

Theme: Trade Unions and Co-operatives

Title: Co-operatives, trade unions and decent work: learning and working together.

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Abstract

Trade unions are facing tough choices about how to respond to the changing public sector and new models of service delivery; for example how to engage with co-operative schools, councils and mutuals in a deregulating landscape. Formal agreements and statements of joint principles between trade unions, the TUC and representatives of the co-operative and mutual sectors (2011), commit to collective bargaining and decent work but unions are understandably concerned about engaging in what many view as an accommodation with neo-liberal restructuring in the context of public sector cuts. Despite unions negotiating TUPE terms and conditions successfully in most co-operative and mutual workplaces, the emergence of co-operative schools for one education union officer, 'feels like privatisation by the good guys.'

The issue is further problematised in the UK by the rise of the 'phoney co-op', the reputational damage done to the 'co-operative brand' through recent negative publicity and the ideological appropriation of co-operation and mutualism by the political right.

Yet the co-operative and trade union movements share common roots and values and whilst the 'fallout' from the current phase of restructuring is politically challenging, damaging to many service users and sometimes elusive in terms of decent work, a further discourse raises the possibility that co-operatives, mutuals and collective entrepreneurship have the potential to empower workers and deliver greater workplace democracy.

The challenges and opportunities of working together around effective member engagement, organising and values driven 'decent' work are the subject of this paper. We take a case study approach to one sector - education - with one trade union, NASUWT and explore how the tensions between privatisation, mutualism and decent work might be mitigated, or not, by the formal agreements and the co-operative values and principles framework. We also 'test' effectiveness by including the views of teachers on the 'co-operativeness' of their schools. Additionally as both unions and co-operatives seek renewal and fresh thinking on their impact and future strategies, we consider if this refreshed relationship might be a 'moment' for co-operatives and trade unions to contribute to re-shaping a troubled state as well as their mutual relations.

1. Introduction

This paper considers how one large UK education trade union, NASUWT, has responded to the ‘rolling back of the state’ by engaging with the co-operative school model and developing, along with the Trade Union Congress (TUC), the School Co-operative Society (SCS) and other UK education trade unions, a *National Agreement and Statement of Joint Principles* on co-operative schools and decent work – an initiative fostered by the Co-operative College, Manchester in 2013.

We begin by describing the nature and rationale for the agreement by outlining the changing educational policy context in the UK and the issues this has raised for teachers, the education trade unions and the co-operative movement.¹ Next, we describe the responses of key actors – co-operative educators and trade unions – as they confront, respond to and manage these policy changes.

We go on to consider and reflect on the experiences of learning and working together within this new policy terrain by discussing opportunities and challenges but also whether the co-operative schools we survey appear to promote a decent work agenda for teachers – one rationale behind joint, mutual support by unions for co-operative schools. Finally we assess this ‘work in progress’ by considering the co-operative school project to date and how unions and co-operatives might continue to strengthen the ‘values and principles’ driven school.

We have captured the ‘lived’ experience of those actors affected by, or responsible for, the agreement by interviewing representatives from NASUWT, the Co-operative College, the TUC and teachers in one-to-one interviews and an online survey across 10 co-operative schools which garnered 62 replies. It is important to note that these schools were randomly selected from the co-operative schools database held at the Co-operative College and that respondents hold a range of education trade union affiliations or none.

¹ By co-operative ‘movement’ we mean the global economic and social movement, its members and its representatives.

2. Education in the Changing UK State

The transformation of the UK state has accelerated since the financial crisis of 2008. Whilst some commentators conclude that the pace of 'reform' has quickened because of the failure of neo-liberal capitalism and the financial sector in particular, (Blyth 2015), others see recent policy by successive UK governments as an ideological attack to privatise and dismantle the welfare state and the provision of public services (Owen 2015, Kotz 2015). Both scenarios resonate with us but one thing is clear. Regardless of causation, the architecture of 'austerity' has empowered the UK government to make sweeping changes to the state through massive cuts in public spending (O'Hara 2015).

Yet the disruption to the post 1945 settlement has been underway for some time (Gall et al 2013). For example hostile political and legislative action against trade unions has been enacted since the 1970s and a growing disenchantment with the political system has resulted in a democratic deficit and an apparent lack of loyalty towards the public sector and local government amongst the UK electorate (Norris 2011). Free market and anti-state rhetoric has thus contributed towards creating a hospitable environment in which to augment radical change and shift the 'balance of power' from the public to the private sector. Education has been one of the sectors in the frontline (Davidge, Facer & Schostak 2015).

The UK 1988 Education Reform Act introduced by the Conservative Government made significant changes to the existing education system and fundamentally created a 'market', with schools competing with each other for 'customers' (pupils). A new National Curriculum made it compulsory for schools, from primary to 6th Form, to teach a national syllabus rather than schools deciding what that syllabus should be. All examinations for young people from the age of 7 are now assessed on a national basis with the 'performance' results shown in league tables. Critically the Act enabled schools, if enough of their pupils' parents agreed, to opt out of local government control and become grant maintained, with funding received directly from central government (Bartlett and Burton 2012).

