The Co-operative University Now!

Mike Neary and Joss Winn

> "What we want and seek to obtain is a co-operative journey that will end in a co-operative university." (Rae, 1909, 29, quoted in Woodin, 2017, 34)

This chapter narrates the recent efforts of a growing number of people, including ourselves, to create a co-operative university in England. In doing so, we situate these efforts within the broader political and economic climate of UK higher education and in light of both historical and recent developments in the co-operative movement. Recognising that the idea of creating a co-operative university in the UK is one that has been written about for over a century, we found ourselves asking, 'why now?'

BEFORE NOW

Throughout this chapter, we point to the role of the Co-operative College, Manchester, in supporting, and more recently leading, efforts to develop a co-operative university. During the course of our research in the College's archives, we found that this desire for co-operative higher education extends back to the mid-nineteenth century.

The earliest references we could find to a co-operative university or co-operative higher education dates to 1872, with Nicolas Balline, an advocate of co-operatives in Russia, who saw the establishment of a co-operative university as a way to further 'propaganda' about the co-operative movement (Twigg, 1924, 17). The idea that education is integral to the promotion of a more co-operative society has been shared throughout the history of the co-operative movement and is instilled in the current principle of Education, Training and Information.[1] Co-operators were also urging closer relations with the University Extension

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[1] The original Objects of the Rochdale Pioneers (1844) state "That as soon as practicable the Society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education and government, or in other words, to establish a self-supporting home colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies." The Rochdale Principles (1937) refer to the "Promotion of Education", later revised by the

Scheme, which began in 1873 with support from "various co-operative stores… both financially and supplying meeting rooms, and continued to do so for years afterwards." (Twigg, 1924, 18-19) At the Stratford Congress in 1904, Edward Owen Greening made a plea in his inaugural address for a co-operative university, as did W. R. Rae in 1909 in his Presidential Address at the Newcastle Congress quoted at the start of this chapter.

By 1913, there is a sense of rapid social change and a need for the co-operative movement to understand itself and its historical conditions. In a pamphlet written by Thomas Anderson, the Chairman of York Education Committee, he expresses a sense of urgency, stating that, "If nothing is done to change present conditions we shall sink back into barbarism from which there seems no escape… Our real weapon of defence is knowledge, and that knowledge must come from some highly developed centre directing the movement on right line." (10) A co-operative college was seen as a way to fulfil the need for research, teaching and training of its members and for leadership of the movement (Anderson, 1913, 7-9).

A year later, we find that money once contributed by co-operatives to fund their libraries was no longer required as the State was increasingly providing public facilities. The (anonymous) author argues that co-operative funds "can now be well applied for the extension of facilities for the higher education of co-operators in other ways, and, in particular, for education in liberal subjects… for the realization of the co-operative ideal." ('A Co-operative College', 1914, 3) This emphasis on a liberal curriculum recurs throughout these early publications. The same author writes that "In short, the college should create a burning desire for social justice, inspire a willingness to work for it, and provide the knowledge how best to attain it… Our aim should be to provide education in its widest sense: an education for the highest purposes of life…" (5) Indeed, in this and later publications, we find that the College fulfils this aim by offering a broad curriculum of education in the social sciences, economics and humanities.

International Co-operative Alliance (1966) to become "Education of members and public in cooperative principles." The most recent ICA Principles (1995) include Principle five: Education, training and information.

In the same 1914 pamphlet, the first 'Objects of a Co-operative College' were published, clearly setting out the ambition for co-operative higher education. Two of the three Objects were:

> "To complete the scheme of Co-operative Education by providing a centre for higher education in the specialised subjects required for the full equipment of the co-operator and for the further development of efficiency in the Co-operative Movement… To undertake investigation and research calculated to aid the general development and progress of Co-operation and stimulate the application of co-operative principles in the solution of social problems."

