Co-operative Learning - Values into Practice

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This paper explores some of the implications for co-operative education of the co-operative values published in the International Co-operative Alliance's 1995 *Statement on the Co-operative Identity*. It suggests that these values could operate as a framework for those involved in co-operative education to critique and develop the authenticity of their organisation's enactment of co-operation.

It acknowledges that when taken individually none of these values is exclusive to the co-operative movement. It maintains that when the values are understood as a suite and interpreted in the specific context of the co-operative movement's history and in relation to co-operative practice, they assume a unique quality, which demands a particular attention to authenticity from co-operative educators and their practice.

It asserts that the inclusion of all parties - students, teachers, managers and external stakeholders - in the routine examination and resolution of tensions between co-operative theory and practice is a hallmark of 'the co-operative education difference'.

A recent article in the *Guardian* by Warwick Mansell exploring the expansion of Co-operative Trust schools in the UK referred to "what many within the co-operative movement view as core educational values: democracy, equity and fairness." (Mansell, 2011). Few would want to take issue with Mansell about the association of these values with co-operative education. Yet, given the centrality of values to the movement in general and to co-operative education in particular, it is worth considering whether democracy, equity and fairness are the definitive co-operative education values, or whether others call out to be added to the list. We might then look behind their names to ask what special meanings these values have in the context of co-operative education. The current expansion of co-operative schools makes this, perhaps, an especially timely exercise.

Mansell's confident naming of democracy, equity and fairness masks a degree of debate and ambiguity around co-operative values. It can come as something of a surprise to note that neither the 1937 International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) statement on the "Present Application of the Rochdale Principles of Co-operation", nor the 1966 Report of the ICA Commission on Statement on Co-operative Principles, specifically referenced values. This was first done in the third and most recent review - *Statement on the Co-operative Identity* (International Co-operative Alliance, 1995) - when six organisational and four ethical values were added to its list of co-operative principles. It is important to note that even then, in the spirit of co-operation, these values were not issued by decree, but proposed as an international framework for on-going debate. The statement read as follows:

> Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others (International Co-operative Alliance, 1995).

Ten suggested values then, rather than Mansell's three. As well as resisting the temptation to issue a definitive list of values, the statement also leaves it to others to interpret what these values might mean in practice. For Johnston Birchall this space for ambiguity is not entirely satisfactory. In his critique of the 1995 revision, he recommends that the values and principles "be made more coherent philosophically (not just a list)' and 'ranked in order of importance." (Birchall, 2005: slide 5).

He goes on to develop this:

- The primary value **Liberty** leads to secondary value **Equity** to the **Democratic member control** principle …

- The primary value **Equality** leads to secondary value **Self-help**, to the **Member economic participation** principle …
- The primary value **Solidarity** leads to secondary value **Self-reliance,** the principle of **Autonomy and independence …** (Birchall, 2005: slide 6)

In fact, Birchall does not merely prioritise the 1995 list of values, privileging solidarity and equality. He also introduces "liberty" as an altogether new primary value and inserts self-reliance, presumably in place of self-responsibility. At the same time he argues that any co-operative values should take second place to the principles:

> The co-operative difference has to be based on the core principles rather than the values; other types of organisation share similar values. (Birchall, 2005: slide 16).

And this difference specifically "resides in the three core principles: member ownership, control and benefit" (Birchall, 2005: slide 16). These translate broadly as the first three ICA principles of 'voluntary and open membership', 'democratic member control' and 'member economic participation'.

If what Birchall asserts is true, it poses a special challenge for Co-operative Trust schools and indeed for co-operative educators in many other settings. What authority can these principles command when students are rarely member-owners, rarely afforded genuine democratic control, and the benefits they derive are a mix of intangible assets, including knowledge, insights, socialisation, and unequally distributed qualifications?

By contrast, all ten of the co-operative values - eleven if we count Birchall's 'liberty' - could constitute the foundations of a universally relevant ethical education. The purpose of this paper, then, is to reflect on what it might mean for co-operative education if each of the ICA's six organisational values and four ethical values, plus Birchall's 'liberty' were enacted. As co-operative economist Charles Gide (Gide, 1921: 10) observed; co-operatives possess the "striking characteristic of being at the same time highly idealistic and very practical." It is essential therefore that co-operatives of all types, schools included, authentically commit to a dialectic between co-operative principles/practice and co-operative values/beliefs.

