



co-operative
education
for a
co-operative
wales

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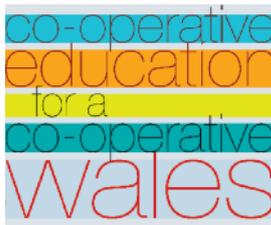
The **co-operative**
Cymru/Wales



Cover photo:
Ysgol Godre'r Graig -
the 200th Co-operative
Green School in Wales

Bishop Gore School,
Swansea – Winner of 2012
Co-operative Green School
in Wales (Secondary)

Foreword



As the birth place of Robert Owen and with its strong emphasis on community and social justice, Wales is rightly proud of its co-operative history and co-operative movement. Co-operatives of all kinds are thriving across Wales, from workers' co-operatives generating and sharing profits to community co-operatives providing essential services, from producer co-operatives working together to bring their goods to market to supporters' trusts helping local football clubs to thrive.

The Co-operative Group is the largest co-operative business in Wales, providing retail, banking and financial services, pharmacy, funeral care and travel services. Its £46 million profit from sales in Wales and its 600,000 members make it a very significant player in promoting the co-operative ethos.

Although co-operatives are becoming established many aspects of life, in Wales interest in co-operation in education is relatively new. The Co-operative Group is pleased to have worked with the Bevan Foundation in the production of this booklet to increase understanding of co-operative education and stimulate debate in Wales.

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Pupils of Ysgol Bro Ddyfi, Machynlleth make a film about peak oil



Introduction

The co-operative sector in Wales is enjoying a renaissance. Welsh-based co-operative enterprises contribute more than £1.3 billion a year to the economy and are out-performing mainstream businesses. They employ thousands of people, usually in good quality, stable jobs, and they provide essential services to millions of customers.

The Co-operative Group is, in its own right, a major economic force in Wales employing over 7,000 people and generating a turnover of approximately £600 million (food, pharmacy and funeral care only). It also plays a leading role in retail and corporate banking, insurance, travel and legal services. With a membership of almost 600,000, one in five people in Wales is a member of The Co-operative. The Group also fosters and promotes co-operative principles and values more widely and plays a leading role, via its Enterprise Hub, in the development of new co-operative businesses in Wales.

Other co-operative enterprises, including worker co-operatives, community co-operatives and producer co-operatives are also thriving and can be found in everything from renewable energy to cafes, from child-care to football clubs and housing.

The Welsh Government is looking to step-up the role of co-operatives: it has established a Welsh Co-operatives and Mutuals Commission to look at growing and developing the co-operative and mutual economy, and is exploring ways in which the model can be applied to rail services.

Co-operatives are not just an alternative way of doing business – they are underpinned by core values and principles (see Figure 1). Democracy, transparency, learning and concern for the wider community are central to the co-operative ethos, and as such can be adopted in many different kinds of organisations.

Recently, a number of schools and colleges across the UK have embraced a co-operative ethos. Although some have opted for a co-operative legal structure, many more have recognised that the principles of co-operation have a great deal to offer irrespective of a school's status. Co-operative principles have helped to transform many schools, resulting in higher achievement, improved behaviour, increased parental and community involvement and teacher satisfaction.

In Wales, the debate about the future direction of education is on-going. The Minister for Education has announced a review of the delivery of education services, with co-operative schools being one option to be considered. We believe that co-operative values and principles need to be considered in the debate about education. We are not arguing for changes to the status or structure of schools and colleges, but suggesting that the many benefits of co-operative education should be considered and explored for the benefit of learners and teachers alike.

The rest of this leaflet explains the history of co-operative education, what it means in practice, and how it is being adopted in different parts of the UK.

Figure 1

The seven principles of co-operation



Voluntary and open membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations open to anyone able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without any form of discrimination.

Democratic member control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations owned and controlled by their members who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Anyone elected to a particular role is accountable to the wider membership.

Member economic participation

Members contribute to and control the capital of their co-operative in an equitable and democratic manner. Members determine how any surplus is allocated.

Autonomy and independence

Co-operatives are autonomous self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, or raise their capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their independence. They should be free of any government control.

Education, training, and information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They also inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

Concern for community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

The origins of co-operative education

In the early 19th century few working-class children received any formal education, and most grew up to be illiterate. The few schools that did exist, run by the church or local benefactors, taught by rote and exerted strict discipline.



