratised. Co-operators are 'practical people' who face the realities of the market head-on. They can do this because the co-operative acts as part of the sensemaking apparatus required to enable engagement with the market to be generalised throughout the organisation, without adopting performative, neo-liberal agendas into the structure of the organisation. Appropriately incentivised, managerial staff can demonstrate loyalty to their institution, rather than seeking rent from it, and can act as an integrating force and enabler of scholarly work. I therefore treat the idea of a Trust University with caution as a concrete proposal, but as a stimulating topic of debate that moves us towards a truly Co-operative University, the idea makes a valuable contribution.

⁷¹ (HolacracyOne, LLC, 2013) Though critically, Holacracy puts the work, rather than the worker at the centre of organisational thinking. While it may offer efficiency gains, tensions still arise and must be managed by governance processes. It is arguable that a co-operative approach lowers many of the tensions inherent in the capitalist firm, resulting in fewer transaction costs around the allocation of work, and hence reducing the amount of tension to be 'managed' overall. '[A] point must be reached where the loss through the waste of resources is equal to the marketing costs of the exchange transaction in the open market or to the loss if the transaction was organised by another entrepreneur' (Coase, 1937, p. 395) and the co-operative model arguably lowers internal transaction costs, by prompting the owner-worker to tend towards highly-engaged work behaviours that lower transaction costs both for themselves *and* for the organisation.

⁷² As falling staff costs as a proportion of income show they already are. The median ratio dropped from 57% in 2008/9 (UUK, 2010, p. 54) to 54% in 2010/11 (UUK, 2012b, p. 17 (annexe)) despite having been stable for most of the early years of the century (UUK, 2008, pp. 57–58)

⁷³ The *studium generale* (university) of Bologna started out as a body of students, officially-recognised by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I in 1158 (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, p. 12). This *universitas scholarium* hired the staff they wanted to hear, much as Cunningham suggested co-operatives should do (Cunningham, 1874).

⁷⁴ (Interviews with Boggs, 2013; Macneil & Lovejoy, 2013; Malin, 2013; Yeo, 2013)

⁷⁵ (Correspondence with Wilson, 2013b)

⁷⁶ (Correspondence with Wilson, 2013b)

⁷⁷ (Correspondence with Wilson, 2013b)

⁷⁸ (Ridley-Duff, 2013)

⁷⁹ (Watson, 2009, p. 77)

⁸⁰ (Interview with Macneil & Lovejoy, 2013)

⁸¹ (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

⁸² (Watson, 2009, p. 78)

⁸³ (Lucas, 2006)

⁸⁴ (Smith, 1983, p. 107)

⁸⁵ (c.f. Shattock, 2010, p. 141)

⁸⁶ (Interview with Wise, 2013)

⁸⁷ Such as in a 'Trust University' (Boden et al., 2012)

⁸⁸ (Interview with Wise, 2013)

⁸⁹ (Williams, 2013, p. 150)

⁹⁰ Looking at the membership of the Court of a pre-1992 English university gives an idea of the procession of organisations and individuals that claim an interest in the university.

⁹¹ (ICA, 1995)

⁹² (Watson, 2009, p. 89)

⁹³ (The need is there, in CPD and in widening access to higher education, in easing transitions to university and even in giving academics access to schools as research sites. Interview with Thorpe, 2013)

⁹⁴ See endnote 124 and (Bolden et al., 2012)

⁹⁵ (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011, p. 122)

⁹⁶ (Ridley-Duff, 2012a, p. 14)

⁹⁷ (Temple, 2008, p. 100)

⁹⁸ (Handy, 1993, p. 141)

⁹⁹ It is not clear whether Handy believes women can also be professors. Elsewhere, commentators argue that ‘only those people with no plans or those who promise everyone whatever they wish to hear get elected’ (Schwarz, 2003 in Shattock, 2010, p. 99) and others that ‘more democracy is not necessarily better’ (Rosovsky, 1991, p. 265), seasoned writers on university management note that neither election nor appointment processes for staff are ‘altogether satisfactory’ but that ‘elections appear to work well’ in a variety of very successful businesses (Shattock, 2010, p. 99).

¹⁰⁰ (Erdal, 2011, pp. 65–73)

¹⁰¹ (Skurnik, 2002, in Mazzarol, 2009, pp. 40–41)

¹⁰² (Correspondence with Wilson, 2013b)

¹⁰³ (Watson & Maddison, 2005, p. 8)

¹⁰⁴ (Handy, 1993, p. 47)

¹⁰⁵ Students in more applied disciplines were 11.8% less likely to find workplace democracy attractive or very attractive, than their counterparts in more theoretical disciplines; and students with industry-linked research degrees were also 9.1% less likely to find workplace democracy attractive or very attractive than other students, but respondents’ perceptions of the level of competition within their discipline had no significance. This finding merits further investigation, as it indicates somewhat paradoxically that the attractiveness of workplace democracy may be negatively correlated with current experiences of practical work based on study.

¹⁰⁶ (Keynes, J. M. in Smith, 1983, p. 96)

¹⁰⁷ (In Handy, 1993, p. 405)

¹⁰⁸ (Handy, 1993, pp. 192–193)

¹⁰⁹ (Hamel, 2007, p. 94) This is essentially because of the transaction costs involved in maintaining larger firms. (A classical exposition of the economic problem may be found in Coase, 1937).

¹¹⁰ We split the questions into similar ones about their current department, and their university as a whole, to find-out if respondents held different views about the co-operative tendencies of their university. We theorised that the smaller and more intimate setting of the Department might score more highly on all the co-operative values, and overall the data bear this theory out, with interesting caveats. We produced two tables, one for the department and one for the university, each showing the extent to which respondents agreed with statements about the co-operative values espoused in that setting. The questions were similar, to aid comparability. We subtracted the table for the university from the table for the department, to obtain the difference in values. In Figure 2 we plotted these differences, with darker colours indicating greater agreement with the statements about the values. Positive percentages indicate where respondents think the department reflects the values better than the university; negative percentages reflect the opposite. The size of the bars indicates the strength of the difference.

¹¹¹ (“The Mondragon Experiment,” 1980)

¹¹² This logical-sounding structure at Mondragon University is really an historical accident. Three separate co-operative colleges merged to form the university and gain degree-awarding powers. The fourth Faculty was newly established under the university structure.

¹¹³ (Fairbairn, 2003, p. 19)

¹¹⁴ (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

¹¹⁵ (hooks, 1994, p. 19)

¹¹⁶ (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

¹¹⁷ (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

¹¹⁸ (hooks, 1994, p. 33)

¹¹⁹ (Mayo, 2013)

5 Culture

Some aspects of university culture provide the conditions for universities becoming co-operatives, and on the whole these factors probably predominate. Universities are ‘inescapably flat in organization and professionally argumentative’¹²⁰ and tend to embrace ‘complex, interactive processes of collective choice’ in preference to ‘top-down control and centralized strategy-making’¹²¹. While top-down control is not anathema to a co-operative, management must command legitimacy with members, who must ‘see “through” the co-operative to the industry or sector beyond’¹²² and hence understand that the rules of the co-operative are structured around their needs.

5.1 Unionised academic staff are likely to find the idea of a co-operative university appealing¹²³ and given the broad literature about and largely against managerialism¹²⁴, there is *prima facie* evidence of the potential for a dialogue with staff about establishing a co-operative university. In Mondragon, the University is composed of 4 faculties, each a co-operative in its own right, and linked to the discipline. Since academic staff tend to identify with their discipline before their university¹²⁵, one route to the co-operative university might be the establishment of specialist institutions, configured as co-operatives, for study in a particular domain. This cultural factor may have an impact on the possible development paths for a co-operative institution, though it is equally possible that the sense of commitment fostered by employee ownership might cause disparate disciplinary cultures to collaborate more willingly in a co-operative university project (as occurred at Mondragon).

- 5.2 The strength and independence of students' unions provides a distinctive voice that militates against students being perceived as consumers alone, and while there are no formally co-operative universities in England, there was until recently a co-operative students' union (Lincoln) and there exists a position statement in favour of co-operative students' unions: NUS' 'Co-operatives on Campus'¹²⁶. This high-level support, and that evident the survey respondents, offers evidence of the potential for dialogue with students about establishing a co-operative university. Further research is required into the attitudes of undergraduates, in particular.
- 5.3 In our survey of current and recent doctoral students, we asked how much respondents agreed with the statement 'HEIs have become too focussed on the wrong things'. A sense of unease is evident in the figures: while 18% strongly agreed; 31.2% agreed; and 37.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 13.1% disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed. When we asked if HEIs were becoming too corporate, respondents' opinions were clear: while 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case, and a sizeable minority of 33.6% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed, only 13.1% disagreed (only a single respondent strongly disagreed).
- 5.4 What are the right things that a university should focus on? Respondents to our survey demonstrated that co-operative values are attractive to current and recent research students. We asked questions about what universities could do to become more attractive places to work, based around co-operative values.

5.5 All co-operative values received an overall approval rating above 50% when considered as ways that universities could become more attractive places to work, and women found the values marginally more attractive than men. We found no correlation with respondent perceptions of the competitiveness of their own discipline of study. Solidarity was the most attractive value with over 90% approval, and was the only value to attract more than 50% *strong* approval.

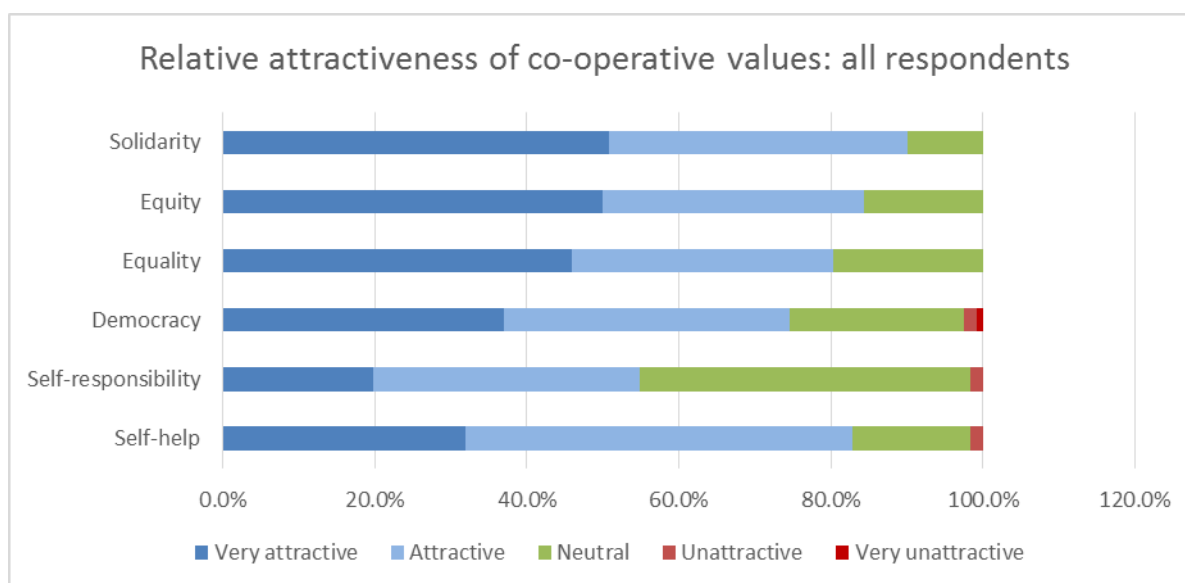


Figure 4 Relative attractiveness of co-operative values (all respondents)

5.6 The highlighting of solidarity is interesting, particularly in relation to democracy. When we looked at how well universities and departments currently support co-operative values, democracy was least-supported, followed by solidarity. The strength of feeling among respondents in favour of more solidarity (ahead of democracy) could point to comradeship being more important than ownership. That the lowest approval ratings were for the value of self-responsibility might seem to back this argument up. However, there is an alternative explanation, which is that respondents feel that solidarity is most keenly missing in the contemporary university, whereas the demands to be responsible and

accountable are ubiquitous. This reading is also more consistent with the literature. '[T]he university field is, like any other field, the locus of a struggle to determine the conditions and the criteria for legitimate membership and legitimate hierarchy'¹²⁷ and studies have confirmed a shift in the behaviour of academics away from traditional notions of collegiality following the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise¹²⁸. Further research is required into this *prima facie* evidence that the culture of universities already seeks closer alignment with co-operative values.

5.7 A lack of solidarity could be ascribed to number of causes, but there is clearly an agenda for senior leaders here, who will wish to consider the advantages a co-operative structure provides for leadership styles preferred by academics¹²⁹.

¹²⁰ (Watson & Maddison, 2005, p. 8)

¹²¹ (Mintzberg, 2000, pp. 405–406)

¹²² (Fairbairn, 2003, p. 15)

¹²³ (Interview with Macneil & Lovejoy, 2013)

¹²⁴ (For example, Chandler, Barry, & Clark, 2002; R. Deem & Brehony, 2005; Rosemary Deem, 2005; E. Ferlie et al., 2008; Ewan Ferlie, 1996a, 1996b; Kok, Douglas, McClelland, & Bryde, 2010; Kolsaker, 2008; Yokoyama, 2006)

¹²⁵ (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

¹²⁶ (Wise & Erbmman, 2009)

¹²⁷ (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 11)

¹²⁸ (Lucas, 2006)

¹²⁹ Extensive work by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education has shown that many co-operative values are preferred in academic leaders. 'Findings indicate that academics across the sector recognise leadership in actions that (a) provide and protect an environment that enables productive academic work, (b) support and develop a sense of shared academic values and identity, and (c) accomplish 'boundary spanning' on behalf of individuals and work groups. Boundary spanning here refers to the ability to create opportunities for external relatedness, getting things done via institutional administrations, mentoring colleagues into wider spheres of engagement, etc. Individual academics may become regarded as leaders when they are seen to fight for a common cause, offer inspiration, and/or represent exemplary intellectual and professional standards. Leadership is also associated with those who offer patronage and mentoring through their access to resources, contacts and career opportunities. Leadership can also be located in teams, especially where team membership is experienced as affirming and empowering in relation to the factors listed in [...] above (enabling environment, sense of purpose and boundary spanning). (Bolden et al., 2012, p. 2)

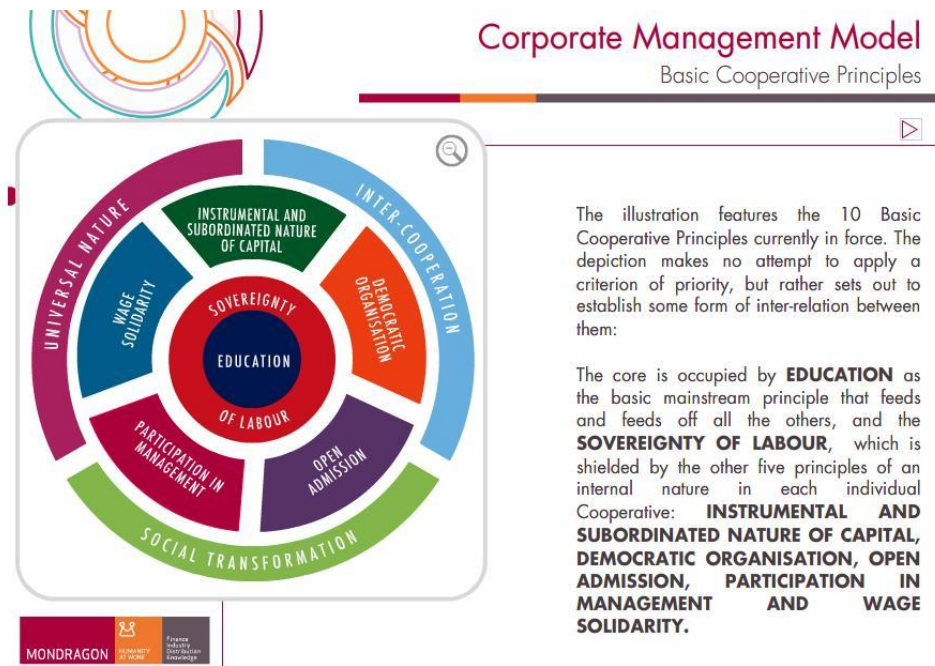
6 Learning, Teaching and Research

Education (which I am using as a by-word for teaching, learning, and research) is at the heart of what universities do, and is the fifth principle of co-operatives. The Co-operative College has as its mission: ‘Putting education at the heart of co-operation and co-operation at the heart of education.’ This mission is a purposeful philosophical statement, and it requires attention from a broad range of academic disciplines.

