

Learning to Manage the Co-operative Difference: Saint Mary's Co-operative Management Education

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Abstract: Co-operative education is at once the most important and yet often weakly implemented of the co-operative principles. Co-operatives exist in an economy dominated by capitalist business and a capitalist business culture. Both make running a co-operative business alternative a challenge for the members and communities who own and are served by it, members of boards of directors and the management and staff who make it operate differently, as an alternative. A major gap in education has long been a graduate level education program to ensure that co-operative managers have a profound enough understanding of the co-operative business difference to make operations co-operative.

This paper looks at the emergence of a major co-operative education centre with an international impact. It recollects the environment that spawned it, an early failure, its adoption by Saint Mary's University and the Sobey School of Business, its financing, delivery decisions, course development, search for faculty, curriculum development, student recruitment, program evaluation and finally a brief look at the program as of 2018.

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Acknowledgements: The International Centre for Co-operative Management at Saint Mary's is the logical conclusion of the initial effort to start a graduate level management education program back in 2001. It has grown as the result of the contribution and skills of dozens of people. Among them were: Sidney Pobihushchy*, a professor at University of New Brunswick, President of Co-op Atlantic and Fredericton Direct Charge Co-operative; Dr. John Chamard*, a Chair of the Management Department at Saint Mary's; Dr. Colin Dodds, a President of Saint Mary's; Drs. Larry Haiven**, Sonja Novkovic, and Daphne Rixon, Professors at Saint Mary's, and my able successor in managing and growing the program, Karen Miner. The program was served by brilliant staff work both full and part time. It also depended, especially in the early years of development, on the dedicated support of senior co-operative leaders, most notably: Dennis Deters, Barbara Turley McIntyre and Kathy Bardswick of the Co-operators, John Harvey of Co-op Atlantic, Geoff Southwood of United Farmers of Alberta, Tamara Vrooman of VanCity Credit Union, Bob Burlton**, Chief Executive of Oxford Swindon and Gloucester and later Midcounties Co-operatives, Sir Graham Melmouth**, Chief Executive of the Co-operative Group and Pauline Green**, the President of the International Co-operative Alliance. Without their contributions and those of many others, the International Centre would not exist.
*Deceased **Retired

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Introduction

In general, university business schools are co-operative deserts. Co-operative business models are missing from the curriculum, are seldom researched, and may even be regarded with disdain.¹ Exceptions exist. India has almost 20 co-operative colleges and the Master of the Economics of Co-operative Firms in the Department of Economics at the University of Bologna in Italy, the world's oldest university, is also a solid and remarkable example.

The other main source of co-operative education programs is co-operatives themselves since one of the seven internationally accepted principles of co-operation is education. Alas, it has been one of the more neglected principles. Co-operatives are started by a group of highly motivated people who almost always have a shared understanding of why they chose the co-operative business model. Over time, as the co-operative grows the co-op identity may be eroded by a number of factors. New members may never have experienced the circumstances or process that made the co-op model the choice of the founders. Successful co-operatives face growing competitive challenges. The value of education is seldom measured and often subject to budget cuts. As co-operatives grow, they may place less emphasis on educating workers and managers about the importance of co-operative purpose, values and principles that brought early success.

The frequent result is a co-operative led by a manager or a small management group who have little understanding of its purpose, values and principles. This can be true of even long-term managers hired from inside. A former Chief Executive of the UK's Co-operative Group, then the world's largest consumer co-operative, said over dinner, "The board of the co-op squanders the money. I make it."² He drove the organization into near bankruptcy.

This chapter examines obstacles, challenges and solutions encountered in the development of the Master of Management – Co-operatives and Credit Unions (MMCCU) in the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia from its initial exploration in 2002 through to 2016.