Robert Owen was the founder of the co-operative movement. He was born in Newtown, Powys in 1771 and entered the textile industry at an early age. Shocked by the conditions in which workers lived and worked, he used his cotton mill at New Lanark, Scotland to create a different kind of society. He wrote and campaigned widely on the need for social change. A group of people in Rochdale developed Owen's ideas and opened the first co-operatively- owned shop in 1844. At the end of his life Robert Owen returned to Newtown where he died on 17th November 1858.

Robert Owen took a radically different view to the 19th century norm. He believed that education was crucial to children's development and argued that learning should be an integral part of the new society he sought to build.

“To train and educate the rising generation will at all times be the first object of society, to which every other will be subordinate”.¹

To implement these ideas, he founded the world's first infants' school at New Lanark, for the children of parents who worked at the mills. The Institute for the Formation of Character, as it was called, opened in 1816, and catered for children 'from as soon ... as they can walk'² until they began work at the age of about 10 years.

The Institute pioneered new methods of teaching using pictures and activity rather than instruction, and children learned through music, dancing, games and outdoor activity. Teachers did not use corporal punishment or abusive or threatening language, as was common at the time, and were instead told by Owen to be 'pleasant' and 'kind' to the children.³



The Institute also organised evening lectures and concerts for children and adults who were working. When the working day at New Lanark Mills was reduced to ten and three-quarter hours, attendance at the Institute’s lectures reached 396 per evening session in March 1816, rising to 485 later.⁴

“a new era must commence; the human intellect must begin to be released from its state of darkness”.⁵

Owen’s commitment to education was taken forward by the early co-operative movement. The Rochdale Pioneers, for example, whose consumer co-operative of 1844 was the model for organisations elsewhere, devoted 2.5 per cent of their profits – the maximum they were permitted – to supporting education.⁶ This soon became the norm for local co-operative societies, whose educational activity included organising evening classes and lectures, providing libraries and reading rooms, supporting clubs and organising trips.⁷

Early co-operatives were also actively involved in supporting schools, although when local councils took over elementary education in the early 20th century most co-operative societies withdrew from education of children and instead concentrated on adult learning.



Co-operative education in the 21st century

Whilst co-operative education may have origins stretching back almost 200 years, it is as relevant now as it was in 1816. Moreover, whilst it can mean many different things from methods of teaching to a specific governance structure, at its core is a distinctive ethos based on co-operative values and principles.

Co-operative values permeate the whole operation of an educational environment, from teaching and learning methods to a school's relationships with pupils' parents and the wider community, to how learners interact with each other.

The ways in which these values affect education include:

- How learners learn
- The skills and knowledge that learners acquire
- How schools and learning establishments operate in their communities



Children from Ysgol Porth y Felin, Conwy, take part in an artwork project sponsored by the Co-operative



Key Features of a Co-operative School

A co-operative ethos – a school which:

- ✓ Can clearly show how it puts values and principles into practice.
- ✓ Regards itself as part of the global movement.
- ✓ Holds the interests of its stakeholders in primacy.
- ✓ Meets educational and wider needs in its local community.

A co-operative governance structure – a school which:

- ✓ Operates democratically.
- ✓ Is accountable to stakeholders.
- ✓ Has an active and engaged membership.
- ✓ Provides a real voice for students.
- ✓ Meets high standards of good governance practice.

A co-operative curriculum – a school where:

- ✓ The co-operative model appears in business and enterprise studies, not just history.
- ✓ Skills for co-operative working are developed.
- ✓ Young people are educated for (co-operative) citizenship.
- ✓ The global dimension is prominent across all subjects.

Source: Shaw, 2011

Co-operative Learning

Co-operative learning is a distinctive teaching strategy that is increasingly used in schools and colleges around the world.

Co-operative learning is based on the principle that learning is often most effective when learners can think and talk together, share ideas, and question, analyse and solve problems without the constant mediation of a teacher. Learners typically work in small teams, usually of four people. Each team member helps team-mates to learn as well as learning themselves. It is appropriate for all areas of the curriculum, and the more complex the outcome the greater the benefits.