The incoming 1997 Labour government did little to turn this tide and was the first political party to raise the idea of Academies in 2000 (Bartlett and Burton 2012). However the coalition sponsored Academies Act, 2010, loosened the ties with local authorities even further by encouraging schools in England to become Academies - still publicly funded (though often sponsored by businesses, charities and other schools) - but now outside of the control of the

local education authority. This move gave schools a vastly increased autonomy over setting teachers' terms and conditions and devising curriculum. Most recently the Education and Adoption Bill, (2015), is designed to speed up academisation and/or the privatisation of state funded schools by making so called 'coasting' schools (deemed 'failing' in the Bill) 'eligible for intervention' and forced to become sponsored Academies. ²

Such developments alarm both educationalists and education trade unions on a number of levels. For example, the most recent 2015 Act offers no consultative arrangements on proposed academisation or the nature of sponsorship with parents or teachers, giving decision making powers to the Secretary of State and new, unelected (non-local) Regional Schools Commissioners instead. The only recourse for dissatisfied parents will be the private bodies who will run the schools or the Secretary of State.

Likewise the rationale for academisation is premised on the argument that sponsored academies perform better than maintained schools and are more 'successful' than a 'top-down' state model. Yet although there have been some notable successes, a growing body of evidence challenges these claims. For example a recent Education Select Committee's report (2015) found that: *"Academisation is not always successful nor is it the only proven alternative for a struggling school"* (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015 p4).

Thus there is a concern that non-local authority schools may lack the culture, political will or infrastructure to deal with students who are not 'high academic achievers' who may cause the ratings of schools to suffer or that such schools will fail to engage with the learning needs of those who live in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods (Benn 2011).

Finally many education professionals and education trade unions whilst critical of some weaknesses within the state system such as inflexibility and under-resourcing, are unconvinced that the motive for this policy change necessarily relates to children's holistic education or school improvement. For critics, it is the profit motive underpinning the privatisation of the system that is the main driver and this has been compounded by the undermining of teacher's professionalism and terms and conditions as (cheaper) Non-

² <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7232>

Qualified Teachers increasingly replace the qualified professional in the classroom (Ball, 2013).

It is within the context of these radical policy changes that Co-operative Trust schools and Academies have emerged. Whilst education has always been at the heart of the co-operative movement - identified as the 'Fifth Principle' but rooted deep in the thinking of the Rochdale Pioneers (Davidge, Facer & Schostak 2015) – such schools, though found in other parts of the world, have not previously existed in the UK. Now there are 850 Trusts and Academies. (SCS, 2015). This growth originated from a project initiated by the Co-operative Group and Co-operative College in 2004 which established a network of eight and then twelve Co-operative Business and Enterprise Specialist Colleges. The network developed a curriculum, pedagogy, learning materials and culture informed by the ICA International Co-operative Values and Principles. By 2007 a number of these schools, along with the Co-operative College, began to look at different models of governance and an important landmark was when the Co-operative College devised a Co-operative Trust Model, leading to the first co-operative trust school being opened at Reddish Vale, Stockport, in 2008.

Co-operative schools (both Trusts and Academies) are built upon a governance ethos based on co-operative values and principles with a key commitment that all stakeholders (e.g. staff, parents, unions, learners and the community) will have a guaranteed say in their school and how it operates. Co-operative schools also use a range of legal frameworks to build democratic elements into their governance structures in an effort to ensure that schools serve the needs of their community by reflecting local needs and interests. The model is thus a membership based model with people from the stakeholder groups becoming members of the 'educational co-operative' for the school or cluster of schools. The interest in co-operative schools prompted the Co-operative College to set up the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) as the apex body (and network) of the educational co-operative sector across the UK. The national agreement between SCS, the TUC and education unions (discussed further below) was one response that developed alongside this initiative.

2. Co-operatives and Education Trade Unions within a Changing State

Both trade unions and the co-operative movement have experienced massive and damaging systemic shocks during recent decades. UK trade unions, because of industrial and sectoral restructuring, have seen a numerical decline as well as a reduction in density (Gall, Wilkinson & Hurd 2013). The shift to services and 'white collar' unionism has to some extent staggered the decline and there is a trade union renewal discourse underway (Fairbrother and Yates, 2003). However the decline of trade union power coupled with ongoing restrictive legislation

has impacted powerfully on the agenda-setting role of unions. This has been particularly noticeable in education where educational reform has undermined one of the primary roles of the education unions who traditionally acted as the conduit through which teachers' concerns about the conditions of teaching reached the attention of policy makers (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011, EI, 2013 and Woodin 2015).

