



# Building a strong membership

Dr Linda Shaw



# The Co-operative College

## **Mission**

- To put education at the heart of co-operation and co-operation at the heart of education
- Since 1919, the College has been providing education for co-operatives (members and staff) in the UK and internationally
- There are 20+ Co-operative Colleges globally



# Making membership meaningful

- A two way process between members and their co-operative
- Varies from co-op to co-op but will involve both financial + associative aspects
- Requires ongoing commitment and engagement



# Governance Matters

- Requires members to have an understanding of, and the skills to participate in, the governance processes of the co-operative
- Governance failures are at the root of commercial failures
- Accountability between board and members is a critical relationship



# Education and learning

- Key factor for building strong membership
- No one size fits all approach
- Importance of recognising both informal and formal learning processes
- Recent research has identified how youth co-operatives provide a vital learning space for youth in Uganda and Lesotho





# Education and development

- Education is the key driver for co-operative development
- The Rochdale Pioneers, Antigonish movement in Canada, Mondragon in Spain
- Current successful tea smallholder co-operative development in Kenya started with education programmes



# Knowledge *and* skills

- Needs to include more on governance as well as 'business' related aspects such as marketing, finance
- Skills development is vital – where are the links to vocational programmes – example of Zambia
- Modes of delivery important – attuned to needs of the learners



# Animation





# Making connections

- Need for much more knowledge and skills exchange between co-operative educators globally
- Build on and develop our existing co-operative education institutions such as Co-operative Colleges
- And develop some new ones....



# New directions

- In the UK, there is not only an expanding co-operative curriculum for schools ....
- but also the growth of a new co-operative schools sector with over 250,000 students and over 300 schools
- Co-operative schools are funded by the state but operate with a co-operative governance model



# Co-operative schools

- Are the fastest growing co-operative sector in the UK
- Their members are parents, students, staff and local communities
- A new challenge for membership development



# Making co-operators

- ‘Making co-operators’ has been central theme of co-operative education in the UK
- In the UK and in East Africa, young people are taking up the opportunity to become active members in a co-operative
- They will go onto be the next generation of strong members and leaders in co-operatives – to become co-operators