This brief, foundational statement indicates that by this time, the vision for co-operative higher education was broader than propaganda for the movement and extended to education and research that served wider social objectives. Early Co-operators also recognised the need to combine research and teaching, envisioning the College to be "a centre for enquiry and investigation.." where "…teaching should never be divorced from learning and enquiry." (15)

However, despite the establishment of the College in 1919, there appears to be no further development towards a co-operative university until 1936, when the College published 'A ten year plan for co-operative education', which included among its six points, that of "Strengthening the Co-operative College and its Work, with a view to the ultimate establishment of a Co-operative University with constituent colleges in various parts of the country." (The Co-operative Educator, January 1936, 11-12). It is likely that the Second World War interrupted such a development, yet in 1944, the vision of a co-operative university was being refined and articulated in a retrospective Co-operative College brochure ('1919-1944'). The publication offers a history of the College during this period and states that "This central British Co-operative College could become the nucleus of a Co-operative University of Great Britain, with a number of affiliated sectional and regional Colleges of Co-operative Institutes, as the demand arises."

It is not our intention here to write a history of the Co-operative College, nor have we investigated post-war archival literature, yet what we hope to have shown is that the explicit idea of a co-operative university has existed within the co-operative movement for over 140 years and that the Co-operative College has, since its original conception, had the objective of becoming a centre for higher education: a federated co-operative university. This is evident in the way that early co-operators referred to the College as a centre that combines both research and teaching; that it offers a wide curriculum across the scholarly disciplines, and makes a contribution to a democratic society as well as equip students with the knowledge and skills needed in the (co-operative) workplace. These aspirations remain the same today.

NOW: 2009-2018

What the preceding section shows is that we are writing at a specific moment in the history of an idea and an institution; the idea of co-operative higher education and the establishment of a co-operative university in the UK. At *this* moment, we are increasingly confident that a co-operative university will be created in England within the next five years due to activities happening right *now*. Unlike previous work in this area that we have written about (Neary and Winn, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; Neary et al., 2018), which discusses discreet research projects, this chapter is an attempt to understand the historical moment in which we are working. By narrating this process we aim to reflect on the momentum being built for a co-operative university. At the same time, other scholars are also beginning to undertake research into co-operative higher education (Woodin, 2017; 2018) and it is increasingly attracting commentary in the Press.[2]

The decade between 2009 and 2018 has been one of significant reform in the English higher education sector. In November 2009, the Labour government announced the 'Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance' (the 'Browne Review'). Among its recommendations, the Browne Review (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010) made the case for removing the cap on tuition fees altogether and proposed a revised loan system to support this radical move. The new Liberal-Conservative Coalition

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[2] A bibliography can be found at http://josswinn.org/2013/11/21/co-operative-universities-a-bibliography/ (accessed 1st November, 2018)

government responded by introducing a maximum fee of £9000 per year from 2012/13, and at the same time, removing most of the direct funding provided to universities. Students attending English universities now graduate with an average debt of over £50,000 incurred by their university education, double the figure prior to the changes in 2012 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2017, 2). In anticipation of this scenario, students were quick to respond to the Browne review. Between the publication of the report in October 2010 and the parliamentary vote on tuition fees two months later, students staged a series of protests and occupations across the country. We attended some of those events, including an occupation at our own university.

Students' and academics' demands for democratic governance of universities

Although the rise in tuition fees and the removal of core funding for teaching was a focal point for the protests, students and academics were aware of the wider implications of the new funding system. The principle of converting direct public funding of universities to private debt and the concomitant conversion of the student into a consumer of higher education had both ontological and epistemological ramifications. Students were clearly positioned as consumers in the marketisation of higher education, prior to becoming learners (Consumer Rights Act, 2015).

In 2015, we reviewed the websites of over 35 student occupations that had taken place in the previous five years[3] and found that students were increasingly seeing the issues they were protesting against as a matter of a 'democratic deficit' (McGettigan, 2013) in higher education. Among the list of demands students were issuing from their occupation of university spaces, was a demand for greater democratic participation in the running of their institutions. For example, an occupation of University College London in 2010[4], included the following:

> "We demand an increase in the number of students on the council. These students should be directly elected through UCLU. We assert that all staff of UCL have an equal right to take part in the decision making process of the university. We

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[3] http://josswinn.org/2015/05/21/student-demands-for-democratic-control-over-universities/ (accessed 1st November 2018)
[4] https://ucloccupation.wordpress.com/demands/ (accessed 1st November 2018)

therefore demand that UCL includes non-academic staff on the council. … Regarding the academic board, we wish to re-implement genuine democracy through an increase in student representation and the re-introduction of elected Deans."

