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Some '*get it*' more than others: cultivating a co-operative ethos in uncertain times

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ABSTRACT This article seeks to explore the dilemmas that schools and their members encounter whilst striving to establish a co-operative culture within an educational landscape contoured by decades of neo-liberal policy 'reform'. In order to (re)consider the construction of democratic subjectivity within contemporary educational discourse, the author has drawn upon ethnographic research recently undertaken in a number of co-operative schools in the North-West of England. Within the article she considers the subjective impacts of co-operative practices in education on the sense of wellbeing and agency of teachers, parents and children, and reflects upon how various identity positions and power relationships are enacted and interpreted within this educational milieu. The article concludes with a critical consideration of the tensions that arise for schools and their members as they endeavour to reconcile the competing diametric demands of co-operation and competition within this nascent terrain of public education.

Introduction

In an age where the free market solution is hailed as the most effective way of organising public resources, the dominance of a 'survival of the fittest' mentality grows ever stronger within the public consciousness. It appears increasingly difficult for schools to resist the inequitable effects of 'Social Darwinism' within public education as generations of people are seduced into thinking that the market solution is *the only solution* for ensuring economic, political, moral and environmental security in times of global crises. This is justified on the basis that 'the invisible hand' can be 'the great equalizer', ostensibly delivering growth through freedom and choice for consumers and a higher standard of living for all. Notwithstanding this, an increasing number of people claim that

co-operative organisation presents a viable alternative to capitalism, especially since it continues to weather the storm of recent global financial crises and therefore proving its resilience as a more ethical, alternative mode of economic organisation (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009). Whether this offers a sustainable alternative political and economic system in its own right, or whether at best it offers an alternative mode of organisation *within* the capitalist system, remains a moot point (Webster et al, 2011). Others argue that, as a prerequisite to ensuring global social justice, there needs to be a revitalisation of democracy within public spaces in order to ensure that the principle of freedom *with* equality can innovate, sustain and include the voices of *all* in response to growing global inequalities (for example, Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Rancière, 1999; Freire, 2004). Despite the presence of a growing body of academics and activists who affirm the urgent need for paradigm change (see Giroux, 2004; Ball, 2008; Fielding & Moss, 2011), hopes for undermining the prominence of competition within educational discourse are eclipsed by fears of surviving the demands of austerity. This article considers the recent rise of a co-operative model of schooling within the England and offers a glimpse of an alternative trajectory within public education when it asks, what happens to democratic subjectivity when competition and co-operation collide within these spaces?

Historical (Fielding & Moss, 2011) and global examples (Wrigley et al, 2012) of democratic alternatives to the traditional institution of 'the school' have provided rich evidence of the radical possibilities for social change in the form of case studies and academic critique. However, the absence of a cohesive platform which allows a multiplicity of voices and contexts to collaborate together and develop a more distinct voice, risks positioning radical models at the fringe of educational reform. This represents a significant challenge for extending democracy within educational contexts. One powerful alliance of partners that is focused upon developing models of education orientated towards social justice is the co-operative schools movement. At present, just over 450 schools in the UK have committed to adopting co-operative values (self-help, self-responsibility, equity, solidarity, openness and honesty, social responsibility and caring for others) within the very heart of their school's ethos (The Co-operative College, 2013). Yet, sustaining a consistent articulation of these values against a backdrop of neo-liberal readings of freedom without equality in education remains an ambiguous exercise (Schostak et al, forthcoming 2014).

What Does it Mean to be a Subject within Current Policy Landscapes?

Despite this challenge, the co-operative model offers the promise of large-scale transformative change. Collaboration with a worldwide movement that engages with over one billion members could establish a powerful alliance, able to unite a critical mass of diverse voices towards a shared educational goal of democracy. Furthermore, capitalising upon co-operative approaches to education that

continue to attract cross-party support via reforms that *claim* to offer greater freedom and autonomy, enhances the scope of this educational model. Given the ubiquitous nature of recent policy reform that positions students and families as active consumers of education, it appears that increasing numbers of schools and families are ultimately faced with a 'Hobson's choice', as the coalition's default position on improving standards and addressing social inequality moves in the direction of 'academisation' at all costs.[1] In view of the growing democratic deficit in a school's choice of governance arrangements, there is an urgent need to interrogate and understand whether an alternative, co-operative model of education can reconstruct the conditions for school members to act and remediate what it means to be a subject within the current policy landscape of 'public' education.

