

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Lincoln		
Unit of Assessment: 23 - Education		
Title of case study: Co-operative Higher Education		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 - 2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): NEARY Mike WINN Joss	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Emeritus Professor Senior Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1 Sep 07 - 26 Jan 19 3 Sep 07 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Throughout, notably 2017 onwards		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Research by Neary and Winn at the University of Lincoln has changed thinking in the UK and internationally around how higher education is provided. Their work has influenced students, educationalists, policy makers and politicians to think about alternative models within contemporary Higher Education. Their work on Student as Producer influenced the agenda in HE for students to be 'partners' and their research on co-operative higher education has been a major influence on the establishment of a co-operative university. It was adopted as Co-operative Party policy (2017) and enacted in proposals for the UK's first co-operative university submitted to the Office for Students in 2020.		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Neary and Winn's research emerged out of concerns among academics and students about the increasing marketisation and commercialisation of higher education since the 1980s. Contrary to the government's neo-liberal policies for higher education, exemplified by the intention to create students as consumers, Neary and Winn developed the notion of students as producers of higher education as the basis for a counter-hegemonic discourse to resist government policy (Neary and Winn, 2009 [3.1]). The power of this intervention and the reason for its impact was that it operated in full view <i>inside</i> a neo-liberal university. Student as Producer became the organising principle for teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln from 2010, supported by funding from the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Student as Producer works as a model of curriculum development and as strategy for institutional transformation. It does this by recognizing the contribution undergraduates make to the production of research and teaching in HE institutions. It seeks to consolidate and reward that contribution through the promotion of greater student engagement in university life through core elements such as research-engaged teaching and curricula and the inclusion of students in the running of the university. This programme of change led Neary and Winn to research how higher education could be further reconfigured, moving beyond students' active engagement in teaching and research, to students being constitutionally recognised stakeholders in the democratic ownership, governance and management of a university. The development of their work, from Student as Producer to Co-operative Higher Education, has been documented through five stages of research and a number of key publications: a. The research began by setting out a critical response to the commercialisation of higher education, exploring the purpose of higher education and examining the notion of		

student as consumer (Neary and Winn, 2009) [3.1]. The tension between Student as Producer and student engagement, leading to the reform of Student as Producer's original radicalism within a neo-liberal university was discussed by Neary and Saunders (2016) [3.2].

b. While working inside the University of Lincoln on Student as Producer, Neary and Winn established the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, a co-operative for higher education outside mainstream university structures, which ran between 2011-2018 (<https://socialsciencecentre.org.uk>). This experimental work helped define and theorise the 'co-operative university', making a key conceptual contribution to later work on the creation of a co-operative university (Winn, 2015) [3.3]. It also inspired other groups to establish similar co-operatives for higher education as outlined below.

c. Having established the idea of co-operative higher education in the UK, Neary and Winn began to develop a framework based on the needs and desires of participants in the co-operative movement and higher education sector. That action research, funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF), focused on issues of ownership and control over the means of knowledge production (Neary and Winn, 2017a) [3.4]. The resulting conceptual and practical framework for co-operative higher education (Neary and Winn, 2017b) [3.5] established the principles around which such a co-operative university might be constructed: knowledge, democracy, livelihood, bureaucracy and solidarity. These principles were later taken up by the Co-operative College in its work to create a co-operative university (Neary and Winn, 2019) [3.6].

d. The principles were then explored in further research (Neary, Valenzuela-Fuentes and Winn, 2018) [3.7] through a series of four case studies in already well-established co-operative enterprises. This research, funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), highlighted the contradictory nature of capitalist work, and that working through these contradictions within co-operatives might be a way to radically transform a consumer based higher education system.

e. A decade of work on Student as Producer and co-operative higher education was discussed in a commissioned chapter in a book to mark the centenary of the Co-operative College, Manchester (Neary and Winn, 2019) [3.6]. Preparation of the chapter involved archival research that revealed how a 'co-operative university' has been mooted for over 100 years. They also argue that, based on their findings, the political, legal and institutional conditions for a co-operative university are now at their most favourable. It concludes by discussing how the Co-operative College is taking steps to establish a co-operative university in the UK, employing the framework Neary and Winn have created.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Neary, Mike and Winn, Joss (2009) *The student as producer: reinventing the student experience in higher education*. In: *The future of higher education: policy, pedagogy and the student experience*. Continuum, London, pp. 192-210. Available on request.
- 3.2 Neary, Mike and Saunders, Gary (2016) *Student as producer and the politics of abolition: making a new form of dissident institution?* *Critical Education*, 7 (5). <https://nearymike.wordpress.com/2015/12/05/student-as-producer-and-the-politics-of-abolition-making-a-dissident-institution/>
- 3.3 Winn, Joss (2015) *The co-operative university: Labour, property and pedagogy*. *Power and Education*, 7 (1). pp. 39-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1757743814567386>
- 3.4 Neary, Mike and Winn, Joss (2017a) *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). pp. 87-105. ISSN 1755-2273.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2017.100106>

3.5 Neary, Mike and Winn, Joss (2017b) *Beyond public and private: a framework for co-operative higher education*. Open Library of Humanities.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.16995/olh.195>

3.6 Neary, Mike and Winn, Joss (2019) *The co-operative university now!* In: Learning for a Co-operative World: Education, social change and the Co-operative College. UCL Institute of Education Press, London, pp. 169-186.
Available on request.

