

Co-operative leadership for higher education

**Mike Neary, Katia Valenzuela-Fuentes and Joss Winn,
College of Social Science, University of Lincoln**



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Inspiring
Leadership

**Leadership
Foundation**
for Higher Education

Prepared for:

The Leadership Foundation

Report date:

01/07/18

Small Development Projects

Small development projects (SDPs) were first launched in 2004 - shortly after the creation of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Since then they have proven to be very popular and have introduced a range of innovative activities of benefit to higher education.

First published July 2018
Published by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Peer House
8-14 Verulam Street
London
WC1X 8LZ

E: info@lfhe.ac.uk

www.lfhe.ac.uk

 @LF4HE

© Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

As the publisher of this work, the Leadership Foundation would like to encourage its circulation as widely as possible while retaining the copyright. We have supported the creation of this work as part of our programme of research and innovation and hope that it will be of value to senior leaders, managers, development practitioners and policy makers throughout higher education and beyond.

We are a membership organisation and prioritise our members' access to our reports. However, short summaries of each report are also available online to all.

Permission is granted to reproduce for personal and educational use only. Commercial copying, hiring, lending are prohibited.

If you would like to use this work for your own non-commercial personal or educational purposes – for example download, save, perform or distribute it in any format, including translation – you may do so without written permission. Please note that the following will be required:

- The Leadership Foundation and the author(s) are credited
- Our website address www.lfhe.ac.uk is prominently displayed
- The text is not altered and is used in full
- The work is not resold
- A copy of the work or link to its use online is sent to the Leadership Foundation.

You are welcome to ask for permission to use this work for purposes other than those covered above.

ISBN: 978-1-912137-97-8

Contents

	Executive Summary	01
01	Aims and objectives	02
02	Framing leadership in higher education: participation, collegiality and democracy	03
	Three dimensions of participation	
	Collegiality	
	Democratic leadership	
03	Research methodology	06
04	Findings	08
	1. Co-operative leadership is taking place in each of the organisations, although framed in different ways.	
	2. The catalytic principles provide a robust framework through which to explore and understand the nature of co-operativism and co-operative leadership in each of the case studies.	
	3. Theory and practice: Capital and Labour are foundational principles for co-operative institutions.	
05	Conclusions and recommendations	20
06	Do it Ourselves Higher Education	21
	1. Find out about co-operatives	
	2. Read about co-operative higher education	
	3. How co-operative is your university?	
	4. Use expert resources for co-operative higher education	
	References	22
	Author biographies	25
	Appendix	26

Executive Summary

The aim of this research was to assess the possibility of establishing co-operative leadership as a viable organisational form of governance and management for higher education.

Co-operative leadership is already well established in business enterprises in the UK and around the world, and has recently been adopted as the organising principle by over 600 schools in the United Kingdom. The co-operative movement is a global phenomenon with one billion members, supported by national and international organisations working to establish co-operative enterprises and the promotion of co-operative education.

Research was carried out in four case study sites using qualitative research methods. The sites were Mondragon University, Unicorn Grocer, a John Lewis store in the north of England and Lipson Co-operative Academy (See Appendix for a description of each of these sites).

The research was building on previous research by the authors to develop a framework for co-operative higher education using the key catalytic principles for co-operativism established by that research: knowledge, democracy, bureaucracy, livelihood and solidarity (Neary and Winn, 2017a).

The research was set within a theoretical framework that argues for the reincorporation of the concepts of capital and labour into our understanding of leadership, management and governance within higher education institutions.

The models of leadership examined by the research in the case studies was framed within a literature that focused on degrees of participation (Bernstein, 2012) collegiality and neo-collegiality (Bacon, 2014) and democratic leadership (Hall and Winn, 2017).

A key output of the research has been to identify the information and support available to institutions and individuals who wish to explore and evaluate co-operative leadership for higher education further. We have developed a diagnostic tool so that institutions can evaluate and develop co-operative leadership and co-operativism within their departments, faculties and across their institutions. This tool forms part of our recommendations and, in the spirit of co-operative leadership, we have called these: Do It Ourselves Higher Education. The structure of the tool, which is web-based (<http://lncn.eu/diycoophe>), as well as the resources, are set out at the end of this paper.

Findings

1. Co-operative leadership is taking place within each of the case studies, although framed in different ways.
2. The 'catalytic principles' established in previous research are robust, allowing for practices to be explored in a way that generates debate and understanding of some of the main issues to do with co-operativism and co-operative leadership.
3. Capital and labour are foundational principles for these co-operative enterprises. The conflict and contradiction these concepts engender can be used for progressive institutional and social change. ■

01 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research was to assess the possibility of establishing co-operative leadership as a viable organisational form of governance and management for higher education. Co-operative leadership is already well established in business enterprises in the UK and around the world (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2015), and has recently been adopted as the organising principle by over 600 schools in the United Kingdom (Wilson, 2014). The co-operative movement is a global phenomenon with one billion members, supported by national and international organisations working to establish co-operative enterprises and the promotion of co-operative education.

Higher education in the UK is characterised by a mode of governance based on vice-chancellors operating as chief executives supported by senior management teams (Shattock, 2006). Recent research from the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education on neo-collegiality in the managerial university (Bacon, 2014) shows that hierarchical models of governance alienate and demotivate staff. They fail to take advantage of the research-based problem-solving skills of staff operating at all levels, and do not account for the advantages to organisations when self-managed professionals interact with peers on matters of common purpose, particularly in knowledge-based industries.

The co-operative leadership model for higher education supports the ambition for more active engagement in decision-making to facilitate the best use of academics' professional capacities, but framed around a more radical model for leadership, governance and management. Members of a co-operative university would not only be involved directly in decision-making and peer-based processes that make best use of their collective skills, but have equal voting rights as well as collective ownership of the assets and liabilities of the co-operative (Cook, 2013). This more radical model builds on work done recently as part of a project funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) to establish some general parameters around which a framework for co-operative higher education could be established (Neary and Winn,

2017a and 2017b). These general parameters are grounded in a set of 'catalytic principles' which, we argue, are central to the development of co-operative higher education.

The catalytic principles are: knowledge, democracy, bureaucracy, livelihood and solidarity.

Knowledge refers to the production and communication of knowledge and meaning by the organisation as a whole.

Democracy is concerned with the structures and degree of influence on decision-making.

Bureaucracy refers not only to the type of administration but a set of ethical and moral principles on which administration is based.

Livelihood looks beyond wages to include working practices that support the capacity to lead a good life.

Solidarity involves sharing a commitment to a common purpose inside and outside of the institution.

One of the key issues emerging from this earlier research that we wanted to explore further was the role and significance of co-operative leadership – a focus of this report – and the extent to which a model of co-operative leadership for higher education can be guided by these catalytic principles.

The report draws out lessons learned from the research, arguing that the type of co-operative provision depends on local history and circumstances, emphasising that new organisations' models are not only the result of rational calculation but produced by working within and through dynamic and contradictory tensions as a way of developing alternative institutional forms. The paper draws on a theoretical framework based on critical political economy to substantiate this assertion, focusing on the conflict between labour and capital. ■

02 Framing leadership in higher education: participation, collegiality and democracy

It is important to understand the nature of university management and governance structures when considering the transformation of higher education. The literature indicates that a number of incremental policy changes have led to the existing corporate form of university governance. These include the Jarratt review (1985), which established the vice-chancellor as chief executive; the Dearing review (1997), which reduced the number of members on the governing body; and the Lambert review (2003), which stated that participatory governance by a community of scholars was not 'fit for modern times', and recommended a voluntary code of governance for the higher education sector (Shattock, 2006; 2008). Each of these reviews and subsequent regulatory changes has been conducted in response to the changing historical context of the corporate form in general. Thus, a history of the development of university governance and management must be seen in the wider context of changing corporate forms and the underlying dynamic of political, economic and social processes. These underlying dynamics have been a move towards a neo-liberal model based on the financialisation of the university sector (McGettigan, 2013), and criticism and resistance to these moves by some academics and students (Molesworth et al, 2011; Brown and Carasso, 2013; Hall, 2015; Collini, 2012; Bailey and Freedman, 2011). It is in the spirit of this criticism and resistance that we frame our approach to co-operative leadership, to create a resource for staff and students working in higher education. Moreover, the recently enacted Higher Education and Research Act 2017 has provided the legislative framework for alternative providers to reconsider the nature of their governance, management and leadership structures. There is no reason why this search for alternative ways to run universities should not include co-operative forms of leadership, governance and management, as a critical response to the neo-liberalisation of the higher education sector.

In this research, we have framed our approach to leadership through work that shares this critical perspective and that seeks to establish leadership and decision-making within very clear parameters: workplace democratisation (Bernstein, 2012), neo-collegiate leadership (Bacon, 2014) and democratic leadership (Hall and Winn, 2017).

