Co-operatives and the Journey of Lifelong Learning

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE

Measuring the Co-operative Difference RESEARCH NETWORK

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The project

- Explore the 5th principle of co-operation
- Scan educational and training initiatives across Canada by co-ops and/or for co-ops
- Explore the investment co-ops make in their people through education and training
- Inform practice (trends, gaps, inform the development of a co-op lifelong learning strategy)
Contributors

- Karen Miner of Saint Mary’s University
- Kim Penna of College Houses, Texas
- Sarah Pike of ACE
- Fiona Duguid (formerly of CCA)
- Quintin Fox of Gay Lea Foods (formerly of CCA)
- Veronique Gagnon, student researcher
- Provincial co-op associations
Methodology

• Scan of co-op websites and annual reports
• Requested submissions via co-op newsletters and through email requests
• Consulted with provincial associations
• Inclusion criteria:
  – Educational or training initiatives undertaken by co-ops or created specifically for co-ops
  – Courses, workshops, online learning initiatives, resources/toolkits, etc.
  – Ongoing initiative (not 1-off conferences/events)
  – Practitioner focused (not undergraduate courses unless developed by a co-op)
Overview of findings

• 182 initiatives found
• Across all sectors
• Delivered by primary, second tier and third tier co-ops as well as consulting bodies and universities
• Delivery methods ranged from online static resources to in-person courses
• Initiatives targeted staff, management, directors, members, policy makers, developers and the public
• Topics included co-op topics as well as technical topics
Target audience

- Directors/Board: 70
- Managers: 60
- Staff: 50
- Youth and students: 40
- Individual members: 30
- Entrepreneurs: 20
- Developers: 10
- Public: 8
- Academics/researchers: 6
- Policy makers: 4
- Other: 2
Topics

• Technical versus co-operative (philosophy and technical)
  – 40 not co-op-related (Financial Literacy in the North, impact! The Co-operators Youth Program for Sustainability Leadership)
  – 142 from a co-op lens or directly on co-operative philosophy/business/principles (The Co-op Difference: Training in Co-op Housing Management, youth camps, Co-operative Corporate Secretaries Conference)
Co-op topics

Governance
Co-op Development
Industry learning in co-op context
Co-op Management
Co-ops 101
Career development
Co-op leadership
Co-op history
Other
Non co-op topics

- Business Management
- Financial literacy
- Governance
- Industry training
- Leadership
- Environmental sustainability
- Marketing
- Career development
- Other
Who is investing in education?
Types of initiatives

- Workshops/courses: 92 (50.5%)
- Online resources: 20 (11%)
- E-learning: 19 (10.4%)
Conferences: 12 (6.6%)

Camp/retreat: 10 (5.5%)

Internships: 8 (4.4%)

Curriculum: 5 (2.7%)

University programs: 4 (2.2%)

Advising: 4 (2.2%)
Mentorships: 3 (1.6%)

Networks: 2 (0.5%)

Webinars: 2 (0.5%)

Video: 1 (0.1%)
In summary

• More formalized programs that feed the governance function than other audiences
• Second tier co-ops and federations play a large role in providing education and training
• Implications for the sector
• Co-ops are educating on the ‘co-op difference’
Lifelong learning strategy

• Strategizing about opportunities where co-ops and co-op associations should collaborate to build capacity within the sector, share resources, set common standards
• Gap between high school and adult education (opportunity to target business schools and college students)
• Educating the public is a priority
• Access to governance resources for smaller co-ops would be valuable (Governance Portal in development)
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