6.1 *Education as the heart of co-operation*

For co-operation to have education at its heart, implies that co-operation is fundamentally an educative process, and this is indeed the case. ‘[E]very co-operative needs access to research as a condition for its own cognitive processes of planning, policy, decision making, and consensus building’¹³⁰ because cognitive processes are at the heart of a co-operative organisation. It is through education based on research, that members develop an understanding of the economy/market, and the benefits the co-op brings them, which in turn are the conditions necessary to become ‘a thinking, adapting, innovating co-op.’¹³¹

6.2 The Mondragon Model puts education at the heart of co-operation in a significant and practical way. By placing education at the centre of its



management model, Mondragon re-draws the traditional structure of an organisation, to put knowledge, analysis, information and cognitive process to work as the guiding principle of the organisation.

Figure 5 The Mondragon model of co-operation with education at its heart¹³²

A near-identical formulation of organisational learning is championed by many in the university sector who believe that 'learning – is directly related to long term survival and success'. Institutional Self-Study is the concept of the university as a learning organisation, and is 'intimately linked to university strategy, culture and decision-making' and is 'directly undertaken to influence action.'¹³³

6.3 Mondragon's model extends further: to the curriculum at the university, where students are given the task of creating a new co-operative start-up, learning by doing, under the guidance of the University¹³⁴.

6.4 *Cooperation as the heart of education*

In the emancipatory tradition of educators such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks, education can be seen as ‘the practice of freedom’, an ‘ontological vocation’ whereby ‘men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.’¹³⁵ Co-operative education is clearly emancipatory education, which seeks to develop agency, but it also seeks to do so in real-world settings, where agency will lead to benefits for the learner and the group.

6.5 By bringing practical ‘enterprise’ work into the university curriculum, co-operation is put at the heart of education. This kind of activity has a long pedigree, with ‘Sandwich Courses [...] interrelat[ing] theory and practice’ offering students the advantages of ‘Motivation’; ‘Self Reliance’; ‘Cooperation’ and ‘Career Choice’, while offering comparable advantages to industry and the university¹³⁶. ‘From universities, we [co-operatives] would like to see what we call ‘co-operative education’ which are the competences and attitudes required to make a success of collaboration for shared value. Yes, that can include the teaching of different models of business, including co-operatives, but it is far more than that. It is also the non-cognitive skills to work in teams, the emotional literacy to take responsibility (one great and enduring co-operative value) and to act in an open way (a second great co-operative value). The way to learn these is often to do rather than to be taught’¹³⁷.

6.6 Practical and industry-linked education are important to students moving in to the workplace, but as well as utilitarian concerns around understanding business, there are philosophical concerns about the

methods by which students are taught. The rich literature on co-operative education offers many examples of good teaching and learning practices that involve ‘problem-solving that operates through genuine reciprocity’¹³⁸ and invokes the notion of ‘associative intelligence’¹³⁹ whereby the group can achieve more than its members alone. Many of these will be familiar to lecturers, not as co-operative education, but simply as good practice. Lecturers who have experimented with co-operative techniques often find them beneficial in improving student resourcefulness¹⁴⁰.

- 6.7 A co-operative university would, almost of necessity, seek to differentiate itself by developing an agenda for co-operative teaching. Co-construction of the curriculum, group work, group assessment and peer assessment, all have a part to play in the education strategy of a co-operative university. While the development of co-operative learning might be seen to be the domain of academics alone, its applicability for enhancing employability should make it an area of interest for academic staff development units, the HEA and for education support workers in universities looking for ways to improve the performance of the institution.
- 6.8 Discussion of co-operative learning practices naturally leads to considering co-operative research. Some will see industry-linked research as less prestigious than publicly-funded or blue-skies research, but co-operative research does not mean slavishly serving a business agenda. As well as the desire for a greater research effort into co-operative business, there is an opportunity to frame an institutional approach to research that is based in co-operation. From the sharing of large scientific resources to the establishment of research agendas with communities, and from egalitarian

citation practices, more internally-collaborative bids, and the development of early-career researchers, co-operation offers avenues for universities to improve their research performance, by constituting research as a co-operative activity, where effort and success is collective in character.

¹³⁰ (Fairbairn, 2003, p. 23)

¹³¹ (Fairbairn, 2003, p. 24)

¹³² (Mondragon model cited in Ridley-Duff, 2012b)

¹³³ (Watson & Maddison, 2005, p. 6)

¹³⁴ (Ridley-Duff, 2013)

¹³⁵ (Shaul in Freire, 2000, pp. 33–34)

¹³⁶ (Daniels, 1980, pp. 21–25)

¹³⁷ (Mayo, 2013)

¹³⁸ (Tam, 2013, p. 198)

¹³⁹ (MacPherson, 2002)

¹⁴⁰ (Kennett, Stedwill, Berrill, & Young, 1996; Maceiras, Cancela, Urréjola, & Sánchez, 2011)

Central to an understanding of co-operatives is that staff are usually members (that is, owners) of the organisation. Being a business owner changes the way accountability operates. Individual incentives to extract economic rents from the organisation are diminished, and incentives to increase organisational wealth are embedded. Furthermore, because other staff are also owners, they can gain access to information about income and expenditure all over the organisation, if required¹⁴¹. The internal financial model for the co-operative university presupposes transparency, and democratic agreement over cross-subsidy. Transparency is a powerful concept, which can lead to effective self-regulation¹⁴². It also adheres to a principle observed by entrepreneurial universities, that ‘[g]ood financial management is not a function of one set of offices in a university but is a characteristic that should run right through the institution’¹⁴³.

Staff membership of the co-operative university could either be direct (where the members directly control the share capital) or indirect. In this latter model, famously used by the John Lewis group, the equity is managed by a trust that benefits all employees.

7.1 Fees and access to state funds

Much of the funding of universities is derived from the state, though at a remove in the form of tuition fees. A university transferring to co-operative status would likely be accessing this funding already, and it may continue to do so while it is able to sign a financial memorandum with HEFCE¹⁴⁴. However, for a newly-starting university, there are barriers to accessing these funds, and these are described in more detail in Appendix

G: Capitalising the Co-operative University. A co-operative private university would be likely to face a limit of £6,000 if accessing student loan funding. However, there is no essential link between fee levels and co-operative status.

7.2 Raising financial capital

Universities tend to be large organisations with highly-paid staff and complex activity. Moreover, universities often develop over time from small origins – the cost of founding a fully-fledged university is high. Raising capital is the most pressing concern for many new business ventures, but the extent to which a co-operative university requires an injection of capital will depend on the prevailing conditions. The establishment of a new University is expensive, whereas a transferring university will likely continue to operate on the same basis as previously. The mechanisms available for raising capital are all the normal sources of loan finance, plus the possibility of co-operative private equity supporting the venture as a secondary co-operative, and/or the possible issue of member equity shares.

7.2.1 The general scale of sums involved varies with the scenario for the establishment of the co-operative university and the mechanisms for raising capital:

- The founding of a wholly-new university
- The purchase of an existing university (in good or poor financial health)
- The development of a university from another kind of educational institution

- Building up a university step-by-step over time
- The transfer of an existing university to a co-operative structure

7.2.2 The implications of these different scenarios is explored more fully in Appendix G: Capitalising the Co-operative University, where it is shown that they range in scale from ‘business as usual’ to the territory of £100M+ sums. Demonstrating the possibility of raising the necessary capital to turn an existing university into a co-operative, means that this option can be considered among a suite of realistic options, should the need, or opportunity, arise. While the scenarios described above may seem relatively remote, they are being planned-for actively by HEFCE and Universities UK, in preparation for future volatility and competition in the sector.

7.3 **Reduced cost of administration**

At Mondragon University, we learn that there are far fewer administrators than at comparable universities¹⁴⁵. It may therefore be arguable that a more organisationally-motivated staff base results in swifter agreement, simpler systems and reduced administrative effort, leading to lower transaction costs. Further research is required to establish the facts in this case, but given that UK HEIs spend around £2,628 per student on academic services and departmental costs¹⁴⁶, further investigation would be worthwhile.

¹⁴¹ At Mondragon University, staff can check up on each other’s expenses (Matthews, 2013b)

¹⁴² As in Bentham’s Panopticon prison, where the possibility of being seen causes the prisoners to regulate their behaviour (Foucault, 1991, p. 201), so financial transparency can act as a political technology that promotes self-regulation. The difference in the co-operative is that peer observation, rather than an all-seeing hierarchical authority, is the cause of self-regulation, representing a more sociable and horizontal construction than the Panopticon, and a democratisation of power.

¹⁴³ (Shattock, 2010, p. 75)

¹⁴⁴ (Interviews with Boggs, 2013; Malin, 2013) Also see para 13.2 below.

¹⁴⁵ (Matthews, 2013b)

¹⁴⁶ (UUK, 2012b, pp. 18–19 [Patterns of Institutional Diversity Appendix])

8 Legal matters

Legal and regulatory matters concerning the establishment of a co-operative university are complex, and this project can only cover them in a limited fashion. I explored the legal basis of existing universities, and the possible forms of incorporation open to a putative co-operative university. I also investigated regulatory matters, to determine the likely status and obligations of a co-operative university. I found that the characteristics of co-operatives are largely independent of corporate form, and can realistically be incorporated into existing or replacement governing documents.

8.1.1 A new co-operative higher education venture

The case of a newly-starting co-operative higher education enterprise is plainly different to that of an existing institution. In the case of a group of staff and/or students setting-up for the purposes of tuition, there are number of questions to consider: will the organisation be unincorporated or an incorporated form? Does it exist for a charitable purpose? How will it raise its capital, and does this have an implication for the legal form chosen? Different legal forms place different restrictions on who can own and control an organisation, and what powers that organisation can use. The Industrial and Provident Society (I&PS) corporate forms are often considered best for co-operatives, but in practice a wide range of corporate forms can be used. For those individuals considering setting up an organisation of this sort, it is significant to note that 39% of the surveyed extant private higher education providers were not-for-profit¹⁴⁷, indicating

a diversity within this sector that could accommodate co-operative enterprises¹⁴⁸.

- 8.1.2 A new institution that wishes eventually to use the word ‘University’ in its title through the Companies House route described elsewhere (endnote 187, page 88) should note that under plans to consolidate co-operative legislation in a forthcoming Act of Parliament¹⁴⁹ that it is likely that the current restrictions on seeking Privy Council approval for an I&PS to use the word ‘university’ in its title will likely more closely mirror the provisions in the Companies Act 2006 (and future subsequent amendments)¹⁵⁰ meaning that the I&PS corporate form is a rational choice for a genuinely co-operative university startup.

8.1.3 Existing universities becoming co-operatives

The situation for existing universities¹⁵¹ is more complex. An existing university seeking to become a co-operative would have a range of options, but loosely, these will include either an adaptation of the existing governing document (by seeking the permission of the Privy Council, generally) or the transfer of the assets and liabilities of the university into a new corporate form.

- 8.1.4 Existing governing documents may be adapted for the purpose of becoming a co-operative for pre-1992s (post-1992s may need to lose the prescribed HEC corporate form). Setting aside the mechanism for gaining permission¹⁵² (which the university secretariat will fully understand) the hurdles will be around the composition of the governing body¹⁵³. The Committee of University Chairs insist upon a ‘a majority of independent members, defined as both external and independent of the institution’¹⁵⁴

and this requirement obviously conflicts with the requirement of a true co-operative, that it should be owned and governed by its members. However, the CUC's prescription may be less binding than it at first appears, for three reasons. The first reason is that there are exceptions: Oxford and Cambridge each break this rule, and the only sanction against them is that they are required to set out the differences between the CUC guidance and their own practice, which they do¹⁵⁵. The second reason is that CUC guidance is not timeless: it is currently undergoing a revision¹⁵⁶, and it may be that future advice will soften the lay majority requirement. Thirdly, there is a question of semantics. Under a co-operative governance arrangement, it may be possible to 'redefine the insider'¹⁵⁷ such that the formal requirement of the CUC guidance is met, even though the governing body would generally be comprised of the members. Where the membership of the university is sufficiently broad-based and includes categories of the general public, such an arrangement could prove defensible.

- 8.1.5 Assuming¹⁵⁸ that a new corporate form is preferred, care must be exercised over the choice. Work by Eversheds proposes a scale of corporate forms from the Royal Charter, through descending 'prestige, flexibility and legal freedom to operate' to the Trust form¹⁵⁹, but this is a simplification, as each form has benefits and detractors.



Figure 6 Reproduction of 'scale of corporate forms' from Eversheds paper (Stanfield, 2009, p. 11)

Nevertheless, there is interest in the opportunities opened up by alterations of corporate form, not least in opening up new ways to raise capital, as reported discussions at the University of Central Lancashire demonstrate¹⁶⁰. The range of possible corporate forms is wider than indicated by the Eversheds paper, and true co-operative corporate forms, such as the two Industrial and Provident Society (I&PS) types¹⁶¹, may also be considered as potential alternative corporate forms for universities. I&PS forms would probably be placed near the Royal Charter end of Figure 6 above (depending on whether the *bona fide* co-operative or society for the benefit of the community form was selected) as these forms also give a high degree of flexibility and legal freedom¹⁶² with the added advantage of incorporating protections for the organisation's assets. See Figure 7 below.

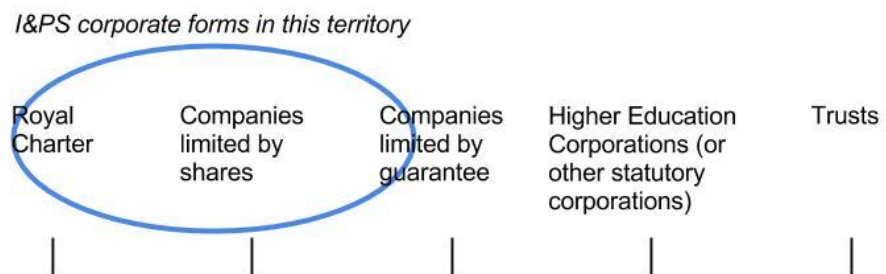


Figure 7 I&PS forms located within the Eversheds scheme

Co-operatives do not have to use I&PS forms, but these forms most closely fit their needs¹⁶³.

- 8.1.6 A university registered under I&PS legislation would not have to use ‘Limited’ in its name, as under ‘section 5(5) of IPSA 1965 (quoted below) permits the omission of "limited" from the name of a society which has objects that are wholly "charitable or benevolent"',¹⁶⁴
- 8.2 Most universities operate as exempt charities, and are therefore not required to register with the charities commission, but instead are regulated by HEFCE¹⁶⁵ in the same way that the FCA regulates exempt I&PSs¹⁶⁶: a potential benefit of the I&PS corporate form over other corporate forms more usually used by charities, where regulation by the charities commission would normally be required¹⁶⁷.

¹⁴⁷ (BIS, 2013, p. 41)

¹⁴⁸ This report cannot offer the necessary advice, but a good starting point would be the Co-operatives UK publication ‘Simply LEGAL - All you need to know about legal forms and organisational types for community enterprises’ (Co-operatives UK, 2009) which steps through the many choices and options to be made by such an organisation. Its companion volume ‘Simply Governance - A comprehensive guide to understanding the systems and processes concerned with the running of a sustainable community enterprise’ (Co-operatives UK, 2011) is also essential reading.

¹⁴⁹ (Snaith, 2013a)

¹⁵⁰ (Snaith, 2013b)

¹⁵¹ There are a variety of legal forms under which universities operate in England, with pre-1992 universities generally established by either Act of Parliament, or with a Royal Charter granted by the Privy Council. These Universities have a bicameral structure (interview with Boggs, 2013) and a defined membership of staff and students. Oxford and Cambridge have sui generis constitutions as common-law corporations descended from medieval guilds (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, pp. 13–16; Roberts, 1947, p. 7). Curiously, this gives these ancient universities the distinction of being, in theory, a form of workers co-operative, with the governing bodies dominated by members of the university, and not by external lay-persons as is normally required. The Committee of University Chairs requires that ‘The governing body shall have a majority of independent members, defined as both external and independent of the institution.’ (Committee of University Chairs, 2009, p. 14). Arguably, the democracy of the medieval guild is a far cry from the more modern idea of a worker’s co-operative. Democracy at Oxford and Cambridge, is, in any case, partial. At Cambridge it does not include ‘others, students or employees who are not members of Congregation or the Regent House’ (Evans, 2013a) while at Oxford, ‘Congregation, the ultimate legislative body of the University, is composed of virtually all academic staff and certain research support staff, administrators and librarians.’ (Oxford, 2011) Which formula leaves quite a few categories of staff and all students and external stakeholders out. Post-1992 Universities are created by provisions in Acts of Parliament (British Government, 1988a, 1992, 1998) and are ‘conducted’ by the Board of Governors: it is the board which is incorporated, and not the university (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, p. 20). Most universities created after 1992 have the corporate form of Higher Education Corporations (with some exceptions, such as a group of former Polytechnics in the Greater London Area which are incorporated as companies limited by guarantee). Other exceptions include the pre-1992 LSE (which trades as a company limited by guarantee) and BPP University (a foreign-owned profit-making university that trades as a company limited by shares) as well as some universities run as Trusts. In addition, a wide range of other, private and foreign institutions operate in England, and are yet to be covered by an encompassing Act.