Three dimensions of participation

Bernstein discusses leadership through an analysis of the internal dynamics of workplace democratisation based on a number of case studies of private firms that operate with varying levels of democracy in their governance and management. Across the range of his case studies, he identified three "dimensions of participation" (2012, 47):

1. The degree of control employees enjoy over a single decision.
2. The issues over which that control is exercised.
3. The organisational level at which it is exercised.

Focusing on *control*, an organisation with minimal democracy in the workplace will operate on the basis of "consultation", through techniques such as an impersonal suggestion box scheme or workers given "prior notice" of management's decisions so that they can voice their views and perhaps stimulate reconsideration. In contrast, an organisation with greater or even full workplace democracy will feature a workers' council that is superior to the management body, joint power or partnership with managers, elected management roles and the power for employees to remove people from positions of management. A basic threshold of democratic participation is that workers are able to initiate criticisms and suggestions and discuss them face-to-face with managers. Bernstein calls this "co-operation or co-influence".

The range of *issues* that employees may have democratic control over start from their physical working conditions and personal safety, through to setting salaries, promoting executives, and (in the context of a private firm) division of the profits. Bernstein groups the issues into control over the worker's own work, control over the organisation's means, and control over the organisation's goals.

Finally, the domain or *level* of participation refers to not only the level at which employees might have representation (eg on the board of governors), but also the extent to which they can exercise real power at that level. Employee representation at the upper levels of an organisation is more effective (ie they wield more democratic power), when all other levels of the organisation are also democratised (ie "gaps" are "filled in" with methods of direct and representative democracy), so that the upper level is brought into more contact with the real issues and concerns of workers in the organisation. Achieving democracy at all levels of the organisation means that employees are able to "exert influence at the very points where they have most expertise" (2012, 54).

The qualities of *leadership* in democratic organisations are, according to Bernstein, based on a conscious recognition of the power that the person in a position of influence holds and how they choose to use that power, based on a set of values, personal goals and beliefs. The traits that Bernstein identifies (2012, 98) as fostering or facilitating democratisation are:

- | A policy of educating the managed ie open access to information (as opposed to secrecy).
- | Confidence in others – hence: willingness to listen and to delegate responsibility (rather than an attitude of mistrust and intense supervision).
- | Governing by merit, explanation, and consent of governed (rather than governing from a formal position of power).
- | Awareness of one's own fallibility; admits errors to those being managed (rather than the belief that the leader must set an example to others by appearing infallible and hiding their mistakes).
- | Reciprocity (rather than paternalism).
- | Egalitarian values (as opposed to a desire to maintain exclusive prerogatives).

Bernstein notes that well-intentioned managers might select one or two of these traits of leadership, but find they conflict with traditional values of managerial privilege. What is needed, argues Bernstein, is recognition that effective democracy requires a "systemic" approach and that this involves a change in the "whole consciousness" of leaders in positions of power.

Collegiality

Bacon discusses leadership in higher education using the concept of 'neo-collegiality' understood as "a structured form of collaborative decision-making". He argues that "the voice of universities' academic and professional staff ought to be heard with far greater decision-making and decision-influencing force than is currently the case" and consequently focuses on "the formalised structuring of a collegial decision-making process" (2014, 3). This is distinct from a definition of collegiality as a form of behaviour since, "it is too easy otherwise for institutions and individuals to commit to or to urge collegial behaviour without anything actually changing in terms of decision-making." The focus, therefore, is on establishing structures and processes that enable and protect a renewed form of democratic decision-making that takes advantage of the research-based problem solving skills of staff operating at all levels, accounting for the advantages to organisations when self-managed professionals interact with peers on matters of common purpose, particularly in knowledge-based industries.

Bacon offers a number of reasons why such changes are needed (2014, 24): too many staff feel voiceless; current university management structures and practices are often outdated; the most recent management literature emphasises the disadvantages, particularly in knowledge-based sectors, of top-down hierarchical structures and the advantages of frontline staff having increased autonomy. His research shows that the desire for more collegial decision-making is widespread across the UK's university sector. Not only that, collegiality improves decision-making, bringing with it an awareness of the front-line activities and priorities which matter most to students. This type of decision-making can take many different forms, often enhanced by new technology.

Bacon concludes his research by discussing two key principles of neo-collegiality: *Institutional inclusivity*, where the contribution of all staff and students is promoted without regard for established hierarchies; and *Promoting collegiality*, outside of established structures and representative committees. To this end, Bacon outlines “a menu of the potential forms that moves to neo-collegiality might take” (2014, 20), proposing initiatives towards greater collegiality within a university. These are: a concordat on collegiality, reviving existing structures, transparency and collegiality, collegiality on demand, consensus collegiality, temporal variations, subsidiarity, collegial appointments, veto collegiality, and shared governance.

Democratic leadership

Hall and Winn (2017) focus on alternative forms of leadership that can be found both inside and outside the university, representing efforts to reorganise, reconceptualise, and democratise the production of knowledge. They point out, following Dopson et al (2016), that the scholarship on leadership in higher education is limited and argue for a form of democratic leadership based on an understanding of the university as a self-critical community of academic and student scholars with high levels of autonomy (Neary and Saunders, 2011) at a time when this critical community is “being disciplined by a dominant corporate agenda that incentivises specific, impactful behaviours” (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012), with devastatingly negative consequences for humanity in the world. This means something more than the creation of decentralised technology-rich governance networks or distributed leadership linked to problem-solving strategies. While such schemes are presented as change management strategies there is no fundamental change since they are designed to make the capitalist project function more smoothly; they are not based on trust, sharing power and individual autonomy, but instead leadership operates as “consent through coercion” (2017, 5).

Hall and Winn see hope in the idea of leadership as a form of citizenship (Bolden et al, 2014) or critical performativity (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). They link these approaches to Virno and other writers in the autonomous Marxist tradition and their concept of ‘mass intellectuality’. Mass intellectuality is the appropriation of knowledge which has been produced as a factor in capitalist production, as science and technology, for the benefit of humanity and nature. Hall and Winn suggest that academics should find ways to create these forms of radical alternatives

so as to reimagine the idea of the university “in order to produce and circulate new forms of socially useful knowledge or ways of knowing the world” (2017, 3). All of this implies a critique of the prevalent mode of (knowledge) production, the institutions where it is sited and the oversight, management and leadership that arises from these spaces. Reflecting on examples of alternative forms of intellectual leadership, Hall and Winn identify six themes for a critical analysis of academic leadership: The relationship between leadership and labour; the lived realities of hegemonic forms of leadership; the existence of alternative models of leadership as forms of counter-hegemony; the attributes of counter-hegemonic leadership; the problems with alternative forms of leadership; and the contradictions uncovered when developing alternative forms of leadership.

This report features a discussion of research findings set within the leadership models established by Bernstein, Bacon and Hall and Winn, understanding the broad policy context within which higher education is currently operating (Shattock, 2012). Before reporting on the findings we have set out the research methodology below. ■

03 Research methodology

The research was carried out borrowing from tenets established by an extended case study method (Burawoy, 1998). This method “deploys participant observation to locate everyday life in its extralocal and historical context” (ibid, 4). It is a reflexive method that aims to “extract the general from the unique, to move from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro’, and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory” (ibid, 5). The pre-existing theory we are using in this research is grounded in the “power of abstraction” (Marx, 1976, 90), with a specific focus on the concept of labour in capitalism, as a neglected category for critical analysis (Dinerstein and Neary, 2002). Recovering the language of political economy, and particularly the categories of labour and capital, can work as a starting point for the development of real alternatives to capitalism, not to develop a political economy from the standpoint of labour, but as critique of labour in capitalism (Postone, 1993).

This approach is derived from an approach to Marxism known as value-form theory in what amounts to a reappraisal of Marx’s social theory and ‘a new reading of Marx’ (Postone, 1993; Bonefeld, 2014). Value-form theory presents the relationship between labour and capital as a dynamic contradiction out of which forms of social life in capital emerge, including struggles against the destructive nature of the contradiction. This theoretical framework suggests that co-operatives, with their focus on the common ownership and democratic control of their resources, are a real alternative to capitalism to the extent that they seek to extend the purpose of their activities beyond the production of capitalist value to include new forms of social wealth based on the vitality of humans in the natural world. Findings from the case studies demonstrate the extent to which the language of labour and capital are meaningful concepts in the life of co-operative enterprises and ways in which the dynamic contradiction is recognised as a creative process in the struggle against the negative consequences of capitalist production (Winn, 2015).

The four case study sites for the research were: Lipson Co-operative Academy, a secondary school in England, funded by the Department for Education; Unicorn, a worker co-operative grocery in Manchester, England; John Lewis, an employee-owned retail store in the north of England, part of the John Lewis Partnership; and Mondragon University, a member of the MONDRAGON Corporation in Spain (for details of each case study site see appendix). The research was carried out between September and December 2016. Researchers spent between four and five days at each site doing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, participatory workshops and group conversations, taking field notes and photographs, recording interviews, as well as undertaking documentary analysis.