In Edinburgh, 2011, students demanded that "Universities should be democratically organised: directly controlled by staff and students."[5] And in Manchester, 2015, students demanded

"a student-staff body, directly elected by students and academic and non-academic staff, responsible for making all managerial decisions of the institution. The university is nothing but the sum of its parts. Students and workers are at the essence of this institution and thus should have direct and democratic control."[6]

Most recently, a two week strike that took place in March 2018 over changes to one of the main university pension schemes (USS) provides a similar form of data only this time published by academics, who although protesting about their pensions, understood the broader implications of what was happening to their work and lives. A USSBrief published during the strike, notes that "The industrial dispute has brought a certain unruly democracy crashing into higher education, opening up spaces to discuss the effects of recent trends" and that "As many of the USSbriefs have shown, the processes prompted by these values have up to now escaped democratic oversight, remaining concealed within obscure reports or beyond the remit of FOI requests." (Pearce, 2018, 1-2). It is noteworthy, too, that during the period of the strike, there were 26 student-led occupations acting in solidarity with the UCU strike. The author of USSBriefs20, stated that

"In all these examples, we saw students draw explicit connections between their struggles and those of staff members via such broader concerns as the democratic accountability of academic institutions and, of course, the marketisation and commodification of education." (Davison, 2018, 3)

In April 2018, the NCAFC coalition of students and workers reflected on the efforts of striking academics, writing that

"From the beginning of this dispute you consistently argued that 'this is about more than pensions'; if this strike is won, students and staff will be in a much better position to roll back the marketisation of education, form an end to tuition fees,

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[5] https://edinunianticuts.wordpress.com/2011/11/27/our-demands-2/ (accessed 1st November 2018)
[6] https://freeeducationmcr.wordpress.com/2015/05/14/demands-from-the-occupation-to-university-management/ (accessed 1st November 2018)

casualisation, the gender pay gap, and outsourcing, to the democratisation of our institutions. Together we have shown that #WeAreTheUniversity, that together workers and students run the show, and together if necessary we can shut it down: we have shaken higher education to the bone."[7]

This evidence testifies to the anger and anxiety among many students and academics caused by the Browne Review. These views and experiences are not shared by all across the higher education sector, but have given rise to a significant energy to create alternatives within and against the current system.

Similar motivations and challenges are shared by many of the recent initiatives to create co-operative forms of higher education.[8] We have personal experience of this, too, having been founding members of the Social Science Centre, Lincoln (SSC)[9] in 2010 (Neary and Winn, 2017c). Unknown to us at that time, scholars and members of the UK co-operative movement were also discussing the need and potential for a co-operative university (Juby, 2011; Ridley-Duff, 2012) and in the past eight years the knowledge, energy and aspirations of people working and studying within the higher education and co-operative sectors in the UK and elsewhere have led to concrete plans to establish a federated co-operative university in the UK, co-ordinated by the Co-operative College. The R.E.D. Learning Co-operative encapsulates the issues raised by the co-operative university.

> "The R.E.D Learning Co-operative has emerged from the tradition of radical trade union education. This tradition takes as its starting point, that critical and engaged study is an integral part of how the labour movement, and other allied social movements, can face the challenges of the current political landscape, as well as grasp the opportunities that are emerging. Our approach has been a response to the neo-liberalisation of education and the narrow instrumentalist focus around

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[7] http://anticuts.com/2018/04/13/students-stand-in-solidarity-with-no-vote/ (accessed 1st November 2018)
[8] Other initiatives currently also exist, such as the Social Science Centre, in Lincoln and Manchester, Leicester Vaughan College, the Centre for Human Ecology, Glasgow, the Feral Art College, Hull, and Bristol Learning Co-op. Outside the UK, we are aware of the Co-operative Institute for Transnational Studies (Greece), The People's University of Social Solidarity Economy (Greece), UniCoop (Mexico), Florida Universitaria (Spain) and Mondragon University (Spain). The two examples from Spain are both well-established worker co-operatives with decades of experience as providers of higher education. The Vice-Rector of Mondragon University, Jon Altuna, has been hugely supportive of establishing a co-operative university in England and a regular contributor to discussions.
[9] http://socialsciencecentre.org.uk (accessed 1st November 2018)

employability which is currently dominating the HE landscape, and shaping the relationship of academics and tutors with HE students.