3.7 Neary, Mike, Valenzuela-Fuentes, Katia and Winn, Joss (2018) *Co-operative leadership in higher education: four case studies*. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education Research Publications Series. London.
Available on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Neary and Winn's research has influenced mainstream and contemporary UK HE sectors and encouraged new and existing institutions to change the way higher education is delivered, run and managed. Their work, and its focus on placing students at the centre of core functions such as research and governance, has in turn resulted in changes to Co-operative Party policy [5.1] and lead to the imminent creation of the UK's first co-operative university.

Student as Producer

Student as Producer was fundamental in establishing the concept of research-engaged teaching across the UK HE sectors as well as the notion of student engagement and partnership (Levy, 2015). It has been adopted by institutions in the UK and internationally: the University of Warwick, Newcastle College, Hull College; University College Galway in the Irish Republic, Vanderbilt University in the USA, the University of British Columbia, Canada. [5.2] It remains the organising principle for all teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln. It involves the redesign of curricula, teaching and assessment to encourage and support greater student participation in the research culture and decision-making of the university.

Enabling alternative and experimental providers

The principles of Student as Producer have been applied outside of the mainstream university setting. Between 2011-2018, Neary and Winn were founding members of the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, a co-operative for higher education. The co-operative values and principles give institutional form to the pedagogical principles of Student as Producer and have inspired further efforts to establish co-operatives for higher education: Leicester Vaughan College (est. 2016) [5.3]; The Co-operative Institute for Transnational Studies (est. 2015, Greece/Mexico); the Feral Art School (est. 2018, Hull), and Social Science Centre, Manchester (est. 2016). The emergence of these co-operatives and increasing momentum surrounding Neary and Winn's work led to the Co-operative College, Manchester committing to create a co-operative university in the UK in its centenary year.

An "historic" moment

A round table discussion was hosted by the Co-operative College in January 2017, to discuss the possibility of establishing a co-operative university in the UK. Research carried out by Neary and Winn on co-operative higher education was a substantive agenda item and helped frame subsequent thinking. The meeting was attended by academic, student and co-operative representatives, and recognised as an "historic" moment by the Trustees of the College. There was unanimous support at the meeting to create a co-operative university in the UK. Neary was

tasked with drafting a proposal for the Trustees to establish a Co-operative University Working Group.

A commitment by the Co-operative College

Following agreement by the College's Trustees in April 2017, a Co-operative University Working Group (CUWG) was established. Members of the group consisted of students and academics connected to the Co-operative College or other co-operative education initiatives. In October 2017, representatives from the CUWG, including Neary, presented their report to the Co-operative College's Board of Trustees, who accepted their recommendations to explore the feasibility of a federated co-operative university. [5.4] An additional outcome from the CUWG was a national conference on 'Making the Co-operative University'. [5.5]

Making the Co-operative University

Making the Co-operative University was a conference hosted by the Co-operative College in November 2017 and attended by over 90 delegates. The Agenda for the conference was based around themes from Neary and Winn's research (2017b): Democracy, Members and Governance; Knowledge, Curriculum and Pedagogy; Livelihood and Finances; Bureaucracy and Accreditation. Outcomes from the conference fed into the College's application for Degree Awarding Powers.

Degree Awarding Powers

In December 2017, representatives from the CUWG, including Neary, met with HEFCE to discuss the Co-operative College's intention to establish a co-operative university. HEFCE were supportive of the initiative and advised the working group to discuss matters with the QAA, which they did in January 2018. The outcome of the meeting was an initial application in August 2018 to the Office for Students (OfS) for Degree Awarding Powers.

"In practical terms, Neary and Winn's contributions to the College's annual conferences and their lead on the roundtable stakeholder discussions convened in 2017, was formative in bringing some of the College's Trustees 'on board'. Three themes developed in their research: governance, pedagogy and finance, have shaped our thinking around the essential issues and out of that came a confidence to move forward with the plans for a co-operative university. This engagement has resulted in the College applying for new Degree Awarding Powers in April 2020" [5.6]

New College Structures

Following his retirement from the University of Lincoln in 2019, Neary was appointed as Chair of the Interim Academic Board at the Co-operative College, tasked with obtaining Degree Awarding Powers and the creation of a federated co-operative university. This work has been supported by an initial £200,000 investment by the College to recruit project staff. [5.6] In March 2020, a full application was lodged with the OfS, and they are awaiting the outcome of their application. [5.7] At their 2019 conference, the Labour Party pledged to support the establishment of more co-operative universities as part of their National Education Service. [5.8]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 The Co-operative Party's 2017 Education Policy document and feedback to our submission is here: <https://party.coop/publication/instilling-co-operation-into-learning/>
<https://party.coop/publication/education-policy-submissions-feedback/>
- 5.2 Neary, Mike et al. (2014) *Student as producer: research-engaged teaching, an institutional strategy*. Project Report. HEA, York.
- 5.3 Leicester Vaughan testimony.
- 5.4 CUWG Trustee Recommendations - Mike Neary.

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- 5.5 Conference report published in the Times Higher Education:
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/working-towards-cooperative-university-uk>
- 5.6 The Co-operative College testimony.
- 5.7 The Co-operative College Access and Participation Plan 2020.
- 5.8 Angela Rayner conference speech: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/angela-rayner-full-text-of-labour-conference-2019-speech/>