The following table summarises the field methods undertaken in the case study site:

Case study site	Interviews	Workshops/focus groups	Observations	Facilitator
Lipson Co-operative: Academy	20 interviews with staff members	Three workshops with students from level 7, 8 and the sixth form	Class dynamics, guild assembly, teachers CPD session	Senior leader
John Lewis store – in a northern city	14 interviews with partners across a range of roles	Two workshops with partners from a range of roles across the business	General dynamics in the store, messages displayed on the walls in staff areas and around the store, staff meeting	Middle manager
Mondragon University, Spain	17 interviews with members across a range of roles	Two focus groups, one with students and one with academics	General interactions between staff at the Faculties of Education and Humanities, Engineering and Business; Basque Gastronomy Centre, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre	Vice-rector
Unicorn Grocery, Manchester	Eight interviews with members	-	Meetings and training events	Co-operative member

Rather than a gatekeeper, in each case study site there was a facilitator. This person helped to arrange the researchers' visits and to select the observation sites, interviewees and workshops/focus group participants. From the range of responses gathered there was no sense in which the research participants were chosen because of any attempt to present a particular view about the organisations. On the contrary, the views expressed broadly matched previous academic research done in this area (see, for example, Woodin, 2015 and Davidge, 2014 for research on co-operative schools; Wright et al, 2011 for an analysis of Mondragon University and co-operative education; and Cathcart, 2009 for research on John Lewis). Moreover, in the case of John Lewis, the findings also matched with in-house partnership surveys. ■

04 Findings

1. Co-operative leadership is taking place in each of the organisations, although framed in different ways:

Co-operative leadership at Lipson Co-operative Academy is grounded in the practices and principles of co-operative learning, derived from the pedagogical model that is used in the classroom. Each member of the school community, at whatever level across the institution, is aware of the role that they are taking and how it contributes to the goal of co-operative education. This approach to leadership differs from Bernstein's focus on traits of leadership that are intrinsic to the person who is doing the leadership; they are, rather, an expression of the nature of the organisation, in this case a co-operative school:

"Co-operative learning is where students know that they have roles within each learning group so they can drive up each other's learning as part of a very positive set of relationships, improving the progress of students. Co-operative leadership is an outcome of this process of co-operative learning, but at the level of the institution. Everyone in the school recognises the significance of their interdependent roles, trusting and relying on each other to make decisions at the appropriate level for the benefit of the whole school."

(Teacher 2)

This version of co-operative leadership is taking place in a hierarchical governance and management structure, where the trust is led by a chair and vice-chair and the school is led by a principal and the support and leadership team (SLT). The hierarchical character of co-operative school management and its consequences has been identified in the academic literature (Davidge, 2014; Woodin, 2015). There was one interviewee who expressed the view that the school was not as co-operative as it could be and that co-operative schools did not fit with

the academy model, but this view was not expressed by others we interviewed. The SLT justifies this hierarchical approach in terms of the need to protect staff from stresses created by the pressure of government policy.

The John Lewis Partnership expects partners to put themselves forward as leaders across all levels of business activity. There is a strong commitment to the principle and practice of leadership, based on a number of prescribed behavioural characteristics. At John Lewis, being a leader and taking responsibility is an inherent aspect of being a partner. The research revealed that a partner's potential is recognised and fast tracked through professional development programmes. The extent to which these characteristics are demonstrated is assessed annually as part of individual partner performance appraisals. The John Lewis management literature explains that leaders at John Lewis are expected to set the direction of the business with courage and confidence, while enabling and encouraging and motivating partners to embrace and live up to the responsibility that co-ownership brings. This means showing strategic insight about customers and the business, based on balanced reflection, communication and sharing knowledge in a way that improves performance and generates integrated solutions; while all the time adapting to change, challenging the status quo and keeping an eye on the wider retail environment. Partners are expected to support and take pride in co-ownership through proactive collective working, in an honest and respectful manner, delivering excellent service to customers and supporting other partners while adapting to and embracing change.

There is nothing unusual about these principles in terms of business practice, and mirror what Bernstein advocates as key principles for co-operative leadership. What is unusual is the set of founding principles and values which underpin them set out in the Partnership's constitution. John Lewis was established by its founder Spedan Lewis (1885 - 1963) as a form of industrial democracy, where workers and management share knowledge and power.

One of the main principles of the constitution is to ensure “the happiness of all members...[based on]... satisfying and worthwhile employment in a successful business”. Following Bernstein’s understanding of effective ways to develop cultures of leadership, there was a strong sense that co-operative leadership be achieved through a ‘systemic’ approach based on the ‘whole consciousness’ not only of senior staff but staff at all levels. This was manifest through the continuing significance and emphasis given to the Partnership’s constitution and its founding principles.

Mondragon University promotes the concept of co-operative leadership which it characterises as taking the lead in terms of co-operation and inter-co-operation, innovation, participation, social responsibility, personal development and social transformation. At the core of these principles of leadership are progressive values to promote the social distribution of work and the wealth of the co-operative as a humanistic practice for a united and equitable society. This co-operative model is not simply humanistic but is regarded as providing a competitive advantage.

There is a strong sense of commitment to this model of co-operative leadership among members with senior management roles, and a recognition that these relationships require humility.

“Leadership is very collaborative. It is necessary to embrace the sensibilities of the different faculties, so as to promote transformational constant adaption as part of a collective process. I have been in a situation many times where I have a view of where the organisation needs to go, but other members do not agree and so it is important to go back to basics so I can review my own position and we can come to a general agreement.”

(Member of Mondragon University)

The model of co-operative leadership championed by Mondragon University goes beyond support for a set of personal values of members but, as defined by Bernstein, a recognition, as with John Lewis Partnership, that effective democracy requires a ‘systemic’ approach and that this involves a change in the ‘whole consciousness’ of leaders in positions of power. This is much more than Bacon’s fostering *institutional inclusivity*, or even *promoting collegiality*; and closer to Hall and Winn’s understanding of leadership as the need to challenge and critique the power relations that exist inside capitalism, *“moving beyond exploitation and valorisation in the market, and in creating democratic, co-operative alternatives”* (Hall and Winn, 2017, 4)

Leadership is considered an important aspect of the work of the Unicorn co-operative, providing dynamism and expertise. One member spoke of organic leadership, whereby individuals with an interest or talent emerge when a particular function needs to be filled then withdraw once the task has been finished, rather than a pre-ordained management function to which members aspire:

“Leadership? Yes, definitely. This is why worker co-ops are so good because we have so many good leaders here. A good leader knows when to step back, a good leader will constantly inform people by saying how it is, any information will immediately be shared, any concerns are listened to. The nice thing is we don’t just have one leader here we have got several, and because everyone has different strengths. Someone will be a leader on extending the business, but they will then step back. We have a lot of good leaders, not everyone. You do need leaders, otherwise you just stagnate. But you don’t nominate someone randomly, people organically show their leadership skills.”

(Worker – member B)

There was a view that the concept of leadership did not fit with a worker-co-operative model based on democratic decision-making. Another opinion was that those who shout the loudest get listened to. Using Bernstein’s framework for democratic leadership, this model of leadership is not based on a conscious recognition of the power that the person in a position of influence holds and how they choose to use that power, based on a set of values, personal goals and beliefs; but, rather, the systemic nature of the co-operative organisation so that it affects the whole consciousness of individuals. One might say that the workers are bearers of a co-operative consciousness that is manifest as the Unicorn Grocery. This attitude is close to Hall and Winn’s concept of a radical counter-hegemonic leadership.

Key learning points: co-operative leadership:

- Emerges out of a process of co-operative learning in the classroom and at an institutional level, where teachers and students have clear roles for the benefit of the organisation as a whole.
- Is a form of industrial democracy, where workers and management share knowledge and power.
- Means that workers are bearers of a co-operative consciousness that operates across the institution as a systemic way of thinking and working based on a shared set of co-operative values and principles.

- | Is organic, with leaders emerging to carry out a particular role or task and then merge back into the collective when the job is finished.
- | Is humanistic, extending beyond the institution, for the creation of an equitable society based on sharing work and social wealth.

2. The catalytic principles provide a robust framework through which to explore and understand the nature of co-operativism and co-operative leadership in each of the case studies.

Knowledge

The production of knowledge by the organisation as a whole is one of the core principles underpinning the model of co-operative leadership advanced by the case studies. A first step in promoting collective knowledge is to commit to systematic processes for the sharing of information and experience. This practice is observed in all the case studies, where a number of matters are shared and jointly discussed.

In the case of John Lewis, the power of knowledge is well understood and enshrined in the Partnership principles. There is a transparent systematic process of sharing business information with partners at all levels of the business. For example, weekly staff meetings are held with all staff based on departments and functions, where financial data and some other key business information is discussed. At Unicorn, all matters relating to the business of the co-operative are shared. There is a commitment among members of Unicorn to sharing knowledge of the co-operative through formal training days, when members make presentations about the history, science and culture that lies behind the products they sell. Unicorn runs training events to share practical information and knowledge in a way that can enhance the operation of the co-operative, for example, with regard to web-based policies and practices and safety and security as well as short presentations on the products that are sold in the store. Following Hall and Winn (2017, 3), they are following a practice of democratic leadership by sharing “new forms of socially useful knowledge”.