The education we offer is based on principles of working collaboratively to develop critically reflective, radical education. We aim to provide research, training and education that responds to the needs and interests of the learners and research partners, and in which the relationship with students and research participants is at the core of the educational and research experience. The constituency of R.E.D. Learning Co-operative are, therefore, those who see the need for education to go beyond the skills training of mainstream education, and provide a space for engaged dialogue and learning. We have started our educational co-operative by building a base of training courses and through these, our relationships with trade unions.

However, there have been significant challenges faced in the process of setting up an HE Co-operative. At a relatively superficial (but hugely important) level these have been practical – finding the time to meet together as a group, getting access to money to fund initial start-up costs, and managing the initial workload of training between us, and earning a minimal income for individual members at the same time as coming together as a group of workers in a more co-operative financial arrangement.

At another level, the challenges have also concerned the processes of validation and accreditation. As experienced educationalists we are familiar with, and able to undertake, benchmarking exercises, and we are confident that our courses offer appropriate levels of educational achievement. After level 5 it is significantly more expensive and difficult to validate and accredit courses as this constitutes a full under-graduate qualification. This poses a serious financial challenge for small co-operatives, without funding, to undertake this process, and we therefore will struggle to offer fully validated alternatives to mainstream HE. This is a clear illustration of the way that gaining academic 'legitimacy' has been effectively restricted to established and funded institutions, excluding those who want to challenge this model of HE institutions.

Finally, it is important to recognise the challenges of finding the space to develop our own ways of working, and establishing the values and principles that lie at the heart of what we do. As a group of teachers and researchers who worked together in a mainstream institutional HE context, we were – in that context - able to work together co-operatively, and collegially. However, finding a new set of practices outside of the familiar hierarchies and routines is difficult. We are increasingly conscious of the need to recognise, name and challenge collectively the hidden hierarchies between us, and the inevitable clashes of values and principles that come to the fore when not shrouded by institutionalised norms and practices." (Personal Communication, 8th July 2018)

As we can see, there are a number of challenges for small co-operatives like R.E.D. to confront and not all such projects can be sustained. Reflecting recently on his involvement in creating co-operative higher education since 2013, Joel Lazarus from the Bristol Learning Co-op[10], also sees the process as both challenging and educational but offers a broader perspective on what is currently happening:

"…Over the years, most of the embryonic projects folded. Some remained. At the time, I couldn't see the bigger picture. I saw the end of a project as failure. I couldn't see how failure was just part of a collective, emergent learning process being experienced by a UK-wide community of praxis and how, through its praxis, through its constant prototyping, through its imagination, this community was contributing the vital foundations - the people, the energy, the ideas - to the movement to establish a co-operative university." (Personal Communication, 11th June 2018)

Inside the co-operative university

The co-operative university is being created as we write in November 2018. Next, we want to record what that has recently entailed before reflecting on how we got here.

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[10] http://bristollearningcoop.org.uk (accessed 1st November 2018)

In 2017, there were a series of significant initiatives that have helped legitimise and accelerate efforts towards creating a co-operative university. The first was the hosting of a Roundtable event at the Co-operative College in January 2017 to discuss establishing a co-operative university. Members of the Roundtable event included representatives from Students for Co-operation,[11] researchers of co-operatives, and representatives of Vaughan College, R.E.D, and the Social Science Centre, Manchester. This was the first time such a group had come together to discuss co-operative higher education and was recognised as a historic moment, there being unanimous support to create a co-operative university in England. The group was tasked with drafting a proposal to be put to the Co-operative College Trustees to formally establish a Co-operative University Working Group (CUWG).

