



Society for Educational Studies

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Title: **Evaluating co-operative schools – a pilot project**

‘Evaluating co-operative schools – a pilot project’

Tom Woodin, Institute of Education

Summary of project

This pilot study aimed to outline and evaluate the nature and extent of co-operative ideas in education. It paid particular attention to mutual structures, co-operative curriculum and pedagogy, and the role of co-operative values and ethos within schools. It assessed how co-operative schools are handling wider tensions and policy issues. Specifically the project addressed the following questions

- What is the scale and nature of the development of co-operative schools?
- What are the motivations involved in co-operative partnerships and education?
- What are the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in these developments?
- What are the wider implications for our understanding of education policy, especially in relation to ‘privatisation’?
- What are the key questions for further research?

Activities

The following have been completed:

- 2 days background reading.
- 8 days of school visits including a number of visits to Brigshaw Trust in Leeds, Lipson Community College in Plymouth, St Clere’s School in Thurrock, Sutherland School in Telford and Sir Thomas Boughey in Stoke on Trent; and Forest Gate Community School in London. Recordings were made and transcribed.
- 3 days of visits to sponsors and facilitators: Co-operative Group, Co-operative College and meetings with various facilitators/development staff, and with ASDAN.
- 3 days writing and dissemination – this has led to a number of writing activities.

Outputs

The research has provided fascinating evidence on the ways in which schools are interpreting and reacting to contemporary education policies. More material than expected has been collected and analysis is still on-going. A number of actual and projected outputs can already be identified, many of them as a result of this funding:

- An article for *Forum*:
Tom Woodin (2012) ‘Co-operative schools: building communities in the twenty first century’, *Forum*, 54, 2, 327-339
- I am currently working on a further academic and critical article to be submitted to the *British Journal of Educational Studies*.
- I am planning to jointly edit a special edition of *Forum* in 2013.
- I am currently submitting a proposal to Routledge for an edited book on the topic of co-operation and education.
- I have provided evidence on my research for a briefing paper for the Department for Education and Skills of the Welsh Government.

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- I contributed to the Labour Party review focusing upon ‘middle tier’ structures, 2012.
- Findings from the research have fed into the seminar series which I organise at the Institute of Education involving academics and a range of educationists.
- Partly as a result of this project I was invited to help organise a major international conference on the role of the co-operative movement in contemporary society, held in July 2012. I gave two presentations at this conference.
- I was invited to speak at a seminar organised by the Centre for Post-14 Innovation and Research, Institute of Education, in December 2011.
- I was invited to contribute to a symposium on ‘Education for Democracy: co-operative problem solving in school and society’ organised by the Forum for Youth Participation and Democracy, University of Cambridge.

Next steps

In addition to the outputs outlined above, I am continuing with this research having established a momentum of activity. I plan to make a number of applications, initially to the European Research Council. A number of further publications and seminars are also planned.

Tom Woodin, September 2012