At Lipson Co-operative Academy there is a well-developed continuing professional development (CPD) programme, where teachers learn from the professional experience of their colleagues. As stated on the Lipson website: “Within this model different ideas are voiced and everyone has a part to play in the drive for continuous improvement.” In the CPD groups, teachers get together with the purpose of sharing teaching strategies and measuring their impact. In this way, they are not only individuals trying their best to deliver a good class, but are part of a team who care for each other and want the best for their students and colleagues. In line with this collective approach to professional development, there has been a prolonged commitment to enabling teachers to undertake academic research on postgraduate programmes:

“We do a lot of action research and use methods and triangulate results so you get accurate information feeding into parts of the process. It’s not being maverick... It’s about personal and group development and sharing those practices.”

(Teacher 2)

While these strategies do not equate to a process of ‘mass intellectuality’, in the way this concept is elaborated by Hall and Winn (2017), certainly a sense of ‘intellectual leadership’ is being promoted among teachers as part of a “process of liberating and reclaiming the knowledge, skills, practices and techniques that are produced... [for]... creating democratic, co-operative alternatives” (Hall and Winn, 2017, 4).

The co-operative ethos of Lipson Co-operative Academy is also observed in its approach to teaching and learning. Here, knowledge is not something that is simply transmitted by teachers to the students, but is produced in ways that sustain the pedagogical and pastoral practices of the school. The school has organised its entire educative project around co-operative learning, defining the curriculum, the classroom strategies and the school’s design, including classrooms’ seating arrangements, accordingly. Lipson’s approach to co-operative learning is set out on their website:

“Co-operative learning is a structured and disciplined approach that encourages dialogue and promotes confidence in the learner. It involves deep thinking and active participation that students find challenging and motivational. A co-operative classroom is one that relies on open and constructive dialogue.”

(Lipson Academy information: www.lipsonco-operativeacademy.coop/Co-operative-Learning)

In a similar way, Mondragon University has extended the significance of knowledge production to its curriculum model. This is established through the 'Mendeberri' system, a type of participatory pedagogy derived from John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks (Retegui, 2001). Students at Mondragon University are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through problem-solving and project-based strategies. Students we spoke to were very positive about the pedagogic model:

"With this model I can give a meaning to what I'm studying, it's not only attending classes, memorising and forgetting what I studied the following day (...) as our classes are organised to have groups of 20/25 students, this helps to have a closer relationship with our lecturers, that is great."
(Student 1, Education, focus group)

"When you begin a module, the lecturers, instead of saying: we will do this and this, they say: this is our proposal, but if you don't like it, then we change it. We can all have a say regarding the contents or assessments of the class. We can decide together aspects that in other universities are just imposed."
(Student 2, Education, focus group)

The Business and Management faculty run dynamic flexible programmes to develop entrepreneurship and innovative thinkers:

"I loved it. I loved the chaos and how much we had to challenge ourselves to make it through the programme. It is great to have people who have run companies to teach others to develop companies because they know what students are going through."
(Student in Business and Management faculty)

Knowledge is recognised as a core activity not only of Mondragon University but MONDRAGON Corporation, a multinational conglomerate of which Mondragon University is a voluntary member. Knowledge will be the focus of a new corporate division to go alongside the already existing divisions for industry, finance and food. There is a strong sense that knowledge should be linked to the needs of industry and the local region. In terms of Hall and Winn's notion of democratic leadership, this means 'socially useful knowledge', including research done inside Mondragon University but also the research done by their partner co-operatives and external members.

Furthermore, Mondragon University has its own co-operative research and training centre, *Lanki*, based in the Education and Humanities faculty, which promotes and supports the development of co-operatives across Mondragon University, the Basque region and with collaborating groups in the global south. *Lanki* provides Mondragon University with a strong sense of critical reflexivity, an essential feature for organisations based on democratic leadership. This critical reflexivity is framed around *Lanki's* attitude towards Mondragon University which can be understood as: a) affirmative, because in spite of the imperfections, Mondragon should be acknowledged as a valuable experience in many ways; b) critical, because there are many aspects that could be improved and identifying them is the first step; and, c) constructive, because the destructive critique lacks the capacity to understand the complexity and ambivalences of the real world (Azkarraga, 2009).

Key learning points: co-operative knowledge is:

- Promoting collective knowledge by committing to systematic processes for the sharing of information and experience, eg formal training days, CPD programmes, action research.
- Knowing that co-operative learning affects the architecture and ethos of the whole school, informing curriculum and classroom design.
- Engaging in critical reflection as a way of dealing with the complexity and ambivalences of the real world.

Democracy

Democracy is another key principle guiding the internal dynamics of the case studies. Although the four organisations concur in their attempts to foster a more democratic workplace, the ways in which democracy is exercised varies significantly from one institution to another. In terms of governance structure, democracy at John Lewis is enshrined through the concept of 'partner voice', which allows partners to represent their issues and concerns at all levels of the management structure. This capacity for partners, at whatever level, to raise issues and concerns about the Partnership is enshrined in the John Lewis constitution as the concept of 'critical voice'. Similarly, in Lipson Co-operative Academy there is a well-established democratic structure which involves all members of the school community. This is characterised by forums for teachers, students and parents to express their views and opinions about a wide range of issues. As a member of MONDRAGON Corporation, Mondragon University is built on a democratic structure designed

so that at each stage of the process managers and those who are taking executive and operational decisions can be held to account. Mondragon University's democratic bodies adopt a model of representative participation in which members choose representatives who are entitled to make operational decisions. However, in all cases, the general assembly is the sovereign body where all the major decisions are agreed. Finally, Unicorn operates a flat governance structure within which all members take on the role of member directors. Decision-making at Unicorn is a collective process based on consensual decision-making with mechanisms enabling all members to fully participate in meetings and the running of the business.

Regarding the degree of control that employees enjoy over a single decision, the four case studies meet Bernstein's basic threshold of democratic participation, where the members exert 'co-operation' or 'co-influence'. This means that they are able to initiate criticisms and suggestions and discuss them face-to-face with managers (Bernstein, 2012). In the case of Lipson, the 'co-influence' over the goals of the organisation is supplemented by an institutional school culture that promotes teachers and students speaking up about matters of concern:

"We all have a voice. We can speak up... [We're] not set apart from our teachers. We are involved in decision-making processes."

(Pupil 1, Year 8)

Those we interviewed at Lipson, including students, teachers and parents, have a strong sense that they are being listened to. However, this perception does not necessarily entail a greater degree of control over the decision-making within the school. Unlike Lipson, the other case studies have consolidated co-influence with other mechanisms that foster greater workplace democracy. At John Lewis, for example, the partners do have the ultimate sanction of being able to remove the chairman at the annual general meeting. In Mondragon University, the workers' council or general assembly sits above the management body thus achieving the status of full workplace democracy, following Bernstein's model. Moreover, in cases where the democratic accountability is restricted there are checks and balances to provide safeguards against authoritarian managerialism. Unicorn develops an even more radical approach as it is based on a co-operative model in which all members fully participate, deliberate and decide on all aspects of the business:

"All decisions at Unicorn are based on consensus. I think it is the best way of making decisions given worker co-ops have no hierarchy so everyone should have an equal say in making decisions, either by being fully supportive or living with it..."

(Member 4, Unicorn)

The type of issues over which members may have democratic control also varies from one organisation to another. In both John Lewis and Lipson there is a very clear demarcation about the types of decisions that are appropriate for different levels of the management and organisational structures. At Lipson, for instance, decisions about the school uniform involve the whole school while budgets and finances are the responsibility of the governors and the support and leadership team. In John Lewis, the chairman and board have control over strategy and financial aspects, including the definition of the annual bonus, while the staff are generally consulted about issues such as pensions and working times but not necessarily provided with the opportunity for formal voting in some of these matters:

"Sometimes you feel that the decisions have already been made for you and you've been steered in that direction. But probably we are not qualified to make that decision anyway..."

(Workshop participant, John Lewis)

In John Lewis and Lipson, the participants felt that they did not have the expertise to be able to decide on certain matters and so were content for that responsibility to be taken on by those with sufficient professional expertise. In that sense, participants felt they were able to "exert influence at the very points where they have most expertise", satisfying Bernstein's level of democratic participation (Bernstein, 2012, 54). However, in John Lewis this view changes when the annual bonus is the issue under discussion. The reduction of the amount of annual bonus in recent years and the discrepancy between amounts of bonus paid to partners earning different levels of salary are decisions made by the upper levels of management and cause disquiet in the rest of the partnership. This demarcation observed both in John Lewis and Lipson is not present in Mondragon University and Unicorn, where the participants get involved in a wide range of decisions, from managerial and financial matters to more operational and practical issues.