Gert Biesta (2007, 2011) offers a valuable lens with which to view the possibilities and challenges posed for individuals and schools attempting to engender a co-operative ethos as an antidote to the neo-liberal treatment of citizenship as a standalone curriculum subject. His distinction between processes of civic learning that contribute to the reproduction of the existing social order in the form of a 'socialisation' approach and forms of civic learning that contribute to political subjectivity and agency as a form of 'subjectification', offer the possibility to rethink the ontology of democracy within the present educational framework. Furthermore, in his interpretation of what it means to be a democratic subject – which draw upon the ideas of Mouffe (2005) and Rancière (1999) – he proposes that focusing upon opportunities for 'democratic action and democratic 'learning-in-action' (Biesta, 2007, p. 741) may offer a more fruitful journey towards establishing vital spaces for enacting democratic subjectivity.

> The democratic subject is not to be understood as a pre-defined identity that can be simply taught and learned, but has to be understood as emerging again and again in new and different ways through its very engagement with democratic processes and practices. (Biesta, 2011, p. 97)

In a similar vein it can be argued that the essence of co-operation cannot be understood as a singular identity to be 'learned' or 'socialised' within an emerging co-operative school sector, for this risks conceptualising 'the school' and 'the students' situated within these contexts as essentialised categories, and runs counter to the nature of radical democratic praxis. In order to reflect the contingent nature of co-operative schooling, one must also take into account the heterogeneous ways in which members experience what it means to 'be' and to 'speak' as a democratic subject (or not) of a co-operative school. Furthermore, if one takes the recent emergence of a co-operative model of state schooling as a serious opportunity to rupture practices of neo-liberal pedagogy (not merely an alternative vehicle of governance) what are the possibilities here for re-articulating subjectivity through active engagement of co-operative values and practices? For instance, whilst it is necessary to consider the educational value of

experiencing co-operative ownership in terms of developing a 'learnt associational identity' (Woodin, 2011), one must also acknowledge that different voices are constructed and interpreted from a variety of standpoints (Harding, 1993) entangled within complex relations of wider cultural discourse and subjectivities outside of the co-operative frame.

Democracy, Participation and Equality

Anne Phillips (1991, p. 1) urges us not to forget that '[T] he ancient Greeks could conceive of democracy without any qualms about excluding both women and slaves' and makes the point that the relationship between equality and democracy cannot always be taken for granted. Negotiating the meaning of democracy within co-operative governance frameworks presents a similar dilemma for young people who have traditionally been asymmetrically positioned in relation to the 'adult'. Likewise, if we understand democracy as a multifaceted concept and a fundamental value central to 'human flourishing and the conditions under which it can best be fostered' (Fielding & Moss, 2011), then we can begin to gain a sense of how co-operative schools could create a range of conditions for *different* members to experience 'learning to live democratically', within their respective school communities. Fielding and Moss (2011) draw attention to Macmurray's philosophy of community and highlight the importance of the presence of freedom *and* equality as a prerequisite for authentic democratic engagement to flourish:

> Equality and freedom, as constitutive principles of fellowship, condition one another reciprocally. Equality is a condition of freedom in human relations. For if we do not treat each other as equals, we exclude freedom from the relationship. Freedom too, conditions equality. For if there is constraint between us there is fear; and to counter the fear we must seek control over its object, and attempt to subordinate the other person to our own power. Any attempt to achieve freedom without equality, or to achieve equality without freedom, must therefore be self defeating. (Macmurray, in Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 50)

At present, children and young people are excluded from the formal decision-making processes of a 'representative democracy' by prevailing discourses that attribute civic competence and the right to vote in accordance with reaching the age of 18. Moreover, co-operative schools do not exist in a cultural vacuum and it is important to consider the conceptual landscape that constructs the position of 'child/ren' both within and outside of the school. For beyond the fabric of the school building, a dynamic interplay of knowledges, meanings, practices, subjectivities and feelings interact with the individual lives of co-operative actors which can both inhibit and enable different ways of 'being' a democratic citizen (or not). It can also be argued that in addition to the diversity of child/hoods (Burman, 2008b) that are drawn upon within educational

discourse, a child's sense of personal agency is also tempered by normative assessments of aptitude and maturity shaped by a long history of developmental scientific 'expertise' (Rose, 1998; Burman, 2008a). Indeed, huge disparities of childhood autonomy are contested and affirmed by bodies of academic research and discursive practices that influence young people's ability to navigate and understand their tenuous position as 'not yet adult', influenced by the ideological dilemmas of contemporary childhood discourse (Billig et al, 1988).