¹⁵² Permission to change the governing document of a university would have to be sought from the relevant authority, generally the Privy Council, or possibly BIS through Companies House. In the case of Higher

Education Corporations the Secretary of State has the power to dissolve and transfer the corporate form by way of a statutory instrument. (British Government, 1992)

¹⁵³ (Interview with Boggs, 2013)

¹⁵⁴ (Committee of University Chairs, 2009, p. 14)

¹⁵⁵ (Oxford, 2012)

¹⁵⁶ (Interview with Boggs, 2013)

¹⁵⁷ (Boggs, 2013)

¹⁵⁸ As is likely to be the case with HECs

¹⁵⁹ (Stanfield, 2009, p. 11)

¹⁶⁰ (Morgan, 2012)

¹⁶¹ A further possibility is offered by the Charitable Incorporated Organisation form, currently too new to be fully investigated in this report (Correspondence with Wilson, 2013b).

¹⁶² (Co-operatives UK, 2009, p. 27)

¹⁶³ (Co-operatives UK, 2011, p. 10)

¹⁶⁴ (Snaith, 2013b)

¹⁶⁵ (Malin, 2013)

¹⁶⁶ (Co-operatives UK, 2009, p. 46)

¹⁶⁷ Oxford Colleges and Students' Unions have opted to register as charities with the Charities Commission under the provisions of the Charities Act 2006 (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, p. 224; interview with Malin, 2013; interview with Wise, 2013). A further consideration for a university choosing an I&PS charitable corporate form would therefore be negotiation over the principal regulator: discussion with HEFCE would be required to establish the situation, but since HEFCE already regulates higher education charities with several corporate forms and a wide range of governing documents, it seems likely that HEFCE would continue as principal regulator.

9 Conclusions

The Co-operative University appears like a radical idea initially, but this investigation indicates it is a realistic and desirable aim to adopt co-operative principles in the running of universities. The biggest barrier may be limited understanding of the business model, and none of the barriers are insuperable. The benefits are multiple, and I offer arguments and examples that demonstrate the co-operative advantage that universities might enjoy: more committed staff, better connections with community and business, and an organisational character that puts education at its core.

9.1 To sum-up the barriers and enabling factors we have encountered, I indicate my findings in Table 1 and Table 2, below. Items have been referenced to the paragraph or section where they are discussed.

9.2 Table 1 – Enabling factors

Table 1 Enabling factors for the co-operative university

	Enabling factors
1	Internal debates at a complementary juncture in co-operative and university sectors (1.7). Interest of co-operative sector in education links (2.1-2.3)
2	Promise of greater efficiency through alignment with member interests (4.1.14, 5.3-5.6) and reduced administrative costs (7.3)
3	Interest in new corporate forms (1.10, 2.13-2.14, 13.2)
4	Fit with academic populism (4.1.6) academic values (3.2-3.10, 4.1.14, 5) and HE management needs to re-engage academics (2.15).
5	Legal structures exist (3.1, 3.1.2, 8-8.2)

6	Fits with government agenda of greater diversity (13.2) in HE and support for mutuals (1.8, 2.5)
7	Volatility in HE sector (2.7-2.15) and possibility for genuine, values-based differentiation (6.7-6.8)
8	Availability of skilled labour (2.15-2.16, 13.9) and necessity of investment in labour (4.1.1, 13.7)
9	Relative advantage and benefit to networked universities (4.2-4.6)
10	Puts teaching and research at the heart of management and governance (6-6.8)
11	Improved financial transparency and control (7)
12	Concentration on member needs improves stakeholder relations (13.3.1)

9.3 Table 2 - Barriers

Table 2 Barriers to the co-operative university

	Barriers
13	Limited understanding of co-operative models in HE sector (1, 1.2), neglect of co-operatives in university research and teaching, few exemplars of co-operative studies (1.8)
14	Requires senior management buy-in (5.7)
15	Some may view co-operative approaches to teaching or research as too utilitarian in character (6.8)
16	Possible difficulties around lack of majority of external members on Co-operative University governing body (8.1.4)
17	Untested nature of some legal routes to incorporation presents a risk in some scenarios (8.1.5-8.2)

18	Lack of consensus on organisational size, shape and membership structure (4.1.3, 4.1.4-4.1.8, 4.2-4.5)
19	Possible resistance from ‘disempowered’ senior management (4.1.10)
20	Complexities of industry frameworks for start-ups (13.2)

9.4 Shape of the Co-operative University

There are many possible co-operative universities, and many paths to realise them. I looked in detail at the form that a Co-operative University might assume. In section 3 above I explored the application of co-operative principles to the university, and in section 4 I explored the governance arrangements, and the organisational structures that the Co-operative University might adopt. In section 8 I looked in depth at the legal situation, and particularly around corporate form.

9.5 Regulatory structure and matters of note

I mapped out the regulatory structure and industry agreements within which the Co-operative University would operate. These are scattered around the document, but most fully mapped out in section 8 and in Appendix C: Analysis of the Higher Education Sector using Porter’s Five Forces. I also encountered a great number of educational and cultural matters which require further exploration, and I have covered these mainly in sections 2-8, and in Appendices C and E. My investigation shows that in many ways the Higher Education sector already is co-operative. Many of the preferences, assumptions and behaviours preferred in universities are co-operative ones. Despite this the possibility of a co-operative university has not been considered by the sector. I suggest that this can change, and

must change: the challenges universities face are too great, and the opportunities co-operative working offers are too pregnant with potential, to do otherwise.

- 9.6 Against a backdrop of increasing inequality, opportunity and risk, we need a higher education that addresses the pressing concerns faced by society. The Co-operative University offers a distinctive and radical model of mainstream higher education with the potential to provide a peerless higher education, secure public benefits and increased access, with affordable fees, and provides an institutional form to address the concerns and ambitions of the ‘the great age of participation coming’¹⁶⁸.

9.7 Ideas, myths and dreams

Ultimately, a co-operative university is a university that behaves in a co-operative fashion, and we have seen a great deal of evidence that many universities already work in co-operative ways. What is required is less a change of practices than a change of expectations and beliefs. The Co-operative University is almost with us. It requires just three things: an idea, a myth, and a dream.

- 9.8 The idea is the idea of a university as a knowledge and learning commons accessible freely and fairly to everyone. The myth is the myth of Mondragon University, democratic and self-reliant, and of the solidarity of the medieval scholars who set up the first European universities. The dream is the dream of the ecological university¹⁶⁹, doing work that extends the bounds of knowledge and possibility, while exhibiting a deep care of responsibility towards its members, publics and the whole world.

¹⁶⁸ (Mayo, 2013)

¹⁶⁹ (Barnett, 2011b)

10 Recommendations

Following from the conclusions above, I make the following recommendations for future action, to support the development of a Co-operative University. Recommendations have been costed approximately and individually, and are grouped according to the conclusion from which they derive.

- 10.1 The recommendations focus on the need for a wider debate about co-operative higher education, and involve aspiration-raising activities within the higher education sector. The recommendations also recognise the early stage of the debate on co-operative universities, and the need to build a discourse among academic communities that elevates the concept of a co-operative university to that of a feasible utopia¹⁷⁰ by undertaking further research.
- 10.2 I believe the recommendations offer a reasonable balance between affordability and impact. They aim to stimulate a discussion in the HE sector, and invest in activities that are likely to raise wide interest in co-operative higher education. Due to the expense, I suggest that discussions are entered-into with either the AHRC or ESRC for funding a research project¹⁷¹.
- 10.3 I have resisted the temptation to include the cost of founding a co-operative university, since the business case is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the recommendations below could lead to the development of a business case, to be pitched to the Co-operative Group. The potential return on investment in HE is better than in groceries¹⁷², so it may be an attractive option!

10.4 Table 3

Table 3 Recommendations

Conclusion	Recommendation	Approx. Cost
1	<p>1.1 An interdisciplinary <i>academic</i> conference on co-operative education in industry (business and education sectors). Higher Education Research Community to be specifically sought-out to attend.</p> <p>1.2 A special edition of a journal on co-operative higher education</p> <p>1.3 A second, HE <i>leadership</i> conference building on the recommendations above.</p> <p>1.4 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education</p> <p>1.5 Sponsor a seminar series based on 1.1-1.3 and 1.4</p> <p>1.6 Co-operative sector to develop a priority research agenda of its own, by engagement in 1.1 – 1.5 above</p> <p>1.7 A Co-operative academic edit-a-thon on Wikipedia, to improve the quality of publicly-available information on co-operatives.</p> <p>1.8 Invite NUS delegates to conferences at 1.1 and 1.3</p>	<p>£5,000</p> <p>£neg.</p> <p>£3,000</p> <p>£300,000</p> <p>£4,000</p> <p>£neg.</p> <p>£neg.</p> <p>£neg.</p>
2	2.1 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4)	-
3	3.1 Carry-out a feasibility study into co-operative higher education corporate forms. Suggest Ian Snaith and David Palfreyman or Dennis Farrington. This could include the development of a set of model rules, or model clauses that can be inserted into existing Royal Charters, for instance.	£15,000
4	<p>Same as recommendations 1.1 - 1.4</p> <p>Ensure LFHE invited to conference in 1.3</p>	-
5	Same as recommendation 3.1	-
6	Support dialogue with think-tanks such as <i>ResPublica</i> , to get co-operative education into political discourse.	£neg.

7	Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4)	-
8	Ensure the Higher Education Academy, Vitae and SEDA are invited to conferences in 1.1 and 1.3	
9	Discuss co-operative scenarios with the Open University, including accreditation of small HE co-operatives like the Social Science Centre, Lincoln through OUVS.	£neg.
10	10.1 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4) 10.2 A HE <i>leadership</i> conference (as 1.3)	- -
11	11.1 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4)	-
12	12.1 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4)	-
13	13.1 Undertake a mapping exercise of co-operative higher education organisations and courses, in order to support the case for co-operative higher education being realisable. 13.2 Sponsor a research project on co-operative higher education (as 1.4) 13.3 An interdisciplinary <i>academic</i> conference (as 1.1).	£18,000 - -
14	Same as recommendations 1.1-1.4	-
15	16.1 Philosophy of Education academics to be invited to conference and to publish in journal in 1.1 and 1.2 above	£neg.
16	Dialogue with CUC to be included in project definition of recommendation 3.1 above.	-
17	Covered by recommendation 3.1	-
18	Covered by recommendations 1.1-1.4 and 3.1	-
19	Covered by recommendations 1.1-1.4 and 3.1	-
20	Work towards the development and publication of a ' <i>Simply</i>	£60,000

	<i>UNIVERSITY</i> ’ type guide book from the Co-operative College and Co-operatives UK, plus a prominent HE body, detailing how to start a Higher Education Co-operative. In addition to 1.1-1.4 and 3.1 and 13.1, this will need to be authored and checked. Distribution could be mainly online.	
TOTAL		£405,000

¹⁷⁰ (Barnett, 2011c, p. 4)

¹⁷¹ The recommendations could be seen as fitting the agenda of the AHRC’s ‘Care for the Future’ programme funding, for example. <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Pages/Care-for-the-Future-Large-Grants-Call.aspx> (deadline 4pm on 10th October 2013)

¹⁷² (Interview with Yeo, 2013)

11 Appendix A: ICA Co-operative principles

These principles were decided by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995, and are now reflected in co-operatives around the world. They can be found at:

<http://ica.co-op/en/what-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

Definition

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity** and **solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

12 **Appendix B: Methodology**

The Co-operative University begins with an idea, a myth, and a dream. The idea is the idea of the university, the popular and hotly-contested debate about the nature and purpose of universities¹⁷³. The myth is the foundational myth of co-operative movement, the story of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers¹⁷⁴, who succeeded in encoding the values and principles of co-operation championed by the radical philanthropist Robert Owen, into the successful, stable and legally-recognised corporate form of the co-operative. The dream is the timeless dream of education¹⁷⁵, as an emancipatory, civilising, democratising, peaceful and productive force. The Co-operative University begins to emerge as an integration of the three.

12.1 The investigation aimed to cover the following areas:

12.1.1 Description and examination of the conditions governing mutualisation in universities: what are the barriers to, and what conditions will facilitate, the mutualisation of existing universities? I developed a list of areas in which to structure my investigation, and it became apparent that there were two strands to the investigation into barriers and enabling factors: the first, around external, regulatory factors; the second into internal, cultural matters.

12.1.2 Description of the possible forms that mutualisation in the universities sector might take. Here I looked for co-operative practices extant in universities, and sought to transfer learning from the co-operative sector into a university application.

- 12.1.3 Delineation of the regulatory structures within which a co-operative university would operate, and explore the areas where co-operative universities might require advice, and where they would be able to offer a distinctive alternative to mainstream universities.
- 12.2 I drew up a list of interviewees, and also determined on a variety of other methods, as follows, to give the study the breadth it appeared to require:
- 12.3 Spending a week at the Co-operative College during Co-operatives Fortnight, I was fortunate to be able to undertake a comprehensive programme of activities, including:
- 12.3.1 Visiting the Rochdale Pioneer's museum to discover more about the history of co-operation, and to attend a lecture by the Principal of the College on the International Co-operative Day Pageant at Wembley Stadium in 1938, and the screening of a film 'Towards Tomorrow: Pageant of Co-operation, 1938'.
- 12.3.2 Attending a lecture by Ian Snaith on developments in co-operative public law, organised by the Society for Co-operative Studies.
- 12.3.3 Participating in a conference on co-operative education 'Co-operative Education Against the Crises'¹⁷⁶ including participating in the establishment of a group looking at the creation of a transnational co-operative university.
- 12.3.4 Held a series of interviews within the Co-operative College, to determine the way in which the College's aims might fit with the development of a co-operative university. Interviewees were:
- Mervyn Wilson, Chief Executive and Principal
 - Linda Shaw, Vice-Principal - Research and International

- Julie Thorp, Lead for Schools Programmes & Digital Learning
- Sara Vicari, Research Associate

12.3.5 I also had the opportunity of meeting with many of the College's staff, including Gillian Lonergan and Jon Priestley whose knowledge and enthusiasm of the history of the co-operative movement was so helpful in developing my understanding.

12.3.6 I met with Ed Mayo, Secretary General of Co-operatives UK, with whom I was also able to have a subsequent and valuable email exchange.

