

Study: Impact and Relevance of Co-operative Business Education

Boosting performance by learning about the co-operative model

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CO-OPERATIVE
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION



UNIVERSITÉ DE
SHERBROOKE



IRECUS
Institut de recherche et d'éducation
pour les coopératives et les mutuelles
de l'Université de Sherbrooke

To profile the existing co-operative business education programs and assess their impact and relevance.

Objectives

- To profile existing formal programs dedicated to co-operative business education (around the world);
- To gather data in order to analyze the impact and relevance of these programs on graduates and sector partners; and,
- To profile existing internal 'co-operative business education' programs within co-operative organizations

Mandate

- Saint Mary's University, Canada
- IRECUS, Universite de Sherbrooke, Canada
- University of Saskatchewan, Canada
- York University, Canada
- Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies, Trinidad and Tobago
- Coop College, UK
- University of Winnipeg, Canada
- Euricse, Italy
- Sheffield Hallam University, UK
- University of Bologna, Italy
- University of Mondragon, Spain
- University of Helsinki, Finland
- University of Gloucestershire, UK
- Pontifica Universidad Catolica do Parana, Brazil
- Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France
- University of Havana, Cuba
- Universidad Autonoma de Queretaro, Mexico
- University of Sydney, Australia
- Ciescoop, Universidad de Santiago, Chile
- Universidad Tecnologica Equinoccial, Ecuador
- Ambo University, Ethiopia

Research Participants

Programs in education institutions

- 2 page profiles plus summary matrix
- 17 profiles completed (commitment to the 2014 Summit was at least 12)
- The study could include more program profiles, but time was a limitation. This is an opportunity for post-October.

Let's review a few profiles by looking at the matrix

Program Profiles

Programs in co-operatives – one example:

**National Rural Electric Co-operative Association (NRECA)
Management Internship Program (MIP)**

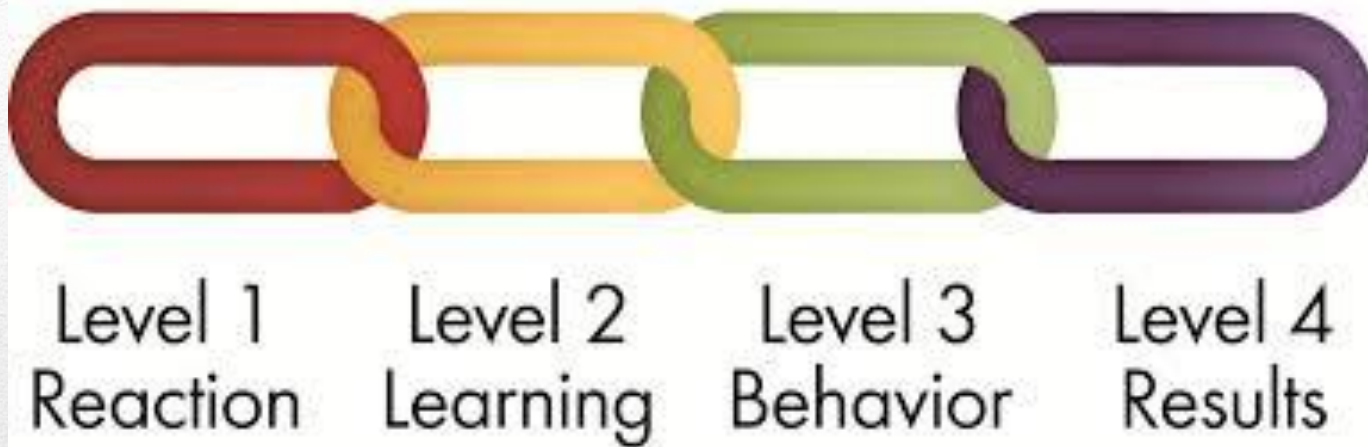
Location: Fluno Center for Executive Education, Madison,
WI, USA

Website: [http://www.nreca.coop/education-
events/cooperative-employee-education/](http://www.nreca.coop/education-events/cooperative-employee-education/)

Operational since 1970. Oversubscribed. Highly successful.
E.g. 1,300 graduates active in co-ops presently; 30% of all
CEOs/GMS

Format: 3 x 2 week intensives

Program Profiles



Report is structured around the Donald Kirkpatrick Learning Model (4 levels).

Level 1 & 2 = relevance; Levels 3 & 4 = impact

Report Structure

- 176 surveys in 4 languages (French, English, Spanish, Italian)
- Summary results from EURICSE previous survey (144 graduates)
- Focus groups conducted: Cipriani College of Labour & Co-operative Studies, Mondragon University, Saint Mary's University, Universite de Sherbrooke, and “open invite”
- Plus targeted interviews.