These ambiguities are also reproduced within some co-operative schools where young people's understanding of co-operation is framed in terms of their 'increasingly extensive participation in commercial life as consumers and beyond' (Cook, 2004, p. 151) which positions them as credible consumers and decision-makers. Whereas in contrast to their perceived expertise as consumers, co-operative students are precluded from participating as full members of the trust board on account of their age and assumed lack of civic understanding and competence. At one school, children were regarded as more capable than some adults in respect of being considered members that could 'sell it better' (the benefits of co-operation), yet opportunities to authentically engage with democratic processes were reduced to consultations about designing the layout of a new sports hall and deciding whether or not to have a blazer.

Nick Lee's work on childhood and human value (2005) highlights how separating adults and children by levels of perceived (in)dependence generates a further source of ambiguity for determining the rights and responsibilities of authentic citizenship. The co-operative model of education offers the opportunity to unsettle the construction of independence and development within educational discourse, and rearticulate the meaning of political agency as an *inter*dependent, community activity. This extends hope for developing alternative narratives of citizenship that reconsider an ethic of 'democratic fellowship' [2] as the primary concern of 'development' and education. However, at this juncture it is also important to draw attention to the inherent difficulties that are presented within the co-operative model of governance to contest the wider social positioning of young people as ambiguous subjects, in view of legal restrictions that limit their capacity to be named as voting members of trust boards. In order to move the debate forward and enable *all* members to be treated equally, this model of schooling and governance needs to openly engage with the intractable dilemma of ascertaining how and when young people can be included as genuine subjects of decision-making processes that affect the conditions of their lives and respective communities.

Who 'Gets' It?

One school actively sought to engage with the ambiguous construction of childhood agency and positioned students as key actors and drivers of the processes that shaped its transition to co-operative trust; indeed students were considered by one member of staff to 'get it', 'much more easily than the adults here'. This confidence in the ability of young people to 'find a solution to the

wider social problems of [our] community ... and influence and change their world' enabled some students to take an active role in liaising with prospective community stakeholders and to feel valued members of the co-operative trust from its inception. For one student, (who became a formal co-founder of this co-operative trust) the experience of being involved, and more importantly being recognised as a competent actor, inspired a desire to engage with politics that reached way beyond the 'usual' subjectivities made available to young people as members of the school council (for example, see Bragg, 2007, 2010). In this student's case, an initial encounter with co-operative values came into being through his affiliation with a local, co-operatively owned football club. This knowledge of 'a different way of doing things' transformed his sense of political agency and fuelled a desire to bring about social change within the context of his own school. Knowledge and desire were further shaped by establishing relationships of trust and equality within the process, despite not 'officially' being able to vote. This educational moment then became infused with an 'ethic of care' (see Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Fielding & Moss, 2011) as the belief from respected (adult) Others of his capability and competence enabled him to speak about and to act upon the conditions of his own life. Moreover, as a result of being trusted and publically recognised as a key actor in this process of change by Others within the school, he also went on to engage with a range of social justice projects and deliver numerous speeches at political party conferences upon leaving the school. This exemplifies how the collaborative action of Others can aid young people's resistance to prevailing discourses that situate active citizenship with 'coming of age' and offer hope that, in some instances at least, co-operation can have profoundly positive impacts upon young people's lives beyond the school gates.

We're All in This Together?

Nonetheless, the extent to which young people are able to fully engage with a co-operative ethos within educational settings remains uncertain and dependent upon the social and political context in which they are able to learn and act. Therefore, the will and commitment of *all* members, especially those afforded a historical position of power and control within the school, are essential tenets for sustaining the equality of interaction necessary for enacting democratic subjectivity. In one instance, the co-operative governance framework enabled the conditions for younger members of the school to come together and initiate a change to the environment from which they learnt by questioning inconsistencies regarding the use of mobile technology within lessons. This issue mobilised a large group of students who did not usually communicate with one another, and enabled a sense of solidarity through a shared belief that the co-operative framework of governance could enable their voices to be heard on a subject that was pertinent to them, and instilled hope that democratic action was possible. As a result of experiencing 'having a say on something other than uniform' in dialogue with the senior leadership team (SLT), this group of

students began to develop a sense of what it could mean to 'be' a collective democratic subject within their school. Following on from their initial enquiry, there began a process of negotiation between a larger body of students and the SLT. This was then mediated by members of the student forum until concerns and proposals for change were reworked into a new policy that reflected the collective wishes of all members of the school. However, despite a new policy being agreed upon between the forum and the SLT, a unilateral decision was taken to 'kill the policy' without explanation to both students and teachers on the day of its proposed inception.