12.4 Following my experiences at the Co-operative College, I conducted a further range of interviews and discussions with representatives from a selection of appropriate organisations, and with individuals, including with regulatory bodies, industry bodies, mission groups, and membership bodies, and a selection of academic thinkers on co-operation:

- Andrew Boggs, Policy Adviser, Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG)
- Sam Jones, Head of Communications and Public Affairs, University Alliance
- Michael MacNeil, National Head of Higher Education, University and College Union (UCU); and Barry Lovejoy, National Head of Further Education, (UCU)
- Andrew Malin, Assurance Consultant, HEFCE
- Graeme Wise, Assistant Director (Policy) at the National Union of Students (NUS)
- Stephen Yeo, former Principal of Ruskin College

- 12.5 I conducted an online survey of current postgraduate and recent postdoctoral researchers, investigating their views on employment and co-operation. The survey was widely publicised and used an opportunistic sampling strategy. Full details of the questions are in Appendix D: Questions asked in the survey. Full details of the selection of the sample, and analysis of the results are in Appendix E: Analysis of the survey.
- 12.6 I searched for a wide range of literatures across topics including co-operative governance and corporate form, higher education governance and corporate form, co-operative education, co-operation in mathematics and science, the history of co-operation and universities.
- 12.7 Correspondence with a wide variety of individuals with an interest in the project formed a part of the project which was welcome, but which I had not anticipated. I am indebted to the following individuals who corresponded and shared their time so freely, and all assisted in developing the thinking that went into this report:
- Gill Evans, CEO of IDRAS, and Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History in the University of Cambridge
 - Patricia Juby, Elected Member, Membership Strategy Committee, Midcounties Co-operative
 - Nick Matthews, Chair of the Society for Co-operative Studies and Lecturer at Coventry University.
 - Andrew North, Regional Secretary, South and West Region, Co-operative Group
 - Edgar Parnell, Independent Consultant
 - John Rainford, Independent Consultant

- Rory Ridley-Duff, Educator, Writer and Composer
- Ian Snaith, Legal Writer, Researcher, and Trainer; Consultant Solicitor, DWF LLP; University Tutor, Law School, University of Leicester

12.8 The time available placed limitations on my work. Given the time and funding, the following additional data would have improved the project:

- Involvement of a wider group at the project initiation phase.
- Visiting Unibersitate Mondragon in the Basque County, a Co-operative University, including interviews with staff.
- A visit to a large department of co-operative studies, such as that at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada
- Dialogue with the Committee of University Chairs
- Interviews with serving Vice-Chancellors

¹⁷³ (for instance, Barnett, 2011c, pp. 1, 59–71; Collini, 2012)

¹⁷⁴ (MacPherson, 2007, pp. 281–282)

¹⁷⁵ I am indebted to the insights of Christoph Wulf, whose exploration of the dream of education helped me to understand the relationship between the Co-operative University as an abstract ideal and as a realisable and tangible institution (Wulf, 2003)

¹⁷⁶ ‘Co-operative Education Against the Crises’ was a conference that took place at the CIS Tower in Manchester on 4th July 2013. Details of the conference including coverage of the keynote speeches is available online at <http://www.co-opedagainstthecrises.org/>

13 **Appendix C: Analysis of the Higher Education Sector using Porter's Five Forces**

I have used Michael Porter's 'Five Forces' model¹⁷⁷ as a way of framing this exploration. The choice of Porter's model is significant for two reasons. The first is that it explicitly recognises the English HE sector as a competitive marketplace, rather than framing the analysis in terms of public policy discourse. There is little doubt that this is increasingly the case¹⁷⁸, as government policy and globalisation continues to push universities towards a more competitive stance through forms of 'market governance'¹⁷⁹. The second reason why the choice of Porter's framework is significant, is that it is 'rooted in microeconomics'¹⁸⁰, which is to say that it produces a view of industry structure from an understanding of the competitive pressures on individual enterprises by the various actors in the marketplace.¹⁸¹ It is therefore a useful analytical tool for a putative Co-operative University, seeking a place in the busy world of English HE¹⁸².

13.1 Porter describes five fundamental forces (see Figure 8, below) that shape what he calls the 'competitive structure' of an industry: the threat of new entrants; the bargaining power of buyers; the threat of substitute products or services; the bargaining power of suppliers; and rivalry among existing competitors¹⁸³. By considering the HE sector in this way, we can root an analysis of the barriers and enablers that a putative co-operative university would face in the practical considerations that University leaders face.

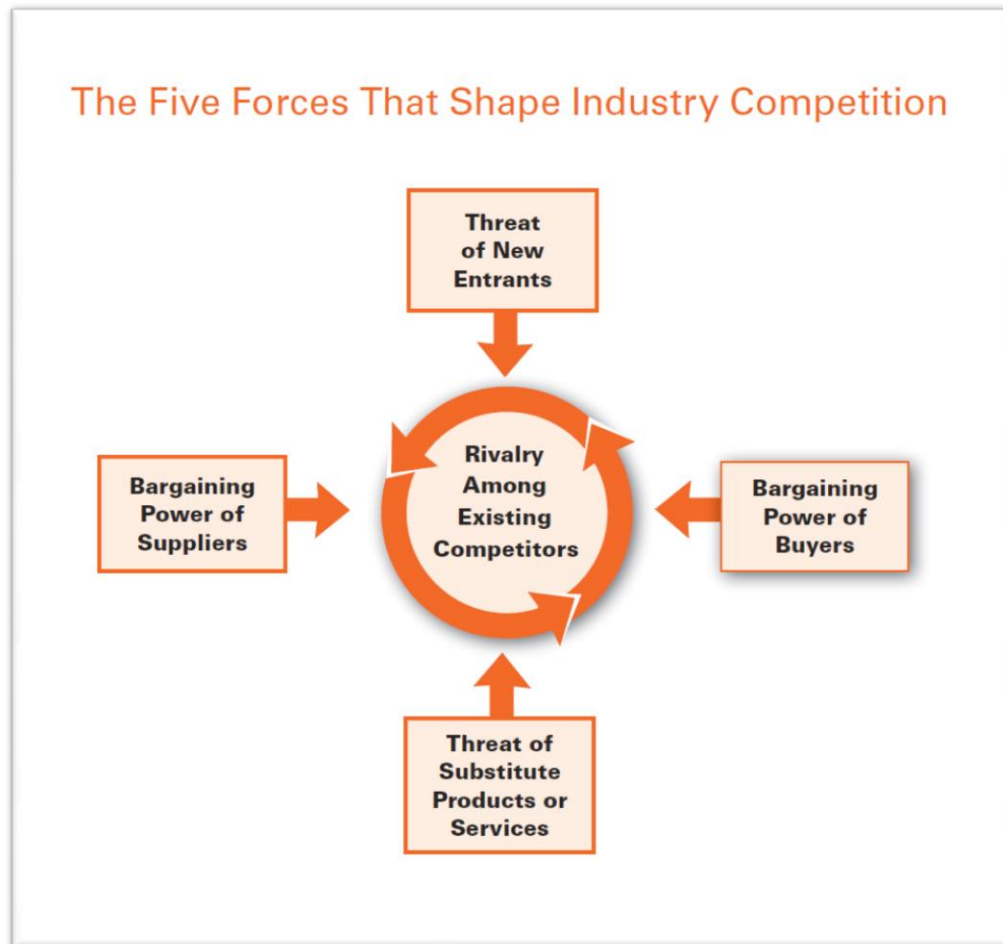


Figure 8 The Five Forces that shape industry competition - (Porter, 2008, p. 80)

The following sections examine how these forces manifest in the English HE sector.

13.2 Porter's 1st Fundamental Force: The Threat of New Entrants

The current coalition government has adopted a programme of deregulation, increased competition and lower barriers to entry in the HE sector, with the aim of producing a more diverse and competitive sector¹⁸⁴. Despite the lowering of barriers, there is a perception that higher education is a relatively difficult market to enter. However, this perception is changing fast. While English HE is a busy and complex industry with an 800-year history, recent research has revealed a wealth of diverse

institutions and missions, serving a wide variety of audiences, and respected commentators predict a rapid increase in the diversity of the sector¹⁸⁵. Rather than barriers, it is perhaps easier to see the HE sector as possessing multiple tiers of involvement, with regulatory responsibilities increasing broadly in proportion to the risk of institutional failure. ‘Depth’ of operation in the HE market can be judged by such tokens as the powers to award degrees¹⁸⁶; the ability to use the title ‘University’ or ‘University College’¹⁸⁷; the right to make government-backed finance available to students (either on all courses, or just a subset of recognised ones¹⁸⁸); the right to sponsor visas for students from countries outside the EU¹⁸⁹; the ability to obtain public funding from HEFCE¹⁹⁰; or at the most minimal interpretation of entry to the market, the ability to offer higher education courses with awards validated by HEIs possessing Degree Awarding Powers.¹⁹¹

- There are regulatory frameworks for each of these tiers or aspects of market involvement, which have been neatly brought together and described in the ‘Operating Framework’, a document that has resulted from a collaborative effort between a variety of sector-owned and non-departmental government bodies¹⁹². This document is the precursor to a new Act of Parliament, considered inevitable in the medium term.
- The ‘Operating Framework’ represents only the legislative portion of the regulatory framework. In addition, membership of a variety of collaborative enterprises within the sector is essential for all but the smallest institutions. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an example of this sort of activity: jointly funded by applicants

and by its member/owner HEIs, it provides a level playing field for all applicants and institutions (regardless of institutional form), at reasonable costs. Membership brings both benefits and responsibilities¹⁹³. The UK's few private universities operate within the UCAS system, which indicates that involvement in this sort of collaborative enterprise has advantages for larger HEIs. Smaller and locally-recruiting institutions are less likely to participate in UCAS, but many still choose to, indicating that the advantages of this system occur at relatively modest scale.

- Furthermore, HEIs are also subject to a wide range of non-HE legislation due to the breadth of their activities. Reducing regulatory complexity has been a long-term aim of the HE sector¹⁹⁴ and a co-operative university would need to ensure compliance with a broad range of legislation, on equality and diversity, employment law, health and safety law, and for larger organisations, law on procurement, corporation tax¹⁹⁵. If in receipt of public money compliance with freedom of information legislation is also required.
- Although we discuss what sort of organisation a co-operative university might be elsewhere in this report, the name 'co-operative university' implies barriers to entry at the high end of the range: use of the university title and degree awarding powers imply a minimum of four years' experience of delivering degree-level courses, a wide range of good governance factors, a minimum of 1,000 students of which 750 must be at degree level and a majority studying full-time¹⁹⁶. A profile of this sort takes some time to establish, and it is significant that most new universities are colleges of long standing. The path from college status to university

status is a fecund one, with a slew of new universities being created since the

- There is an alternative, but it comes with a heavy price-tag. Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) can apparently be purchased, and the right to use the word ‘University’ in the company name granted via Companies House; but it is necessary to find a HEI for sale that has DAP, and the capital to effect a purchase: the sale of the College of Law cost Montagu Private Equity £200M¹⁹⁷. Moreover the purchased degree-awarding powers are not held in perpetuity, and must be reviewed regularly. The generalisability of this new model has been outlined¹⁹⁸ but it still requires government approval, and there is concern within the regulatory community about the longer-term risks to students and to the reputation of the UK HE sector overseas from dilution of the high standards expected from HEFCE-funded institutions¹⁹⁹, and there is a possibility of judicial review²⁰⁰, given the tensions between promoting competition, openness and improving efficiency²⁰¹ straining within BIS’s policy of ‘[m]aking the higher education system more efficient and diverse’²⁰² simultaneously.
- Access to HEFCE funding is not a necessity for the co-operative university: the privately-owned University of Buckingham and Regent’s University do without it, despite their not-for-profit status²⁰³. Direct HEFCE funding is, in any case, in short supply – but a co-operative university with a internationally-recognised research profile, or with teaching programmes in subjects considered strategically important and vulnerable, such as some natural science, engineering, foreign languages and quantitative social science disciplines²⁰⁴.

- Access to the student loan book is probably essential for financial viability. Unless only elite student markets are targeted, student loans guarantee access to a higher education system on the basis of ability. Even with funded numbers capped, this is an important source of income for many institutions. For students to be able to access loans from the Student Loans Company, the HEI at which they study must be designated as recognised for this purpose. HEFCE-funded institutions will be designated by HEFCE, and alternative providers (or individual courses at those providers) will be designated by BIS, based on assessments made by HEFCE²⁰⁵.
- A co-operative university would need to consider carefully its approach to recruiting students from outside the EU. The ability to sponsor ‘Tier 4’ visas for scholars from overseas requires successful engagement with the QAA’s Educational Oversight procedures²⁰⁶. In addition to the review, engagement with the administrative requirements of the Home Office’s processes is onerous²⁰⁷.

13.2.2 Despite the extensive regulatory framework involved in entering the HE marketplace in England, there are 674 private providers currently operating²⁰⁸. The wide range of sizes, from less than 100 students to over 8,000 shows the diversity of viable models already operating in the alternative HE sector²⁰⁹. Over the past two decades, around 20 new not-for-profit, publicly-funded universities have also been created in England. Despite significant barriers faced by new providers, the English HE sector is an accessible one, as the scale and diversity of small and new providers shows. However, the sector remains dominated by large, publicly accountable institutions, but the current work by BIS opens the possibility

of radical shifts in the structure of the English HE system in the medium-term.

13.3 Porter's 2nd Fundamental Force: Bargaining Powers of Buyers

Although there are many other 'buyers' of university services besides students, tuition fees form the largest part of the HE sector's income, and represent the most significant part of the HE economy. The government is the other significant 'buyer', both because students are funded by state-backed loans, and because of the public funding universities receive both directly and through commissioning of research. Students and government each have considerable buying power, and we will now look at how these are exercised in turn.

- 13.3.1 The character of student 'buying power' is complex, and interwoven with the role of government. Higher education is in great demand because of the social and earnings benefits it offers to individual as well as the wider public benefits it secures. The high unit cost represents a problem of affordability²¹⁰. Government policy on tuition fees has increasingly shifted students into the role of buyers or consumers of their education²¹¹. While it is clear that students have complex identities as learners²¹², even when considered principally as consumers, students are both empowered by and vulnerable to the market²¹³. Students do not only bring finance to the university, but 'because university needs some effort on the part of the student'²¹⁴ they also bring their intellectual labour. Both the starting and ending assessments of students' intellectual attainment (in the form of UCAS tariff points on entry and degree classification on finishing) feed into institutional reputations as encoded in league tables. At the point of

application, therefore, students with higher grades have a greater 'purchasing power' in the marketplace, by being more likely to gain entry to an 'elite' institution. The decision to 'buy' into a university is generally exercised only once, and hence marketing is 'an issue of great importance'²¹⁵ for universities, to which considerable resource is devoted. However, the decision to apply for a place at a given university is usually influenced by evidence about the university's past performance and relationships with students. Accordingly, universities are likely to accord primary importance to stakeholder relationships that affect student recruitment or satisfaction²¹⁶.

- 13.3.2 There is negligible price competition: for home undergraduate students fees have risen to the government's £9,000 cap in the majority of cases. Higher Education is a positional good, where price sends a quality signal to the market, and 'students [are] more influenced by university prestige than measures of program quality'²¹⁷. Because universities wish to be perceived as high-quality, the government's maximum fee has become normative. There is, except in the FE in HE sector, inelastic demand for the sector's main business of undergraduate degrees.
- 13.3.3 Students cannot easily walk away from their education²¹⁸, and accordingly benefit from substantial organised consumer protection. Prior to entry this revolves around UCAS' governance of the admissions process, and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) whose role is 'to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for lower income and other under-represented groups'²¹⁹. While studying the QAA and HEFCE have a role in championing the student interest in general terms, by monitoring quality

and standards at universities. Review of individual complaints is available through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which acts as an ombudsman for the sector. Nevertheless, there is an argument that students still require stronger consumer protection²²⁰.

- 13.3.4 Students are active participants in their education²²¹ organising a system of course representatives and other elected officers to make the voice of students heard throughout the decision-making apparatus of the university. Students are comprehensively unionised, with almost all students represented through a democratic Students' Union formally constituted and recognised in law²²². Individual unions are normally affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS) and hence have a significant voice in public policy discourse. Moreover, student satisfaction is measured through the National Student Survey, the results of which feed into institutional reputations as encoded in league tables, and hence act as a driver for institutional behaviour. Students have a powerful voice in the HE sector, and their views (and those of their parents) help shape the sector's priorities. The relationships between students and their universities are generally perceived as long-term ones, so while the negotiating power of 'buyers' is great, it is usually exercised in partnership with the university, and hence does not represent a volatile factor in the sector. Moreover, a co-operative institution might reasonably be expected to possess institutional advantages in the process of relationship-building.
- 13.3.5 Students are financed with state-backed loans, to correct a tendency in the HE sector toward 'acute *market failure*'²²³ and to address disadvantage in access to higher education. Because of this, and also because it is a major

funder of research, the government is a powerful buyer of the HE sector's services. The dual role of the government as funder and legislator can affect universities in powerful ways, and over short timescales. Regulatory decisions (such as removing the cap on places for students with ABB at 'A'-level) change the 'rules' of the market, affecting both applicant and university behaviour. The government is a powerful monopsony buyer in the English HE sector.

13.4 Porter's 3rd Fundamental Force: The Threat of Substitute Products or Services

There is a growing literature on the potential for the HE sector to be disrupted. The most touted disruptor of the sector is technology, with the idea that internet-based instruction will reduce the labour-intensity of teaching in higher education. Online learning is an important and growing part of the higher education landscape, and will undoubtedly have long-term effects on learning practices. The current fad²²⁴ in educational technology is the MOOC, or Massive Open Online Course. While MOOCs are unlikely to kill-off universities as we know them, the combination of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) and new business models arguably has the capacity to disrupt traditional universities.