Likewise the UK Co-operative Bank and Group scandals alongside the loss of retail market share has weakened the traditional co-operative movement. Whilst co-operatives more generally are enjoying recent 'rude' health in terms of economic resilience since the 2007 crash (Co-operatives UK, 2015) the movement overall has found itself reputationally and democratically damaged because of the spin out from internal mis-governance (Kelly Report 2014). Equally the consumer route taken by the UK movement historically has been, some would argue, at the expense of the member engagement, values and principles focus to be found in the wider co-operative movement. (Parker & Cheney, 2013)

These organisational, political and domestic tensions are framed by the global restructuring of labour markets and the pervasiveness of a neo-liberal ideology which is resulting in precarious work – a tendency impacting on work everywhere including within the education sector (Wilson & Ebert 2013). Yet precariousness is not simply a narrow conception (i.e. employment insecurity in relation to employment tenure) but has wider impacts such as deteriorating labour market conditions and employment, social and political relations (Berrington et al, 2014). This deeper understanding of precarity helps us to appreciate how 'a race to the bottom' is challenging 'decent work' in all workplaces as well as the culture and wider expectations of work and working life. For example one of the reasons why education trade unions are so committed to defending existing terms and conditions is that two tier staffing arrangements in schools are increasingly commonplace. For some employees existing terms and conditions continue to apply but a second 'layer' of newly appointed staff can find themselves on less favourable pay and conditions, doing the same job, in the same workplace. (NASUWT 2015).

3. Challenges and Opportunities

Education and associated trade unions in the UK have a historical commitment to public sector education delivered through local authorities. The 1944 Education Act committed local authorities to a statutory system of public education which covered primary, secondary and further education alongside various levels of engagement with minority alternatives such as

independent/private and grant maintained education. The Local Authority (state) model has therefore played a dominant role in facilitating consistent and aspirational education for all children including those previously excluded by a leaving age of 14 for the last 70 years. Local authorities had close working relationships with education trade unions through their education departments - a significant change from the pre-war period when teachers and schools went relatively unregulated (Bassey2005). The historically close synergies between the co-operative movement and organised labour is likely to find expression in a similar loyalty to state rather than private education and for many co-operators as well as trade unionists, these changes to state education are deeply concerning.

However it is also possible to see the development of co-operative schools (in the context of the neo-liberal state) as a tension between *'centralisation and conservatism on the one hand and autonomy and diversity on the other'* (Woodin p 4). Indeed co-operative educators and a growing number of trade unions see the co-operative model not only as an alternative to the outright privatisation of schools but also as a model rich with possibilities in terms of new ways of 'doing education'. In the words of one of our respondents:

I suppose we thought that schools would always be run in the way that they have been. As far as I am concerned, it's public sector first, it always will be. But I have seen examples of where schools have been turned round with a great Headteacher committed to co-operation, where the attitude in the school has really improved. Maybe they would have turned it round anyway but there is definitely a change. One thing has been really bringing parents and local community in, that has been good for everyone. ... In the classroom the focus on co-operation has been really enlightening because we have seen the behavior improve. Really good state schools do this O know but students seem to like the idea of the co-operative way of going about things. It's early days but maybe if there is going to have to be change in schools, this is the way to do it. (Teacher, aged 50)

The co-operative ethos that can be inculcated in co-operative schools is values driven, privileging co-operation over competition in attitudes, organisation and behaviours. As Woodin notes, it is not that the values of self-help, caring for others and so on are absent in non-co-operative schools but rather that in the co-operative school they are formally articulated and explicit and situated within an international framework of values and principles (Woodin, 2015). This co-operative ethos within co-operative schools can be

developed through an approach to pedagogy and curriculum which offers teachers opportunities to innovate within the classroom and young people opportunities to develop social, character and life skills which are not always easily measurable and emphasised in other schools but which co-operative, holistic and for life (Brockington, 2015). A membership based governance model also offers potential in terms of engaging with multi-stakeholders and responding to local needs. Finally, although there are concerns about what has been termed 'contrived collegiality' (Jones, 2015) the model offers a rich experience amongst teachers within and between co-operative schools. Decent work, from trade union agreed terms and conditions to professional development, should characterize the co-operative school.

4. Responses of Actors

So how have teaching unions working with co-operative schools addressed these changes to ensure decent work for teachers? How have both the co-operative movement and the education unions sought to ensure a robust and authentic model for co-operative schools? An early response has been to produce two documents; a set of good practice guidelines and an agreement.

The first, *Public Services, Co-operatives and Mutuals: best practice guidance*, reflects discussions between the TUC and Co-operatives UK, the umbrella body for co-operatives. Whilst both parties commit first and foremost to public services delivered by the public sector, it was agreed that where mutuals and co-operatives do become involved in service delivery, a set of principles which draw upon the public sector ethos and the internationally agreed International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) values and principles needs to guide the process. The guidance pays particular attention to engaging and consulting workforces prior to conversion, building governance models to ensure democratic participation by all stakeholders, addressing issues around the commissioning of services and procurement, the safeguarding of public assets and ensuring employment standards. Although this is guidance only, (and therefore voluntary) the parties agree that:

'Co-operatives and mutuals will work with all recognised trade unions to develop and agree arrangements for recognition status, collective bargaining arrangements and facility time that reflect the new entity and relationship'. (P9)

The second agreement, and the one that is the focus of this paper is the *National Agreement and Statement of Joint Principles* (2013) which was signed by the Schools Co-operative Society, the Co-operative College, the Trade Unions Congress and key UK trade unions. The agreement was reached following a series of meetings facilitated by the TUC. The trade unions

signing the agreement were the unions for teaching staff, the ATL, NASUWT and the NUT, and the unions for school support staff, the GMB, UNISON and Unite.