> Everyone thought it had been agreed and we could start using our phones after the half term break and then when we came back – we couldn't ... *We really couldn't do anything.* And students were getting annoyed basically with the forum because it looked like it was our fault when it wasn't. (Emphasis added)

This case draws attention to the democratic veneer that can veil the dominance of historical asymmetries of power within co-operative schools, and underlines the fragility of democratic processes within relations between those who 'get it' and those who don't. Students involved in this process ultimately experienced the frustration of learning what it means *not* to be able to act, despite being told that their school subscribed to values of equality and that they had 'a voice'. The consequences of this have been far reaching. A once vibrant student body has become silent and defunct as an ensuing atmosphere of mistrust and disenchantment with the co-operative framework to deliver parity of voice and action has resulted in most of its original members leaving the forum.

> After, we tried to get the forum back up and running but it's like they've kinda just lost all hope ... it's just kind of all the seniors, you know ... basically all the hand-picked nice kids on there now.

Mainstreaming 'Getting It'

Nuanced understandings of what it means to be a member of a co-operative school offer both a source of hope and anxiety for the sustained growth of a co-operative consciousness within such schools. What is more, as the number of co-operative schools has almost doubled year upon year, and co-operative schools are slowly gaining clarity and visibility as a distinct 'sector', it appears that there remains a wide variation in the conditions of membership experienced by individual actors. Within the five years that has passed since the very first co-operative school adopted a co-operative trust model of governance, some of the most established co-operative schools are now beginning to offer learning visits, training, support and reassurance to newcomers within the growing family of co-operative schools.[3] Co-operative schools have constituted the fastest and largest growth area within the co-operative and mutual sector this year.[4] This exponential growth has necessitated an immense commitment on behalf of The Co-operative College who have steered the

organisational structure of this rapidly growing sector since 2008. In response to wide ranging questions and anxieties about what it means to become a co-op school, workshops such as 'Vision and Values: what does a co-operative school look and feel like?' offer the space to share a range of different readings of co-operation in education. As according to the Co-operative College Chief Executive and Principal, Mervyn Wilson:

> There is no blueprint for a co-operative school. There is a framework ... It's not about 'the Co-op' running your schools. These are your co-operatives that will serve the needs of your communities.[5]

Notwithstanding this, the transition from working within a prescriptive top-down managerial culture, to autonomous organisation guided by ethical values and principles that prize honesty and openness as key drivers of progress, constitutes a major source of concern and confusion for schools. 'Getting it' and articulating 'it' in a manner that enables others to 'get it' too, represents a source of constant tension for schools that walk the tightrope between remaining accountable to current educational policy demands, whilst endeavouring to resist the oppressive power relations rooted within them. Despite a diverse collection of reasons for becoming a co-operative school being conveyed to me in the course of this research project [6] and elsewhere (Facer et al, 2012; Woodin, 2012), some accounts of co-operation have also shared a sense of uncertainty with regard to 'how' they might mark their metamorphosis to co-operative trust. The fourth annual co-operative schools conference, 'Co-operative Schools – where values matter', held in 2011, endeavoured to address some of these issues and cultivate an ongoing dialogue between schools as they tried to navigate their own respective vision of co-operative values in education. The title of the following year's conference 'Mainstreaming Co-operation: an alternative for the 21st Century' indicates the extent to which this sector has overcome some of these uncertainties, and is beginning to redefine its organisational identity away from the margins of mainstream education, and reposition itself as a viable alternative. Outside the formal spaces created within such conferences, opportunities for democratic engagement are also realised between co-operative schools through their involvement with organised bodies such as the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) [7] and more informally through dialogue between schools supporting and advising each other on an ad hoc basis. One member of staff observed how the absence of competition within these relationships of shared values enabled her to gain much needed support whilst she endeavoured to make sense of the co-operative coordinator role that was both new to her and the school:

> When I got the job ... I contacted schools that I'd never spoken to that I found on the list [of co-operative schools in the area]. They'd all send me their leaflets, everyone was dead, dead helpful ... others were all dead honest and they said stuff like 'this or that wasn't great, don't worry it's dead slow to start with, don't think you're