- 13.4.1 The above-inflation costs of higher education have become a hot political topic in US public policy discourse²²⁵. The longer-term effects of tripled fees in the UK are yet to be understood, but expense and debt are issues for young people in modern Britain. Prominent innovation theorists have posited that the combination of technology and new organisational forms have the capacity to disrupt traditional models of higher education,

bringing high-quality, low-cost tuition to a mass-market²²⁶. There is already evidence that innovative organisations are putting this theory to the test. Companies like Academic Partnerships are using an innovative model of online courses run by respected public universities targeting large employers who want to up-skill their workforce. These business models have attracted venture capital: there is a prima facie case that their adoption could therefore be used for a wide range of purposes, from profit-generation to reduced tuition costs. A co-operative university that chose to take advantage of technology, and operated an innovative business model might be able to create an offering in today's higher education marketplace as significant and revolutionary as that created by the Rochdale Pioneers in the grocery sector 160 years ago.

13.5 Porter's 4th Fundamental Force: The Bargaining Power of Suppliers

With respect to commodities and fuel, universities are in the same position as other large organisations: although prices are rising, the sector's purchasing consortia negotiate deals that offer value. Even a small co-operative university would be in a position to benefit from membership of organisations that would save it money.

13.6 Universities often need to raise capital for investment in new facilities. Although the circumstances of each university are unique, and smaller universities tend to pay more for borrowing²²⁷, looking at the sector as a whole, there is substantial evidence that lending in the sector is seen as a safe prospect. Moody's ratings agency advise that despite government cuts, higher education remains a strong export industry and figures strongly in

the government's economic strategy, and as a consequence is in a strong position to receive extraordinary support should the need arise²²⁸.

- 13.7 Higher Education is a labour-intensive industry: universities spend about 54% of total income on staff costs²²⁹. Staffing is unionised, with UCU and Unison the main recognised unions. UCU covers academic and higher-grade professional service staff, and claims a membership of more than a third of the eligible workforce²³⁰. In addition to unions, there is a fecund environment for professional associations, and the majority of staff will be a member of a professional body. Staff are generally well-educated, and expert in their fields, and there is legal protection for academic freedom²³¹.
- 13.8 Industrial action is relatively infrequent and has a minimal impact on the conduct of business. High standards of professional conduct are generally expected by students, staff and employers, and industrial relations tend to be relatively cordial and constructive. Pay rates are bargained nationally, and salaries are on a nationally-determined 'pay-spine' agreed between employers and unions, but on this 'spine' a number of different role structures exist. Outside this structure, individual bargaining over recruitment and retention occurs. 16.9% of staff in universities earn a salary of £55K or more (this is around the basic salary for a professor, a category of employment covering 10.2% of the workforce)²³².
- 13.9 There is a growing use of casualised academic labour to provide greater flexibility in the workforce, both in terms of hourly-paid contracts for academics, and for professional services staff the possibilities of outsourcing jobs. In addition, changes to pensions and terms and conditions under a long-running modernisation agenda have generally

reduced employee benefits. Although a cause of concern for unions, these appear to be growing trends, indicating that despite the labour intensity and unionisation in the industry, the sector is ‘relatively weakly unionized’²³³ and the bargaining power of academic staff is unequal and possibly reducing. An exacerbating factor is the increasing supply of doctorates, currently more than the academy can absorb. This leads to the availability of an oversupply of labour, which lack of scarcity tends to reduce the price of labour.

13.10 Porter’s 5th Fundamental Force: Rivalry Among Existing Competitors

Rivalries within the HE sector are characterised by collaboration as much as competition. Some commentators argue that ‘the universities that head the league tables [...exhibit...] a strongly competitive approach’²³⁴ there is also a strong heritage of cross-sector co-ordination and collaboration. The structure of rivalry within the sector is non-obvious: universities co-operate and compete with each other regularly and simultaneously.

- 13.11 As we have seen in 13.3.2 above, price competition is negligible in mainstream higher education, but some categories of students have extra bargaining power. By removing the cap on places for students with grades ABB or higher at ‘A’-level, the government has created a highly competitive market for these students. This policy decision has altered market behaviour and underpinned expansion strategies at some universities, while other universities reportedly offer incentives to students with high grades. Government policy, and not competitive impulses is leading to a zero-sum recruitment game with ‘increasingly frantic competition between a small number of universities’²³⁵.

- 13.12 There is no cap on postgraduate student numbers nor (visa controls aside²³⁶) on overseas recruitment. In these markets there is both differentiation and true competition on price and service, and universities attempt on the one hand to deploy increasingly sophisticated ‘humanistic marketing strategies’²³⁷ which develop classic relationship marketing into an ‘ethical’ approach²³⁸. In practice, this is less sinister than it sounds: information provision, openness, efficiency fairness and warmth are key characteristics of successful approaches. On the other hand, limited incentives to produce an economically diverse population among postgraduates and international students can lead to classic market segmentation (including the reproduction of inequalities)²³⁹ in a way that would be unacceptable in the more heavily regulated home undergraduate markets. Nevertheless, competition in these less regulated domains leads to innovation and diversity of offerings, beyond the traditional teenage undergraduate entrant.
- 13.13 Universities frequently co-operate with each other in some spheres, while competing in others. It is not uncommon for lecturers on competing programmes at neighbouring institutions to undertake joint research projects, for example, which may have been won in a competitive bidding process against other, similar consortia.
- ‘academics generally do not [compete] and are always collaborating across institutional boundaries for educational and research purposes. HEIs are still some of the most collaborative organisations around, they practice matrix management / dual-reporting, devolved (part-time) management roles, peer-review and collegial support.’²⁴⁰

- 13.14 There is a strong commitment to organisational collaboration within the sector, with a wide variety of trade associations and shared services, including UMAL, a mutual insurer²⁴¹. This collaborative spirit goes deep: in UCAS universities are sharing a service where they are highly competitive; HESA brings together a wide range of sensitive staff, student, admissions, financial, estates and other data and makes them publicly accessible; and it is difficult to imagine many industries where Finance Directors would get together to share notes and devise common approaches as they do in BUFDG.
- 13.15 To summarise our analysis using Porter's Five Fundamental Forces, we can see that the English HE sector is in a state of change, and that new technologies, new business models and government reforms are set to increase the diversity of the sector, but given the interests of a stable and dependable sector, this may have the effect of expanding the market for higher education, rather than increase competition in a zero-sum game (though competition will likely grow more intense). The regulatory structure is multi-tiered and complex to navigate, but the sector can provide a rewarding environment for institutions willing and able to build long-term relationships. Students simultaneously occupy roles as demanding consumers and valued partners and co-producers in their education, and staff are professional and highly-skilled, but unable to organise adequately against the threats to pay and conditions posed by growing managerialism. The English HE sector is a *sui generis* mix of collaboration and competition, of public duties and private interests, and of intertwined business and educational concerns.

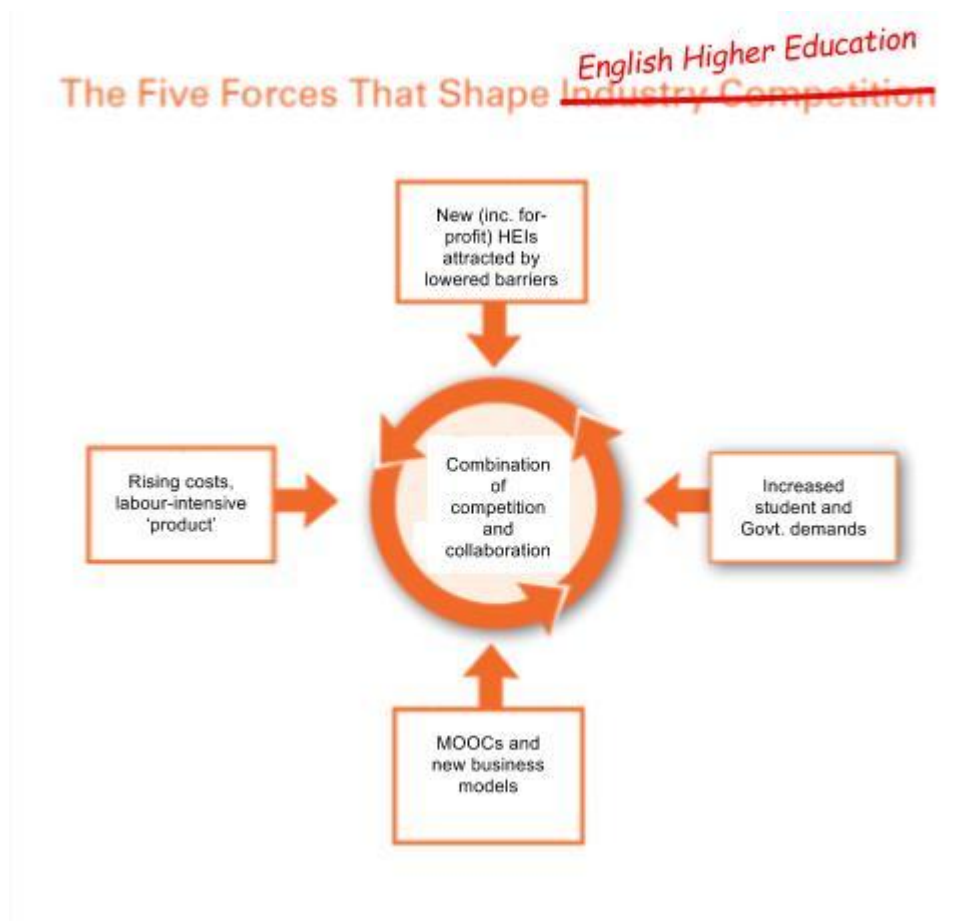


Figure 9 Relabelling of Porter's Five Forces based on the analysis of the HE sector

¹⁷⁷ (Porter, 2008)

¹⁷⁸ For evidence of the links between higher education and economic progress, and the use of the language of business by the sector, see works such as those explored in elsewhere, such as: (Gilead, 2012, pp. 1–2) and (UUK, 2011)

¹⁷⁹ Wendy Larner has explored this concept in depth, and I am indebted to her insights into neoliberalism as governmentality. The term 'market governance' is hers (Larner, 2000, p. 12) while other commentators have explored governance as being a feature of globalisation, part of a neoliberal project extending beyond the nation-state (Robertson & Dale, 2013, p. 431).

¹⁸⁰ (Pringle & Huisman, 2011, p. 39)

¹⁸¹ (Porter, 2008, p. 79)

¹⁸² (Porter, 2008, p. 80)

¹⁸³ Porter tends to use battlefield language in his description of industries: 'fierce rivalry' exists between 'entrenched competitors' who try to 'stake out a position that is more profitable and less vulnerable to attack' as a way of 'defending against the competitive forces' (Porter, 2008, pp. 78, 81, 80). However, despite this combative language, Porter's analytical tool is nuanced and permits discussion of a wide variety of factors affecting profitability within an industry.

¹⁸⁴ The desire for greater diversity and competition is presented in the Government's response to the Browne Review (BIS, 2011, pp. 46–53).

¹⁸⁵ HEPI have discussed potentially massive changes in a space of time as short as three years from the time of writing this report (Middlehurst & Feilden, 2011, pp. 36, 39–42)

¹⁸⁶ (BIS, 2004, pp. 13–24)

¹⁸⁷ University title can be awarded by the Privy Council *via* one of two routes, either the granting of a Royal Charter, or through provisions in the Companies Act (Regulatory Partnership Group, 2013, p. 15)

- ¹⁸⁸ Publicly-funded HEIs are eligible for student finance on all courses (with minor caveats) but alternative providers in the private sector can also obtain access to student finance for specific courses (BIS, 2004). A full list of currently designated courses is available (Student Finance England, n.d.).
- ¹⁸⁹ (Home Office, 2013)
- ¹⁹⁰ The sums are substantial: a £4.47Bn publicly-funded grant to the sector in 2013 (HEFCE, 2013a) disbursed among 129 HEIs (HEFCE, 2011).
- ¹⁹¹ (Regulatory Partnership Group, 2013, p. 11)
- ¹⁹² The Operating Framework was produced by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Office for Fair Access, The Student Loans Company, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Quality Assurance Agency and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, acting in concert as the Regulatory Partnership Group (Regulatory Partnership Group, 2013, pp. 61–62)
- ¹⁹³ The most significant benefit of UCAS membership is enhanced access to the pool of prospective students, but this comes with responsibilities – to recruit for full-time students through UCAS alone, and to comply with a variety of technical requirements (UCAS, n.d.)
- ¹⁹⁴ The magisterial report ‘Easing the Burden’ (Better Regulation Task Force, 2002) has generated a slew of successor activity over the past two decades, with the current work of the HE Better Regulation Group being an example of the ways in which the sector collaborates to achieve better collective outcomes for HEIs.
- ¹⁹⁵ The range of regulations that bind HEIs is wide, and inconsistently applied in the sector (Capita Consulting, 2011, p. 3)
- ¹⁹⁶ (BIS, 2004, pp. 13–24) modified by (BIS, 2012)
- ¹⁹⁷ (Morgan, 2013)
- ¹⁹⁸ A model for a take-over of an existing HEI has been developed by the Law firm Eversheds, and published in a UUK report (Stanfield, 2009, pp. 7–8).
- ¹⁹⁹ (Morgan, 2013)
- ²⁰⁰ (Interview with Malin, 2013)
- ²⁰¹ (Interview with Boggs, 2013)
- ²⁰² (Willets, 2012)
- ²⁰³ Neither Buckingham nor Regent’s benefit from a HEFCE block grant (HEFCE, 2011; Regent’s University London, 2012; University of Buckingham, n.d.)
- ²⁰⁴ At present, HEFCE is continuing support for a small number of strategically important and vulnerable subjects under a previous policy that expired in 2012. A new policy in this area has not been announced to date (HEFCE, 2013b)
- ²⁰⁵ (Regulatory Partnership Group, 2013, pp. 15–16)
- ²⁰⁶ (QAA, 2012)
- ²⁰⁷ The cost of Tier 4 visa compliance to the HE sector is estimated at £67m (Higher Education Better Regulation Group, 2013)
- ²⁰⁸ (BIS, 2013, p. 7)
- ²⁰⁹ (BIS, 2013, pp. 30–31)
- ²¹⁰ (Johnstone, 2004, p. 403)
- ²¹¹ The position of students as consumers is complex, as new financial arrangements cut against the moral obligations that students and teachers owe each other in a shared learning enterprise, and it becomes incumbent upon lecturers to review, discuss and gain consensus on these moral obligations (Regan, 2012, pp. 2, 9) and to refresh the debate with students about the purposes of the university (Williams, 2013, p. 150).
- ²¹² (Dickinson, 2013; Williams, 2013, pp. 105–121, particularly p.120)
- ²¹³ (Williams, 2013, p. 117)
- ²¹⁴ (Jürgen Enders, in Matthews, 2013a)
- ²¹⁵ (C. Chapleo, 2004, p. 17)
- ²¹⁶ (Chris Chapleo & Simms, 2010, pp. 15–16)
- ²¹⁷ (Moogan, 1999 in Marginson, 2006, p. 3)
- ²¹⁸ Retention rates in HE have remained remarkably consistent over a long period, with annual percentage rates for attrition averaging somewhere in the mid-teens in most years (HESA, 2013a). Differences in attrition rates between institutions may be primarily attributable to cultural factors (L. Thomas, 2002, pp. 438–441).
- ²¹⁹ (OFFA, 2013)
- ²²⁰ (Palfreyman in Grove, 2013)
- ²²¹ (Williams, 2013, p. 5)
- ²²² (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2012, pt. 9.B (paras 9.07–9.10, pp. 218–220))
- ²²³ (Buckland, 2004, p. 245)
- ²²⁴ Although an educational practice rather than a managerial one, the advantages of the MOOC are commonly perceived to be financial and managerial in nature, and there is significant managerial and policymaker interest

in the role of MOOCs. While the role of technology in education is sustained and significant, the current MOOC phenomenon appears to meet the requirements for recognition as a HE management fad, in that a crisis has been identified (high tuition fees) a winning strategy that solves the problem proposed (learning moves online with reductions in labour intensity) the narrative is evolving (every university seems to be joining a MOOC consortium, and the politicians have endorsed the agenda ‘Colleges must do their part to keep costs down’ (Obama, 2013)). We are arguably engaged in the second stage of the MOOC fad evolution, awaiting the analyses of user experience that characterise the third ‘time lag’ stage (Birnbbaum, 2000, pp. 125–132).