The CUWG was established in April 2017. Its purpose was "to take a twin track approach to exploring a) a federated co-operative university model b) how the Co-operative College might work towards acquiring degree awarding powers as a secondary co-operative." In October 2017, the CUWG presented *A Feasibility Study to acquire Degree Awarding Powers (in the light of the Higher Education and Research Act)* (Ramos-Arroyo, 2017) to the Co-operative College's Board of Trustees, who accepted the report's recommendations to create an Academic Board at the College and explore the feasibility of "a federated co-operative university and all of its possibilities." This was the second such report commissioned by the College, the first being *Realising the Co-operative University* (Cook, 2013), a landmark study that helped establish the potential for a co-operative university in the UK. Informed by the work of the CUWG, the Co-operative Party included a section on co-operative higher education in their Education Policy 2017.[12]

In November 2017, the CUWG hosted a dedicated 'Making the Co-operative University' conference [13] attended by over 90 delegates. An outcome of the conference was for the CUWG to establish a Co-operative Higher Education Network (CHEN) and a Co-operative University Forum (CUF). CHEN is a general purpose mailing list with a focus on co-operative higher education. CUF is hosted by the Co-operative University Working Group and acts as

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[11] http://www.students.coop (accessed 1st November 2018)
[12] https://party.coop/publication/instilling-co-operation-into-learning/ (accessed 1st November 2018)
[13] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/working-towards-cooperative-university-uk (accessed 1st November 2018)

an advisory group to help support the development of a co-operative university linked to the Co-operative College.

In December 2017, representatives from the CUF met with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to discuss the College's plans to establish a co-operative university. In January 2018, representatives from the CUF met with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to discuss the aspirations of the College, the timeline for HE accreditation and the support available from the QAA. These discussions were encouraging and provided the CUF with sufficient direction about the expectations of the new regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), and the timescales involved. The task was to work towards obtaining Degree Awarding Powers so that a degree programme could be run from September 2019. This required that the College first register with the OfS in April 2018 and submit their application in August 2018. To achieve this, three expert roundtables were organised. In preparation for the roundtables, members of CUF were invited to contribute their views on the themes of Governance, Accreditation, and Funding for the Co-operative University. These online discussions confirmed for us that the vision among those involved was quite consistent and coherent and that the co-operative values and principles provided a common language for the discussion of what we are trying to achieve.

Governance

The roundtable on governance was attended by student and academic representatives from CUF, as well as the Chair of Trustees of the College, an invited member of the Committee of University Chairs, the oversight body of governance in the higher education sector, and a legal expert from Co-operatives UK. It took place just weeks after the College had announced at its annual conference that it had formally registered with the new regulator, and that "plans for acquiring Degree Awarding Powers and developing a model for a future Co-operative University are on track." The aim of the first meeting was to develop a model of democratic governance that was federated, with member co-ops undertaking research and delivering educational programmes that were accredited by the university, which acted as an 'apex body' or secondary co-operative, similar to the way that the University of Mondragon operates (Wright et al., 2011; Neary et al., 2018). This model of governance

would need to comply with the values, principles and regulations of co-operatives, as well as the HE sector code of governance (Committee of University Chairs, 2018). The outcome of the day was both a sense of compatibility between co-operative governance and the HE code of governance. It provided sufficient information for Co-ops UK to draft a document which outlined the features of the governance model in terms of membership, organisational culture, financial management and the operation of the Board. Given the Co-operative College's now integral role in the formation of the Co-operative University, it was clear that adoption of the model would have to be gradual, allowing it time to modify its own constitutional arrangements. The College would initially run one or more degree programmes under its current form of governance, while developing the federated model over a three year period at which time it would hope to be in a position to validate and award the degree programmes of other co-operatives and work towards gaining university title.