Both of these initiatives are concerned to ensure that employees who are transferred from local authority schools to new co-operative schools, trusts and academies are TUPE'd³ across to the new arrangements. As with the guidance publication, the agreement also draw upon the core *principles* and *values*, adopted by the ICA in 1995 by which the world's co-operative movement strives to abide. Both the position paper and formal agreement make explicit reference to ILO Recommendation 193 which relates to the role of co-operatives in decent work.

The mechanism for agreed working for the signatories is the National Joint Forum which meets three times a year with an aim to produce national policies which can be implemented through awareness raising and training within schools. Model agreements can cover issues such as terms and conditions of employment, pay structures, pensions, employment policies and procedures, staff training and continuing professional development as well as trade union access and facility time issues. Overall, the document is based around seeking a mutual agreement for decent work within co-operative schools and although this may appear straightforward, its actual implementation, in the experiences of the teaching unions can be frustrating – especially in terms of securing facility time for unions.

Other initiatives have been devised which are intended to embed the co-operative ethos in schools. For example mechanisms such as the Co-operative Identity Mark whereby schools are authenticated through a badging scheme have been developed by the Co-operative College with schools voluntarily applying to have their 'co-operativeness' tested according to an agreed set of values and principles criteria. The College has also encouraged training on embedding co-operativeness, with a focus on values and principles, within co-operative schools.

TUPE refers to the "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006" as amended by the "Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014". The TUPE rules apply to organisations of all sizes and protect employees' rights when the organisation or service they work for transfers to a new employer

³ <http://ica.coop/en/media/news/young-leaders-co-operate-transform-society>

5. Experiencing the Process

The Co-operative College and SCS

There are numerous challenges associated with securing universal best practice in the co-operative schools sector. Whilst both the Co-operative College and SCS share a full and robust commitment to working with schools and trade unions to foster a widespread and enduring commitment to the joint agreement, there are challenges. A growing literature demonstrates that co-operative good practice is uneven across the co-operative schools sector (Woodin, 2015, Davidge, 2013).

Some of the mechanisms to ensure co-operativeness in place are also problematic. Firstly the agreement is voluntary and the independent governance arrangements of schools and academy trusts means that whilst co-operative schools are encouraged to pay due regard to the agreement, they are not bound by it. This creates difficulties for the College, SCS and the education trade unions.

Secondly, there are clear indications that whilst there is significant good practice amongst co-operative schools, the roll out is uneven and that work needs to be done to embed the co-operative ideal into the model much 'deeper' than is currently the case. (Woodin 2012) Many schools, responding to the demands of the Ofsted framework and continuously evolving government policy struggle to take the 'broad and long view' on how to make their school more co-operative. The fears associated with, for example, school league table positioning and other indicators can dominate other considerations such as pursuing a decent work agenda for teachers or stimulating a more authentic engagement with co-operative practices, processes and cultures within schools. One commentator has suggested that co-operative schools need to 'get it' i.e. the co-operative project (Davidge 2013), but capacity building initiatives need to continuously reflect on and innovate around the cash strapped realities of co-operative schools operating within a neo-liberal education framework.

A third factor is that take up of the Co-operative Identity Mark is small. Again, this is a voluntary activity and whilst those schools that do apply for the Mark demonstrate excellence in terms of co-operativeness, more needs to be done to convince schools of the need for the Mark and the enhanced reputation that acquiring the Mark would bring. This means continuing to ensure a robust measurement of co-operativeness by the Co-operative College and SCS and building on and developing the initiative.

Thirdly, fear of privatisation may well have encouraged some schools to be uncritical and unreflective in terms of understanding the implications of becoming a co-operative school. This is a very particular legal identity as well as one bound by custom, practice and international values and principles. More needs to be done to ensure that schools who are or who plan to become Co-operative Schools are aware of their responsibilities.

Fourthly, further robust research needs to be conducted on schools with a critical and reflective lens which 'tests' the co-operative difference. The 'threat of mass privatisation' resulted, many would say, in a 'race for growth' from the Co-operative Colleges side (to ensure a critical mass to influence policy makers) and a 'race for conversion' amongst many schools wishing to avoid, in the words of one Head Teacher, "being gobbled up by someone like McDonalds". This means that the College and SCS (along with schools and trade unions) need to continuously reflect on how to ensure and test the authenticity and robustness of co-operative identity, values and principles in co—operative schools.

