

Annual Conference 2013

Education Policy Paper



To be effective in a modern global economy, young people need to be equipped not only with individual skills, but the knowledge and understanding to effectively work in teams – to learn to co-operate. In order to give young people a well-rounded education, it is equally important that education also focuses on developing ethical values and social responsibility. Through its involvement in education, the Co-operative Movement has demonstrated that it can provide a values-led, faith-neutral environment and curriculum for the future citizens of tomorrow's global economy.

Co-operatives on the curriculum

Reports from OFSTED and the results of pupils have shown the benefits of using co-operative values as a framework to deliver the breadth of curriculum areas and personal development undertaken in schools. Co-operative values and skills can empower young people as active citizens, and embed civil society skills. These should be embedded in the curriculum across early years, primary and secondary education.

It is also important to ensure that young people develop an understanding of the depth and breadth of the Co-operative Movement, both in the UK and across the world. As it stands, a very small proportion of young people leave school with an understanding of co-operatives and mutuals, as opposed to other economic models. Governments should ensure that knowledge of co-operative practice and principles are fully incorporated into the national curricula for economics, enterprise, geography and citizenship, and all other subjects where appropriate.

Life-long learning

Local social and cultural clubs and associations perform a valuable function in UK society, fostering a culture of lifelong education and learning. Governments should enable clubs to come together to form community learning co-operatives that would be able to:

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- form partnerships with local Higher Education Institutions that would result in more Higher Education adult learning within communities;
- make it easier for clubs to negotiate for access to local civic facilities where this learning could take place;
- act as a vehicle that might be fundable with relatively small support grants from HEFCE, to develop capacity;
- make it easier for Higher Education Institutions to accredit small-scale learning that happens in the community;
- help people to find routes of access into more substantial HE programmes;
- consideration to be given to the creation of a Co-operative University.

Co-operative Schools

The Co-operative Party is pleased to see that there are now close to 500 co-operative schools. Moving to a co-operative model provides a framework in which everybody with a stake in the school's success. Parents, teachers and support staff, local community organisations and pupils have the opportunity to be involved in running it.

To an increasing number of schools, it provides a strong mutual 'root' and a clear mechanism for involving parents more effectively in their children's education.

The co-operative model also ensures that the school becomes more accountable. The structure is designed to ensure that those in positions of responsibility will have to remain sensitive to the needs, views and aspirations of the different groups of interested people, and that the respective views of stakeholders can be balanced in an appropriate way to suit the needs of the organisation.

There is significant potential for co-operative trust schools to provide an important contribution to the overall diversity of state education. A national network of co-operative trusts has developed, actively supported by and engaging with the huge and diverse co-operative and mutual sector. Governments should work with the Schools Co-operative Society to further develop a national support mechanism for co-operative trust schools, owned and controlled by the existing co-operative trust schools.

Existing charity law should also be reviewed to ensure that the co-operative trust model is able to develop in as democratic and participative a manner as possible, as well as enabling schools to benefit from international associations.

Existing legislation should be amended so that all mainstream state funded schools and Further Education Colleges, whether community, trust, faith-based schools or academies can establish co-operative governance structures, should they wish to do so. They should also become more accountable to parents, pupils, staff and their local communities. Parent and teacher associations should become mandatory in all mainstream schools, and should each have responsibility for appointing at least one school governor. Every school and Further Education College should also be required to have an elected body for students, which will play an important role in setting its ethos and overall direction.

Co-operative trusts have not only transformed the relationships of schools with parents, staff, pupils and other stakeholders, but they have also formed a framework for co-operation between a number of different schools in the same area. They could also provide a more integrated service encouraging collaborative working across different providers.

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One solution to this would be the creation of social co-operatives, which could provide a range of services in their appropriate communities, outside of the existing timetabled programme.

It is important to note that support is given to governors of the Co-operative Schools to ensure that they are able to articulate and guard the principles of co-operation. This will ensure the long term health of the schools and increase the number of co-operators within our movement.

