



Cooperatives: Principles & Practices in Cooperative Curricula

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Background

- An extensive revision of *Cooperatives, Principles & Practices* by Marvin Schaars (1980)
- First edition written in 1936
- Funding for the revision and printing provided by The Cooperative Foundation



Background

- Purpose: To provide basic, *straightforward* information on the organization, structure, financing and management of cooperatives.
- Our intention was to provide an *introductory & supplemental* text



What can it do for you?

- Three essential innovations for the classroom:
 - The very flexible and durable binding—no hassles at the copying machine!
 - It is a free download!
 - <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/pdfs/A1457.PDF>
 - It has pictures!



Curriculum considerations

- Audience
- Course objectives
- Methods of instruction
- Scope (big themes, big picture)
- Sequence (order of topics)



Audience

- My classroom:
 - 50 undergraduate/graduate students
 - 13 different majors; state law requires all ag & soc science teachers to take a co-op course
 - No prerequisites
- UW correspondence courses



My course objectives

- To learn the fundamental reasons behind collective action in the economy.
- ☑ To understand the defining characteristics and principles of cooperative businesses.
- To apply economic theory to the analysis of cooperative businesses.
- ☑ To understand the strengths and challenges of the cooperative model.
- To learn basic spreadsheet analysis tools.



Instruction methods

- Problems: motivation & skills
- Correspondence course
 - The book has to be sufficient (reason for pictures and graphs)
- Traditional classroom with some technology offers more options
- The book is used as a supplement, a starting point



Instruction methods

- Group activities (cooperation skills and appreciation)
- PowerPoint and short video clips
 - NCFC, NCBA, USDA, and local resources (WI Historical Society)
 - Co-op culture: the rainbow flag and song <http://www.ica.coop/kids/rainbow.html>
 - WI video: <http://wisconsinstories.cfdev.uwex.edu/2002season/coop/video/index.cfm?doc=video2>

Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society Store
as it appears today.



Scenes from Rochdale Museum
The Rochdale shop was spare and simple. The pioneers used only
rudimentary furniture and offered few goods for sale.



Scenes from Rochdale Museum
Scales and desk used by the pioneers in 1844.





Instruction methods

- Guest lectures (better than video)
 - Co-op managers and directors
 - Co-op development experts
- Computer labs for software exercises
 - Students analyze “realistic” but invented data for cooperatives



Assignment example

- In 1845 the town of Rochdale is hit by the plague, sadly taking the lives of most of the pioneer members. Some of their competition, however, has also gone out of business, meaning they are selling more of their products to non-members.

(a) Using the “Statement of Operations” data for 1845, calculate the answers in question 1 using the Excel spreadsheet.

(b) Can the co-op survive another year if it doesn't attract new members?



Scope

- What are the major themes of the course?
- The book can be divided into two parts (different themes):
 - Academic content for “students of cooperatives”
 - Practical information for establishing and operating a cooperative



Scope—Academic content

- Co-op history in US and Europe
- Co-op laws (legal infrastructure) in the US
- Co-op trends
- Co-op classification (traditional)
- Our book provides an introduction; other books, book chapters, or journal articles provide more analysis and theory



Scope—Practical information

- Alternative business models in the US (comparative advantages)
- Procedures for organizing a cooperative
- Roles and responsibilities of directors and management
- Financial management
- Supplemental materials: USDA (*Rural Cooperatives*), NCBA, NCFRC, law firms, etc.



Sequence

- Good luck!
- Q: “What can you start with that will not result in half the class dropping or developing a negative attitude?”
- Answer #1:
 - For a homogenous group with specific objectives—something expected (example: chapter 6—roles and responsibilities)



Sequence

- Answer #2:
 - For a heterogeneous group with no objectives—something completely *unexpected*
 - For example: Chapter 5—Alternative business models in the US
 - Or: collective action examples from other disciplines & newspaper



Final thoughts

- Our book is a starting point for most curriculums—fills a very useful niche.
- We hope it frees the instructor to offer more in-depth analysis, more theory, etc.
- We (ACE members) should start sharing teaching tools. Can we develop a web site?