The range of issues on which the members can influence decision-making is linked to the organisational level at which democracy is exercised. In John Lewis the members hold the power to remove the chairman and so, following Bernstein's dimensions of participation, they do have real power at the highest level of company control. The partner voice framework means that 'gaps' are 'filled in' with methods of direct and representative democracy, so that the upper level is brought into more contact with the real issues and concerns of workers in the organisation. However, when it comes to the levels at which participation is exercised, there is a tendency towards more management control, as with the example above about the annual bonus. Similarly, at Lipson, where the high levels of democratic participation do not mean that all members are involved in the decision-making about all aspects of the life of the school. Although the level of awareness about the democratic structures of the school is high, as is the understanding of their importance for the ethos of the institution, not all participants are able to demonstrate, in Bernstein's terms, 'real' power at the highest level of governance, eg to influence decisions made by the school governors. For a member of the support and leadership team, this reality is unavoidable due to the need for quick decision-making in an educational institution:

"An institution is more like a living organism where sometimes quick decisions need to be made on the best judgement of those we have entrusted with leadership."
(SLT member, Lipson)

Taking a totally different approach is Unicorn where the current governance structure is based on whole membership meetings, including all members of the co-operative, currently 70. These meetings take place three times a year and last for three hours. In this co-operative, the whole membership is responsible for policy, major decisions, reporting, strategic planning, visioning and building consensus. Therefore, it can be considered a full workplace democracy in Bernstein's terms. Similarly, in Mondragon University the model of management and governance allows its members to exercise real power and control at all levels of the organisation (Bernstein, 2012). As a worker-owned democratic organisation, Mondragon University is based on one-member-one-vote even in the situation where members are not the owners, as in the case of students and collaborating partners. As a way to ensure the democratisation of the university at all its levels, it is customary for administrative workers to hold elected positions on the governing board. Moreover, the rector and vice-rector of Mondragon University, as

members of the supporting co-operative, do not have the power to make decisions on behalf of the faculty co-operatives, which are autonomous and self-managed units:

"The decisions are much better even if it might take longer. I am completely convinced about that. I would be misguided if I thought that I am dean and king of the faculty. You have to listen and create a shared project."

(Member, Business and Management faculty)

"It works!" It improves the quality of decision-making. Definitely."

(Alecop member)

However, participation at all levels also brings its own challenges. Both Mondragon University and Unicorn members felt that, although the democratic decision-making system works, it has some qualifications. These are mainly in terms of the time taken to decide and the high levels of engagement required by members in affairs of the business, which can be exhausting at times. However, the speed with which decisions are made can be hastened by decision-making not having to go through a chain of managerial control. In the case of Mondragon University, there is also some concern about students' low attendance at meetings and lack of student engagement in the Humanities and Business faculties. This could be attributed to the individualism of contemporary society, the lack of individual commitment to work or that students do not need to work as they are supported financially by their families. Where students do engage, they feel committed to the co-operative project, although they feel that they could be encouraged to organise events and activities in a more autonomous way. Moreover, they would prefer to have more influence in deciding the issues to be discussed in meetings and other forums:

"We can have a say in the governing board, there are a number of topics to be discussed, but they have been previously set..."

(Student, Humanities faculty, Mondragon University)

Finally, the democratic structures at Mondragon University do not resolve the tensions between the role of students as both students and members of the co-operative and the role of the staff as both workers and owners.

Key learning points: co-operative democracy is:

- | Raising issues and concerns at all levels of the organisational structure so that decision makers can be held to account, eg by representative participation, one member one vote, consensual decision-making and creating spaces for critical voices.
- | Exhausting, needing high levels of engagement by members in the affairs of the institution.
- | Listening to each other and reflecting on one's own position in relation to the shared project.

Bureaucracy

For the purpose of this research, bureaucracy is understood not only as the type of administration but as the commitment to a set of ethical and moral principles on which the administration is based. The four case studies analysed in this report are grounded in strong ethical and moral frameworks underpinning the practices, organisational culture and procedures of their organisations. In the case of Lipson, this framework is based on the principles of the International Co-operative Movement and an associated set of values, which are: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Overall, there is widespread understanding by students and teachers about these values and principles and what they mean and their importance for the working of the school.

In Mondragon University there is a strong commitment to the ways in which the bureaucratic structures operate across the institution, enabling autonomy and independence while, at the same time, harnessing the supporting and harmonising powers of Mondragon University as a co-ordinating co-operative. These bureaucratic structures are underpinned by a clear political, ethical and moral base expressed in their own co-operative principles. These principles are more radical than those established by the International Co-operative Association, as they make explicit the sovereignty of labour and subordinate nature of capital. The Mondragon principles are:

- | Open admission
- | Democratic organisation
- | Sovereignty of labour
- | Instrumental and subordinate nature of capital
- | Participatory management

- | Payment solidarity
- | Inter-co-operation
- | Social transformation
- | Universality
- | Education (<https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/co-operative-experience/our-principles/>)

In general, the bureaucratic structure of Mondragon University is considered both liberating and empowering for its members. However, it can be restrictive too, as a senior leader of the Business and Management faculty argues:

"The autonomous nature of Mondragon University faculties means that the dynamic of the structure pushes each faculty to develop their own programmes, rather than to work in an interdisciplinary way (...) there is a contradiction within the system, which is able to be very collaborative but at the same time (...) we are not able to be co-operative and collaborative across faculties."

In Unicorn, the co-operative is grounded in a distinctive set of political, moral and ethical values and principles, rather than the generic framework established by the International Co-operative Association. The principles at Unicorn are: secure employment, equal opportunity, fair and sustainable trade and solidarity in co-operation, all established by the members themselves. The workers at Unicorn believe in the importance of shared values and principles for maintaining a sense of common purpose. They also recognise that the business does not just run on principles and values but it is grounded in collective hard work and trust of each other:

"Workers make co-ops work. A group of hardworking people, a mix of idealism and getting things done based on mutual trust. We have a shared vision and we do lots of things to keep that shared vision strong (...) the really important thing is the sense of working as a collective."

(Worker-member 6, Unicorn)

Finally, in the case of John Lewis, the working life of the business is underpinned by a moral and ethical framework set out in the business constitution. It is interesting to notice that within a competitive commercial environment, the constitution still maintains the concept of partner 'happiness' as the number one principle of the company. In the words of a partner, "the principles of John Lewis are very much alive".

The principles are set out around the store and the staff section of the building on wall notices and written up as inspirational phrases. Partners had different interpretations for what were the key messages of the principles. One senior manager focused on the importance of experimentation as a business principle, another partner emphasised that Principle 1 was not just about ensuring that partners were to be happy, but that staff happiness should endure within the context of a profitable company:

“Principle 1: The Partnership’s ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business. Because the Partnership is owned in trust for its members, they share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power.”

Key learning points: co-operative bureaucracy is:

- Commitment to a set of ethical and moral principles on which the administration is based enshrined in an organisations’ constitution and business practices.
- Grounded in co-ownership; the politics of labour over capital, happiness and humanity at work.

Livelihood

The principle of livelihood is more than earning a wage. It refers to the ways in which life is enhanced through the activities of the institution (Neary and Winn, 2017a, 2017b). In Lipson Co-operative Academy, one of the strongest expressions of livelihood is observed in the guild system, whereby students choose to become part of a guild, which are organised around subject areas. The guilds enable students to engage with other students not from their year group and to work with teachers outside of the classroom. The guilds operate during the whole school day out of lesson times, before and after the timetabled curriculum. They also provide a good opportunity for pastoral support, as one head of guild argues:

“You can see co-operation in the vertical tutor system, the older ones guiding the younger ones, bringing them on, and that is heartening. It can be terrifying to come to school but through the guild system students settle in really quickly through collective responsibility and looking after each other (...) There is a sense of family and we look after each other.”

It is very clear that the guild system plays an important role in adding value to the experience of the students

outside of the classroom so that they feel part not simply of a formal institution, but of a family. This enhanced sense of student life beyond the academic is further developed by a number of co-operatives ran by students that includes a big band music co-operative, a catering co-operative and a co-operative that advocates human rights.

In the case of John Lewis, livelihood is expressed in the importance given by the company to the principle of partners’ happiness within a competitive environment. This principle is made real by the system of benefits that accrue to staff as a result of their employee ownership status. This includes an annual bonus, holidays in a partnership-owned location, in-store dining facilities at reduced prices as well as discounts at stores and restaurants and entertainment venues.

At Mondragon University, a key feature of livelihood is that the university exists to create employment more than to maximise profit:

“We want to grow, but growth is not for more economic benefit but to create more employment. We do not understand growing unless it is accompanied by employment because of the idea of the development of the individual by employment at work.”