²²⁵ (Obama, 2013)

²²⁶ Extensive work on innovations in higher education has been done by Clayton Christensen and his associates. In an extensive case study of two institutions, Harvard and BYU-Idaho, Christensen develops a range of insights into the competitive pressures that drive US universities to climb the Carnegie scale, echoing Michael Shattock’s observations that the pressures of the UK HE system tend to drive universities ‘towards a common model’ (Shattock, 2010, p. 9). Christensen’s observation is that Universities face three core strategic choices, about the students they will serve, the subjects they will teach, and the model of scholarship they will promote (Christensen & Eyring, 2011, pp. 346–378). The effect of making strategic choices about these factors, it is claimed, can be to change the university’s ‘DNA’. This topic is explored in greater depth in a paper by Christensen’s team at the Center for American Progress, which argues that universities conflate three separate models of value-creation (Stabell & Fjeldstad, 1998 argue for three basic logic systems for value creation: solution shops, value-adding chains, and facilitated user networks). This conflation creates system inefficiencies and transaction costs, which could be dispensed with by some universities that chose a single logic of value creation (treating tuition and student progress as a value-adding chain process). By applying the right business model for the task, and utilising the power of online learning, it is argued that the cost of high-quality tuition can be reduced dramatically (Christensen et al., 2011, pp. 3–6).

²²⁷ (HEFCE, 2004, p. 11, para. 24)

²²⁸ (Amenta & Kieling, 2011)

²²⁹ (UUK, 2012b, sec. B, p. 17)

²³⁰ UCU claims a membership of 119,401 (Trades Union Congress, 2013) more than a third of the 321,680 eligible staff in the sector (HESA, 2013b. Calculation based on Table A)

²³¹ ‘[A]cademic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions’ (British Government, 1988b)

²³² (HESA, 2013b, Table B)

²³³ (Watson, 2009, p. 51)

²³⁴ (Shattock, 2010, p. 26)

²³⁵ (Bekhradnia, 2012)

²³⁶ Visa regulations have reduced the attractiveness of the UK as a study destination (ICEF Monitor, 2013)

²³⁷ (Gibbs, 2002, pp. 329–333)

²³⁸ (Gibbs & Murphy, 2009, p. 351)

²³⁹ (Hemsley-Brown, 2011, p. 128)

²⁴⁰ (Ridley-Duff, 2013)

²⁴¹ (KPMG, 2006, pp. 5–15, 28–40)

A co-operative future for academic employment?

This survey is about your views on the future of academic employment. It has been developed by a student of higher education as part of a final project on a masters programme, and is designed to help thinking about how Higher Education Institutions might change in the future. Specifically, we are looking at the possibilities raised by the notion of a distinctly co-operative university, where staff, students and the community collectively own and run the university, democratically.

We want to discover more about the sort of expectations that future academics hold about employment, and to look at their preferences when seeking academic employment. By asking questions that relate to co-operative values, we hope to be able to determine whether the idea of a co-operative university would be attractive.

By finding out more about potential future academics' expectations and preferences around employment, we hope to be able inform the working practices that universities adopt in the future, and to think more deeply about the sorts of principles and values that Higher Education Institutions ought to observe.

A small gesture of thanks for completing this survey, we are offering the chance to win £30 in amazon vouchers.

The survey takes between 5 and 10 minutes to do.



1 **Ethical statement**

The researcher has made every effort to comply with the policies of the Institute of Education (IoE) and British Educational Research Association (BERA). 1) The research project this survey relates to is called 'Realising the Co-operative University' and is designed to explore the possibilities for a more co-operative future for universities in England. The research is being conducted on behalf of the Co-operative College. 2) You do not have to submit any personal information to complete this survey. However, you will have the opportunity to leave your email address as part of a prize draw, or if you want to hear more about the research in future. Only those people who have indicated a desire to stay in touch with the research will have their email addresses retained by the researcher. Email addresses provided for the prize draw only will be deleted following the prize-draw, which will be by the end of January 2014 at the very latest. 3) You can withdraw your consent at any time up to the point when you submit your answers. If you choose to withdraw before submitting, the researcher will retain no record of your answers up until that point, nor of your involvement in the research. 4) This research is focused on future academics, and many of the questions only make sense if you are currently studying for a research-based qualification at a university (or have recently finished). The researchers can promise confidentiality as described above, and cannot identify whether any

participants are children or in another group considered vulnerable. 5) The researcher will produce an analysis of the results of the survey, and those participants specifically asking to receive further information will be sent a copy of this in due course. 6) The researcher is Dan Cook, a masters student at the Institute of Education, University of London. Dan can be reached by email at d.j.cook@bristol.ac.uk

2 Survey starts here

Q1: Are you currently studying for (or have recently finished) a postgraduate research degree? *By this we mean either a doctorate, like a PhD, or DPhil; or a research masters, such as an MRes or MPhil with likely progression or upgrade to a doctoral degree; or a professional doctorate such as an EngD, DSocSci, ProfD, DBA or EdD. (after answering this question scroll to the bottom, and click 'Continue >>')

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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3 About you

This page is to find out more about you, so that we can compare results across the survey. It also gives you the opportunity to receive a prize draw, and gives you the opportunity to find out more about the project, later on.

Your gender *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Your age *

Have you worked in full-time paid employment before returning to study? *Please answer for the majority of the time before returning to study (if any)

Do you want to be included in the prize draw? To thank participants for their time, we will enter all those who wish into a prize draw to win £30 in amazon vouchers

- ☐ Yes, I would like to be included in the prize draw.

Would you like to find out more about the results of this study? We anticipate having a summary of findings by January 2014.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to find out more about this study

Would you be potentially willing for us to contact you to follow-up on your answers? Please tick the box, and remember to give your email address below.

- ☐ I am open to being contacted to follow up on my responses. (By ticking this box I am also stating that I am over 18 years old.)

Your email If you have told us that you would like to receive the outcome of the project, put yourself forward for a follow-up discussion, or that you would like to be entered into the prize draw, we will need your email address. We only retain your email address for the purposes described in this survey, and once the survey has been analysed and the prize draw winner selected, we will delete your email from our records.

...and finally Are there any comments that you would like to make about the idea of a Co-operative University, or any of the issues raised by this survey?

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4 About your studies

This section is to find out more about the kind of study you are engaged in, because we theorise that factors relating to study might affect expectations and attitudes around employment.

What pace are you studying at? *

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time

Are you doing paid work alongside study? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you are working, do you consider your paid work to be academic work? * I consider my work to be

- ☐ Academic work
- ☐ Non-academic work

Are your studies and paid work linked in the form of a university/industry

partnership? * Sometimes these are part of official schemes, referred to as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) or Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE) studentships

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Which subject area do you work in? * Please choose the one that closest fits your department

Would you say your own research is applied or theoretical? * Most research comprises both elements - please tell us which description most closely fits how you feel about your own research

- ☐ Applied
- ☐ Theoretical

How co-operative or competitive is your discipline? * Thinking about your discipline in general, to what extent would you say it was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Highly competitive

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Highly co-operative or collaborative

5 About your Higher Education Institution

Research and teaching priorities of your Higher Education Institution * To what extent do you think your Higher Education Institution is focused on Teaching, or on Research?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Teaching-focused ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Research-focused

Industry-focus of the Higher Education Institution *To what extent do you think your Higher Education Institution is linked with Industry?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Driven by the needs of the workplace/industry

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Tends to set its own academic direction

What is your Higher Education Institution's name? *

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6 Your values at work

Generally-speaking, what makes a workplace attractive to you? *

Very
attractive

Attractive

Neutral

Unattractive

Very
unattractive

It provides a structure for me to help myself to achieve my career goals

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I can take personal responsibility for my work

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Decisions are made democratically in the workplace

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I am treated equally, and not discriminated against because of who I am

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I am treated fairly and equitably according to transparent rules

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	Very attractive	Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Very unattractive
There is a sense of solidarity between colleagues, whereby colleagues give each other support to achieve common objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now imagine you have secured a post as an Academic at the Higher Education Institution (HEI) where you are currently studying *THINKING ABOUT THE WHOLE HEI, to what extent do you agree that the following statements are REALISTIC?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The HEI provides a structure for me to help myself to achieve my career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HEI holds me responsible for the work I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HEI makes decisions democratically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HEI treats me equally, and does not discriminate against me because of who I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HEI treats me fairly and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
equitably according to transparent rules					
The HEI fosters a sense of solidarity, whereby it encourages common objectives and mutual support between employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now we would like you to imagine that you have joined the staff of your current DEPARTMENT *Thinking about what you could realistically expect from the staff in your department, tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My Department provides a structure for me to help myself achieve my career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My Department holds me responsible for the work I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My Department makes decisions democratically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My Department treats me as an	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
equal, and does not discriminate against me because of who I am					
My Department treats me fairly and equitably, according to transparent rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My Department fosters a sense of solidarity, whereby it encourages common objectives and mutual support between colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What could be done to make your current Higher Education Institution (HEI) a more attractive place to work for you? *How attractive do you find the following statements?					
	Very attractive	Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Very unattractive
My HEI could develop a better structure for staff to help themselves to achieve their career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My HEI could enable staff to take more personal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very attractive	Attractive	Neutral	Unattractive	Very unattractive
responsibility for their work					
My HEI could make decisions more democratically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My HEI could ensure all staff are treated equally, and are not discriminated against because of who they are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My HEI could ensure all staff are treated fairly and equitably according to transparent rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My HEI could foster a sense of solidarity, whereby it encourages common objectives and mutual support between staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What else is important to your satisfaction at work? The questions in this section have asked about the co-operative values of self-help, self-reliance, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. We would be interested in your views on whether these are important values to you, or if there are other values that you think are equally, or more important at work.

7 Your future employment

We are interested in finding out more about your views on academic work

Becoming an academic *Thinking about academic work and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), tell us how much you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would like to become an academic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can see myself working both inside and outside HEIs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEIs are among the best places to work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If HEIs changed for the better, they would be more attractive employers to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEIs have become too focused on the wrong things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEIs are becoming too corporate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Universities are among the most important institutions for the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

future of
our society

On balance *Thinking about your likely future career

- ☐ I will probably end up working for Higher Education Institutions, as a part of my future career
- ☐ I will probably work outside of Higher Education Institutions in the future

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8 **Thank you for completing the survey**

We appreciate your time and views. Please press submit (button located below the ethical statement) to send your responses to the researcher.



9 **Ethical statement**

This section is repeated from the first page. The researcher has made every effort to comply with the policies of the Institute of Education (IoE) and British Educational Research Association (BERA). 1) The research project this survey relates to is called 'Realising the Co-operative University' and is designed to explore the possibilities for a more co-operative future for universities in England. The research is being conducted on behalf of the Co-operative College. 2) You do not have to submit any personal information to complete this survey. However, you will have the opportunity to leave your email address as part of a prize draw, or if you want to hear more about the research in future. Only those people who have indicated a desire to stay in touch with the research will have their email addresses retained by the researcher. Email addresses provided for the prize draw only will be deleted following the prize-draw, which will be by the end of January 2014 at the very latest. 3) You can withdraw your consent at any time up to the point when you submit your answers. If you choose to withdraw before submitting, the researcher will retain no record of your answers up until that point, nor of your involvement in the research. 4) This research is focused on future academics, and many of the questions only make sense if you are currently studying for a research-based qualification at a university (or have recently finished). The researchers can promise confidentiality as described above, and cannot identify whether any participants are children or in another group considered vulnerable. 5) The researcher will produce an analysis of the results of the survey, and those participants specifically asking to receive further information will be sent a copy of this in due course. 6) The researcher is Dan Cook, a masters student at the Institute of Education, University of London. Dan can be reached by email at d.j.cook@bristol.ac.uk

15 Appendix E: Analysis of the survey

15.1 The purpose of the survey was to find out about the attitudes of current and recent PhD students to academic employment, and to co-operative values. Given the focus of the report on the English HE system, the ideal population to sample from would comprise all students at all English HEIs. Regretfully, there is no pre-existing mailbase for contacting these individuals, and the many mailbases covering sub-sets of the population have a membership broader than just English HEIs. I therefore could not select and contact a sample methodically from a dataset on an ideal population without spending more time than was available for the project. I considered using just one or two HEIs as proxies for the English sector as a whole, but this seemed more likely to produce effects of skewing the data because of characteristics of the target population at those HEIs than a more random sample. I therefore resolved that an internet-based publicity campaign targeting the UK research postgraduate population via multiple routes, was more likely to achieve a greater degree of randomness in the data. The details of the UK's postgraduate researchers exists in HESA's HEIDI data extraction tool, so it was theoretically possible to compare an opportunistic survey sample drawn from UK-based JISC mailing lists to a wider population with known characteristics. Furthermore, the existence of multiple mailbases targeting postgraduate research students (and administrators working with this category of student) allowed for wide publicity of the survey. I therefore adopted an opportunistic sampling strategy, targeting mailing lists potentially covering the whole of the UK's

postgraduates either directly or through proxies, with the aim of maximising respondents.

- 15.2 The questionnaire filtered out respondents who were not current or recent research postgraduates, but still gave all respondents the opportunity to enter the prize draw and to find out more about the results in due course. Hereinafter I refer to the total number of respondents as ‘unfiltered respondents’ and the category of respondents filtered to include only those studying or recently completed a research degree simply as ‘respondents’.
- 15.3 The survey asked a number of questions about the current place of study, biographical data, work history and used Likert scales to measure attitudes to co-operative values at work. Respondents were also given two opportunities to offer free-text responses. Full details of the questions are available at Appendix D: Questions asked in the survey.
- 15.4 The survey was developed on Google Drive’s online questionnaire tool, and opened on 15 August 2013. The data was extracted on 30 August 2013. The survey was publicised using a number of UK-based mailing lists, each of which is a national list with either a membership of postgraduates or of administrators with responsibility for postgraduate issues, and the message enjoined respondents to publicise the survey among postgraduates:
- ADMIN-GRAD@JISCMail.AC.UK
 - POSTGRAD@JISCMail.AC.UK
 - NUS-POSTGRAD@JISCMail.AC.UK
 - AUA-DEPTADMIN@JISCMail.AC.UK
 - UKCGE-MEMBERS@JISCMail.AC.UK

- 15.4.1 The survey invitation was also sent out to PhD mailing lists at the University of Bristol.
- 15.5 In addition, I made direct appeals to relevant individuals and organisations on Twitter, and the survey was re-tweeted by a wide range of individuals and organisations
- 15.6 I felt these lists and tweets were appropriate, as they were likely to result in a spread of respondents from different institutions and subjects, and given the targeted lists, mainly UK-based individuals.
- 15.7 I chose not to measure the method by which respondents discovered the survey, as I had no way of using this information.
- 15.8 I theorised that the following general factors might produce difference in respondents' answers: gender, age; and experience of the workplace (including a specific question about whether studies were industry-linked).
- 15.9 I further theorised that while type of institution studied at probably would not make a difference to attitudes, discipline of study might. In this, I followed the thinking put forward by Becher and Trowler that while there are a multitude of factors affecting competition in academic work, '[t]here is considerable variation in collaborative practice between the hard [mainly natural science] and soft [mainly humanities] ends of the continuum'²⁴². I wanted to see if there was a difference in response by discipline, working on Becher and Trowler's classification of disciplines as Hard/Soft and Pure/Applied²⁴³.
- 15.10 I chose not to control for location, nationality, or other geographical factor. My reasons for this were as follows:
- 15.10.1 I targeted individuals at UK-based universities.

- 15.10.2 Co-operatives are an international phenomenon, with internationally-agreed principles of operation and similar legal frameworks.
- 15.10.3 Academic employment is similar in its essentials across the globe.
- 15.10.4 If I had had access to international mailing lists, I would have controlled for this, and it would be an interesting experiment to repeat a similar survey in different countries, to see if differences exist between, say, countries with different Power-Distance indices, Individualism indices or Masculinity indices in the World-Values Survey, because it is arguable that ‘nationality defines organisational rationality’²⁴⁴, and hence in questions about values in a specific institutional setting, one might expect to get different responses depending on nationality of respondent.
- 15.10.5 My reference data ‘the population’ was a HESA report from the HEIDI system giving details of the 2011/12 research student population in the UK, showing age, gender, mode of attendance, and discipline of study as represented by top-level JACS code.
- 15.11 There are several limitations on the data and my interpretation of them, including, but probably inexclusively:
 - 15.11.1 Lack of control on nationality/domicile discussed above means that some answers may have come from outside the population used for reference (HESA data from 2011/12 on research students).
 - 15.11.2 The HESA data are the most recent available (2011/12) and while the population of PhD students stays reasonably stable between years, I recognise that I am not comparing answers within the exact same population. The side-effects are likely to be negligible given the size of the population and its stability from year to year.