> failing if you don't get loads of members at first cos it's really difficult'. *When you contact other schools [non- co-op] for other reasons, that openness just doesn't seem to be there* ... I've only been to a couple of co-operative school meetings but at every one there's never been any sense of anyone outdoing anyone else or that. It's all about sharing ideas – what's worked and what hasn't. (Emphasis added)

Tensions within the Borders

Yet, within this growing circle of schools, there are also occasions where members articulate the lack of synergy between themselves and other local co-operative schools:

> They just don't get involved in co-op stuff. **T***hey don't seem to have 'that' erm* ... I don't know why? (Emphasis added)

And at another school, one member of staff remained ambivalent about the scope of the co-operative model, based on his experience of undertaking similar teaching roles at two different co-operative schools. In his previous school he claimed that becoming a co-operative school had made 'No difference whatsoever apart from the logo on the letterhead. The school used it because it was the least, worst option for governance arrangements for the school'. And then he added:

> For *this* school, I mean ... it is certainly more co-operative in spirit but I don't know if that's just because we all know we are a co-operative school and say we are a co-operative school and therefore we all nod in the right places. I mean – I can't quite get my head around it. (Emphasis added)

It appears that regardless of membership status, or of being an 'insider' or 'outsider', there are difficult challenges to be faced when trying to articulate this elusive 'essence' that bears the name of co-operation. This difficulty has haunted the co-operative movement throughout its history (Woodin, 2011) as ambiguities between translations and enactment continually defy the neat categorisation and quantification required for competitive analysis or league table comparison. Instead the co-operative movement draws strength and unity through trust – that is to say, a trust that *all* members will come together through a collective desire to share a set of values and principles that epitomise its organisational ethics and aims, but also remain open to interpretation according to the values of equity and equality. As a visionary ideal this may be possible, but for those involved in the complexities of everyday life within such schools, the constant interruption of commercial values and practices confuses such utopian ideals within the paradox of 'moral capitalism'. This places the democratic ideals of the model in tension with the commercial discursive framework that these schools are sometimes compelled to operate within. Furthermore, situating 'co-operation' as a form of 'enterprise' causes additional

confusion when understandings of co-operative forms of governance are obscured by the commercial activities of The Co-operative Group – often mobilised as a primary signifier of membership and identity by a range of co-operative school members. Indeed, even the subject leader for citizenship at one school interpreted his concerns regarding the need for everyone to 'get it' through the lens of commercial credibility and 'quality assurance':

> Now the governance arrangement thing ... well the Co-op College needs to be really careful on this because there is no quality assurance. They should be saying for the status of being a co-operative trust or academy you need to meet the requirements – if you're not, well *you can't use the name because it damages the brand of co-operation.* (Emphasis added)

A Different Model of Quality Control

This begs the question: can the ontological work of neo-liberalism be re-written and articulated within a co-operative framework of schooling? Or does it simply veil a colonised language of neo-liberalism in a more 'ethical' way? The Co-operative College has responded to criticisms of this nature with an approach to 'quality control' that reflects an embodiment of the movement's values and principles at its core, and offers a counter narrative to the individualised, 'evidenced based' approach that currently dominates public sector practices of 'quality assurance'. Rather than the constant re-working of the self, employed by technologies of managerialism and performativity, there is an opening to rearticulate a counter technology of individual performance management as a collective responsibility, in which all members of the school have both a stake and a voice in determining how success is valued and interpreted. The Co-operative Identity Mark (CIM) seeks to offer a qualitatively different reading of educational attainment and school improvement that troubles the credibility of competition as the ultimate driver of success. The entire process aims to provide schools with an opportunity to celebrate their co-operative journey and resignify their own accounts of 'success' through peer assessment and dialogue. In opposition to dominant measures of 'attainment', this practice engenders plurality and invites participants to offer their own narrative of achievement; primarily in the form of case studies and examples that illustrate how co-operative values are embedded within the daily practices and pedagogic encounters of the school. From the outset, the CIM scheme aimed to embrace collaboration and actively sought member's opinions through the dialogic spaces created within the pilot consultation. Schools involved in the initial pilot were able to feedback and question the utility of assessment criteria and made changes to the wording and format of the scheme, in addition to creating lasting relationships of trust and support in the course of visiting each other's schools. One participant drew attention to how this process enabled a parity of power and status as she was recognised as an 'equal' subject within this process. This offered her a new way of seeing herself in relation to Others as her initial

concerns that she lacked a sufficient level of expertise and status were transformed within this encounter:

> So I went along and every school had sent a member of the SLT. And then there was me. So I really felt like a fish out of water ... But I didn't feel like that for very long, they were really, really lovely. If I'm ever stuck with anything I can just pick up the phone and ask for advice now.