In addition, this paper will touch upon the lack of exclusivity enjoyed by the co-operative movement in relation to its values. This is important since, just as "other types of organisation share similar values", so other pedagogies may also appear to share a selection of the same values. It seems critical that if these values are to serve meaningful purpose for co-operative education, we seek to understand the ways in which their terminology is animated by the unique spirit and wisdom of the co-operative movement. This might help us see how the values themselves can contribute to what might be termed the "co-operative education difference".

Of the ten co-operative values, those which promise to offer the most for this line of enquiry are the organisational values. This is because, as their name implies, they were formulated with specific consideration for the circumstances of co-operative practice. It is therefore with these, plus Birchall's 'liberty', that we will begin.

The Organisational Values

Solidarity
As we have seen, Johnston Birchall views solidarity as one of three primary co-operative values. Daman Prakash similarly affords solidarity high regard in his 2003 review of the ICA Co-operative Identity Statement:

> It has historical roots. Co-operators and co-operatives stand together. Solidarity is the very cause and consequence of self-help and mutual help - two of the fundamental concepts at the heart of co-operative philosophy (Prakash, 2003: 6).

Another values-based pedagogy that references solidarity is education for sustainable development (ESD). In a 2011 report the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development characterises ESD as

"underpinned by an ethic of solidarity, equality and mutual respect among people, countries, cultures and generations." (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education [NECESC], 2011: 1). Reading on, this concept of solidarity approaches a universal proposition, constrained neither by geography, social nor economic organisation, the passage of time, nor species. Rather it is something requiring the educator to convey:

> the interdependent nature of relationships within the present generation and between generations, as well as those between rich and poor and between humans and nature (NECESC, 2011: 7).

For some practitioners it goes so far as to embrace the inanimate. David Abram, for instance, describes:

> … the solidarity between my thingly presence and various plants, even my kinship with the stones in the wall and the boulders outside the cottage. (Abram, 2010: 210).

Compare this with Prakash's focus on humans making a stand together, a reading of solidarity which is firmly rooted in a sense of historical and continuing social struggle. So, while one of the Rochdale Principles of Co-operation 1937 was Political and Religious Neutrality, for co-operators solidarity has traditionally been a key part of a civil movement for redressing inequity; something enacted *within* the movement and *between* co-operators, in the face of external resistance. This is certainly the case for one eminent historian of the co-operative movement Stephen Yeo. Writing in 2011 he maintained:

> Owenites were less afraid than we have become, attracting members to their movement by making serious intellectual and moral challenges to capitalists and their ideologists (Yeo, 2010: 139).

Co-operative education can learn lessons by engaging with ESD around futures-oriented inter-generational solidarity. It may also have room to develop a deeper and stronger disposition towards solidarity with the non-human realm. However, co-operative education is distinguished by its association with the wider movement's solidarity in using co-operative structures and practice to counter socio-economic injustices, and its fine history of international campaigning on issues of trade and structural poverty. Co-operative educators, including those in formal settings, must find ways to keep faith with the movement's tradition of asking serious intellectual and moral questions of prevailing systems. This seems essential if learners are to understand the value of solidarity in its specific co-operative context.

Self-responsibility

For Birchall self-reliance or self-responsibility follows from solidarity, and supports the principles of autonomy and independence. Self-responsibility is distinct from self-help as it refers to the autonomy and independence of co-operatives rather than of individuals. So, for Prakash self-responsibility demands members "ensure that their co-operative remains independent" (Prakash, 2003: 6). This sounds a lot like group resilience and plays to the questionable perception that a top-down welfare state has contributed to social and individual passivity. Whatever the validity of that assumption, it is the case that understanding and possession of self-responsibility will become increasingly significant for communities seeking to maintain control and integrity of services previously delivered by local government. Co-operative education can help prepare students for informed collective participation in these newly localised services. And perhaps facilitating learners to reflect on the relationship between demutalisation and the banking crisis can help inspire a new generation to seek and not relinquish co-operative ownership of vital public provision.

The skills and attitudes required for self-responsibility can be promoted through the establishment and maintenance of student-owned social enterprises. But we should not overlook platforms for staff, students and parents/guardians to learn about the value of self-responsibility in relation to the governance and safeguarding of, for instance, co-operative schools. Regular co-operative scrutiny of schools' enactment of ethical and organisational values could form a vital element of this process.