The benefits of co-operative learning are that:

- all students are involved in the learning process – no student can ‘hide’;
- social skills are developed including listening, taking turns, managing conflict, leadership and teamwork;
- students are encouraged to take initiative and responsibility;
- students have higher attainment.



Teachers who have introduced co-operative learning methods say it has transformed their teaching. In a recent study of co-operative teaching⁸, one teacher described the experience of co-operative learning as follows:

every lesson has been outstanding since [starting to use the co-operative structures] ... I've been teaching sixteen years and it's revolutionised my teaching, because it involves everyone, there's no child in the room that can be left out or not feel as if they are part of the lessons

This study found that many teachers were enthusiastic about co-operative learning methods not because of the values associated with it but simply because it works. As one said:

I don't think it is [a political agenda]. It's just about learning, it's about helping the kids.

With learners and teachers under pressure to increase achievement and challenges for young people in Wales to secure decent quality employments, a co-operative education has a great deal to offer.

Co-operative Knowledge and Skills

Education is key to ensuring people have the knowledge and skills to co-operate.

At its most straightforward, co-operative education involves ensuring children and adults are aware of the principles, history and practice of co-operation. This might involve, for example, including the role of Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers in the history curriculum, learning about the role of co-operatives in international development as part of the geography curriculum, as well as learning about co-operatives in the business and enterprise curriculum. Developing knowledge of issues, such as fair trade, ethical considerations and democracy, also give learners a sense of how they fit into society as a whole.

The aim of putting co-operatives in the curriculum is that at all levels of education, including higher education, and in all subjects, learners understand that there is an alternative way of organising society and doing business and are aware of co-operative values. They can then be aware of co-operatives as possible workplaces, of the opportunities to start new co-operative ventures and decide if co-operatives are organisations that they want to patronise.

Important though this is, learning about co-operation is more than just ensuring that co-operatives have a place in the curriculum.

Co-operative education also means ensuring that learners acquire the essential skills of co-operation, such as listening and team working, openness and democracy,



and conflict-management and resolution. These co-operative skills can be learned not only in the classroom or lecture theatre, but through experience and observation. So the ways that students and pupils get on with each other and interact with their teachers are just as important as the curriculum itself.

The skills of co-operation are extremely valuable for children and young people's futures. Research suggests that these kinds of 'soft skills' may be better predictor of work and life success than traditional academic qualifications.⁹ Almost all jobs involve team-working at least some of the time, with technological developments being argued to increase the importance of collaborative and co-operation skills.¹⁰ Researchers are also calling for education that recognises humanity's interdependence with material resources and environmental systems – education based on mutuality is seen not only as central to personal development but to global survival.

In communities and families too, co-operative skills help individuals to get along with each other more harmoniously.

Co-operating with the Community

Because of their ethos of openness, transparency and democracy many co-operative schools and colleges seek to build relationships with partners, including parents and local organisations.

Co-operative Schools place a high emphasis on schools, teachers and the community working together to provide the best environment they can for young people.¹¹

A Fairtrade farmer from Chile visits Ysgol y Wern, Cardiff



Families and parents are critical to a child's educational success. Parental involvement positively affects children's academic performance and is a more powerful force for academic achievement than other family characteristics. Evidence shows that parental engagement with their child's school makes a difference to educational attainment, with engagement taking a variety of different forms.

Schools with a co-operative ethos encourage parental involvement, sometimes formally through appropriate structures including Parent Teacher Associations and sometimes informally, such as through volunteering time and expertise. These help to

increase understanding between parents and teachers¹², supporting better outcomes for children.

Many co-operative schools also build relationships with local organisations. For some, this involves a close relationship with local co-operatives, including the Co-operative Group as well as local workers' or food co-operatives. Many co-operative schools have also chosen to continue and develop their relationships with their local education authority.¹³

Schools and colleges can benefit considerably from partnerships with local organisations. A study of co-operative schools noted how one had benefited significantly from involvement with a local co-operative which had provided thousands of hours in volunteer time to the school. This included volunteers building an eco garden, painting classrooms, attending awards events, providing business and PR advice, giving speeches and running barbeques for students picking up exam results.

The Co-operative Group is actively involved in developing a dynamic and active co-operative schools movement in the UK. It supports initiatives such as the Green Schools Revolution and the Co-operative Film Festival which give young people the chance to find out more about its business and values.