In 2013 Meg Munn MP introduced a Co-operative Schools Bill containing two clauses: the first sought to ensure that schools were able to set up under Industrial, Provident Society law, and the second sought to allow Nursery Schools to join with emerging Co-operative school clusters. The details of these two clauses are below:

Clause 1

- *Despite commitment to co-operatives and mutuals in the public sector as well as the Governments localism agenda, co-operative schools have to work around existing legislation as no provision is made in the relevant acts for Industrial & Provident Societies, the usual legislative form for co-operatives. The first clause seeks to amend this in ensuring any future legislation provides a level playing field.*

Clause 2

- *Many co-operative networks and co-operative trusts are based on strong geographic clusters. They have an all-through vision of education, raising achievement by supporting young people throughout their journey through the education system. Yet the 2006 Act excludes nursery schools from becoming parts of trusts.*
- *Nursery schools are in many ways the most co-operative part of the sector, both in relation to their engagement with parents and carers and their pedagogy, as is reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Enabling nursery schools to become full members of trusts, or academies, would allow such engagement to further develop that all-through vision of education essential for sustainable changes in achievement.*

Local government

Local authorities have a role in planning school places, fair funding, managing admissions and the care of excluded and vulnerable children and providing the additional support to schools. Education should be not-for-profit and not part of a profit making market system. Our children and their education is too important to be left to the market. This should also apply to the ever increasing provision of free schools and chain academies in England.

It is important to have collaboration amongst schools and the support services to be able to develop and raise the standards of teaching and build an inclusive framework for education to be delivered. The Schools Co-operative Society (www.co-operativeschools.coop) is there to provide networking amongst co-operative schools and to support schools. Networking and working together is the key to providing a fully comprehensive education with a broad range of subjects both vocational and academic with a broad range of assessments and qualifications. All exam boards should be publicly owned or not-for-profit with a strong public service ethos.

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Making sure that parents can be and should be encouraged to play a greater role in their children's education. Schools should be encouraged and funded to provide numeracy, literacy and IT for parents. Parents can then support their children and take part in running the school.

There are numerous examples of emerging co-operative endeavour among schools. For example in Sandwell schools in the borough have been able to set up a co-operative consortium which has, through the LEA, been able to collectively purchase and deliver shared services. This endeavour is supported and encouraged by The Co-operative Party.

In Wales, new flagship schools such as Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen are showing that co-operative schools can develop with and within the local authority system.

Case Study - Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust

Reddish Vale Technology College was the first school in England to become a co-operative Trust school, with the Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust established in March 2008.

Reddish Vale is a large secondary school, with 1,320 learners. The school's most recent Ofsted Report in 2007 described the school as good with some aspects, such as provision for care, guidance and support, outstanding.

The Co-operative Trust has given the school a solid platform on which to build partnerships and continue to develop to meet the changing needs of our local communities. The 'My Place' programme, for example, has offered young people hands-on opportunities to develop and manage a youth co-operative. They have come together through membership of the Trust to bid to deliver sport, leisure, information, advice and guidance, and a safe place to be in the heart of their community. Their bid "Our Space" has a co-operative enterprise – run by young people for young people – as its centrepiece.



The Trust has offered not only the school but a wide range of partners and stakeholders a way in which to continue to drive up standards and create a transformational platform to address wider issues of education, training, employability and regeneration.

Sustainability is provided through the membership and co-ownership of the physical environment. The school's community has a continual throughput of potential new members and a strong connection within the community to bring stakeholder groups together at a grassroots level. Drawing on this they are able to grow support and capacity in and across the community for regeneration and transformation.

Source: Reddish Vale, www.reddish.stockport.sch.uk

What councils can do

- ✓ Ensure that co-op models and values are included in all business education modules.
- ✓ Support co-operative business models such as Young Co-operatives, in schools
- ✓ Promote co-operative models and ideas in the curriculum and schools' culture
- ✓ Promote co-operative trust schools

Sure start

Sure Start and Flying Start Children's Centres are one of Labour's finest achievements, and remain at the forefront of endeavours to transform the way services are delivered for young children and their families. We can take much pride in the fact that there are over 3,000 centres still up and running in England, and tens of thousands of families benefiting from Flying Start in Wales.