These concerns and challenges are ones that have impacted on the experience of the Co-operative College and SCS in the last few years.

The NASUWT's approach

Following the Coalition Government's decision to accelerate the academies and free schools policy, teacher trade unions, including the NASUWT, were left with a difficult policy decision to make, namely how to react to the rapidity of the conversion process. The approach under the Labour Government by the NASUWT had been one primarily of opposition to the process of academisation, but also of pragmatism in continuing to organise and recruit members. The opposition to the academies policy resulted from a principled view over concerns that democratic oversight was being removed from the system and that there would be a removal of national structures including nationally bargained for pay, terms and conditions.

Consequently, once the Academies and Free Schools Act was given Royal Assent, the trade union response continued to be largely one of opposition whilst continuing to deal with the organising agenda. The key concern was with the forced academisation process that converted schools to academy status without consultation, and without the direct consent of the stakeholders within the school. The teacher trade union response was not, however, uniform.

NASUWT had long established a position of pragmatically dealing with the political situation at the time, reaching its zenith with the work that had been carried out with the Government

and employers, in social partnership between 2003 to 2010, arguing that the gains for teachers and school leaders were significant enough to allow for the process to continue.

Additionally, the NASUWT recognised the issues and challenges that there had been under Local Management of Schools (LMS) and that not all local authorities had been uniformly supportive when overseeing schools provision. NASUWT also argued that private involvement in public education could be appropriate provided that key principles were adhered to (as seen in the NASUWT publication '*The Private Sector and State Education*').

Therefore the NASUWT continued to seek new solutions for teachers using key principles in the new political context, seeking out meetings and agreements with organisations that might, under the new structures:

- I. Result in better standards for all users of the public service
- II. Lead to increased burdens on, and risks for, the public purse in the short, medium or long-term
- III. Compromise the pay and conditions of public service workers
- IV. Adversely affect equality, lead to discrimination or undermine work to promote wider social cohesion
- V. Result in problems for trade unions in terms of recognition and legitimate access in support of members
- VI. Inhibit democratic participation and undermine or remove accountability

The NASUWT took account of the work that UNISON had undertaken seeking a series of agreements with organisations including with the Co-operative College and the Schools Co-operative Society to further the interests of their members. Following negotiations and discussions with the SCS and the Co-operative College, the NASUWT National Executive approved an agreement with both parties that sought not only to recognise trade unions but to actively promote the co-operative agenda (as discussed above). The agreement was followed by the adoption of a report by their Annual Conference in 2013, *Maintaining World Class Schools*, in which the NASUWT stated that the Government should be '*promoting a 'co-operative revolution' in public education*'.

Since the agreement, the NASUWT and its members has been active in promoting the co-operative schools process as an alternative to the academisation process, and as a way of genuinely ensuring that there is not a democratic deficit in schools.

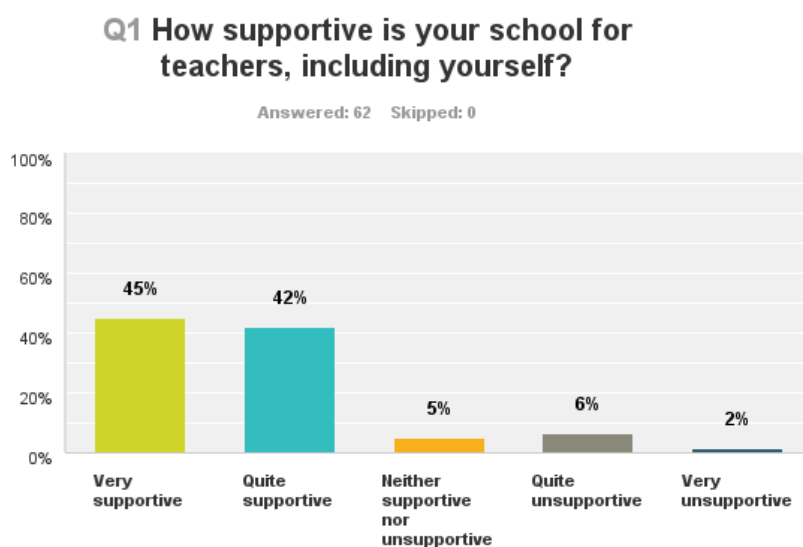
Subsequently, NASUWT representatives have, in many cases, pressed the co-operative alternative at a policy-making level, including with Government and opposition parties. The NASUWT has also been a participant in TUC negotiations with Co-operatives UK and was instrumental in developing the agreement with the TUC and all education unions.

At the time of writing, the NASUWT policy position is one of celebrating the success that there has been in transforming the schools landscape, although the Union believes that the next part of the process of engagement must involve a genuine democratisation of the co-operative schools that are currently operating in order to ensure that they are genuinely co-operative in nature.