Co-op Atlantic, the Co-op Difference, and Co-op Education

In the late 1980s a board member of Co-op Atlantic, Sydney Pobihushchy, was raising concerns about the overall direction of Co-op Atlantic, with its growing dependence on being a discount grocer. As competition heated up in the grocery market in Atlantic Canada, this strategy had become more difficult. Competing with some of Canada's largest corporations, owned by some of Canada's wealthiest families, left the system vulnerable and fragile.³ Interest in promoting healthy food or developing an environmental program withered. Promoting local products or advertising aimed at stressing a co-operative difference lost momentum and a foray into fair trade faded. At the same time as Co-op Atlantic cut back on member education and communication in order to cut shelf prices, a major competitor, Sobeys, recognizing the power of relationship marketing, was launching a well-funded Sobeys Club. They were attempting to look like the co-operatives, while the co-operatives were focused on looking like their competition but with lower prices. The result was that more and more local co-operative stores lost money and Co-op Atlantic's accounts receivable sharply increased.

There was considerable discussion led by Sid Pobihushchy about the need to educate managers about how to manage a co-operative business. What did managers need to learn to creatively manage a business that innovated based on the co-operative difference – a business whose purpose was not to maximize profit but to meet human need; a business that embraced internationally accepted co-operative values and principles? The challenge was that many managers in Co-op Atlantic and its member co-operatives had been hired from competitors and schooled in the techniques of a business model with a different purpose. Co-operation posed tough questions whose answers could not be found by copying the competition. For example, piles of candy at the checkout might be a great disservice to mothers with young children but it boosted sales. If unhealthy food was good for margins and sales, do you promote it anyway? If encouraging impulse buying with end of aisle traps drives up sales did it matter if it did not really meet member need? Co-op Atlantic needed managers who could use resources efficiently responding to member need and long-term member interests. It needed managers with vision who could cope with competitive pressures but no co-operative management education program existed.

An opening came up for Director of the Extension Department at Saint Francis Xavier University (St. F.X.) in 1993, presenting an opportunity to develop a university-based program for co-operative managers. The task of developing a co-operative management education program faced some formidable challenges. Some co-operative managers and leaders believed that, "managing a co-operative was no different than managing any other business." Others advised that unless we could develop managers who had a profound understanding of the difference between co-operatives and capital driven business, growth would mean slow suffocation. Building that difference is crucial to

success, however, it would be a challenge getting the backing of some major associations of co-operatives and credit unions for such a program since their boards would be split.

Partly to demonstrate the value of a management approach based firmly on nurturing a co-operative difference, the St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department partnered with the Cooperative Development Institute, based in Massachusetts, to explore perceptions of co-operatives and the potential for them to market their co-operative difference. The two organizations hosted three international "Marketing Our Co-operative Advantage" (MOCA) conferences in the US in 1996, 1997 and 1998, exploring questions such as: What is the relationship between co-operative education and marketing? Does the public see co-operatives as different? When co-operatives act in line with their purpose, values and principles does it strengthen or weaken their market position? The conferences were successful and deepened the belief that MOCA was a viable strategy. The MOCA example also spurred interest in looking at other management functions.

Ideas came from many sources. In 1997, Brian Murray an accountant at Co-op Atlantic, called to ask what we were planning in terms of a co-operative approach to accounting. 'Well,' we responded, 'accounting is just accounting.' He suggested that would undermine everything we were trying to do. Accounting's purpose was to measure how effectively resources were used to achieve the purpose of the organization. If we used measures mainly focused on the use of resources to maximize the return to capital, it would undermine the core purpose of the co-operative – to meet member and community need. After reflection and consultation, we decided to develop two co-operative accounting courses.

We attended meetings to spot progressive, visionary leaders and then arranged visits to their co-operatives. As more and more progressive co-operatives made financial contributions, support from umbrella organizations grew apace. Between 1996 and 1998 over \$300,000 had been raised to develop a co-operative management education program.

While progress was evident in the co-op community, the administration at St. F.X. was not enthusiastic about a co-operative management education program. After long periods of silence and delay, they indicated their support for a program with a maximum of 6 credits – a fatal decision for the program. The funders had provided their contributions to create a program. A couple of courses was simply not acceptable, so the funds were returned to the donors.