- 15.11.3 The possibility of false representation as eligible to complete the survey.
- 15.11.4 Bias introduced from the selection of mailing lists.
- 15.11.5 An error on my part where I gave different options for age-range than those in the HESA data, rendering direct comparability difficult, except at a very high level.
- 15.11.6 The sample is too small to draw statistically valid general conclusions about the population. It is also too small to be effectively weighted.
- 15.12 The number of unfiltered respondents to the survey was 150. The number of respondents who were current or recent research students ('respondents') was 122. This latter figure represents about 0.11% of the population of 108,290 full-person equivalents (headcount, essentially). Thus the survey sample is too small to be statistically meaningful, and the conclusions that may be drawn from it are limited to what can be said about this population. Further research would be required to extend the survey to a statistically significant proportion of the population.
- 15.13 There was a bias in the survey data towards respondents who identified their gender as either female or who did not disclose this information, compared to the population (see Table 4). Respondents identifying as male were under-represented by 11.61%.

Table 4 Gender of survey respondents compared to population

GENDER	POPULATION	RESPONDENTS	DIFFERENCE
MALE	53.41%	41.80%	-11.61%
FEMALE	46.59%	54.92%	8.33%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	0.00%	3.28%	3.28%

- 15.14 There was a bias in the survey data toward respondents studying full-time, of 7.1% compared to the population (see Table 5, below).

Table 5 Mode of Study of survey respondents compared to population

MODE OF STUDY	POPULATION	RESPONDENTS	DIFFERENCE
FULL-TIME	72.41%	79.51%	7.10%
PART-TIME	27.59%	20.49%	-7.10%

15.15 Discipline of study was coded using JACS data. A difference between the version of JACS used in the survey, and that used by HESA meant that some categories had to be collapsed to allow a comparison, but the robustness of the JACS scheme means integrity of the data was retained. The percentages of respondents identifying as studying in various disciplines is compared to the population in Table 6, below.

Table 6 Differences in study discipline between population and respondents

DISCIPLINE	POPULATION	RESPONDENTS	DIFFERENCE
MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY	9.47%	0.00%	-9.47%
SUBJECTS ALLIED TO MEDICINE	7.33%	0.82%	-6.51%
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES	13.55%	13.93%	0.38%
VETERINARY SCIENCES, AGRICULTURE AND RELATED SUBJECTS	1.18%	0.82%	-0.36%
PHYSICAL SCIENCES	12.41%	13.93%	1.53%
MATHEMATICAL AND COMPUTER SCIENCES	7.52%	0.82%	-6.70%
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY	0.00%	4.92%	4.92%
ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING AND PLANNING	2.15%	2.46%	0.31%
SOCIAL STUDIES	10.19%	13.11%	2.92%
LAW	2.45%	0.82%	-1.63%
BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES	6.88%	13.93%	7.05%
MASS COMMUNICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION	1.12%	0.82%	-0.30%
LANGUAGES	6.55%	6.56%	0.01%
HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES	7.78%	6.56%	-1.23%
CREATIVE ARTS AND DESIGN	3.99%	10.66%	6.67%
EDUCATION	7.40%	9.84%	2.44%
COMBINED	0.02%	0.00%	-0.02%

Given the small size of the sample, it was gratifying to note that the survey data was a reasonably good match for the population data, with no difference between the two datasets of greater than 9.47% and a standard deviation of a mere 4.32%. This spread of disciplines is good enough to draw some tentative conclusions about differences in attitudes between disciplines, subject to the caveats laid out elsewhere. The different proportions of disciplinary background between respondents and the population has been plotted visually in Figure 10.

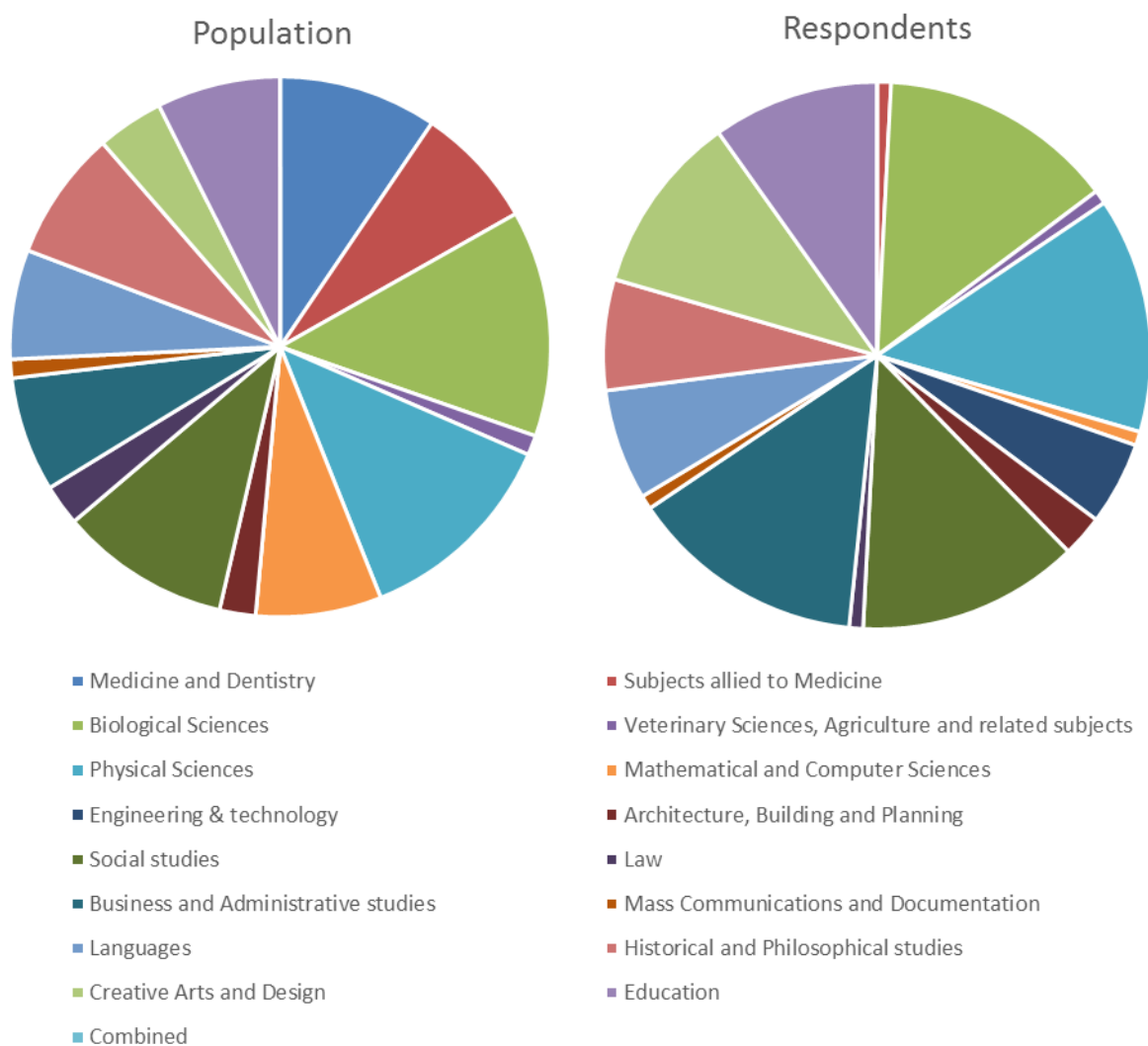


Figure 10 Differences in disciplinary background between the population and respondents

- 15.16 The age range of respondents appears to correlate reasonably well with the population (see Table 7, below), with a standard deviation of only 3.9%. However, an error in coding on my part results in an uncertainty factor of about 10%, meaning that these data are not very reliable.

Table 7 Age ranges of population and respondents

RESPONDENT AGE RANGE (CLOSEST EQUIVALENT RANGE FROM THE POPULATION IN PARENTHESES)	POPULATION	RESPONDENTS	DIFFERENCE (+/- <10%)
20 OR YOUNGER	0.06%	0.00%	-0.06%
21-25 (21-24)	22.34%	27.87%	5.53%
26-30 (25-29)	31.78%	31.15%	-0.63%
31-40 (30-39)	26.46%	18.03%	-8.43%
41-50 (40-49)	12.00%	16.39%	4.40%
51-60 (50-59)	5.60%	4.92%	-0.68%
61 OR OLDER (60 OR OLDER)	1.76%	1.64%	-0.12%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
TOTAL	100.00%	100.00%	

- 15.17 Overall, then, we can say that for the size of the sample, the respondents represent a loose analogue for the population. While we cannot build statistically valid statements about the population from the respondents, we have a good enough response sample to be able to identify some correlations within the respondents' data, in order to develop hypotheses that could be tested in a larger study in future.

15.18 Findings from the survey

The main objective of the analysis was to determine differences between the values of the respondents, their opinions on the values of their university in two different contexts, and their value preferences for a

university workplace. Subject to the caveats in the preceding section, the data produced the following results:

15.19 In our survey on the attitudes of current and recent research postgraduates, we asked two sets of questions that asked about respondents' beliefs about the extent to which their university supported co-operative values (see Appendix A: ICA Co-operative principles). We split the questions into similar ones about their current department, and their university as a whole, because we were interested in finding out if respondents held different views about the co-operative tendencies of their organisation. We theorised that the smaller and more intimate setting of the Department might score more highly on all the co-operative values, and overall the

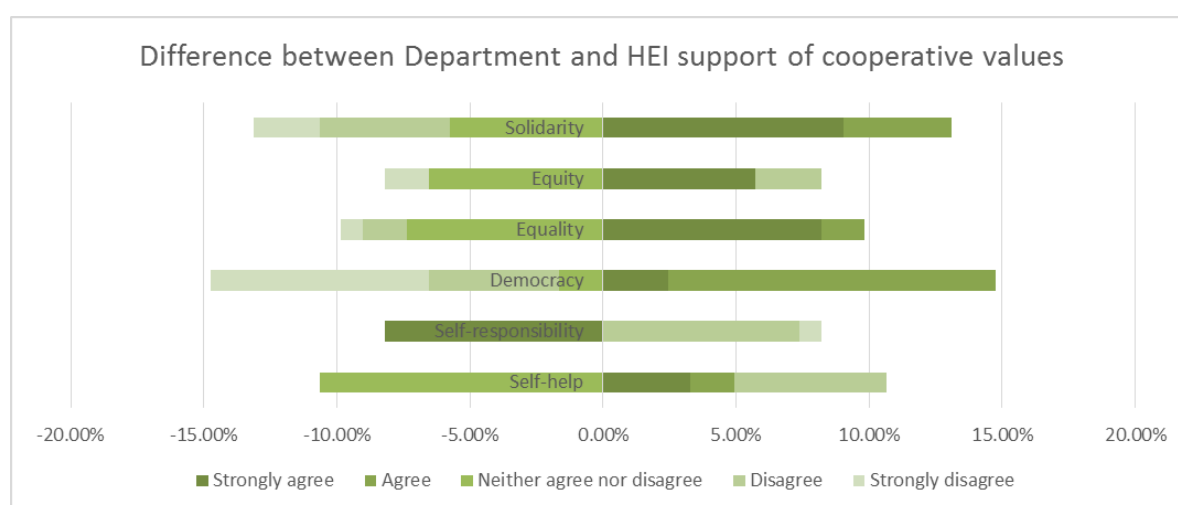


Figure 11 Difference between Department and University support of Co-operative values

data bear this theory out, with some interesting caveats. We produced two tables, one for the department and one for the university, each showing the extent to which respondents agreed with statements about the co-operative values espoused in that setting. The questions were very similar, to aid comparability. We subtracted the table for the university from the table for the department, to obtain the difference in values. In Figure 11 we plotted

these differences, with darker colours indicating greater agreement with the statements about the values. Positive percentages indicate where respondents think the department reflects the values better than the university, and negative percentages reflect the opposite. The size of the bars indicates the strength of the difference. Curiously, although respondents generally believe that their Department upholds co-operative values better than their University, there are notable exceptions. Firstly, there is a stark difference between views on the value of self-responsibility and all others. For each other value, departments are believed to uphold the co-operative values more than the university, but universities are believed to uphold the value of self-responsibility to a far greater extent than the departments. This possibly indicates that the department can feel a little ‘cosy’ and that accountability is held to be an attribute of the centre of the university. It would be interesting to see if we got the same results if we re-ran the study at the University of Mondragon. Secondly, there is far more ambivalence about universities’ support of the values than the departments – respondents are universally less sure about their university’s position than their departments. This finding has implications for communications within the university.

- 15.19.1 In our survey of current and recent doctoral students, we asked how much respondents agreed with the statement ‘HEIs have become too focussed on the wrong things’. A sense of unease is evident in the figures: while 18% strongly agreed; 31.2% agreed; and 37.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. 13.1% disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed. When we asked if HEIs were becoming too corporate, respondents’ opinions were clear:

while 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case, and a sizeable minority of 33.6% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, only 13.1% disagreed, with a single respondent strongly disagreeing.

15.19.2 We found that 73.8% of respondents found the idea of workplace democracy either ‘very attractive’ or ‘attractive’, and this preference was fairly stable (between 70% and 76%) regardless of time spent in employment, with preference for democracy rising slightly in line with increased experience of the workplace, and with no discernible correlation with age. Gender was a significant variable, with 15.9% more women than men finding workplace democracy an attractive or very attractive idea. Students in more applied disciplines were 11.8% less likely to find workplace democracy attractive or very attractive, than their counterparts in more theoretical disciplines; and students with industry-linked research degrees were also 9.1% less likely to find workplace democracy attractive

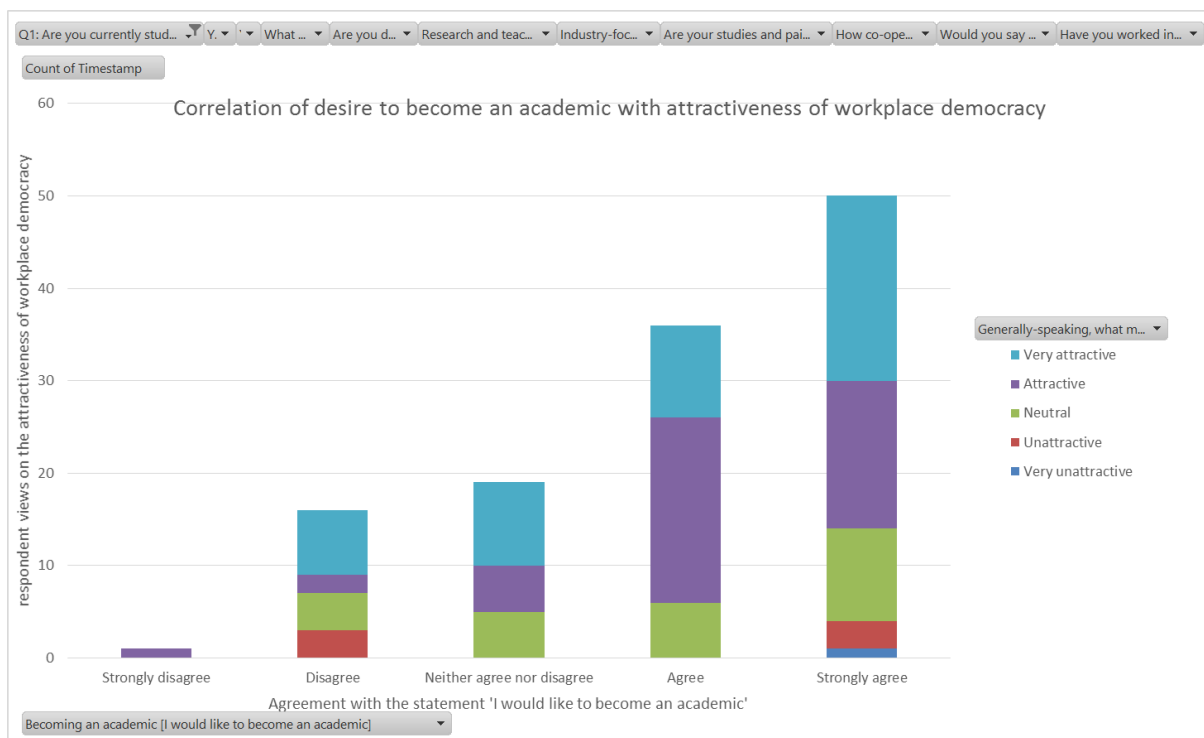


Figure 12 Correlation of desire to become an academic with attractiveness of workplace democracy

or very attractive than other students, but respondents' perceptions of the level of competition within their discipline had no significance. This finding merits further investigation, as it indicates that the attractiveness of workplace democracy may be negatively correlated with current experiences of practical work based on study. However, approval ratings for workplace democracy were strongly positively correlated with desire to become an academic. This, and the very high approval ratings for workplace democracy among all categories of respondent indicate that universities ought to consider workplace democracy as a potent offer for recruiting and retaining tomorrow's academic staff.