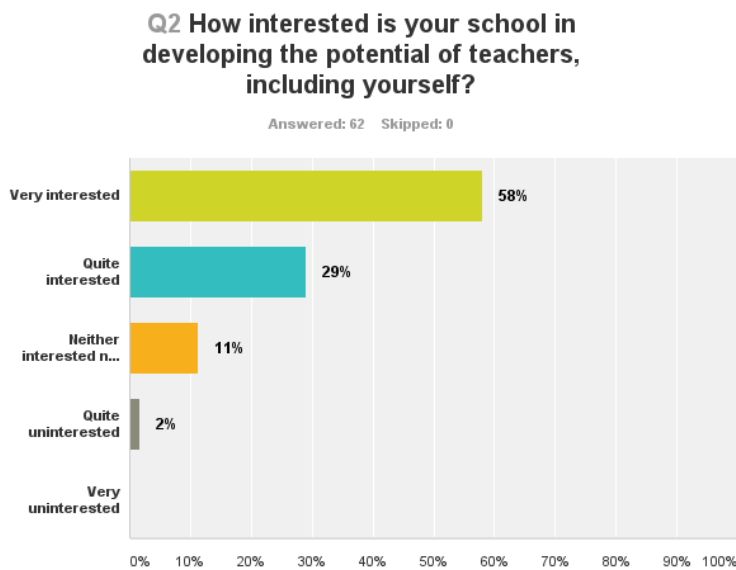
Teachers in Co-operative Schools

In August and September 2015, our survey examined the views of teachers and school leaders on the co-operative nature of the schools in which they teach. Primarily this survey was intended as an initial attempt to ascertain whether 'co-operativeness' had become embedded.

The first question was developed in order to discover if teachers felt that their schools was supportive of them and other teachers. This was based on the proposition that a co-operative school should be seen to be supportive by all of the stakeholders within the school. The survey found that the vast majority of teachers (87%) stated that their school was supportive, with 45% stating that it was very supportive and 42% quite supportive. Only 8% stated that they were not supported in their schools. This would be a concern for any school but particularly a co-operative school unless appropriate systems are in place within that school to help teachers to access support.



Teachers were then asked about whether the school was interested in developing their potential and the potential of other teachers. This question was asked as it was felt that it was important to see whether there was a desire by schools to understand and develop teachers, a key aspect of ensuring that the school has embedded co-operative values. 94% stated that the school was interested in developing teachers, with 58% stating that it was very interested and 29% quite interested. Only 2% (1 teacher) said that the school was uninterested in their potential, suggesting that the overwhelming majority of schools in which the teachers were teaching understood this principle.

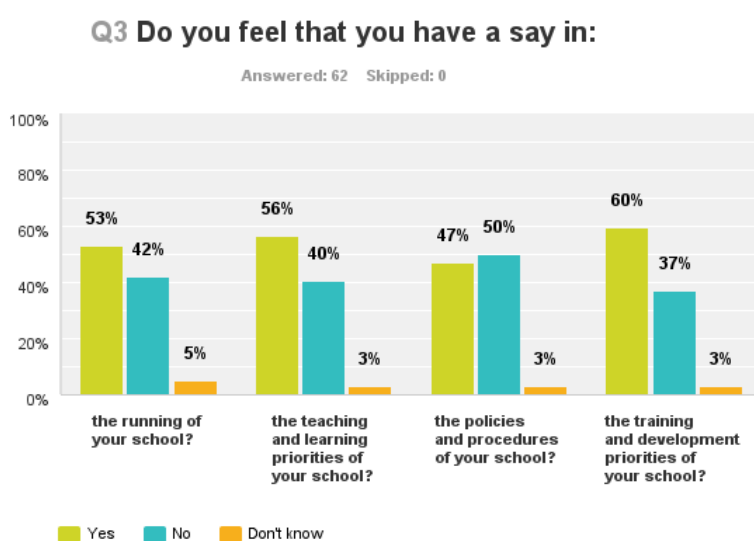


Additionally, teachers were asked whether they felt that they had a say in the running of the school as this is an important principle of becoming a co-operative, namely that all stakeholders feel that they have this say. 53% of teachers stated that they did have a say but 43% said that they did not, suggesting that this is an area to be explored further in order establish why so many teachers do not feel that they have a say.