About ten months later, in the summer of 2001 Dr. John Chamard, the Chair of the Management Department in the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University, arranged a meeting with the President of Saint Mary's, Dr. Colin Dodds, Paul Dixon, the Dean of the Sobey School and Sydney Pobihushchy from the Co-op Atlantic Board of Directors. Within a half hour the program had a green light. The university would provide space and facilities and development costs would be met through fund raising. The program would have to break even but could keep any surplus for future development. The content of every course would, in the words of Dr. Dodds, be 'co-opized.' The value of the sixty percent rule would be 'proved by the exception.' A decision was also made that we would have an advisory group drawn from the co-operative sector.

The Emergence of the St Mary's Program

The approval process for new academic programs can be fraught with unforeseen pitfalls. As the program approval was being debated at Faculty Council in 2002, we encountered unexpected resistance. Fortunately, Dr. Sonja Novkovic rose to say she had just attended a major academic conference of the International Association for the Economics of Participation where the participants would have deeply envied having such a program at their universities. As an economist whose ideas were compatible with economic co-operation, Dr. Novkovic was also vital to ensuring we had a solid base of 'in house' expertise.

Dr. John Chamard, the first Academic Director, taught the program's second course on co-operative economics, and researched and wrote papers on how co-operatives were absent from the business school research and teaching. As a long-standing and highly respected member of faculty, his contribution was essential to the survival and success

of the program. He knew the university and the university knew and respected him. His untimely and sudden death in 2009 deprived the program of an intelligent and passionate supporter.

While the majority of faculty teaching in the Co-operative Management Education program did not come from Saint Mary's, the program has had strong support and participation from Saint Mary's faculty. Dr. Larry Haiven, Dr. Judy Haiven and Dr. Daphne Rixon have taught in the program. Larry Haiven and then Sonja Novkovic succeeded John Chamard as Academic Director. Professor Nicola Young and Jeff Power provided advice and encouragement. Dr. Daphne Rixon from Accounting joined the board of Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC, discussed below) and eventually became the Executive Director of the organization.

Financing

The previous donors renewed commitments and new ones came on board. A meeting of supporting organizations was organized, and a decision made to create the Co-operative Management Education Co-operative (CMEC). Its key roles were to: raise funds for the program; advise on content; promote the program with the university; and recruit students. In addition to CMEC Board Chair Sydney Pobihushchy from Co-op Atlantic, other strong proponents included Dennis Deters of the Co-operators, Gerard Duggan from the Credit Union Central of PEI, Jack Christie, CEO of Northumberland Co-operative Dairy and Geoff Southwood from United Farmers of Alberta. As time went on, strong international support emerged from Paul Hazen, the CEO of the National Co-operative Business Association in the US, Charles Snyder, CEO of the National Co-operative Bank in the US, Sir Graham Melmoth, Chief Executive of the Co-operative Group in the UK, Robert Burlton, Chief Executive of Oxford Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative and Pauline Green, Chief Executive of Co-operatives UK and later President of the International Co-operative Alliance. Not counting CEARC funding, over a million dollars were raised from Canada, the US and the UK.

Delivery

Although the primary task was innovation, we initially required a review of some of the critical literature on business curriculums at the Masters' level. Notable was the analysis of Henry Mintzberg, who had suggested that, '... many MBA programs taught the wrong people, the wrong thing, the wrong way.'⁴ Mintzberg explained that graduates, fresh out of an undergraduate program, with no work or business experience were the wrong people to educate for management. Master's level students, he argued, should have several years of working in an organization. We decided that almost all our students would be accepted from applicants working in co-operatives, preferably as managers.

Mintzberg went on to critique case study models where students were given a short summary of a problem in a complex organization, economy and society and asked to come up with a solution. He still maintains, "... case studies teach them how to pronounce cleverly on situations they know little about..."⁵ We decided that, in each course, the fundamental case study in our program would be the co-operative business in which the student was immersed or, in rare cases where they did not work in a co-operative, they would find one open to allowing them to use it as a case study.

