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# Education Sector and the Social and Solidarity Economy

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## Abstract

This entry examines the relationship of SSE to enhancing the scope and quality of education worldwide. In higher education, this relationship is reflected in a specialized curriculum to support cooperatives and civil society through cooperative and social-economic development. Universities are employing technology to create both national and international networks to support students in the development of entrepreneurial skills leading to new SSE businesses. Primary and secondary education has a stronger emphasis on addressing the challenges of access to education in lesser developed regions. In advanced industrial societies, it plays a role in strengthening cultural capital and fostering ties for youth to the SSE through youth cooperatives.

## Keywords

cooperative business education; Team Academy; Co-op Network Studies; active learning; school cooperatives; popular education

## Introduction

SSE activities directed to enhancing the quality of education are broad in scope and encompass primary and secondary education as well as the role of higher education in support of innovation in the SSE. They also include workforce development which may be done through higher education or other nongovernmental entities. Education at the primary and secondary levels is examined in terms of how SSE institutions have contributed resources to improve the quality of the public schools or created innovative alternatives. This can take the form of alternative models such as cooperative schools. In higher education, the challenge for SSE is to encourage the incorporation of a curriculum about the SSE as well as resources to support research and policy work to guide the development of new SSE institutions. The literature on SSE and education is scarce. The focus of this entry is on mapping the role of SSE in the education sector and identifying best practices, lessons learned and areas for future innovation. In identifying best practices, examples were selected based on their impact, sustainability, accessibility and relevance to multiple stakeholders.

Education is key to promoting social progress. Too often, education is focused on maintaining the status quo. SSE organizations and enterprises (SSEOs) are committed to a more civic and inclusive minded commitment to their local communities, and this includes educational institutions (also see the entry “Contemporary understandings of the SSE”). Spiel and Reich (Spiel et al. 2018) cite four goals in the relationship between education and social progress. Education is key to maintaining a competitive labour force in an increasingly globalized economy. Through education, people can develop skills and understanding of the importance of participation in civic life as engaged citizens. Education cultivates life skills to expand our knowledge as well as realize our full potential. Lastly, it is the most effective means for creating a level playing field and reducing the impact of social injustices and social exclusion. Primary and secondary education is considered a basic right for every child according to the United Nations. Only through the commitment of governments and SSEOs can we hope to achieve that objective. SSE in the form of philanthropy can influence the content of education to focus on goals of social justice and social inclusion. SSEOs also play a role in the promotion of educational programming to address the needs for professional capacity-building for their workforces. This can take the form of professional training such as badges or certificates as well as courses and degrees in higher education.

### 1. Higher Education and SSE

Many universities include degrees in nonprofit management, but far fewer offer studies in co-operative management and community development. Degrees in cooperative business development were surveyed by Miner and Guillotte (2014) at eighteen universities (see Table 41.1). Miner and Guillotte (2014) identified the following other universities with cooperative business education programs: Cape Breton University, Canada; Moshi University, Tanzania; On Co-op, York University, Canada; Sungkonghoe University, Korea; University of Exeter, UK; University of Missouri, USA; University of Saskatchewan, Canada and University of Sydney, Australia.

Table 41.1 Universities with Cooperative Business Studies

Region	University	Programs in Cooperative Studies
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<b>Africa</b>	Ambo University, Ethiopia	BA and MA programs
	Moshi University, Tanzania	Cooperative business education
<b>Asia</b>	Sungkonghoe University, Korea	Cooperative business education
	University of Sydney, Australia.	Cooperative business education
<b>Europe</b>	University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute, Finland	Cooperative Network Studies with seven affiliated universities
	Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France	Master's degree of Mutualist and Co-operatives
	European Research Institute on Co-operative and Social Enterprises (EURICSE), Italy	MA and professional trainings
	Università Di Bologna, Italy	Master's in the Economics of Co-operatives
	Mondragón University (MU), Spain	MA
	The Co-operative College, UK	Courses and programs related to co-operatives
	University of Gloucestershire, UK	MBA in Co-operative Enterprise
	University of Exeter, UK	Cooperative business education