Recently, the Co-operative Group in Wales has developed and deepened its relationship with Welsh

schools at a macro and micro level via its Green Schools Revolution initiative, the spOiLt project in Machynlleth and with support for community schools across Wales. Outside Wales, the Co-operative Group works with the Schools Co-operative Society, the Co-operative College and the Co-operative Education Trust Scotland and with a network of schools in Northern Ireland to create a strong independent voice for all co-operative schools, provide mutual support and embed co-operative values into schools.





The Green Schools Revolution

The Green Schools Revolution is bringing exciting and engaging activities to classrooms across the UK, with projects that encourage creative thinking about three key sustainability themes: energy, water and healthy living. Schools can access free online resources and hands-on learning experiences with opportunities to visit Co-operative farms, its wind farm and local science and discovery centres such as the Centre for Alternative Technology. As part of this The Co-operative Group in Wales has financed the provision of Welsh-language materials for the Welsh-medium sector which adhere to the National Curriculum in Wales.

By bringing together schools, parents, young people and their local communities The Co-operative wishes to inspire young people to change their world.

The spOILt project

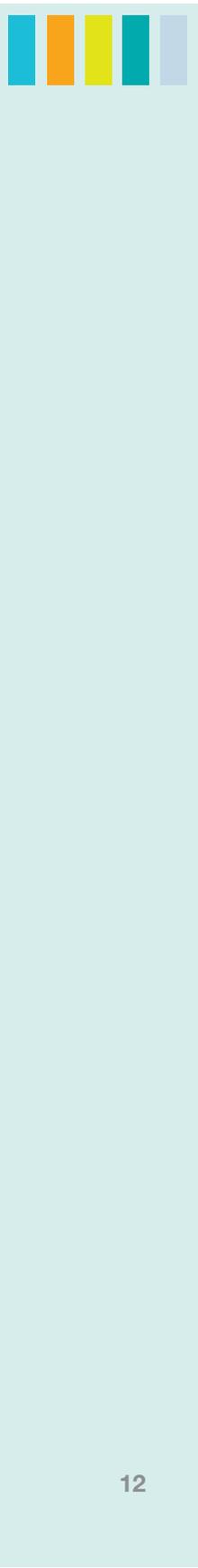
In 2010 The Co-operative Group in Wales financed a climate change-themed film project at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi in Machynlleth. These bilingual film and teachers' resources highlight the issues surrounding Peak Oil and how the world's dependence upon it has led major corporations to develop 'unconventional' sources of oil such as the Tar Sands in Canada.

In discovering more about climate change, the pupils from Machynlleth developed a wide range of technical skills as they worked co-operatively to make their award winning film. The Co-operative Group in Wales was delighted to help enable this innovative project – schools and youth groups are invited to request copies of the film and teachers resources.



Community Support

At a very local level, the Co-operative Group supports schools throughout Wales, such as Ysgol Bronllwyn in the Rhondda. Not only did staff at the nearby Co-operative Food store in Treorchy raise funds to buy paint and brushes with which to decorate the rather grey and drab school yard, the staff volunteered to help with the painting itself. The children at the school got involved in a wonderful community-led co-operative project to brighten-up their school.



Models of co-operative education

Across the UK, hundreds of schools have been established as co-operatives, ranging from infants' schools to special schools, from faith schools to school clusters.

Many schools want to adopt co-operative values and principles without changing their status. These schools use co-operative ideas throughout the school, within existing governance arrangements. They are still co-operative schools.

Some schools do however decide to change their legal status, so that they are themselves a co-operative.

Co-operative schools have ...

- An ethos that is drawn from globally-shared co-operative values, acknowledged in their governance documents.
- Governance mechanisms that engage key stakeholder groups, parents and carers, staff, learners and the local community through membership.
- A curriculum and pedagogy that embraces co-operation, using the global co-operative movement as a learning resource and drawing on co-operative approaches to teaching and learning.

Source: Mutuo Handbook 2012

Examples from round the UK show the varying ways in which the potential of co-operative education is being developed.