Yet more can be done to ensure that they deliver to all those in need of their services, particularly 'hard to reach' groups. For many people, engaging with statutory bodies and agencies is problematic. To them, state or local authority run organisations can seem intimidating, remote and make little or no connection with them at a personal level.

Giving communities a sense of ownership and involvement over Sure Start services can play a significant role in either addressing 'us and them' attitudes or simple alienation from authority. We welcome the way in which this has been addressed through the development of a 'community mutual' Sure Start centre at Millmead in Kent.

Through involving local residents in its membership structures, the centre has been able to design services around the needs of its users, as well as developing increased satisfaction, support and loyalty. Community ownership can help remove barriers and develop trust, so that the organisation is accessible to people who otherwise would be less likely to use the services.

The UK and devolved Governments should recognise the advantages of the 'community mutual' model for Sure Start, and work to ensure the development of the model, both in the provision of new centres and the conversion of existing ones. In particular, they should:

- Create a national body to support the development of new Sure Start/Flying Start Mutuals, based on the successful 'Supporters Direct' Model.
- Encourage local authorities to consider converting existing Sure Start/Flying Start centres to the 'community mutual' model, as well as using it as a model for the provision of new services.

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Case Study – Millmead Community Mutual

SureStart Millmead was established as a Community Mutual in April 2005. The programme started in 2001 and developed a model that values the views of parents and children. Parents were included in all aspects of the programme, from being on interview panels for the recruitment of the large team, to being members of the Management Board and being active on the Parent Focus Group.

There are many examples of how the Community Mutual has helped local residents. These include the provision of outreach home visits by community workers where parents are befriended and supported to access the many services available in the new purpose-built Children's Centre. Childcare is provided free of charge to parents attending programmes in the centre. The Community Café provides a focus for local

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parents and children to get together on an informal basis to support each other and it also helps develop a sense of community in the area.

Some local parents were recruited to work as community workers, which not only helped with job opportunities in an area of North Kent with very high unemployment rates but also enabled the establishment of vital links into the county. Over time, the programme considered the models of governance available. It was important to the programme to have a model that ensured the continued involvement of parents in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. It was agreed that they would incorporate as a Community Mutual, as this model would enable the continued engagement of parents and the building-up of trust in a community that had a history of being “atomistic” and “on the edge”.

The programme emphasised the importance of working with parents and children. Having local parents as part of the integrated team, they were able to use their knowledge and experience of the area to tailor the services that were needed in the community. They were also able to develop a model of working where we expected change and improvements in local service delivery and outcomes for children and families.

The Community Mutual model has made a difference as it enables:

- A local programme to operate in ways that made sense and is meaningful to local residents.
- A greater emphasis on adult education programmes for parents who lack self-esteem and self-confidence.
- The continued delivery of better services in the local community.
- New models of working where staff, parents and children all work together to improve outcomes for children and families.
- The provision of tailored services for parents experiencing domestic violence, mental health problems and other difficulties.
- Membership of the Community Mutual leads to cost reductions in activities such as the summer family trip, use of the Community café and other events.

The Community Mutual has given Millmead residents ownership and involvement in the centre. It has provided a sceptical community that lacked confidence in traditional statutory service provision a new model of engagement that works and has helped to improve outcomes for children and families.

Source: Millmead Children’s Centre, www.surestartmillmead.org.uk

The Co-operative Party

The Co-operative Party is the Party of social justice.

We believe that people will achieve more by working together than they can by working alone. We support the efforts of those who seek success through that co-operative endeavour.

We believe that the only way to create a just and fair society is through power being spread evenly throughout society, and not arbitrarily based on wealth, class, gender or race.

We work to promote co-operatives and all forms of mutual organisation.

We work in partnership with the Labour Party as its sister party to achieve these ends.

In addition to hundreds of Labour and Co-operative Councillors across England, Scotland and Wales, there are currently 32 Labour/Co-operative MPs, and members in the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and the House of Lords.