<b>North America</b>	IRECUS, Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada	MA and certificate programs
	St. Mary's University, Canada	Master and certificate programs in co-operative management
	Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Québec, Canada	Executive MBA and professional training
	University of Saskatchewan, Canada	Cooperative business education
	University of Winnipeg, Canada	Bachelor of Business Administration concentration in co-operatives
	Cape Breton University, Canada	Cooperative Business Education
	Ontario Co-operative Association & York University, Canada	Cooperative Management Certificate
	Universidad Autónoma de Queretero, México	bachelor's and technical diplomas in co-operative and social enterprise management
	University of Missouri, USA	Cooperative business education
<b>South America &amp; the Caribbean</b>	Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies, Trinidad and Tobago	BA, AA and professional certificates
	Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná (PUCPR), Brazil	Master and certificate programs in co-operative management

	Universidad de Habana, Cuba	Master's, diplomas and courses on co-operatives
	Universidad Federal Rural de Pernambuco, Brazil	Post-graduate programs on co-operatives
	Universidad de Santiago de Chile (CIESCOOP), Chile	Diploma and master's on SSE

*Source: Miner & Guillotte, 2014*

Two universities that have noteworthy programs for their scale, and years in cooperative research and cooperative studies are the University of Saskatchewan and University of Wisconsin, Madison. They benefit from support from co-operatives and credit unions as well as public funding. The University of British Columbia and the University of Massachusetts have established campus co-operatives. The Law Clinic at the City University of New York provides legal support to the development of co-operatives and is affiliated with 1worker1vote (<http://1worker1vote.org/>).

University College, Cork (UC, Cork) in Ireland has strong ties to the Irish credit unions and co-operatives and has an active research centre and undergraduate and graduate teaching in support of SSE. Their online master's program reaches an international student enrollment. Strong programs with a community development focus are housed at the University of Cape Breton, Concordia University and Carleton University in Canada, and at the University of New Hampshire in the U.S.

Co-op Network Studies (CNS), a network established by a group of seven universities and coordinated by the Ruralia Institute of the University of Helsinki offers multidisciplinary, web-based minor subject courses and modules leading to a bachelor's or master's degree (Ruralia Institute 2021). This delivery model offers students a greater variety of courses and module options while ensuring a larger enrollment pool for the courses.

An outstanding innovation in the role of universities in the promotion of SSE is Team Academy. Team Academy (Tiimiakatemia) was established in Finland in 1993 at the University of Applied Sciences in Jyväskylä, Finland (Ruuska and Krawczyk 2013). The model was then adopted at other Finnish universities and spread to universities in the UK, Hungary, Brazil, Argentina, Queretaro and Puebla Mexico, the Netherlands and Costa Rica. There are multiple centres in Spain located in the Basque region (Irun, Bilbao, Oñate), Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia. The network includes innovation labs in Bilbao, Berlin and Seoul. Mondragon University (MU) in Spain has provided technical assistance for the expansion of Team Academy to other institutions. The curriculum is based on the development of skills in entrepreneurship, fostering of networks, connections with innovation labs, experience with the newest entrepreneurial methodologies and interaction with new markets.

The Universidad Fundepos in Costa Rica, with technical assistance from MU, joined Team Academy in 2019. They have 260 participants and have served 1800 program

participants. Team Academy students are organized into teams and operate as co-operatives. First-year students learn about the co-operative form of business. The learning process is to build their skills as entrepreneurs while developing their cultural competencies for engaging in international business and to work together in a co-operative with their “teampreneurs”. The students move around the globe utilizing the various network member sites to develop their entrepreneurial skills and networks to facilitate the development of a viable business concept by the end of their studies. Post-graduation, the majority of the students secure employment as entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs. There are retention issues as not everyone is cut out to be an entrepreneur; MU’s LEINN program model allows for students to transfer to other degree programs if it is not right for them.

Costa Rica has a second program supported by SSE institutions and the government. CENECOOP ([campus.co.cr](http://campus.co.cr)) offers over 30 courses online. The cost ranges from free to \$20 per course. Students rely on cell phones and loaded tablets. The curriculum includes courses on co-operative schools and student co-operatives, cooperative management as well as more general courses in entrepreneurship, finance, and digital literacy. Since Costa Rica accepts more refugees than other countries in the region, this program is seen as accessible to all (S. Naves 2021).

