

Report of the New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand, 21-22 March 2002

Building on the success of the 2001 conference, the New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education (NZACE) sixth annual conference was held in conjunction with the Association's AGM at the Quality Inn Hotel in Wellington, New Zealand's capital city. The conference theme was *Education and Work Partnerships for the Knowledge Economy* and a large number of delegates attended workshops and paper presentations across a range of subject disciplines – sports, teaching science and technology, business studies, teacher education, and industry training organizations. There were some provocative presentations, such as Kath Seton's question *Who needs placement coordinators, what difference do they make anyway?* It appears that co-op in New Zealand is alive and well and facing increasing scrutiny from practitioners. Chris Eames and Richard Coll ran a workshop seeking to address what New Zealand practitioners think defines co-op and Katharine Hoskyn looked at aspects of internationalization of co-op in another workshop. Papers were presented on aspects of best practice such as assessment by use of portfolios by Alison Ayrton and assessment in the teaching profession by Sheila Grainger with Nicola Beentes providing the view from the Industry Training Organization perspective. Integrating theory and practice was looked at by Kay Fieldon and Andy Williamson. Plenary speakers included The Minister for Tertiary Education, Steve Mahary and Paul Williams the Executive Director from the Industry Training Organization. It was perhaps a reflection of the fact that the conference was held in Wellington that we were able to access Ministry officials and senior managers and this added an interesting new dimension to the conference compared with past conferences.

Special thanks are due to Danette Whitehouse for her efforts in organizing a stimulating and interesting conference. Papers are currently under review and will be produced as refereed proceedings. More detail about the conference and New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education are available from the NZACE web site (<http://www.nzace.ac.nz>).

Contributors to the NZACE conference are encouraged to submit research reports to APJCE for publication (email: editor@apjce.org).

Katherine Gibson
Chairperson
New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education
Auckland, New Zealand
(gibsonk@lincoln.ac.nz).

Opportunities for Research

As cooperative education gains in acceptance and importance and its value and importance is recognized, so too are the opportunities for research. I would like to suggest that a register of possible research topics be created that would serve to stimulate ideas for further research in the growing field of co-operative education.

My current area of interest is that of the possibility of a growing trend towards 'reverse' cooperative education – where people from the world of work with actual experience are returning to the education sector to add a *theory* component to their existing practical experience.

I would like to offer the following as possible researchable topics – admittedly some with a South African slant but, as you know, co-op is alive and well in South Africa as well! These are 'further research' topics I identified in my research into the reversal of cooperative education:

1. Problems/difficulties encountered by the working adult learner.
2. 'Reverse' cooperative education seen from the employer perspective.
3. Higher education institutions – how they cope with the challenges of 'reverse' cooperative education.
4. Opportunities/threats to higher education from the SAQA/NQF/unit standards perspective. (These are South African initiatives to establish a national Qualifications Framework (NQF).)
5. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – the influence this has on cooperative education, specifically 'reverse' cooperative education.

Thanks for a super journal.

Susanne Taylor
Technikon Witwatersrand
South Africa
(staylor@mail.twr.ac.za).

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