It was clear from the beginning that the courses had to be taught online. Our goal was to serve managers who were working in co-operatives and from conversations with co-operative leaders it was clear that very few were willing to leave their jobs, move and study full time. Distance education was clearly the best option. The options available with 2003 technology were more limited than we hoped. Software for delivering live stream interactive online sessions was very weak.

We also knew that online courses at the time had a 40% drop out rate. We needed to achieve a much higher retention rate over a twelve-course curriculum. To counter dropouts we decided to have a face-to-face, mandatory, one-week orientation at the university, in spite of significant additional costs for students. The bonds among the members of each cohort were renewed during the ten-day study visit. Eating, socializing and learning together during both the orientation and the study tour created deep bonds that became apparent at graduation when many students returned to the university from across North America and Europe to share their accomplishment. We were convinced that the low dropout rate achieved was due to this opportunity for students to get to know each other.

Dr. Stephen Dutcher who developed our first course on co-operative history and theory stressed the value of what he called co-operative learning and both large and small robust discussion groups. He emphasized the value of students teaching material to each other while drawing on their differing national, sector and co-operative experiences. Dr. Dutcher believed that online discussion could be more powerful than face-to-face discussion. In face-to-face it is a constant struggle to get everyone in the group involved. If discussion is a large percent of the grading, that problem disappears. In addition, in a face-to-face discussion, the contributions are almost all 'off the top of your head' – what is said is gone when the person finishes speaking. Written online contributions remain visible, are easily revisited and graded and most are more thoughtful, nuanced and analytical.

Developing the Courses – 2003-2005

Curriculum materials developed for the unique structure, qualities and dynamics of co-operatives were scarce. The three earlier international conferences on Marketing the Co-operative Advantage had generated research on innovative co-operative marketing approaches. We linked the new materials to adapted analytical frameworks in traditional marketing courses. Much has been written and there is considerable research on co-operative philosophy and history. Comparative co-operative practice and examples of best practice also offered considerable foundational material.

There has been little curriculum development on the differences in management that would reflect co-operative purpose, values and principles. Accounting and financial management, economic analysis, information technology and communications, human resource management and strategic analysis all contained ideas that were valuable but were clearly geared for a different business purpose and business model. We made a conscious decision to drive curriculum development by asking questions like, 'I know how you would do that in an investor driven business but how would it be done differently if we took co-operative purpose, values and principles seriously?'

In 2005, we held an international symposium on co-operative accounting. Participants came from five countries presenting papers from varied perspectives, but all holding to the core ideas that co-operatives needed to account for how they used their resources to meet member and community need and report, not to remote financial shareholders who vote on the basis of 'one dollar one vote', but to user members and the community. If economic democracy was to mean anything, what quantified information did members need to know? What measures did members require to understand how well their co-operative was doing at meeting member and community need? In the aftermath of this successful conference, one question continued to hover over the program 'What would the accounting community think?' We sent the papers from the symposium to Canada's then accounting standards board, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA). The response was a pleasant surprise. CICA, had a program for Centres of Excellence at various universities. 'Would we,' they asked, 'submit a proposal?' The result was the creation of CEARC in 2007.

To develop a course on co-operative strategy and planning we wanted to nurture approaches that involved members whose needs were met by co-ops and for whom co-op activities were important. We wanted to engage the communities in which members and workers lived knowing that social, economic and environmental impacts on the community would affect members and workers. We wanted consumer and producer members to consider whether their relationship with workers reflected co-operative values and principles and was not exploitative. Much neoclassical theory is fundamentally at odds with the co-operative business model: co-operatives are portrayed as 'inefficient'; oil spills are valued as they contribute to GNP; and hyper-individualism ignores the dual individual/social nature of humanity. Co-operative managers must envision global co-operation as an alternative to corporate globalization.