Pedagogy, Curriculum and Assessment

The next roundtable was held a month later. Those present established a baseline of understanding for teaching practice, conceived as a form of radical epistemology. The group understood 'radical epistemology' to mean that teaching is a key component in the production of knowledge for the benefit of the commonwealth. The main themes (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) were brought together with the understanding of radical epistemology as 'a demanding common task' based on a shared vision and learning by doing. In this model everyone approaches the task from a different starting point, skills and experience, yet all develop a mastery of a shared set of mental and manual tools, used in different ways. The roundtable concluded with an exercise in mapping the main themes to the regulator's concerns of student retention, employability and student engagement. We all agreed, not only did the way in which we conceptualised our themes match with these imperatives, they transcended them: not simply student engagement but co-operative membership involving democratic ownership and control of the university; not simply student retention but commitment and a sense of belonging to the co-operative, and not simply employability but the reorganisation of employment that support the interests of workers rather than capital.

Finance

The final roundtable was held in July 2018. Attendees included experts in co-operative finance and higher education funding. Throughout the last decade of discussions about co-operative higher education, we have found that the most difficult questions were those relating to the business model of a co-operative university. In one sense, this is not surprising because as discussed earlier, the impact of the post-Browne Review tuition fee rise and new loan system meant that many of us were committed to restoring free, public higher education, yet had identified with co-operative values and principles, which emphasised self-help, member economic participation and autonomy from the State. Co-operatives are member owned and run, rather than public organisations, and typically rely on investment from the members, rather than the State. The contradiction between public and private organisations has been apparent to us for some time (Neary and Winn, 2017b) and increasingly, in our own work, we have privileged the need for democratic member control over creating a publicly funded institution. Most of the participants at the roundtable favoured a model of charging student fees along with maintenance loans to take advantage of the government funding available and with the knowledge that repayment rates will be low. Participants discussed ways in which monies could be returned to the students through bursaries, wages and even a dividend on their fees, now seen as an investment, at the end of their period of studies and/or annually. The financial relationship between the Co-operative College and the network of federated co-operatives was discussed at length without any final conclusions being arrived at.

Each of the roundtable events provided critical and practical guidance that informed the Co-operative College's application for Degree Awarding Powers, recognising that this was the necessary first step towards creating a federated Co-operative University. A key and ongoing concern for the project is whether prospective HE students want to come to the Co-operative College [HE].

Following the roundtable meetings, a writing group was established to complete the Office for Students' *Access and Participation Plan*. The group met for three days in July 2018 at the

Co-operative College. The *Access and Participation Plan* had to show how providers will promote access to their degree programmes for students who have found it difficult to access higher education in ways that improve student success and social mobility.[14] The meeting provided the opportunity for those present to clearly express the aims and ambitions of the Co-operative College [HE] in writing. The approach to this activity was to set out the aims and ambitions of the Co-operative College [HE] in ways that challenged the basis of the questions that were being asked, while at the same time showing how enhanced provision, based on the Office for Students' planning imperatives, could be provided by the College's co-operative, collegiate and collective approach.

WHY NOW?

Having offered our narrative of the development of the idea of co-operative higher education and the creation of a Co-operative University in England, we now want to return to the question that was provoked by our reading of the archival documents from the early history of the Co-operative College: Given that the idea of a co-operative university is over a century old, why is it happening only now? While acknowledging the agency of individuals, we argue that it is a confluence of changes in both the higher education and co-operative sectors that has only recently reached a point whereby it was felt among students and academics that a co-operative alternative was needed in the higher education sector and that the co-operative sector had an adequate response to this need.

Contrary to common complaints about the effective privatization of UK higher education, since the 1980s, Shattock (2008) argues that the higher education sector has moved from being explicitly "self-governed" to one that is now "state governed", and subsequently "the formation of higher education policy therefore needs to be reinterpreted as an adjunct of public policy, rather than as something intrinsic to higher education." (2008, 185-6) Exogenously-driven policy initiatives over the last three decades have weakened the control that academics had over the running of their institutions and made way for the implementation of New Public Management reforms in the higher education sector.