Equality

A great many, perhaps a majority, of educators believe inequality reduction to be a fundamental objective of education. It is also the case that providers of education across the UK hold policies relating to equality and think hard and seriously about equality in relation to accessing opportunities, for instance. When speaking of equality as a co-operative value and in the context of co-operative education, however, the concept has to move beyond mere compliance to assume a powerful transformational character. This is particularly urgent in the wake of the 2011 riots in UK cities, and the role which social, economic and emotional inequalities contributed to these[1].

For co-operative educators the issue of equality asks critical pedagogical and organisational questions. Those working in informal learning settings are accustomed to creating the conditions for equality by, in the words of Paulo Freire, dying "as the unilateral educator of the educatees, in order to be born again as the educator-educatee of the educatees-educators" (Taylor, 1993: 53).

The emergent, open-ended, dialogue central to this approach is no easy undertaking in more formal contexts of school or college, with their attendant constraints of timetabling and attainment targets. All the same, the challenge remains.

Organisationally, many schools and colleges have developed significant learner voice initiatives. Few though risk extending substantive strategic decision-making powers to their learners. There may be strong arguments to defend this situation but they do not necessarily look very co-operative, and we need to be completely open about this fact. Judith Suissa's observation made in respect of anarchist education holds equally true for co-operative education:

> If, like many liberal theorists, we consciously make compromises in our philosophical treatment of concepts such as 'equality' - compromises which imply an acquiescence with existing political structures - we should at least articulate our reasons for such compromises, and the way they reflect our substantive ideals (Suissa, 2010: 148).

Finding organisational and pedagogic solutions which authentically reflect our co-operative commitment to equality may not be achievable overnight, and ultimately may require compromise. As Prakash puts it, "It is a Movement that is always torn between what its philosophy suggests and the contemporary world requires" (Prakash, 2003: 11). Is it not essential though, that the processes of coming to these solutions model co-operation and promote the value of equality?

Self-help

Mention of self-help can conjure memories of Norman Tebbit's infamous protestation to the unemployed to get on their bikes to find work. In the co-operative context self-help is emphatically not an appeal to individualistic solutions. Certainly it is about developing individual capacity and resilience, but the co-operative value of self-help is imbued with the belief that full potential for these can be achieved only through purposeful, co-operative engagement with others.

2003/2004 saw the phased introduction in England of a statutory key stage 4[2] work-related learning framework, one element of which was enterprise learning. The framework suggested that the process provide opportunities to:

- Demonstrate enterprise skills, including decision making, leadership, risk management and presentation.
- Demonstrate enterprise attitudes, including a willingness to take on new challenges, self-reliance, open-mindedness, respect for evidence, pragmatism and commitment to making a difference.
- Demonstrate enterprising qualities, including adaptability, perseverance, determination, flexibility, creativity, ability to improvise, confidence, initiative, self-confidence, autonomy and the drive to make things happen (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2008: 39).

Notice the reference to 'self-reliance', 'determination', 'self-confidence', 'autonomy' and other attributes commonly associated with self-help. Notice too the absence of 'co-operation'. For very many schools the implementation of the work-related learning framework coincided with the launch, in January 2005, of BBC TV's fiercely individualistic reality show Dragons' Den, which pits

budding entrepreneurs against one another. Unsurprisingly perhaps, a large number of schools and providers of enterprise education seized upon the Dragons' Den approach and both teachers and young people came to equate, if they had not already done so, enterprise with individualistic entrepreneurship. Yet, as Paul Kearney, an established voice in enterprise education, points out "Learning in a co-operative is a core element of an enterprise way to learn" (Kearney, 2010: 3).

While the statutory status of work-related learning may be removed as part of the current curriculum review, aspects of enterprise learning have become popular and regular features of many schools' year planners, and not just at Key Stage 4. These can provide space for the systematic development and critical appraisal of attributes associated with self-help. Moreover, enterprise education often successfully engages learners who are normally less responsive, and who are perceived by teachers to be the most deficient in terms of existing capacity for self-help.

In the midst of the current rhetoric about the 'Big Society' and growing consciousness of social enterprises and community interest companies, enterprise learning continues to provide a platform for the explicit exploration of what the value of self-help means in a truly co-operative context.