(Member, Mondragon University)

This principle is enacted in many ways. Regarding the working conditions, the university does not function with the traditional salary system, rather the workers get monthly payments or ‘anticipos’, based on the anticipated earnings of their faculty for the calendar year. These anticipated revenues are agreed at the annual general assembly and voted on by workers, students and external members. As well as being workers, the staff at Mondragon own the co-operative, each of them investing 15,000 euros when their membership is confirmed, usually after having worked in the co-operative for a two-year probationary period. A close account is kept of the earnings throughout the year, with information shared with all members, so that in a situation where revenues are below what has been predicted the monthly payments can be reduced after a general agreement. As well as receiving a monthly payment workers receive an annual bonus based on a percentage of the revenues that are generated, calculated in terms of employment grades and length of service. The workers are eligible for other benefits including access to private health care, charged at 20% of the usual cost. Furthermore, the advanced payments are scaled so that the highest paid worker gets

no more than 4.5 times that of the lowest paid. While the levels of pay for new academics are similar, or even higher, to those in other universities, the staff that occupy executive positions are less well remunerated than staff with similar responsibilities in other higher education institutions.

Although students are not owners of the university they are also regarded as workers, with studies organised alongside employment placements, instilling the idea of 'humanity at work', and the sovereignty of labour as set out in their co-operative principles. Against the worldwide growing trend that fosters unpaid internships as a way to improve employability, Mondragon University insists that students are paid while on work placements as they are contributing to the wealth of the company. Unlike staff, the students do not make any financial investment, or gain any share in surpluses that are produced. However, they have the chance to participate in other federated co-operatives in the region, like Alecop, an industrial co-operative established in 1966 to provide students with employment and the experience of working in a co-operative company. Alecop exemplifies the spirit of co-operativism at Mondragon University, where students are owners of this co-operative along with technical and administrative staff. Here, students make a capital investment of 670 euros, and earn an income of 500 euros a month. The experience of Alecop is another expression of livelihood as it fosters students' leadership in education and society. The founding rector of Mondragon University describes the role of students in Alecop as:

"Students are protagonists: a powerful force in education and society, at the centre of a shared endeavour based on activity, labour and education: 'a', 'l', 'e' as the 'ale' in Alecop."
(Founding rector, Alecop)

In Unicorn, a strong feature of livelihood is the equality of wages, with all worker-members getting paid the same: £22,000 per annum based on an hourly rate, including probationary staff. Casuals receive 80% of the hourly rate (or National Living wage, whatever is greater). Moreover, members receive quarterly bonuses based on hours worked and length of service capped at 10 years. But livelihood at Unicorn extends beyond earning a wage. There is also a strong sense that the monies that the co-operative make should be used to support 'like minded' projects in the UK and the global south:

"Unicorn is connected to the wider movement (...) We have relied on other large co-ops to give us ideas about how to move forward so it is important for us to pass that on. I quite

like that we can give that back. (...) We come from the point of view of shared community interest that is not just about the money. So a lot of what we do is to focus on supporting people who share that point of view."

(Worker-member 6, Unicorn)

Key learning points: co-operative livelihood is:

- More than earning a wage, but people are paid for their work.
- Adding value to the experience of work by a system of benefits, eg annual bonus, holidays, discounted eating, shopping and entertainment and leisure.
- A commitment to the business through personal financial investments and acting as protagonists.
- Supporting the work of other co-operatives by sharing ideas.

Solidarity

The four case studies are strongly committed to the principle of solidarity, which is enacted in multiple ways. Lipson, for example, shows solidarity with other co-operative schools nationally and in the region, participating in a network of supporting co-operative schools. Internally, there are high levels of commitment to the co-operative ethos of the school and a strong sense of solidarity among the members of the institution:

"...the school would not survive without solidarity... the only way to provide our unique provision is by connecting people together through the guilds and faculty... we are achieving greater than the sum of our parts by being together..."

(Head of faculty 1)

This head of faculty maintains that solidarity between students, teachers and professional staff is a core dimension that enhances the school and improve its functioning. This approach contributes to genuine collegiality, or 'neo-collegiality', to use Bacon's term (2014), with no features of 'contrived collegiality' (Jones, 2015, 74) observed in the field.

Although the school works hard to generate 'institutional inclusivity' (Bacon, 2014), there was little sense of solidarity with the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), even though the school principles and ethics are taken from this organisation. The students are very knowledgeable about the meaning and importance of the ICA principles for the school, but know little about the co-operative movement. They learn about individuals who

personify the principles and practices of co-operativism rather than the idea of co-operativism as a global social movement. According to one participant, the school could do more to develop a relationship of solidarity with the global co-operative movement. This view contrasts with the perception of an SLT member, who claims that such a show of solidarity would compromise the school's political neutrality and, therefore, put its charitable status at risk, ie the school should not to be seen to be seeking to influence the political views of the students.

Lipson's teachers expressed a strong sense of solidarity to their trade union, reflecting the culture of trade unionism in the teaching profession. Any conflict between the labour movement as trade unionism: collective and state centric, and the labour movement as co-operativism: autonomous based on worker democracy, was not recognised. The conflict is widely discussed in the literature and is seen as having been a barrier to the progressive development of the labour movement (Yeo, 1988), with calls to create a stronger sense of solidarity between trade unionism and co-operative workers (<http://1worker1vote.org>).

In the case of John Lewis, there is a clear sense of solidarity with colleagues in the store and to the Partnership as a whole. This is underpinned by a commitment to the concept of partnership, as one staff member indicates:

"At John Lewis the Partnership is the glue that holds us all together and that makes us stronger and it shows with customers (...) We are a powerful organisation..."

(Workshop participant, John Lewis)

Despite this common view, some members were concerned that the Partnership could be undermined by contracting aspects of the work to outside agencies, particularly cleaning. This was not just in terms of undermining the Partnership principle but the lack of sanctions by store staff if the cleaners were not performing their work effectively. The sense of solidarity was also undermined by the cuts to staffing, at the back room and shop floor level, as well as the numbers of part-time staff being employed. This results in stress due to high workloads, and a reduction in the support services for staff. Furthermore, some partners expressed concern about the the lack of awareness of the Partnership's culture and history among new staff, due to the limited time now spent on staff induction. Externally, there was no sense of solidarity to workers elsewhere in the retail trade. The general view is that partners are in a favourable

situation compared to other workers in retail, with many of them drawing on previous experience in other retailers. There is general agreement that unions are not required at John Lewis because, as partners, they have considerable influence on the decision-making process, based on their status as employee owners.

If Lipson and John Lewis express solidarity mainly in social and symbolic actions, Mondragon University takes this a step further, by engaging with a 'solidarity economy' (Molina, 2011) that is aligned with the extensive nature of co-operativism across Mondragon and the Basque country. All co-operatives in the MONDRAGON Corporation pay a percentage of their annual revenue into funds that are distributed for the benefit of the corporation as a whole. There is an education fund to pay for infrastructure developments and new technologies. Within Mondragon University, each of the faculties can support each other through the transfer of revenues if one of the faculty co-ops is not achieving its anticipated earnings. Solidarity at Mondragon University is much more than an economic relation, it is a social relation and a way of life, deeply rooted in the local region and its politics as well as family life:

"We were co-operators before we were born. My mother and father were co-operators. It is something like a form of predestination."

(Member of Education and Humanities faculty 2)

According to the research participants, in the last decade this co-operative spirit has declined significantly due to a number of reasons, such as the depoliticisation of society. In this context, promoting the co-operative principles within Mondragon University is an essential task that the organisation should prioritise, according to some members. There is a view that the financial difficulties experienced by one of the main businesses in the corporation, FAGOR, declared bankrupt in 2013, was the result of a decline in the spirit and culture of co-operativism. There was concern that the internationalisation of MONDRAGON Co-operative Corporation meant that the principle of membership was being undermined due to the growth of non-member employees in foreign-based enterprises. The democratic structures do not apply to non-member workers and to contract workers – who currently comprise 25% of the workforce in co-operatives in the Basque country – and increasingly in international companies, where more than 50% of workers employed in MONDRAGON-related organisations in India and China are not members of the MONDRAGON Co-operative Corporation (Bakaikoa et al

2004). Furthermore, concern has been expressed in the academic literature that managerial authority is becoming increasingly centralised within the corporation (Bakaikoa et al, 2004).

Finally, solidarity among the members of Unicorn is very evident, as well as the solidarity expressed towards the co-operative movement in general, and to worker-co-operatives in particular. There is a recognition that the strength of the co-operative is in its individual members, who remain united by a common purpose. However, there is also an awareness that relationships between members could be strained, not only in terms of personal disagreements, but also with regard to contributions made to the working of the co-operative. Externally, there is a sense of loyalty and commitment to customers and to external suppliers, but no desire to reconstitute as a multi-stakeholder co-operative where decision-making would be shared with people and groups who are not directly employed by the worker co-operative. This position is based on the perception that decisions made by these groups might not be based on the best interest of the co-operative as a whole:

“We are not a consumer co-op... the workers’ voice sets the tone of the business but the customers are a crucial part of the business, they pay our wages so we need to pay attention to what they say. We get a lot of feedback from customers to do with product range, along with the overall experience of being in the shop; we do good work in terms of outreach and community engagement; we have evening events so customers can come in and see behind the scenes as well as education and marketing events.”