Southern New Hampshire University’s Global Education Movement (GEM) delivers associate and bachelor’s degrees through a competency-based model of blended learning to low-income youth and refugees at nine sites in five countries: Rwanda, Lebanon, South Africa, Malawi and Kenya. The goal is to improve student labour market outcomes through a combination of online coursework and in-person instruction. Over 1200 students have been enrolled with 93% on track to graduate and 84% employed within six months of graduation.

The Korean government has been supportive of the development of SSE through the establishment of public policies related to education and training. To create skilled leaders to lead the social economy, the government-supported expansion of specialized courses in social economy leadership called the Social Economy Leadership Programme (SELP). The SELP program is a non-degree program offered by colleges and universities to SSE workers which teaches skills required to lead the social economy. The program began in 2013 at three universities and by 2018, the number increased to four with over 600 workers benefitting from the program (Yoon and Lee 2020). Over 20 universities are projected to host SELP by 2022. In addition to SELP, many colleges and universities are committed to offering related degree programs.

The solidarity economy in Brazil grew in the 1990s as a social movement (Cruz-Souza, Cortegoso, Zanin and Shimbo 2011). In response to the economic dislocation created by neoliberal policies, the government appealed for the creation of incubators of cooperatives. La Red Universitaria de Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares (Rede de ITCPs) formed with 44 universities and institutions of higher education networked in five regions of Brazil in 1998. At Universidad Federal de São Carlos, the innovation resulted in INCOOP (Incubadora Regional de Cooperativas Populares), an extension program to develop cooperatives that entailed the participation of faculty, students, workers and professionals across a range of disciplines and professions. Twenty solidarity enterprises in areas such as food, cleaning and surveillance, laundry, recycling, sewing, production of seedlings, handicrafts, carpentry and agricultural production and cleaning products created jobs and income for approximately 500 people. INCOOP has a practical curriculum with graduate and postgraduate programs of study. Graduates develop their own projects with the support of the INCOOP incubator. Embedded in the curriculum is a focus on solidarity finance

and ethical consumption, aligned with the Solidarity Economy and Popular Cooperatives group. This group is linked to the national network, Rede de ITCPs.

## **2. Primary and Secondary Education and SSE**

Evidence of the implementation of initiatives and programs linked to the Social Solidarity Economy can be found in various forms throughout primary and secondary education. Examples of model programs can be found at both levels.

Evidence of the Social Solidarity Economy in Tanzania dates back to colonial times and can be observed in various forms throughout society (Bee 2013). Although data and information related to SSEs in Tanzania is limited (2013), the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives is charged with inspecting over 200 cooperatives every three months (Daily News Reporter 2021). Tanzania continues to face many challenges in education including teacher shortages, a lack of classroom resources, overcrowding in classrooms, lack of funding, curriculum and design and learner retention, with fewer than 40% of children pursuing secondary education (Lugalla and Ngwaru 2019).

Educators in East Africa are required to implement active learning pedagogies in their teaching, yet they face numerous barriers in educating their students (Crichton and Nicholas 2018). These educators often work in overcrowded classrooms, with insufficient resources, limited funding, and are offered few professional development opportunities. In Tanzania, as well as other parts of the world, educators can be found using the Taking Making into Challenging Contexts Toolkit to model the integration design thinking, making, and STEM education in what they define as challenging contexts. Crichton and Nicholas (2018) define a challenging context as a setting “in which individuals have limited, unreliable or no access to modern-day conveniences such as electricity, running water, health care, mobile computing, and related emerging technologies due to a variety of circumstances, conditions or environmental constraints” (Crichton and Nicholas 2018, 7).

While Crichton and Nicholas (2018) note that challenging contexts can be found anywhere, a major focus of their work has been to train teachers to implement this pedagogy as a model to impact sustainable change in challenging contexts. In their model, students learn to use and apply the Design Thinking approach in innovative and creative ways to solve authentic problems that are faced by their communities. Although there are numerous benefits for any students who engage in learning through this model, children who learn making in challenging contexts have the added benefit of learning that they can become part of the change that they want to see in their own communities. Through active learning, students apply the Four R’s of global citizenship (rethink, reuse, reduce, and recycle) to solve authentic problems in a tangible way (Crichton and Nicholas 2018, 22). By engaging in design thinking, STEM and making, students practice and learn transferable skills that they can use in the future to solve problems in the context of their own community to create a more sustainable future. They can identify problems or issues that need solving in their communities and work together to design solutions.

Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) has supported the development of poor rural communities in India through the promotion of the social solidarity economy for over 50 years. ASSEFA’s core values are based upon the Gandhian principles of non-violence, love, and truth. For over 40 years, ASSEFA has worked to establish schools in rural areas with no school facilities and to improve access and equity in education.

During this time, over 10,598 children and 474 educators have benefitted from their programs (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). ASSEFA promotes the holistic development of children's basic knowledge, health and wellness, as well as providing education regarding the principles of non-violence, love, respect, and the importance of sharing with others. ASSEFA has had a tremendous impact on education in India, expanding the number of schools that exist in rural areas. It also provided access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic when the government authorized school closures, particularly providing education for women, improving educator preparation and educator professional development.

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education of over 320 million students in primary and secondary education. This learning disruption is exacerbated by digital divides that have increased the educational inequities in gender and class that existed in India prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sahni 2020). Only 23% of households in India have access to the internet (Sahni 2020), with only a reported 8% of children in rural areas attending online classes (Carvalho 2021).

While many schools remained closed in India due to COVID-19 with an expected reopening date of November 2021 (Carvalho 2021), ASSEFA provided online classes in basic math, English, and even Social Emotional Learning for 1,350 students in the Coastal area of India (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). Due to a lack of internet and device accessibility, over 50% of those students had difficulty attending classes (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). In response to student needs, educators implemented creative ways to deliver content, including recording lessons and sharing them through WhatsApp.

Another example of ASSEFA's impact on education in India is the introduction of "weekend schools". The weekend schools grant proposal was submitted in September of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 impact. Many parents in India must decide between working on the weekends and being home to care for their children (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). For many families, there is no choice, and parents must leave their children home alone or in the care of neighbours. In response to childcare needs, ASSEFA has established two-weekend school sites, in Mykudi and Kottapatti, for children ages 6 through 12 (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). The goal of these weekend schools is to provide a safe environment for socioeconomically disadvantaged children to learn useful skills that will benefit them in the future beyond simply reinforcing skills learned in the textbook. These weekend schools engage students in learning and activities aligned to the head, hand, and heart.

The weekend school project is grant-funded and over 300 children are benefitting from participation in the pilot version. After one year, the skills gained by children involved in the weekend school project will be assessed and the ASSEFA Head Office will send a progress report along with photos to the funding agency. After assessing the program, the plan is to expand the weekend school program to other areas. In addition to their work with improving rural education, ASSEFA has also played an instrumental role in preparing new teachers through the College of Education at Silarpatti and the Teacher Education Institute at Pooriyampakkam, which has also had a major impact.

ASSEFA is also responsible for implementing numerous socio-economic welfare programs. One of ASSEFA's goals is the empowerment of rural women through various programs, including those focused on education and financial stability. ASSEFA partners with a variety of key stakeholders including the government and private sector to provide the resources necessary to implement these programs.

The Digital Livelihoods Program is an initiative that was created in collaboration with Hewlett Packard, FRENED and the Sarvodaya Mutual Benefit Trust to offer training and education to Saathis who expressed a desire to start their own smart printer based business (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). The training was offered by FRENED on how to operate the printers, and the printers were offered to the Saathis at a subsidized rate by Hewlett Packard. Over 300 Saathis have benefited from participating in this program and are now earning income (Association for Sarva Seva Farms 2020). This service as well as providing the printing of educational materials, transportation tickets, government documents, and photos among many other things, contributes greatly to the community.