The program would consider information technology and communications from a different perspective. Could social media and IT solutions empower members and engage them in planning and decision-making? What might the risks of new media be and what opportunities might it provide to better meet human need? How could we best ensure that in such a rapidly changing world, co-operatives thrived in the digital economy?

There was also recognition that if meeting people's needs is the purpose of the business, we need to rethink 'human resource management'. Meaningful work rewards people's skills and talents, encourages human creativity and allows people to contribute to their community. People development and leadership, a better fit with co-operative ideas, is also far more demanding and challenging.

Two additional courses rounded out the program: field research and study tours to either the superb co-operative networks around Mondragon in the Basque Country of Spain, or to the remarkable co-operative networks of Emilia Romagna around Bologna, Italy. Students needed to have their horizons expanded. The two networks are significantly different and an early decision was made that any graduate who wished to take the study visit that she or he had missed, could do so after graduation. The study visits were also opened up to a limited number of non-students from the co-operative world. The advantage of including several non-students was that the slightly higher fees allowed us to offer a special course fee reduction to a student with limited resources. A second advantage was that the non-students were often senior or innovative co-operative leaders and their participation provided students with additional insights.

The final 'double credit' course developed was a research paper. Because the papers might include commercially sensitive information about the student's co-operative, we chose a Capstone Paper designation. A thesis would have required the paper to be made public.

Although it was a challenge to adequately cover all the subjects in a twelve-course program, it was necessary to launch a program that would have a sufficient volume of students. Certain topics like innovation, governance and participation, community and environment were covered in several courses. In the last few years these topics have been part of an enriched course offering that continues to evolve.

The Faculty Search - 2002 to present

The Sobey School, like other business schools, did not have deep expertise in co-operative business. We surveyed business literature but the number of English language papers about co-operatives was exceedingly limited and the few papers that did mention co-operatives were often dismissive. The program needed well-respected academics who combined a solid background in a relevant discipline with a deep understanding of co-operatives, or at a minimum, a strong commitment to expand and deepen their co-operative research and understanding.

We assembled lists of academics associated with organizations such as the Association of Co-operative Educators, the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation, the ICA Research Committee, and co-operative research centres at the University of Victoria, University of Saskatchewan, University of Mondragon, University of Wisconsin, University of Bologna and the UK Co-operative College. Co-operatives UK, the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), and the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) in the US also assisted. We accessed copies of papers and presentations to determine where the best fit might be for each course.

Over a two-year period, we wrote to several dozen potential faculty members. We chose proposals with a strong focus on the co-operative difference that could adapt to the online format and met our desire to have courses with a common feel.

The Saint Mary's program was developed with the somewhat awkward name Master of Management – Co-operatives and Credit Unions. The simpler name, Master of Co-operative Management, was abandoned when a significant number of credit union managers and board members indicated they didn't think members or managers would see the program applying to them unless it specifically included the words credit union. The objectives of the program from the start were to make the curriculum relevant to all types of co-operatives and co-operative financial institutions, drawing students not just from Canada but from across the English-speaking world. We needed to ensure a wide-market to increase our likelihood of success.

These objectives appealed to a wide market but were also based on a strong belief that managers from different types of co-operatives and from different countries would provide a far richer learning experience. The final program

was a product of extensive conversations in meetings with more than a hundred co-operatives and conversations at meetings of global, national, regional and sectoral organizations in North America and Europe.

Long-term Curriculum Development

Our curriculum needed to continuously evolve ideas about how co-operatives reflect their difference. We called for papers on co-operative capital, people development, fair trade, the commons, social justice and responsibility, social co-operatives, environmental impact, governance, solidarity co-operatives and co-operative economics. Study visits deepened ties with the Co-operative Economics program at the University of Bologna, the Otorola Management Training Center in Mondragon and the University of Mondragon.

We drew on papers presented at conferences and symposia including the Co-operative and Its Workers (2006), Co-operative Legislation and Public Policy (2009) and an International Co-operative Governance Symposium (2013). St. Mary's and the ICA hosted Imagine 2012: International Conference on Cooperative Economics, a two-and-a-half-day event with more than 800 attending held in conjunction with the International Co-operative Summit in Quebec City in October 2012.