However, a later conversation with another head teacher revealed concerns about the significance of the assessor's level of expertise as she voiced an opinion that head teachers should exclusively take on the assessor's role due to teaching assistants being 'not qualified enough'. This example illustrates how the co-operative governance model offers new ways of being and acting within the school, but also underlines the complexities this causes when the meaning of equality is open to (mis)representation (see also Schostak et al, forthcoming 2014). Therefore, it is also important to consider that although the CIM offers the conditions to create a collective and contingent articulation of educational success, the hegemony of competition as the primary driver of school improvement and educational attainment continues to impose a very particular account of what school is supposed to be for, and how educational success can be recognised. For those individuals who are implicated as targets of this discourse, individual responsibility for retaining a competitive position against other schools can obscure perceptions of political agency and reduce the ability to fully engage with the project of democracy. In this instance, the pressing need to provide visual evidence and calculable data trails (Ball, 2003) shapes the subjectivities of those in leadership roles, as their individual performance is held to account by the dominance of the neo-liberal agenda.

> *Well the buck stops here* ... with me, the head teacher, you know for me with the governors and the school is judged on where it is in the league tables ... So I don't feel you'll ever have a truly democratic school. (Emphasis added)

Existential Ambiguities

Stephen Ball (2003) reminds us that the performative effects of the neo-liberal educational agenda are not exclusively embodied by students, but reach into the very depths of teacher's 'souls' (see also Ball et al, 2012). His long-term engagement within the field of educational research underlines the discursive demands of neo-liberal reform within his central argument that education policy 'does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, *it changes who they are*' (Ball, 2003, p. 215, emphasis added). For the last two centuries, state schooling has been predicated on the assumption that knowledge and cultural values can be objectively 'transmitted' to chronologically ordered and categorised batches of children in order to 'produce' a particular kind of individual and society (see Hendrick, 1997;

McCafferty, 2010; Perry & Francis, 2010). The latest calls for an 'aspiration nation' [8] underline the continued responsibilisation of schools, students and families as they remain politically and culturally defined as carriers and consumers of the future moral and economic health of the nation. As this brief exploration of an emerging co-operative sector of schools demonstrates, the path towards 'getting it' and engendering democratic subjectivity is fraught with risk and dangers of a neo-liberal appropriation of freedom within education (Facer et al, 2012). As a result, it remains unclear as to whether co-operative schools can offer the wider material, social and symbolic resources needed to resist the dominance of competition within the contemporary educational arena, in addition to overcoming a history of social inequality and exclusion. In order to create and sustain the conditions needed for democratic action and participation, this growing sector of schools faces the significant challenge of renegotiating the meaning of democratic subjectivity, whilst being subject to the demands of neo-liberal readings of 'freedom without equality'. Its greatest asset may be that it has the potential to inspire an intergenerational approach to navigating democratic subjectivity through managing dissent and difference in the course of 'getting it' and 'being' co-operative, whatever that may mean.

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Notes

[1] There has been a 'rapid increase in the number of schools converting to academy status with numbers swelling from 200 to 1635 since the coalition government came to power'. http://www.thersa.org/about-us/media/press-releases/speed-commission-into-the-academisation-of-schools-announced-by-rsa-and-pearson-centre-for-policy-and-learning; see also http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2013/mar/25/ofsted-conerns-academies-undermine-improvement

[2] Fielding & Moss (2011) discuss this concept at length within the arguments presented in *Radical Education and the Common School: a democratic alternative.*

[3] See http://www.co-op.ac.uk/schools-and-young-people/membership/ for examples.

[4] http://test.school.coop/raising-achievement-for-all-a-key-factor-in-co-operative-schools-rapid-growth/

[5] http://www.co-op.ac.uk/2013/03/handbook-helps-co-operative-schools; www.co-operatives.ac.uk

[6] The working title of this PhD thesis is '(Re) considering the Place of Democracy in Education: an ethnographic account'. The thesis aims to critically explore whether alternative models of education can enable democracy as the central practice and purpose of education.

[7] The SCS acts as a national coordinating body which provides resources and support for a network of co-operative schools.

[8] This refers to David Cameron's address at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, 2012.

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