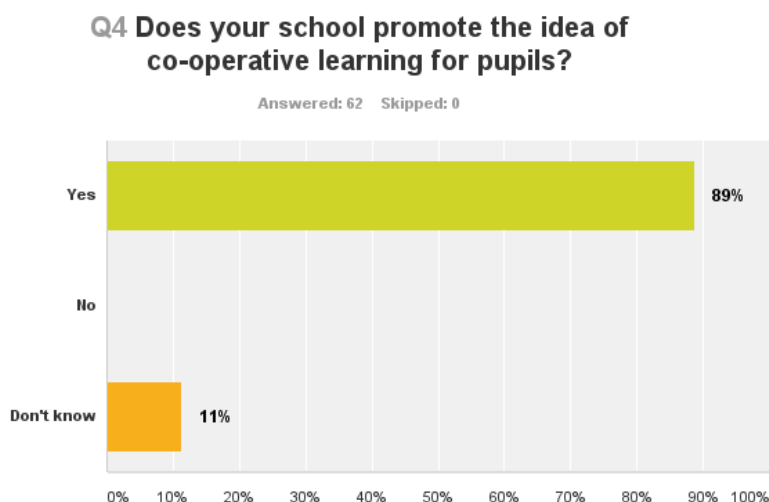
Teachers were also asked whether they have a say in the teaching and learning priorities of their school in order to establish if both a sense of co-operation was evident in the teaching and learning priorities set within a school and to see how far professional autonomy was understood. 56% said that they did have a say and 40% said that they did not. Although the majority of teachers feel that they have a say in the teaching and learning priorities of their school, it is surprising that so many teachers do not feel that they have the type of professional autonomy one would expect for any teacher, but particularly for a teacher in a co-operative school.

In order to establish whether teachers have autonomy as practitioners, the survey then explored whether teachers felt that they had a say in the policies and procedures of their schools. 47% stated that they did and 50% said that they did not, therefore, the majority of teachers either did not have a say in policies and procedures or did not know whether they had a say in these policies and procedures.

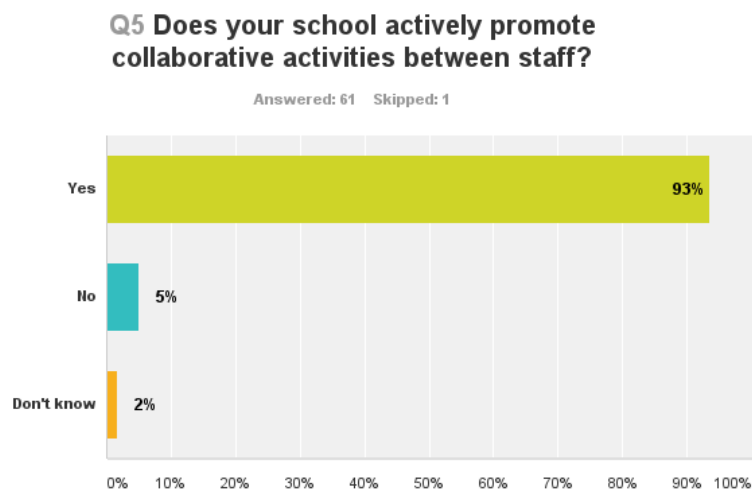
Finally, in a set of questions about whether individual teachers felt that they had an impact on their schools, they were asked whether they felt that they had a say in the training and development priorities of their school. The majority of teachers (60%) did feel that they had a say, although a considerable minority (37%) did not.



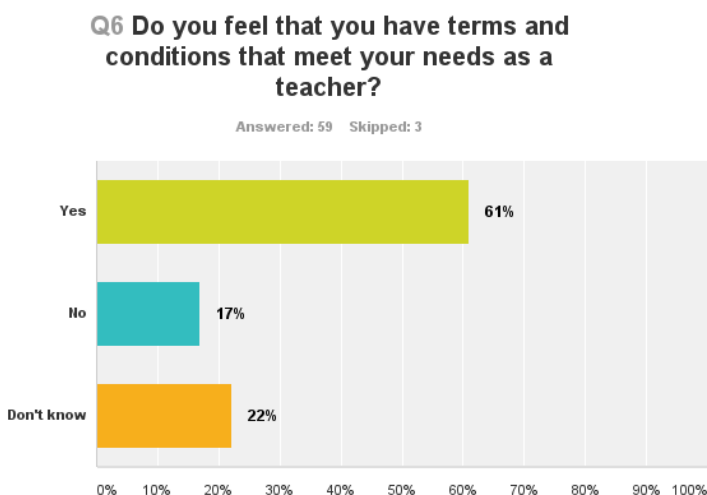
To examine the impact of the co-operative approach on lessons, and therefore on pupils, the survey asked teachers whether their school promoted the idea of co-operative learning in the classroom. 89% said that they did and no teachers said that they did not, suggesting the schools are well on their way to developing a co-operative curriculum.



Furthermore, it was clear that when teachers were asked whether their school actively promoted collaborative activities between staff, the vast majority did, as 93% stated that this was the case and only 5% stated that they did not.



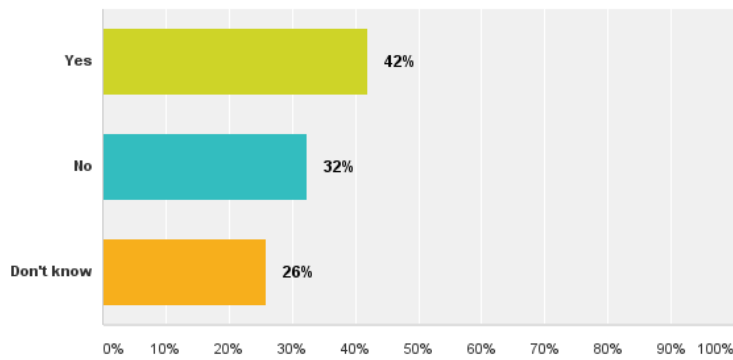
In order to establish whether the schools were seeking to ensure that teachers had the appropriate terms and conditions to enable them to carry out their jobs effectively, teachers were asked whether they felt that they had terms and conditions that met their needs as teachers. 61% said that they did, although 17% said that they did not.