Conferences, workshops and a study visit were also held in Cuba where the Saint Mary's program has played a constructive role as Cuba becomes a global leader in what may be called co-operative socialism. In addition, the program organized a study visit to Croatian co-operatives in 2017.

Student Recruitment

The program was rolled out in 2003 and we were surprised by an enrollment of 15 students in each of the first two years, even without a strong recruitment program. We were also encouraged by the student evaluations and the low dropout rate. Low recruitment levels in subsequent years were unsettling. As we focused more on recruitment, we were disappointed that even with high positive ratings from students and a strong impact on their co-operatives, there was still strong resistance from many large co-operatives, who continued to send managers to MBA programs.

Survey research over a number of years suggested that about 30% of people liked online, 30% strongly disliked it, and the balance had mixed feelings. We also encountered a type of resistance we had not expected from Vancity Credit Union where managers were not interested because the program would limit career opportunities in investor-owned financial institutions. Vancity, however, subsequently decided to back the program, funding two full scholarships a year and making it clear to managers that the program was valued. The following year, 16 Vancity managers applied.

Another potential obstacle is nationalism – co-operators from each country want to have their own program. Despite the tendency to favour programs offered locally, many US co-operative managers did eventually join the program, often from the vibrant and dynamic retail food system. They made a substantial contribution to the learning of their colleagues.

Where corporate managers were not excited by the “co-operative difference” focus enrollments very quickly ceased. The Co-operators have played an important role in creating the program by providing solid and continuing support. The two cases of Vancity and the Co-operators clearly demonstrate that the level of commitment of senior management is crucial to co-operative education.

One of the greatest opportunities for co-operatives relates to the ‘co-operative literacy’ of their managers. Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, a Polish politician and economist, suggests there is a cycle that leads from inception by a committed and informed group to growth based on the strength of that shared commitment and then to a decline in the level of shared knowledge and commitment, resulting in organizational decline. Whether an organization then thrives or withers depends on renewal of organizational literacy.⁶

If the co-operative nature of the organization becomes more like their capital-driven competition, there may be short-term success, but in the long run, capitalist investors will be more successful at running capitalist business. As

the difference erodes and the management shifts to serving capital, member loyalty will decline. The dynamics are a bit different in worker owned or solidarity co-operatives, but if their organizational literacy withers, their cohesion and loyalty will also erode. A core belief of the Saint Mary's program was that, if fully developed, the co-operative nature of the business would be a profound asset.

Program Evaluation

Up to 2013, student evaluations were generally quite positive, achieving ratings of 4 or more out of a possible 5. A common comment by graduates is that the program changes how they manage and is also a "life changing experience" and one expressed that "While I realize I still have much to learn from the MMCCU program, it is this program that has helped to change the way I supervise individuals."⁷

An important impact of the program is in creating change agents who deepen the performance of their co-operatives in terms of co-operative purpose, values and principles. Graduates have reported creating new programs in their co-operatives, making significant policy changes and changing structures. One consumer food co-operative, led by a graduate, adopted a living wage for new workers, transformed the co-operative into a solidarity co-operative, adopted several additional co-operative principles, improved financial health and merged with a smaller co-operative experiencing difficulties, all in a two and a half year period. The CEO credits his learning experience in the Master's program as a key driver of all the changes.⁸

The program has been evaluated as part of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation of the Sobey School of Business and received high marks. The University and the Sobey School also evaluate it regularly as part of program review. Feedback has included the comment that the MMCCU program has impressed leading scholars in the field of management.

Most of the students in the program are managers and only a few have gone on to other degrees including a PhD in business administration at Saint Mary's. Many have participated in additional study tours, executive education courses and conferences. Students who already had an MBA and have gone on to take the Saint Mary's program, found it significantly different and of value to their work.