(Worker-member, A)

Solidarity as a commitment to a common purpose outside of the institution is also enacted in Unicorn’s engagement to the wider movement. This co-operative donates 1% of its wages bill to fund local projects and organisations which share its vision of community and society in the UK. At an international level, 4% is donated to an international fund concerned with the impact of unfair world trade regulations, poverty, and unsustainable agriculture in the global south. Moreover, Unicorn supports the development of other grocery co-operatives through the ‘Grow your own grocery’ guide, along with other community activities to support the development of co-operativism. This work is organised by the education and marketing team.

Key learning points: co-operative solidarity is:

- | A commitment to the co-operative movement and its principles.
- | A sense of shared endeavour with other parts of the labour movement, eg trade unions.
- | Working collectively with a sense of common purpose, involving customers, suppliers and external stakeholders.
- | Trusting in each other.

3. Theory and practice: Capital and Labour are foundational principles for co-operative institutions

The theoretical framework for the research makes a claim for the inclusion of capital and labour into the debate about leadership, governance and management in higher education.

The research reveals the extent to which capital and labour are organising principles for these case studies, with the exception of Lipson Co-operative Academy. John Lewis was established as a producer-co-operative as a way of avoiding communism by incorporating workers as partners into the running of the business. The title of a book written by Spedan Lewis, the founder of John Lewis Partnership, in 1954 is *Fairer shares: a possible advance in civilisation and perhaps the only avoidance of communism*. Mondragon University has as one of its defining principles that capital should be subordinate to labour, with the marketing slogan ‘MONDRAGON: Humanity at Work’, so as to give expression to the dignity of labour that the corporation aspires to promote. As a workers’ co-operative, Unicorn is built on the idea of worker control of the labour process in what remains a capitalist enterprise. The view was expressed by a staff member at Lipson that co-operative learning could be more connected to the co-operative labour movement which is based foundationally on the idea of freedom from capitalist work.

The way in which we have framed the relationship between capital and labour in this research is that it is essentially conflictual, and not resolvable by management strategies or even trade union representation and negotiation.

The basis of the contradiction is that workers are not fully recompensed for the value (profit) they produce; this is the essential meaning of capitalist exploitation, so that employees create surplus value for their businesses in which they work. In capitalist workplaces, employees are the resource rather than the project.

This fact is generalisable to life outside of the workplace and extends to humanity and nature in general generating enormous social and environmental and political problems. We have referred to this process by which surplus value is created as 'the value vortex', (Neary and Winn, 2017a, Dyer-Witthford, 2015): the dynamic matrix through which industrial production is advanced and social transformation is generated. This process has also been referred to as class struggle: "all history is the history of class struggle" (Marx and Engels, 2002/1848).

The value vortex suggests that transformational change is essentially derived out of conflict and contradiction within capitalist institutions and extends into other key aspects of social life. In that case, the focus of institutional and social change should be recalibrated to incorporate the concepts of capital and labour, and the contradictory forms of behaviours that they generate in leadership, governance and management practices. This approach was confirmed to us by a statement that forms part of a book chapter written by a former vice-principal of Lipson, which, although not framed with the matrix of capital and labour, captures the point we are making about the dynamic possibility of the forces of capitalist contradiction. She argues not to be afraid of tension and contradiction within an institution, but to recognise that:

"It is actually at this point of heightened tension and conflict that the objective can be co-constructed and substantial transformation take place. This is important as it informs us that we should accept the conflict and tension rather than seeing it as a dysfunctional measure of the democratic work we are undertaking."

(Jones, 2015, 82) ■

05 Conclusions and recommendations

The research has shown that the catalytic principles are robust and reliable, finding resonances across the four case studies, and providing the basis for a definition of co-operative leadership in higher education. Focusing on the principles as a framework for the research provides a rich and compelling account of the work of the four case studies that we visited.

The focus of the research is co-operative leadership. Following on from the research into the catalytic principles, we can say that the distinctive feature of co-operative leadership that emerges from this study is derived from the nature of the co-operative organisations themselves.

We found that co-operative leadership in a capitalist context emerges in response to the socialisation of labour that co-operation in capitalism implies (*solidarity*), and for purposes that go beyond the limits and barriers of capitalist production (*livelihood*) in ways that involve the agreement of the whole organisation (*democracy*) based on its collective intelligence and capacity (*knowledge*) and in a manner that members of the enterprise support and adhere to as a set of moral, ethical and political principles (*bureaucracy*). And, as well as all of that, the research has revealed that co-operative enterprises are built by people based on trust, and a sense of commitment to each other, as well as managing personal tensions and antagonisms. So, more like a family than a business corporation.

Finally, while doing the research we found there was support for a co-operative university from all of the case study sites, particularly students, teachers, and administrators at Lipson Co-operative Academy. Following on from this enthusiasm and in line with co-operative principles we recommend developing the practice of leadership in our own higher education institutions. In the next section we identify the information and support available to institutions and individuals who wish to further explore and develop co-operative leadership for higher education. This resource has been created by the authors of this report. We refer to this resource as: Do It Ourselves Higher Education. ■

06 Do it Ourselves Higher Education

Do It Ourselves Higher Education is an aggregated resource for academics, students and administrators who are interested in research, CPD on co-operative leadership or even setting up a co-operative higher education institution.

Researchers from this project are available for consultancy on any aspect of co-operative higher education. We have developed a framework for co-operative higher education that is intended to support, both conceptually and practically, the development and implementation of co-operative higher education. ■

1. Find out about co-operatives

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.

<http://lncn.eu/diy1>

2. Read about co-operative higher education

There is a growing bibliography of articles, reports, presentations and book chapters that discuss the idea of a 'co-operative university'.

<http://lncn.eu/coophe>

3. How co-operative is your university?

We have developed a diagnostic tool for higher education institutions to reveal the extent of co-operative provision within an institution and assess to what extent a co-operative model already exists, is viable, and how it might be further developed.

<http://lncn.eu/CLT>

4. Use expert resources for co-operative higher education

Practical support for the development of co-operatives is available in most countries and co-operatives are also widely researched around the world. Find out who can support you to develop co-operative higher education.

<http://lncn.eu/coops>

References

- Alvesson, M. and Spicer, A. (2012) 'Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity', *Human Relations*, 65(3): 367–390.
-
- Azkarraga, J. (2009) El cooperativismo como conciencia critica, *Nexe*, 25, 37-48. Available at <http://nexe.coop/nexe/images/stories/PDF/nexe25.pdf> [accessed 8 March 2018].
-
- Bacon, E. (2014) *Neo-Collegiality: Restoring Academic Engagement in the Managerial University*. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education: London. Available at: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/11493/> [accessed 6 March 2018].
-
- Bailey, M. and Freedman, D. (2011) *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance*. London: Pluto Press.
-
- Bakaikoa, B., Errasti, A.I. and Bergiristain, A. (2004) 'In Governance of the Mondragon Corporacion Co-operativa', *Annals of Public and Co-operative Economics*, 75(1): 61-87.
-
- Bernstein, P. (2012) *Workplace Democratization: Its Internal Dynamics*. Massachusetts: Educational Services Publishing.
-
- Bolden, R., Gosling, J. and O'Brien, A. (2014) 'Citizens of the academic community? A societal perspective on leadership in UK higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(5): 754–770.
-
- Bonefeld, W. (2014) *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy: on Subversion and Negative Reason*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
-
- Brown, R. and Carasso, H. (2013) *Everything for Sale? The Marketisation of UK Higher Education*. London: Routledge.
-
- Burawoy, M. (1998) 'The Extended Case Method'. *Sociological Theory*. 16(1): 4-33. Available at: <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Methodology/ECM.ST.pdf> [accessed 6 March 2018].
-
- Cathcart, A. (2009) *Directing Democracy: the Case of the John Lewis Partnership*. PhD Thesis. University of Leicester. Available at: <https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/7811/1/2009CathcartAphd.pdf> [accessed 6 March 2018].
-
- Collini, S. (2012) *What are Universities For?* London: Penguin.
-
- Cook, D. (2013) *Realising the Co-operative University, a consultancy report for the Co-operative College*. <https://coopuni.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/realising-the-co-operative-university-for-disemmination.pdf> [accessed 6 March 2018].
-
- Davidge, G. (2014) *For 'getting it': and Ethnographic Study of Co-operative Schools*. PhD Thesis. Manchester Metropolitan University.
-
- Dinerstein, A. and Neary, M. (2002) *The Labour Debate: the Theory and Reality of Capitalist Work*. London: Ashgate.
-
- Dopson, S., Ferlie, E., McGivern, G., Fischer, M.D., Ledger, J., Behrens, S. and Wilson, S. (2016), *The Impact of Leadership and Leadership Development in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature and Evidence*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. (Research and development series).
-
- Dyer-Witthford, N. (2015) *Cyber-proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
-

Molina, F. (2011) 'The Spirituality of Economics: Historical Roots of Mondragon'. In Bakaikoa, B. and Albizu, E. (eds). *Basque Co-operativism*. Centre for Basque Studies: University of Reno, Nevada and the University of the Basque Country.

Hall, R. (2015). 'The University and the Secular Crisis'. *Open Library of the Humanities*, 1(1).