Wales

In Wales no schools have, to date, formally adopted co-operative education. With its distinct history as well as its devolved legislative powers and policies, very few schools in Wales have ever opted-out of the local authority maintained sector. This does not, however, preclude a school or college adopting a co-operative ethos, curriculum or methods of engaging with learners, parents and partners. Recently, the Minister for Education, Leighton Andrews AM, announced a review of the delivery of education services, which will include the question of whether there is scope for co-operative ownership of schools at a local level.¹⁴

Scotland

The Co-operative Education Trust Scotland (CETS – <http://www.cets.coop/>) works with educational institutions to increase awareness for teachers, students and local education authority staff of the importance and values of co-operatives, and also produces a suite of learning and teaching resources.



Make your School Co-operative

1. Top level commitment

Senior Management Team agree to the adoption of co-operative ethos, with the Head Teacher signing off a written statement of intent. This might include a Pupil Council, and making the School Board democratic, participative and inclusive.

2. Set up a co-op council

Establish co-op council, involving, staff, pupils and possibly parents to incorporate co-operative values and principles into school ethos and support working across the curriculum. The council produces a co-op development plan that includes a commitment to increase co-op membership, activity or involvement by 10 per cent year on year.

3. Operate a Co-operative within the school

Create or maintain at least one of a young co-operative (enterprise), a school Credit Union or another co-operative project.

4. Hold an event

Hold a major co-operative event within the school.

5. Show you can do it

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the co-operative values and principles amongst staff and pupils through presentation to assessment panel.

Co-operative schools are encouraged to embed learning about co-operatives into the curriculum, particularly enterprise education. CETS also offers certificates in co-operative studies, accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, at levels 4, 5 and 6.¹⁵



*Goetre Primary School,
Merthyr Tydfil – Winner of
2012 Green School Award
in Wales (Primary)*



Siop y Bobl, Llanmadog – a community co-operative

West Lothian Council / Bright Business Partnership and CETS

West Lothian Council, Bright Business Partnership and Co-operative Education Trust Scotland designed an innovative way of giving students an insight into setting up and running their own co-operative.

Teams of 6 pupils from 5 secondary schools across West Lothian attended a 2-day workshop where they were introduced to the co-operative business model. They were helped to develop their own business ideas, given support to write a business plan and also sign-posted to sources of possible start-up funding. Other organisations were also on-hand to support the students in their bid to start up their own co-operative.

At the end of the second day, a team of experts listened to the teams' business ideas, looked at their business plans and offered advice on how to take their ideas forward.



Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, a network of 242 schools are working together to introduce co-operative values into their day-to-day activities. Supported by the Co-operative Group and working with the Schools Co-operative Trust, co-operative schools are developing rapidly. One school which has adopted a co-operative ethos is Hunterhouse College in Belfast.

Hunterhouse College

Hunterhouse College is one of three schools in Northern Ireland which has embedded co-operative values and principles, along with Glenlola Collegiate and Bangor Academy.

Hunterhouse College has created an environment of strong community involvement and significant student democracy. The College is a voluntary girl's grammar school which has seen admissions rise from 675 in 2008 to 718 in 2012 because of its ethos. It obtains exam results above the Northern Ireland average.

As a co-operative school, Hunterhouse College has applied for Fairtrade School status, has opened a Fairtrade shop and has given a teacher responsibility for ensuring that co-operative values are integrated into all the school's activities. As part of this, a team of students interact with their peers to report back to the Principal and Board of Governors on issues within the school.

In 2011/12 students formed a co-operative to compete in the Young Enterprise Company programme based on stopping the decline of bee colonies. The students won the Best Social Enterprise Award and their experience has helped in the establishment of a pilot Young Enterprise scheme to allow schools in Northern Ireland to participate in a new Social Enterprise Company scheme.

All three co-operative schools collaborate – recently Hunterhouse College collaborated with Glenlola College and Bangor Academy to create and perform a theatre piece celebrating co-operative values.

England

In recent years the number of Co-operative schools in England has grown rapidly, primarily as a result of different legislation and policy within which the co-operative model is seen by many as the most appealing option for their schools. There are estimated to be more than 200 338 co-operative schools in England at September 2012, including nursery and primary schools, secondary and special schools, and colleges. There are two main types of co-operative school in England – co-operative trusts and co-operative academies.