The Program Today

The program has very successfully passed through a leadership generation change and has broadened its focus. It is now very capably led by Sonja Novkovic as Academic Director and Karen Miner as Managing Director. The Co-operative Management Education program now offers Graduate level program options including:

- Master of Management, Co-operatives and Credit Unions
- Graduate Diploma in Co-operative Management
- Certificate in Co-operative Management

The program also offers Executive Education including: *'Enhancing Business Performance through Co-operative Management Practices: How to Strengthen Identity, Loyalty and Participation'*; "Demystifying co-operative finance – Why it matters"; and *The Canada Development Education (DE) Workshop*. The latter is a weeklong program for credit union professionals from around the world, offered in partnership with Caribbean Development Education program (CaribDE).

Conclusions

The Saint Mary's University Co-operative Management Program has not just survived but has grown for more than fifteen years. Student recruitment has been challenging but so far successful enough to allow the program to continue. The program has developed an international reputation for its innovative and vigorous approach to analysing business skills and issues from a co-operative perspective. It has earned consistent support in terms of students from highly respected co-operatives like Vancity Credit Union and the Co-operators Insurance and was able to raise more than a million dollars over a decade from co-operative businesses. It attracted financial support from

the then Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, now Chartered Professional Accountants Canada, from 2007 to present for its Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC).

In addition to CEARC, it has spawned the International Centre for Co-operative Management and the *International Journal of Co-operative Accounting and Management*. It has held conferences and symposia and encouraged and funded research. It continues to be a positive presence in the co-operative world. The intent was to one day have graduated hundreds of co-operative managers in co-operative businesses which would position them to build a preferred economy based on global co-operation.

That said, the program has served over 200 students and graduates from more than 100 different co-operative organizations in 11 countries. They have come from small and large insurance, fishery, credit, agricultural, retail food co-operatives, fair trade, housing and worker owned co-operatives. They have also come from co-operative development organizations and second tier organizations. More than 200 have participated in 8 study visits to the Mondragon co-operative system in Spain's Basque Country, 8 visits to the Emilia Romagna network in Northern Italy, two study tours of Cuban co-operatives and one to study co-operatives in Croatia. 152 participants from 66 diverse organizations have been involved in Executive Education programs. Small and large, worker and farmer and finance have all learned from each other.⁹

The success of the program flows from its steadfast commitment to focusing on and integrating co-operative purpose, values and principles into the vision and daily operations of co-operatives. It is rooted in the belief that co-operation is deeply embedded in the world of nature and human nature. The hope is that the program will inspire the global co-operative movement, help it to provide a preferred alternative to the destructive tendencies of corporate globalization, and contribute to a better world.

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Notes

¹ See Chamard (2003); Chamard (2004); Chamard and Webb (2004); Chamard and Webb (2006)

² Comment made over dinner, UK Co-operative Congress, 2002

³ It eventually led to its collapse. See Webb, Tom, *The Failure of Co-op Atlantic: A post-mortem on one of North America's largest co-op federations*, Co-operative Grocer, March April 2016.

⁴ The initial version of Mintzberg's comment was on a 'no longer available' CBC Ideas program from 2002. He has made a number of variations on the theme over the years. For example, <http://edition.CNN.com/2004/BUSINESS/01/28/globaloffice.mintzberg.transcript/index.html>
Accessed April 23, 2018

⁵ Mintzberg, Henry, (2017) <http://www.mintzberg.org/blog/mbas-as-ceos> Accessed 26 April 2018. He expressed a very similar view in the Ideas interview back in 2002.

⁶ Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski was a Polish politician and economist, Deputy Prime Minister of Poland, and government minister in the Second Polish Republic. The author is grateful for discussions with Ryszard Stocki, a Polish academic who has collaborated with the CME program, for an understanding of Kwiatkowski's organization theory.

⁷ Comments made to the author by students.

⁸ Stories related to the author by students.

⁹ Co-operative Management Education Program (2018) *Education for Values Based Business: The Co-operative Difference Impact Report*, https://smu.ca/webfiles/8555_SSB_Co-op%20Report_Email.pdf