Equity

Prakash states that the task of "achieving 'equity' within a co-operative is a continuing, never-ending challenge" (Prakash, 2003: 6). If this is true where relatively tangible assets such as dividends or membership discounts are at stake, how much more of a challenge is to be faced by the learning provider? What indeed is the currency in which education trades? Notwithstanding conventions of aims and intended outcomes, both formal and informal learners bring their own aspirations and expectations. How are educators to achieve an equitable distribution of such nuanced assets? Similarly, in formal settings where the most apparent currency is qualifications, distribution is at core inequitable; participation and effort having no bearing on participants' rewards. Moreover, as Alan Wilkins points out in this *Journal*, the processes for achieving these qualifications, rather than impressing the value of equity, tend to foster 'negative interdependence' and again in this *Journal*, Lee Taylor speaks of beginning "to think of our community of teachers and learners as 'members'", and touches on ways in which co-operative learning generates values-related benefits. Above all it confirms that transforming these circumstances must be undertaken as a co-operative journey.

Taylor also refers to an international link programme between his school and Africa, which had a specific focus on the establishment of co-operatives. Few co-operative educators would deny the need to develop learners' awareness and understanding of the need for equity beyond their own organisational or learning context. Yet is the practice of co-operative education sufficiently informed by the insights of development education (also referred to as global learning) to enable us to spot and avoid the pitfalls characteristic of much learning about the developing world? These traps include the well-meaning reinforcement of negative stereotypes and over-simplifications to do, for instance, with the causes of poverty, that too often invoke bad fortune, geographical and climactic happenstance and local corruption. Think Global, the development education association, has worked hard since the early 1990s to improve critical thinking for education on global issues, and to promote, as it currently frames it "understanding of global issues and power relationships; and optimism and action for a better world" (Think Global, 2007). Members of Think Global have different views about what form that action should take although many are already highly sympathetic to co-operative ideals and, globally the co-operative movement makes an enormous contribution to development.

As co-operative educators, we need to be critically aware of the structural bases of the inequitable global distribution of power and of social, economic, manufactured, intellectual and natural resources, and we need to be clear about the specific part that co-operatives can play in mitigating these inequities. It is also crucial that we understand global learning as a dialogue and not a one-way process in which UK students provide resources or learning to their 'third world' peers. That would be a fundamental betrayal of the value of equity.

Democracy

Democracy is in the bloodstream of the co-operative movement. Democratic member control is the second ICA principle, re-stating the long-established protocol of one member, one vote. The early leaders of the Rochdale Pioneers included Chartists. How might they have reacted to the fact that

voter turnout at the twenty-first century's first three general elections was lower than any since the Second World War? A range of commentators has blamed the diminishing pull of representative democracy on, amongst other things, market-oriented individualism; the shrinking state; distrust and scepticism of politicians and political parties; and the erosion of traditional loyalties and identities. In the face of these challenges, education can and must play a role in appetising learners to become active civic participants. It is worth reflecting though, that the introduction of citizenship as a statutory part of the curriculum in 2002 has not coincided with a conspicuous rise in turnout. It seems probable that this is partly down to too many students having a transmissive experience of a subject concerned with abstract concepts such as rights and responsibilities, justice and democracy. If citizenship is to create active citizens, it has to be taught using active, participative and co-operative learning techniques. In this way students can *feel* rather than merely *think* about rights and responsibilities; they can experience the empowerment of democracy and, through skilful management of simulations, begin to sense the frustrations and pain of disenfranchisement and injustice. They can even, through engagement with their own and others' real-life co-operative enterprises, model and evaluate different forms of democracy. For the sake of authenticity, learning providers must themselves learn to be more transparent and more permeable. This means allowing not just students, parents/carers and staff, but also appropriate community stakeholders to engage with and influence substantive decision-making. No school that is managed along autocratic and exclusive lines can convincingly claim to be a co-operative school.

The fifth co-operative principle is Education, Training and Information. If 'information' equates to learning 'about' co-operatives, and 'training' equates to learning 'for' co-operatives, surely co-operative education should mean learning 'through' co-operation, a process which should lead to deeper understanding of and passion for the co-operative value of democracy.

Liberty
As previously noted, to the six organisational values discussed above, Birchall adds a seventh in the form of 'liberty'. At first sight it may seem curious, given the prominence he affords it, that Birchall defines liberty as the option not to participate. He explains:

> … this is not freedom to choose between an endless set of possibilities – we expect to be constrained by lack of information, of resources and of time - but a negative freedom, to choose not to do something if we do not want (Birchall, 1997: 66).