- 15.19.3 We offered the chance for respondents to tell us, in their own words, about any issues that the survey had raised for them. There were many issues, but overall an enthusiasm for the idea of a co-operative university came through from most respondents who took the time to write. I produced a 'wordle' (a sort of cloud of words where words that are repeated a lot in the text get made larger and bolder, giving a visual representations of the topics that respondents thought were important) from the text of their answers. We also asked respondents for their opinions on what else, besides the questions we had asked, were important about their satisfaction at work. In it, there is a clue to the high scores for solidarity described above. Many respondents who took the time to write had concerns about the levels of support available for early career researchers, and a sense that they were not invested in sufficiently.



Figure 13 Wordle: Thoughts on the Co-operative University in the words of respondents

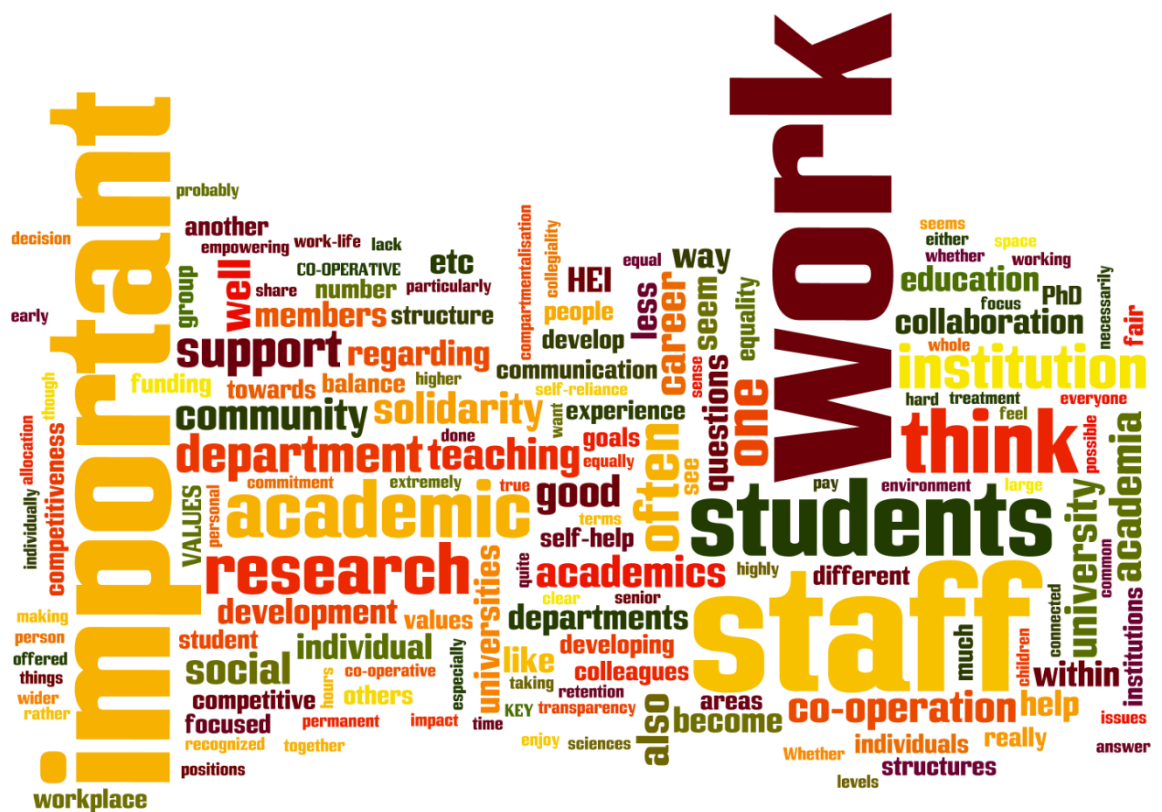


Figure 14 Wordle: What else is important about your satisfaction at work? In the words of respondents.

²⁴² (Becher & Trowler, 2001, pp. 118–126)

²⁴³ (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 36)

²⁴⁴ (Hofstede, 2010, pp. 337–340)

16 Appendix F: Literature search

- 16.1 A literature review for a project of this sort is necessarily limited in scope by the available time. I will describe the search process, but have not undertaken a critical review, since the predominance of grey literature (which tends to be densely descriptive rather than making an argument *per se.*) did not lend itself to this sort of tactic.
- 16.2 Although the remit of the consultancy report ranges widely over a number of disciplines, including public law, institutional governance, and finance, I was able to utilise literatures already familiar to me through my studies for the Master of Business Administration at the Institute of Education. The core of the inquiry, however, concerns the governance of both universities and co-operatives. Accordingly, for the literature review, I concentrated on locating a literature peculiar to a domain where these issues intersect.
- 16.3 I used two main methods of amassing a collection of literature. The first and main method was an organic exploration of literature, relying on previous knowledge, recommendations from the client, interviewees and others, using previous reading and following through the bibliographies to the debates around co-operative education. The second was a supplemental structured search of bibliographic databases.
- 16.3.1 Following a period of exploration and reflection, I used the keywords ‘co-operative’ and ‘university’, usually in combination with ‘governance’ or ‘pedagogy’ to reveal results of relevance to the topic. I principally used the Zetoc journal search tool, Google Scholar, University of Bristol MetaLib and the ProQuest tool searching the British Educational Index, Australian

Educational Index, and the Educational Resources Information Center databases.

- 16.3.2 The characteristics of this search may be described thus:
- 16.3.3 610 items of literature were discovered in total, 130 from organic exploration of sources and the remainder from systematic searching of bibliographic databases. Through a process of sifting, these documents were reduced to 165 in total.
- 16.3.4 I only selected publications in English, and although there was a wide geographical spread, the majority were published in the UK.
- 16.3.5 It quickly became apparent that there is hardly a literature of co-operative university governance at all. This is a literature that has to be pieced together from a number of other fields, which touch on the issues of this report. Reviewing the 165 publications that I finally selected, several groupings emerged
- 16.3.6 A literature on co-operative education, dealing with three core topics: the history of co-operative education; the contemporary co-operative schools movement, and; co-operative pedagogy. The former deals only slightly with higher education. The latter offers many examples from higher education, in fact the selected articles were only a small number of the total works on co-operative pedagogy. I culled most discipline-specific works, and where several publications covered similar territory, I selected only the most relevant-sounding.
- 16.3.7 A literature on co-operation in mathematics, psychology and biology, dealing principally with game theory, with potential application to social

institutions. I did not investigate this literature as thoroughly as I would have liked.

- 16.3.8 A literature on university governance, which can be split into a set of largely ‘grey’ literature sources relating to legal, financial and other technical governance matters on the one hand; and on the other hand, a literature on academic cultural life, academic freedom and academic work more broadly.
- 16.3.9 A literature on co-operative governance, including legal, financial and membership matters. The current and developing character of some of this work (some of which was ‘grey’ literature) enabled me to contact some authors directly, and build a dialogue.

17 Appendix G: Capitalising the Co-operative University

17.1 Founding a new university

The founding of a wholly-new university is an expensive undertaking, and although many new institutions with university title have been created since 1992, these have all been cases of the granting of university status to previously-established institutions. The last new universities to be built in England were as a result of the Robbins Report, a document notably short on financial detail²⁴⁵. We can estimate the total cost of running a fully-functioning university on an annual basis from HESA data. Looking at the universities with the smallest expenditure, the private, not-for-profit University of Buckingham expended £18M in 2011/12, while small universities in receipt of HEFCE grant income (such as Newman University, Leeds Trinity University, The Arts University Bournemouth and The University of St. Mark and St. John) expended sums between £19.6M and £23.6M²⁴⁶. Assuming the necessity of an endowment in the form of land, buildings and investments of a similar sum to a year's expenditure, it is not unreasonable to assume that a sum in excess of £50M might be required to get a very small new university 'on its feet'. This is purely hypothetical, and the newly-realised institution would be unable to be able to use the title 'university' immediately, but the exercise gives a sense of the large sums involved for even the smallest establishment.

17.2 Buying an existing university

Sales of universities are rare, but there has been a recent one – the sale of the College of Law (now the University of Law) to Montagu Private Equity for £200m in late 2012²⁴⁷. The College of Law was a relatively small, charitable organisation²⁴⁸ which has now been transformed into a charitable trust²⁴⁹ in a relationship with the University of Law which permits the award of degrees from the newly for-profit institution²⁵⁰. The options for co-operatives to access capital on this scale are limited, but this. The price negotiated is likely to be indicative of the value of the brand, the strength of student recruitment and the confidence of the investor in their capacity to extract a profit from the arrangement. There can be no standard calculations here, but this sort of scenario is considered likely in the sector, and considerable work has already been done on collaborations, alliances and mergers in HE²⁵¹. Some sector bodies have predicted universities up for sale if current trends of low or no economic growth and public policy based on increased competition continue, and there remains little active industrial policy²⁵². However, the scenario is worth considering for two reasons: firstly because the robust academic and financial health of the English HE sector makes an acquisition a potentially attractive prospect (even on a purely commercial basis – the presence of private equity demonstrates that) and secondly because there is already an example of a secondary co-operative operating as a private co-operative university. Mondragon University is owned by its staff students, and by companies in the big Mondragon co-operative group of companies in the Basque country of Spain²⁵³. Practical considerations aside, there is no objection in principle to the co-operative movement purchasing a university, which it

could own in much the same way as the Co-operative Group owns its Bank²⁵⁴.

17.3 *Developing a university from an existing institution*

A relatively recent example of the development of an essentially new university from a previous institution was the founding of the University of Lincoln, which was achieved through the establishment of a charitable trust, and the accumulation of a sum of £30m over a long period of campaigning. Although the University of Lincoln can trace a longer heritage (through Humberside Polytechnic) the modern university in the city of Lincoln is largely the result of the £30m charitable trust raised for the purpose of bringing a university to Lincoln (again). The people of Lincoln wanted a city-centre university, and the charitable trust raised for this purpose facilitated the former Humberside Polytechnic to leave Hull and establish in Lincoln, in a process taking just six years from the Trust's establishment in 1995 to the change of name and move of administrative headquarters in 2001.

17.4 *Building-up a university slowly*

Building-up a co-operative university over time offers the possibility of starting with relatively modest sums of money. All institutions had to start somewhere, and many were very modest locally-endowed schools and colleges that have since grown, in some cases, into mighty universities. Again, it is difficult to offer a sum with any accuracy, but it is clear that there are some very small HE providers currently operating in the English sector. Forty-seven private providers, representing 37.3% of the smallest organisations surveyed employ less than ten staff, and 217 providers,

representing almost half of the smallest organisations surveyed had fewer than 100 registered learners²⁵⁵. An organisation on this scale would require very modest resources – perhaps renting offices and teaching facilities as required – and with the right advice a business plan could be prepared for such an organisation. Within the co-operative movement there are multiple organisations providing advice of an appropriate sort, including the Co-operative College itself. In this case, the raising of capital might potentially be secured from sources available to the staff employed in the organisation and its students. It would not, however, meet the definition of a university, until significant expansion and regulation of its activities had taken place. The challenges would not therefore be principally financial ones, but instead would relate to the organisational resilience required to hold the institution together over the time it takes to build up to university status²⁵⁶.

17.5 *Mutualisation of an existing university*

By comparison with the options explored above, the transfer of an existing university to co-operative status could potentially offer a relatively affordable *and* rapid solution, depending on the reasons for the transfer. A number of scenarios could result in a transfer:

- A university in financial difficulties might seek to raise funds from the public, including its staff, students, alumni, businesses and the local community. The precise sums would depend on the financial situation, the attitude of the university's governing body or council, and the presence or otherwise of alternative investors.

- The governing body or council of a university might seek to replicate the sale of the College of Law described in 17.2 above. In this case, where the fundamentals are strong, a worker buy-in or similar would be relatively more expensive – for instance, to raise the £200M realised by the sale of the College of Law, that institution's 850 or so staff would have to raise over £235K per person. This sum is unlikely to be achievable by the staff alone, making mutualisation difficult to envisage where the institution has attracted the interest of private equity.²⁵⁷
- A university in good financial health might choose to become a true co-operative. In this case, the issues around finance are likely to be less important than the visionary leadership required to achieve such an outcome. The HEFCE would need to be convinced that the move was financially sound, and that the assets were appropriately 'locked'.²⁵⁸ A university in this position would be sensible to adopt a multi-stakeholder model, with students, staff and other organisations or members of the public as members. The opportunity could be used to raise an endowment fund for development of the institution from member shares. Although not essential (as the organisation could possibly be 'gifted' to its new members) the immediate financial benefits of such a process could be considerable. The raising of a sizeable (£5M, say) endowment through this process is conceivable, even for a relatively modest-sized institution. Staff could be required to contribute withdrawable share capital to the co-operative if they wish also to be members, or

they could be compelled to do so. At the University of Mondragon, which is wholly-owned by its members, after a two-year probation, staff who wish to become members must contribute an equity share of £10,300, which they must withdraw (along with and accumulated dividends) when they resign or retire²⁵⁹.

Other categories of members could have membership payments: student fees could include a proportion of contribution to share capital, and members of the public and alumni might be invited to contribute.

17.6 Pensions

An important consideration in the creation of a co-operative university from an existing university relates to the potential transfer of pension assets. Universities carry significant pension liabilities, with older universities members of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), and newer universities members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), as well as other, local schemes. Many pension liabilities are not carried on university balance sheets, but under changes to accounting rules, this will no longer be the case from 2015. Any schemes that are not fully-funded could be detrimental to the university's financial statements, and so any changes to corporate form that would result in liabilities being represented in financial statements ahead of 2015 could represent a very significant barrier in the minds of governing bodies and HEFCE. Post-2015, this consideration is likely to diminish relatively, though any poorly-funded local schemes could still have an impact on the new owners.

17.6.1 Trade Unions will assess the impact of any change to corporate form that might harm their members' interests, and the thorny issue of pensions are therefore a potential barrier to the co-operative university, if the new corporate form removes protections. Any sense that the co-operative university was being used by managers for 'instrumental' purposes that 'game the regulatory framework'²⁶⁰ to the detriment of pensions (or other interests) would raise major problems significant enough to halt the process. However, the benefits of a pay-structure that seeks security of employment over a defined benefit structure might gain the support of unions. Co-operatives UK and the TUC have produced a joint guide on mutualisation of public sector organisations²⁶¹, which encodes many of the principles that they believe should apply. While universities are state-supported rather than publicly-owned, this guidance likely applies as good practice in the event of a mutualisation.

²⁴⁵ Robbins argued that the costs of higher education expansion would be met by increased productivity (Robbins, 1963, pp. 273–274)

²⁴⁶ 2011/12 financial data extracted from <https://heidi.hesa.ac.uk/>

²⁴⁷ (Morgan, 2013)

²⁴⁸ There is some doubt about whether the College of Law was truly a charity (Malin, 2013) and my search for it with the Charities Commission (<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/>) reveal it (charity no. 312100) was removed from the register in 1995

²⁴⁹ The Legal Education Foundation (charity no. 271297) was created in 2012, and now appears to hold the Royal Charter granted by the Privy Council in 1975, according to the wording on the list of charters available from the Privy Council.

²⁵⁰ There is some haziness around the arrangement, still. The legal arrangement is likely to be similar to that described by Stanfield in an Eversheds paper for UUK (Stanfield, 2009, pp. 7–8). Eversheds were the firm engaged to arrange the sale.

²⁵¹ (HEFCE, 2012)

²⁵² The vision of universities closing, reducing in size, becoming utilitarian business entities or seeking buyers has been raised by the University Alliance in the uni_divide scenario explored through its University_Vision project (see University Alliance, 2012a, pp. 3–4, 2012b). In addition the possibility of Private providers taking-over publicly-funded institutions has been raised by the independent think-tank HEPI (Middlehurst & Feilden, 2011, p. 44)

²⁵³ ("The Mondragon Experiment," 1980; Ridley-Duff, 2013)

²⁵⁴ At the time of writing the Bank is still a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Co-operative Group, awaiting a portion of its shares to be floated.

²⁵⁵ (BIS, 2013, pp. 28, 30, 48)

²⁵⁶ (Evans, 2013b, 2013c)

²⁵⁷ It is important to note that many institutions still carry their assets on a historical cost basis, which underestimates their value. A private equity organisation intent on realising that value through asset-stripping might be prepared to pay a good deal more than a worker buy-in would be able to accomplish.

²⁵⁸ (Interview with Malin, 2013)

²⁵⁹ (Matthews, 2013b)

²⁶⁰ (Interview with Macneil & Lovejoy, 2013)

²⁶¹ (Co-operatives UK & TUC, 2013)

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