Graduate Results

- The ratio female/male is 55%/45%
- Work experience (years) - < 5 (26%); 5-9 (15%); 10-14 (16%); 15-19 (9%); >20 (34%)
- 21% have >20 years work experience in co-ops

Graduate Results



RELEVANCE

Why take a CBE program?

- For personal interests and by choice;
- To obtain a better understanding of the model and its possibilities;
- To improve knowledge of co-operative management
- Interest and belief/trust in the co-operative model

Graduate Results

Would you recommend your program to colleagues or others?

- Yes 95.45 %
- No 4.55 %

Why Recommend?

- Education received and educational experience it provides (ethics, principles)
- Better understanding of the world we live in and of the co-op organization fundamentals
- Broadens perspectives
- The quality of the program is an essential element

Graduate Results

Has the program been relevant to your career development?

- Significantly 59.85 %
- Moderately 29.55 %
- Minimally 8.33 %
- Not at all 2.27 %

Graduate Results

Commentary:

- It is useful, and necessary to know who we are and where we are from as co-operators
- It gave me perspective about organizations, economy and environment
- keeps us in connected with society, and about the social aspects of organizations
- Not surprising. I became more conscience of global problems and that solutions actually exist
- We need education to build a sustainable world and co-operatives are a good mean to achieve this goal

Graduate Results

Of the following knowledge areas, which three have been the most valuable to you in your co-operative activities ?

- Co-operative identity (principles and values) 54.55 %
- Co-operative business strategy 39.77 %
- Co-operative organizational structure and function 32.95 %
- Member participation 26.70 %
- Sustainable development (triple bottom line) 21.59 %
- Co-operative finance and accounting 19.32 %
- Co-operative marketing 12.50 %
- Co-operative people management / HR 10.80 %
- Other 1.70 %

EURICSE results: strategy, people management/HR, structure and function

Graduate Results

IMPACT

To what degree did the program change your approach to your activities in co-operatives?

- Significantly 57.60 %
- Moderately 32.80 %
- Minimally 8.00 %
- Not at all 1.60 %

Graduate Results

The programs allows for the transfer of a theoretical perspective (e.g. globalization and co-operative history) to the managing of organizations through co-operative principles.

- “Big picture awareness” and the co-operative potential
- Enhanced ability to take a participatory and a consulting approach inside the organization as employees and with members and other co-operatives
- How respondents act with their colleagues: becoming more responsible towards co-workers and organizations
- Guidelines to make decisions through principles and values, which are deeply studied and understood
- Links and reconciles the associative and business sides of the co-op
- CBE teaches cooperation in its philosophical and educational aspects but also carries it to the day-to-day competencies.

Graduate Results

Taking into account the type, size and culture of your co-operative, to what extent have you been able to impact the performance of your co-operative as a result of the co-operative business education program you completed?

- Significantly 32.00 %
- Moderately 32.80 %
- Minimally 24.80 %
- Not at all 10.40 %

Graduate Results

Specific changes to approach?

- More member focused strategy
- Ensured that member control is intrinsic in the cooperatives
- Open book management and collaboration among teams
- In decision making, empower others to look for solutions
- Triple bottom line accounting helped our members and our community understand better all aspects of our organization, and what are impacts are. There were also benefits to our marketing as we could talk about those impacts.
- Implementation of a more participative general assembly
- Implementing employee's evaluation criteria based on principles
- Implementing a co-operative education development program for members and employees so we all speak the same language and share the same objectives
- More teamwork

Graduate Results

How well recognized is the program in your organization?

- Significantly 23.48 %
- Moderately 40.15 %
- Minimally 31.82 %
- Not at all 4.55 %

Graduate Results

From the Graduates' perspective.....

For the organizations recognizing the relevance of the CBE programs:

- The executives see value in the program and support the enrollment of their employees, or hire the graduates of a CBE program
- All university training or learning is highly valued

For the respondents whose organizations do not recognize the value of CME programs:

- Being an expert on co-operation does not speak as loudly as being a chartered accountant or a financial analyst, at least not currently
- There are too few CBE graduates to have significant impact given the size of our organization, at this stage
- Needs more buy-in from the executives direction and the HR
- Lack of awareness from our executives and employees

Graduate Results

Proposition: Co-operative business education programs exist to serve the needs of the sector. Existing programs deliver high value, but only to the small # that have taken the programs.

If the programs are to grow and thrive, the following is needed:

- Increased commitment for 'co-op' education from the sector
- More support for existing programs (students over funding, but funding as well)
- P6: between educators and co-operatives – to better meet needs; direct engagement with programs
- Programs need to ensure relevance and impact

Other recommendations?

Recommendations