Birchall is impelled here by the specific instance of the Soviet Union, in which citizens were obliged to become members of consumer co-operatives; he proposes liberty then, specifically in relation to the first principle: Voluntary and Open Membership. In the context of education, speculation about voluntary non-participation may invoke libertarian education in general and, with his famous declaration "I force no bairn to learn in my school", A S Neill in particular (Neill, 1973: 418). In his foreword to Neill's *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (1960), Erich Fromm critiqued other forms of supposedly progressive education, objecting that they colluded with an economic system in which a more insidious 'anonymous authority' had taken the place of the 'overt authority' of the nineteenth century:

> … in the sphere of consumption (in which the individual allegedly expresses his free choice) he is … managed and manipulated. Whether it be the consumption of food, clothing, liquor, cigarettes, movies or television programmes, a powerful suggestion apparatus is at work with two purposes: first, to constantly increase the individual's appetite for new commodities; and secondly, to direct these appetites into the channels most profitable for industry. Man is transformed into the consumer, the eternal suckling, whose one wish is to consume more and "better" things (Fromm, 1960: 7).

The enslaving character of this insatiability is well-documented. See for instance Richard Layard in the 2003 Reith Lectures[3] and more recently Unicef's *Child well-being in the UK, Spain and Sweden: the role of inequality and materialism*:

> I've got an iPod nano, but I just kinda want something better, with cool apps and stuff (a child age 13), UK. (Unicef, 2011: 3).

In contrast to A S Neill there are modern proponents of radical education who believe an element of obligation is necessary. Without it they seem to doubt the power of education to lift the veil on the inequities supporting this self-defeating consumption. See for instance, Henry Giroux's recent complaint about:

> the need to comfort students - now viewed as customers with rights rather than obligations - rather than prepare them intellectually for a world that needs to be engaged, not merely enjoyed (Giroux, 2011).

Of course, co-operative education has always been spurred by the need to equip learners for civic participation. All the same, and without intending to detract from the endeavours of nineteenth and twentieth century co-operative educators, readying young people for critical engagement with the twenty-first century requires new levels of pedagogic sophistication. Increasing awareness of hitherto unrealised complexity in, for instance, natural and social systems, coupled with the substantive increase in complexity wrought by the processes of globalisation, call for wide-spread enhancement of critical literacy. This seems essential if liberation from the fruitless appetites and imagined certainties of the modernist world is to lead to a safe transition to a post-modern world of multiple identities and contingent meanings. The Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry Methodology positions the challenge as follows:

> All knowledge can be questioned. Critical engagement in the project is defined as the attempt to understand where perspectives are coming from and where they are leading to (origins and implications). Therefore, questioning is not an attempt to break the lenses (to destroy or de-legitimise perspectives), but to sharpen and broaden our vision. (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice/Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry Methodology, 2006: 4).

Despite the reassuring accent on sharpening our own vision, the key challenge here for educators is how to respond to this endless complexity without setting learners adrift on a sea of valueless relativism. In this, the work of Marcia Baxter Magolda, offers a way forward for co-operative education.

Baxter Magolda formulated a ladder of epistemological development comprising four 'Stages of Knowing'. Put simply, learners at stage one or 'Absolute Knowing' perceive things as either right or wrong; learners at stage two - 'Transitional Knowing' - perceive some things to be right, some wrong and some uncertain; those at stage three - 'Independent Knowing' - view everything as relative, and often "in the excitement over independent thinking", miss the possibility or desirability of judging some beliefs as preferable to others. Learners at stage four - 'Contextual Knowing' - recognise that knowledge is constructed and that judgements can and should be made on the basis of evidence and contexts (Baxter Magolda, 1992: 55).

On the journey from stage one to stage four the relationship between the teacher and the student must undergo a profound change. At stage one, students perceive teachers to be experts; by stage four, they will have grown to understand their teachers as co-operative partners and co-creators of meaning and understanding.

Significantly, Baxter Magolda recognised that breaking with traditional classroom teaching to allow students to interact practically as co-workers helps develop understanding of the extent to which meaning depends on context. Commenting on this aspect of Baxter Magolda's work, Jenny Moon has stated that learner involvement:

> … with 'real-life' situations such as work in student affairs (student unions, etc) and placements could furnish these kinds of experience very helpfully (Moon, 2005: 11).

It could also take place in a classroom where the teacher understood their role as co-creator of meaning and both valued and actively and creatively drew upon the diversity of experience within the room. We are reminded in this respect of Paulo Freire's conviction that key to personal and

social emancipation is equipping learners to critique their own lived experience:

> Liberation implies the problematisation of their situation in its concrete reality so that being critically aware of it, they can also act critically on it (Friere, 1968: 90).