The last set of questions were centered trying to gain an understanding about whether the respondents really liked working for their school. Teachers were asked therefore whether they saw themselves working in their school in five years' time. 42% said that they did, 32% said that they did not. This may suggest that a majority of teachers are not altogether happy with their experiences in their school but could, conversely, be as a result of the success of a school if they feel developed and wish to move on.

Q7 Do you see yourself working in your school in five years' time?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0

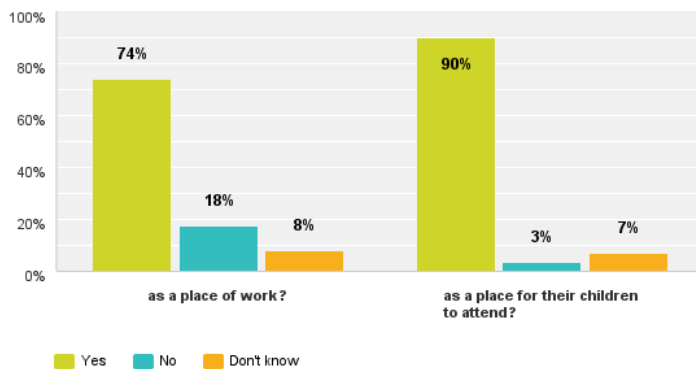


Teachers were also asked whether they would recommend their school to a friend as a place of work. Almost three-quarters (74%) said that they would, although 18% said that they would not. This would suggest that the vast majority of teachers see their school as a good place to work.

Finally, teachers were asked whether they would recommend their school to a friend as a place for their children to attend. Our aim here was to understand if teachers feel that the school in which they teach is fundamentally a good school for pupils. 90% said that they would and only 3% said that they would not.

Q8 Would you recommend your school to a friend:

Answered: 62 Skipped: 0



Teachers were asked to make any comments as a result of completing the survey. One said:

"The Co-operative model is a perfect way to run a school. It is based around principles, is collaborative and has the needs of stakeholders at its core".

However for another, commenting on the survey and the co-operativeness of their school was more problematic:

I am part time which has many issues in relation to the questions you ask such as 'meeting my needs as a teacher' as I cannot enter in to dialogue with the school in quite the same way as a full time member of staff. It is not easy to attend CPD, meetings and participate in the same way as FT colleagues. One's voice and influence is also compromised and matters often take time to be dealt with.

The survey demonstrated that co-operative learning and the co-operative ethos are clearly embedded in the schools from which teachers responded. However, the survey also showed that there is a disconnect between the general sense of co-operation and the feeling that teachers are supported developmentally compared to whether teachers feel that they are generally able to engage in the processes. This would suggest that there is more for schools to do in embedding this co-operative effect in schools.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this article has been to 'begin' the conversation about whether or not co-operative schools can help to deliver a 'decent work' agenda for teachers which reflects the issues outlined in ILO Recommendation 193, Promoting Co-operatives. We have also explored how education trade unions and co-operative educators have sought to embed authentic co-operativeness in schools. Although the focus of this article has not been on the success or otherwise of the co-operative schools sector in general, we maintain that a commitment to the ILO decent work agenda goes hand-in hand with co-operative authenticity, identity and success.

Our short survey indicates that the teachers who responded proved to be reasonably satisfied with their schools and work environments but that a great deal more needs to be done.

Identity and capacity building around co-operative values and principles is clearly vital and SCS schools should be imaginative in developing peer support and mentoring networks as well as other support initiatives focused on co-operative teachers. Stronger networks of co-operative teachers can also make schools more accountable and active in terms of facilitating co-operative and decent work environments.

The Co-operative badging initiative (the Mark) could be linked to professional development so that it is viewed as an award of high standing in both schools and for individuals who meet the requirements of Co-operative Mark.

One of the great and enduring strengths of the co-operative movement is its international nature as well as ICA Principle 6: co-operation amongst co-operatives. Further development work can be done around building co-operative networks so that there is greater synergy and collaboration between co-operative schools and support co-operatives.

Finally, co-operative schools need to become excellent schools which in turn will convince parents, the teaching profession and organised labour and others that co-operative schools are not simply 'privatisation by the good guys' but vibrant, democratic working environments which are inclusive, accountable and which offer different ways of 'doing' both work and learning. We would argue that in working together, the co-operative and trade union movement can build and strengthen this alternative to the privatisation agenda.

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