A **Co-operative Trust** school is a maintained school that is supported by a charitable trust, which also appoints some of the governors of the school. Partners in the Trust use their experience and expertise to strengthen the leadership and governance of a school, and hence help to raise standards. Co-operative Trusts adopt a co-operative model for their structures and governance. This involves adopting co-operative values and principles and ensuring that the key stakeholders such as parents, staff, learners and members of the local community have a guaranteed ‘say’ in the affairs of the organisation.

Co-operative Academies are schools that want the freedoms and funding of an academy school but also build in important aspects such as a voice for key stakeholder groups. Some academies are sponsored by organisations, including three sponsored by the Co-operative Group, and in addition some schools are converting to co-operative academy status.

Within England, co-operative schools are so popular that Cornwall could become the first local authority where the majority of schools are co-operating. Schools here are joining together to pool resources and ensure they have a sustainable future. The county many small schools - the co-operative model engages multiple local stakeholders and ensures that the community has a voice in the running of their schools.

In Devon, all ten special educational needs schools have joined together to create the first co-operative multi-school Trust, the





SENTient Trust. It helps schools to access specialist resources, provide student-centred education for all learners, and partner with the local co-operative movement and support services. Co-operative status has formalised existing collaboration between schools and encouraged sharing of good practice, as well as enabling the families of students to become involved in education.

Co-operative schools have also been successful in areas of high deprivation.

Burnt Mills School, in Harlow, Essex, became a co-operative trust school in 2010 and is now a co-operative academy. In 2009 only 27 per cent of pupils achieved five GCSEs including English and Maths at grade C or above - by 2012, 72 per cent were achieving at this level. It attributes its success to its co-operative values, and its challenging targets set for all learners with interventions targeted on particular groups of learners. Other schools in areas of high deprivation, such as Sir Thomas Boughey High School, have recorded similar successes.

Sir Thomas Boughey High School

Sir Thomas Boughey High School in Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire was one of the first schools in the UK to adopt co-operative values and principles. It became a specialist Co-operative Business College in 2004 and is now a Co-operative Trust School. Before it became a co-operative the school faced significant problems. The Head Teacher used co-operative values and principles as a basis for the school's value structure. The school set three broad aims:

- to use co-operative values and principles as a basis for developing good citizens
- to develop our management using co-operative approaches
- to ensure a balanced approach between the 'PLCs' and the co-operative alternative in all work about business or enterprise.

There was a dramatic improvement in the school's performance at all levels, with the proportion gaining 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including English and Maths rising from 28 per cent to over 70 per cent. In 2010 it was recognised both as a Higher Performing Specialist School and gained 'Outstanding' in its Ofsted inspection.

The school has also pioneered links with co-operatives in other countries and co-operative schools in places like Spain.

Notes

- 1 The Social System, 1826 quoted at <http://www.newlanark.org/robertowen.shtml>
- 2 Robert Owen, An Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark on the opening of the Institute for the Formation of Character, 1st of January, 1816, published on http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/owen_new_lanark.htm
- 3 Owen, R. D. (1874) *Threading My Way. Twenty years of autobiography*, London. Quoted on <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-owen.htm>
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- 5 Robert Owen, An Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark on the opening of the Institute for the Formation of Character, 1st of January, 1816, published on http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/owen_new_lanark.htm
- 6 Facer, K. Thorpe, J and Shaw, L (2011) Co-operative Education and Schools: An old idea for new times? The BERA Conference, September 6th 2011, London, UK Available at: <http://www.co-op.ac.uk/2011/12/co-operative-education-schools-idea-times-paper/>
- 7 Dawson, L.A. (1923) Co-operative Education. Fabian Tract. p.5
- 8 Facer, K. et al (2011) op. cit.
- 9 Mulgan, G. (2010) Learning the skills of co-operation - building our capacity to work together. Co-operatives UK.
- 10 Facer, K. et al (2011) op. cit.
- 11 <http://www.co-operativeschools.coop/>
- 12 Facer, K. et al (2011) op. cit.
- 13 Woodin, T. (2012) Co-operative Schools: building communities in the 21st century. FORUM Volume 54, Number 2, 2012. Available at : www.wvwords.co.uk/FORUM
- 14 Minister for Education, National Assembly for Wales Plenary 21st November 2012
- 15 See <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57787.html>

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