This looks like a good fit with co-operative learning's dialogue between ethical theory and ethical practice. It is not impossible to envision a secondary school providing structured opportunities for its students to take part in practical co-operative learning and to use this as the basis for increasingly sophisticated reflection and social criticism. This could involve a programme extending from year 8 to year 11. At year 8 many students might be at stage two, knowing some things to be right, some wrong, some uncertain, and still largely perceiving teachers to be experts. Careful curriculum planning and teaching could mean that by year 11 many students would be at stage four, working with their teachers as co-operative partners, to understand knowledge as socially constructed, and able to recognise the need to form judgements according to evidence and contexts, rather than on the basis of received opinion and 'common sense.'

It may be then that we would wish to retain liberation in our list of co-operative education values, not with Birchall's intent of negative freedom, but in recognition of the need for liberation from our addiction to numerous flawed and destructive tastes and certainties.

The Ethical Values

I would like to turn very briefly now to the four ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. I will treat them as two pairs.

Honesty and openness

The co-operative movement's commitment to honesty and openness has its roots in practical concerns about quality, pricing and transparency of governance. In 1860 the Rochdale Pioneers included in their *rules of conduct* the requirement that "only the purest provisions procurable should be supplied to members" (Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society, 1860). In part the honesty and openness of any co-operative education venture should be measured by its willingness to engage all stakeholders in a thorough interrogation of the meaning of 'purity' and 'quality' in the context of its provision. In the section on equity I underlined the need for honesty around the fact that co-operation will always involve a dialectic between values and practice. Similarly, as I have noted in the discussion about democracy, co-operative educators also need to find ways to
co-operatively learn about openness through the governance and strategic management of their organisations. This process too will entail exacting consideration of the competing demands of pragmatism and values. This is one of the very reasons why co-operative principles and values have historically been reviewed and revised. Equipping learners with the capability and willingness to adapt while retaining clarity about and commitment to their core values, will become ever more important in an increasingly unpredictable world. This cannot be achieved if educators obscure the inevitable tensions between values and practice. Ultimately though, any organisation that consistently compromises the *quality* of its co-operative practice needs to be honest enough to own up and question its right to continue trading on the word co-operative.

An authentic commitment to openness and honesty is, then, not just a condition of co-operation; it is part of the *purpose* of co-operation, and co-operative education has a responsibility to find ways of teaching these values.

Social responsibility and caring for others

The Co-operative Group's Ethical Operating Plan 2011-2013 *Leading the Way: a revolutionary approach to social responsibility* commits to "continue to champion human rights" and, "to campaign anew to make poverty history, beginning with a reinvigoration of the Jubilee third world debt campaign" (Co-operative Group, 2011: p11).

The boldness of these statements helps set the document apart from most CSR publications and accord with Prakash's claim that the co-operative movement maintains a "fundamental

respect for all human beings" (Prakash, 2003: p2). The response of co-operative education must be equally bold. It can demonstrate its undertaking to care for one another in the classroom by creating what Mildred Masheder has described as "an atmosphere in which violence seems totally out of place and where constructive approaches are modelled" (Masheder, 2004: p54). It can demonstrate its commitment to social responsibility and to caring for others by sharing and developing appropriate levels of critical rigour in its analysis of the world. This will help learners see beyond single issues and to act with informed purpose, in place of harmful sentimentalism and pity. In this way, the values of social responsibility and caring for others become entirely consistent with the co-operative value of solidarity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although we might sympathise with the attempt by Mansell to edit down the co-operative values, their true power comes only when taken as a suite. Understood in this way they speak to and act upon each other, establishing their own dialectic. See for instance the way in which the co-operative conceptualisation social-responsibility is shaped by the co-operative commitment to equity. If the co-operative values are to play a defining role in co-operative education, regular space should be found for teachers, administrators and students to co-operatively interrogate these relationships and the implications for how they play out in practice in the classroom and beyond. This may be the defining mark of 'the co-operative education difference'.

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Notes

1   35% of adults charged in relation to rioting were out-of-work benefits claimants, compared to a national average of 12%. 42% of young people arrested qualified for free school meals, compared to an average of 16%. 66% of the young people had special educational needs, compared to 21% for the national average http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15426720

2   Years 10 and 11 in England and Wales (11 and 12 in Northern Wales), when students are aged between 14 and 16 and preparing for GCSEs.

3   In particular Lecture 2: Income and Happiness: rethinking economic policy, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 27 February 2003.