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[14] Access and Participation Plan 2019-2020 https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1093/ofs2018_03.pdf (accessed 1st November 2018)

Although this development would suggest a concurrent strengthening of both governance and leadership within the university sector, the effect has been "to reduce the role of governance and greatly enhance that of leadership and management." (Shattock 2013, 219) This is due to the volatility of funding to the sector in the first decade of the century and the implicit threats, which have reinforced hierarchies and encouraged centralization of decision-making. University governing bodies are, Shattock argues, too far removed from university strategy to contribute effectively and

> "we thus have the paradox that at a time when the higher education environment has come to replicate private sector conditions in its market orientation, more than at any time since the First World War, the private-sector company governance model seems to be the least appropriate." (Shattock, 2013, 222)

Earlier in this chapter, we have shown what the impact these changes in higher education policy have had on students and academics and the way in which some have responded by occupying their institutions and striking, demanding greater democracy and accountability in their universities. While these acts of resistance are both understandable and necessary, the most recent change in higher education legislation (Higher Education and Research Act, 2017) appears to have offered a historically unique opportunity for the introduction of co-operative governance and leadership in higher education. In fact, the publications leading up to the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 explicitly encouraged 'challenger institutions' as a way to further the marketisation of the sector (and potentially widen participation), stimulate efficiencies and raise the quality of provision to paying students (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016).

Since 2018, the HE sector has never been more open to new entrants yet it has never been more subject to state regulation and control. Within this difficult regulatory environment those of us working on the co-operative university are drawing on developments within co-operative governance over the last few decades, in particular the multi-stakeholder model, which offer a way of reconciling the diverse interests of a university community. As a historically new form of institutional governance, the multi-stakeholder model appears to

be compatible with traditional collegial structures (Cook, 2013) and speaks to many of the concerns raised over increased corporate governance structures and hierarchical management of universities (Bacon, 2014; Shattock, 2013). It also has much to commend for more radical, popular and community-based forms of education, which are already identifying with the new co-operativism for the 'social-solidarity economy' (Vieta, 2010).

Ridley-Duff and Bull's work (2014) provides a useful account of the development of the multi-stakeholder co-operative model that has become aligned with the 'new co-operativism'. Their research examines "the historical shifts that have led to the emergence of a social and solidarity economy, and how those shifts were expressed in the UK during its formative years." (2) The multi-stakeholder (also referred to as the 'solidarity' or 'social') co-operative model overcomes the single-member models of worker or consumer co-operatives and recognises that both workers and consumers, as well as other supporting individuals and organisations, might each wish to share the responsibility of owning and running the co-operative. Such a model has its historical roots in Spanish co-operatives during the 1960s, where workers and consumers wanted to integrate shared ownership and governance as an expression of solidarity (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2014). By the 1990s, multi-stakeholder models were thriving elsewhere in Europe with political and legal support and recognition, yet the UK instead shifted towards a US model of social entrepreneurship, which was more broadly defined to accommodate the charity and voluntary sectors.

The multi-stakeholder co-operative model is relatively new as a form of corporate governance; most universities were created before it was introduced into the UK in 2009 but it is now a credible model of governance when existing public and private models of HE governance have arguably failed. In the UK, the multi-stakeholder model of co-operative governance has only been formally supported by Co-ops UK since 2012 and only internationally endorsed by the co-operative movement in 2011 (CICOPA, 2011). Yet in our view, for the first time in recent university history, a model of institutional ownership and control exists that is adequate for a post-1968 university, one which helps overcome the unnecessary antagonism between the interests of academics and students. This co-operative model of ownership and governance has matured exactly at a time when both students and academics are aware that the idea of 'public higher education' has

disintegrated; when corporate governance is weak and executive decision-making is being strengthened, and at a time when entry into the higher education sector has been encouraged by the same legislation.

THEN, NOW AND THE FUTURE

We have set out an account showing how the co-operative university is being created, as part of an historical process, focussing on the contemporary context: the now. It is important at the end of this account to recognise the co-operative movement's interest not only in history and the now but also in the future. For the early co-operators like George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), the co-operative enterprise was a moment of transition towards a more enlarged and comprehensive version of co-operativism, as a type of association based on absolute equality where all goods and land would be held in common along with the end of wage slavery (Gurney, 1988). Explicit then in the co-operative movement is the ambition, not simply to replicate forms of corporation that can subsist on terms established by the financial and state sectors, nor simply to create more socialised models of governance like the multi-stakeholder approach, but to create a new commonwealth as the basis for a co-operative future. This is a continuing story.

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