Hall, R. and Winn, J. (eds.) (2017) *Mass Intellectuality and Democratic Leadership in Higher Education*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Jones, S. (2015) 'Contrived Collegiality? Investigating the Efficacy of Teacher Development', in Woodin, T. (ed) *Co-operation, learning and co-operative values – contemporary issues in education*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 74-87.

Lewis, S. (1954) *Fairer Shares: A Possible Advance in Civilisation and Perhaps the Only Alternative to Communism*. Rochester: Staples Printers Limited.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2002) *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin Classics.

Marx, K. (1976) *Capital; A Critique of Political Economy: Volume 1*. London: Penguin Classics.

McGettigan, A. (2013) *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education*. London: Pluto Press.

Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and Nixon, E. (2010) *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*. London: Routledge.

Neary, M. and Saunders, G. (2011) 'Leadership and Learning Landscapes: the struggle for the idea of the university', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65(4): 333-352.

Neary, M. and Winn, J. (2017a) 'Beyond Public and Private: A Framework for Co-operative Higher Education', *Open Library of Humanities*, 3(2).

Neary, M. and Winn, J. (2017b) 'There is an alternative: a report on an action research project to develop a framework for co-operative higher education', *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences*, 10(1): 87-105.

Postone, M. (1993) *Time, Labour and Social Domination: A reappraisal of Marx's social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Retegui, J. (2001) La educación en el nuevo milenio. Reto 2: Educación. Gipuzkoa 2020. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20111222122413/http://www.gipuzkoa.net/g2020/docum/G2020-Educacion-Retegui_es.pdf [accessed 8th March 2018].

Ridley-Duff R. and Bull, M. (2015) *Understanding Social Enterprise*. London Sage

Shattock, M. (2006) *Managing Good Governance in Higher Education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Shattock, M. (2008) 'The change from private to public governance of British higher education: Its consequences for Higher Education policy making 1980–2006', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 62(3): 181–203.

Shattock, M. (2012) *Making Policy in British Higher Education*. Maidenhead: MacGraw-Hill and Open University Press.

Wilson, M. (2014) 'Learning Together: perspectives in co-operative higher education' (keynote address), Co-operative College Manchester.

Winn, J. (2015) 'The Co-operative University: Labour, Property and Pedagogy', *Power and Education*, 7(1): 39-55.

Woodin, T. (ed) (2015) *Co-operation, learning and co-operative values – contemporary issues in education*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wright, S., Greenwood, D. and Boden, R. (2011) 'Report on a field visit to Mondragon University: A co-operative experience/experiment', *Learning and Teaching*, 4(3): 38–56.

Yeo, S. (1988), *New Views of Co-operation*, London: Routledge.

Author biographies

Mike Neary

Mike Neary is Professor of Sociology in the School of Political and Social Science at the University of Lincoln. During his time at Lincoln he has been the Dean of Teaching and Learning (2007–14), Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (2007-2012) and Director of the Graduate School (2011-2014). Prior to taking up his appointment at Lincoln he taught Political Sociology at the University of Warwick (1993-2007). Before becoming an academic he worked in youth development and community education in South London (1979-1993). He was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy in 2007. In 2016 he became a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. The Students' Union at Lincoln granted him honorary life membership in 2014 for his work with students. He is a founding member of the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, a co-operative providing no fee public higher education. His main research interest is the future of universities and the role of higher education in creating a post-capitalist society.

Joss Winn

Joss Winn's research focuses on co-operative education, workplace democracy and alternative forms of higher education, contributing to a number of sub-disciplines and contemporary research themes in the social sciences. These include the sociology of work and critical labour studies; critical social theory; the sociology of education; the co-operative movement, social movements and activism; and the sociology of technology and information. Joss is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education where he leads the Doctorate in Education. Prior to joining the University of Lincoln in 2007, he worked for Amnesty International.

Katia Valenzuela-Fuentes

Katia Valenzuela-Fuentes is an assistant Professor at the School of Environmental Sciences, Universidad de Concepcion, Chile. She obtained her PhD in Politics from the University of Nottingham in 2017, where she studied the politics of autonomous movements in Latin America. Her research interests include social movements, political sociology, socio-environmental conflicts, critical epistemologies and militant research. She is currently leading a research project about environmental movements in southern Chile. ■

Appendix

John Lewis Partnership

The John Lewis Partnership was established as a retail business in 1929 through an act of irrevocable settlement in trust signed by John Spedan Lewis, the son of John Lewis who founded the original company in 1864. This legal framework extended an established profit sharing scheme that had been implemented in 1919 so that the business “would be given to the workers ‘present and prospective’”. The Partnership was based on a constitution which incorporated the principles of “power, gain and knowledge” to underpin an arrangement of democratic structures and protocols in what amounted to nothing less than “an experiment in industrial democracy” (Cathcart, 2009). John Lewis is not a co-operative association, although its culture and practice is based on producer co-operatives (Lewis, 1954). It is, rather, an employee-owned company where employees – partners own deferred shares in the business (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011). The Partnership now employs 88,000 staff, or partners as they are all referred to, reflecting the co-owned nature of the business. The premises are mainly in the UK, with 46 branches, as well as more than 300 Waitrose supermarkets, and new international outlets in Dubai and Australia.

Lipson Co-operative Academy

Lipson Co-operative Academy is a single school foundation trust established in 2011. It has 1100 students, including a sixth form of more than 200 which operates in partnership with a local consortium of non-co-operative schools. It is situated in Plymouth, Devon. The school is governed by a board of governors and managed by a Support and Leadership Team (SLT). The emergence of co-operative schooling has been one of the most significant developments in the English education system in the 21st century (Woodin, 2012; Yeo, 2010; Facer et al, 2012; Wilson, 2011). Co-operative education has developed into a network of more than 600 schools in England. Co-operative schools are not legally co-operatives but exist as foundation and academy trusts in the form of “hybrid or embryonic co-operatives which operate within a specific educational and legal framework” (Woodin, 2015: 114). These new trust schools are funded directly by the state and, while regulated by state education policy as independent and autonomous schools, they are free to arrange their practices around the values and ethics established by the International Co-operative Alliance (1995), with an emphasis on collectivity and co-operation rather than competition.

Mondragon University

Mondragon University, situated in the Basque country in Spain, was established in 1997 through a coming together of already existing co-operatives for higher education in the Basque region. These were co-operatives in engineering, established in 1943, business and management studies, set up 1960, and a humanities and education co-operative opened in 1976. In 2011 Mondragon University gained a new faculty of gastronomy. The distinctive feature of Mondragon University is that the faculties retain their autonomy and independence as co-operatives, with Mondragon University acting as a secondary co-operative to award degrees, support and harmonise the activities of all of the faculty co-operatives, and establish general university policies and strategic alignments. This means that the faculties cannot be dictated to by Mondragon University or its members, not even the university rector. Currently there are more than 4000 students at Mondragon University, 15 undergraduate programmes, 13 Masters and three PhD programmes. In addition, there are more than 5000 people involved in professional development and training with 44 certified courses. Most undergraduate courses are taught in three languages: Basque (Euskadi), Spanish and English, although Basque is the vernacular of Mondragon University. The degrees are mainly technical and vocational, although there is an MA in Social Economy and Co-operativism. Mondragon University is part of the MONDRAGON Corporation, a multinational business and one of the largest most profitable co-operatives in the world, with 11 billion euros turnover in 2015. MONDRAGON corporation provides a range of services as well as producing white goods, bikes, machine tools, industrial components, buses and elevators; part of its construction wing built the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim museum in Bilbao.

Unicorn Grocery

Unicorn Grocery is a worker co-operative located in South Manchester, England. It was founded in 1996 by a working group of four members plus volunteers based on a commercial blueprint of adding value to wholesale food sales by bulk packaging commodities (Sawtell, 1985/2006). With an annual turnover of £6m, 70 worker-members and occupying a site of 10,000 square feet, Unicorn is one of the largest wholesale groceries in the UK. Unicorn sells regionally produced seasonal fruit and vegetables as well as fairly priced organic produce, including alcohol, and environmentally friendly baby products, cosmetics and household goods. Unicorn supports local producers by balancing affordable prices for customers with a good return for growers. As well as the shop, the location includes an on-site carpark, warehouse, office space, a children's play area and roof garden. There are three categories of workers at Unicorn: full-time staff, probationary staff and casual staff. Workers at Unicorn have agreed their own co-operative principles of purpose to provide secure employment for their workers, equal opportunity, wholesome healthy consumption, fair and sustainable trade and solidarity in cooperation. ■

July 2018

Contact us at

info@lfhe.ac.uk

or connect with us

 @LF4HE

 /LF4HE

 /LF4HE

 lf4he.blog

 www.lfhe.ac.uk

Inspiring
Leadership

**Leadership
Foundation**
for Higher Education

Peer House
8-14 Verulam Street
London WC1X 8LZ

T 020 3468 4810
F 020 3468 4811
E info@lfhe.ac.uk