In Germany, a secondary school cooperative program called Schulergenossenschaften allows students to develop and operate their own cooperative under the guidance of their school. As part of this program, students are required to create and implement their own business plans (Wolf and Redford 2018). Students' ideas are turned into action, as they write the statutes of their cooperatives and are responsible for the creation of the goods and services that are distributed (Wolf and Redford 2018). Students are supported throughout the process, often with the resources to implement their business plan by the Genossenschaftsverband, the cooperative association, if needed. Participants in the student cooperatives are allotted the same time frame and are held to the same criteria and expectations as those in the adult cooperatives, including annual audits. This program, which allows students to learn while engaging in the program, lasts at least three years and offers the opportunity to renew once this time ends. One of the program's main goals is to promote sustainability. Schulergenossenschaften has been praised for the lasting impact it has had on the community, and its innovative model for educating students.

In the Basque region, the Euskal Herriko ikastolak is an example of a European cooperative with 120 members from throughout France and Spain (Basque Country Schools 2018). Approximately 6,000 teachers employed by the program educate 60,000 students and have an impact on over 40,000 families (Basque Country Schools 2018). The ikastola pedagogical model focuses on the promotion of the Basque curriculum, focused on social participation, responsibility and competence development. Students are taught through engagement in active learning and innovation is highly valued. An emphasis is placed upon educating students about Basque culture and creating multilingual Basque students who are trained in Information and Communication Technology (Basque Country Schools 2018). One of the most unique components of this program is that the cooperative is run in partnership with parents and the community. Educators partner with families and professionals to create their own learning materials, which they constantly revise and improve. While each school is part of the cooperative and adheres to the same values and model, each has its own history and unique way of operating in its own unique context. As part of the services provided by the program, published teaching materials and training are offered. The program is funded primarily (80%) through services provided by the program. Other funding comes from public subsidiaries (15%) and a direct cost to members (5%) (Basque Country Schools 2018).

The Korean government's commitment to the social economy is also evident in their primary and secondary schools. In 2018, plans were made to revise curriculum content to focus on social economy, cooperation and other practices related to the social economy (Yoon and Lee 2020). There was also a desire by the Korean government to create a curriculum connected to social solidarity economy education and provide courses for students in primary and secondary school (Yoon and Lee 2020). In 2018,

Korea had established over 60 school cooperatives to promote student learning and curriculum related to the social economy (Yoon and Lee 2020).

### **3. Criteria for Success**

One of the most critical components necessary for a successful initiative is directly tied to the ideals that are foundational to human-centred design and the work that is being done through Making in Challenging Contexts. When stakeholders fail to implement a human-centred design approach, they often apply their own context to what they think the communities, or “users” as they are often called in human-centred design, need based on their own perception. Decisions are often made because stakeholders think they know the solution, but what they really need to do is take the time to better understand the problem, the needs of the community and the context through empathy work. By implementing human-centred design when partnering with a community, stakeholders can have a more profound impact by offering services and practices that change lives by filling an actual need.

Another critical component is the involvement of multiple stakeholders engaged in a mutual partnership. As stated previously, this partnership must work toward the best interests of the community. When multiple stakeholders collaborate and work toward the same goals with the local community and government, initiatives are much more successful. When informing practice for education it is also important for stakeholders to come from a diverse range of backgrounds to ensure that all voices are heard and that a variety of perspectives are considered (Lugalla and Ngwaru 2019).

Funding is another critical factor that impacts the success of an initiative. Programs need to either demonstrate relatively low-cost sustainability over time or be provided with ample funding for the program to be sustained long-term. Long-term funding is necessary for any initiative to demonstrate effectiveness, or to have a true impact on a community. Many programs demonstrate strong potential for success and are ended before their impact is able to be assessed due to a lack of long-term funding (also see the entry “Financing for SSE”).

Through a review of programs, it is clear that there are several key factors that contribute to the expansion and improvement of the quality of education. When examining various models, they were assessed for overall impact, sustainability, the program’s ability to fill a need within the community, the quality of the partnerships developed with stakeholders, and the model of innovative practice. Technology and knowledge sharing is key to promoting and scaling programs at an international level as in Team Academy, which has the potential to have a tremendous impact on SSE.

The various ways in which SSE provides services to education are evident in innovative programs and models across primary, secondary, and higher education. While innovative programs and models are impactful, the key to success is government and private sector support. Governments must prioritize SSE when creating policy, and adequate funding must be provided to support SSE initiatives. If governments develop collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders and support SSE initiatives through funding and policy, these programs can flourish.

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