2022

Cooperative schools: Learning to be cooperative in a changing educational landscape

Downes, Tracey Anne

http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/19264

http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/552
University of Plymouth

Copyright Statement:

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior consent.

Cooperative Schools: Learning to be cooperative in a changing educational landscape

by

TRACEY ANNE DOWNES

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment of the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Plymouth Institute of Education

May 2022

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the numerous people who have supported me in the completion of my research.

The staff, students, parents and governors who gave their time so generously have provided me with rich sources of data to enable me to complete my research. For this I am very grateful.

My supervisors, Dr Ulrike Hohmann and Dr Ruth Boyask have supported me in my extended doctoral study, maintaining their faith in my capacity to complete my studies despite the various trials and tribulations that have adversely impacted me along the way. I thank them both for their unwavering support and encouragement.

I am grateful to Dr Nick Pratt, the former Director of the Plymouth University Professional Doctorate in Education Programme, for his mentoring and support in the early stages of my doctoral studies.

Finally, I would like to express my eternal thanks to my family without whose support, this thesis would not have seen the light of day. My husband, Jonathan, has provided unbending emotional support and now knows more about cooperative schools and CHAT than he would have believed possible! My children have all contributed to this work in their own way, whether by bringing me cups of tea at opportune moments or just playing quietly so as not to distract me at times when I needed it most. I am grateful to them all for their forbearance and understanding.

Tracey Anne Downes

Cooperative schools: Learning to be cooperative in a changing educational landscape

Abstract

Through a case study approach, this research considers what it means to be a cooperative school in the 21st Century and how this ideological stance impacts on stakeholders' experiences. The research sought the perceptions and experiences of 99 staff members, pupils, governors and wider community, to illuminate the act of learning to be cooperative and to explore the role of cooperative schools in the current fractured education landscape in England. Multiple qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, were used to generate data and Engeström's Second Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used to explore the interconnectivity of a cooperative school and to identify tensions or contradictions which exist. Tensions around performativity and power inequality mean that opportunities also exist for system level learning and so renewal of the system itself.

Whilst cooperative schools are perceived as democratic organisations or 'hybrid cooperatives', they represent the inherent tension between cooperativism and neoliberalism. The cooperative schools that form the basis of my research are engaged in the activity of democratisation and enculturation, seeing this as a way of instigating a more just society. In practice, they place greater importance on serving the local community than being democratic organisations, and now fill the community spaces left by current education policy and its promotion of academisation in English schools. Enacting cooperativism on a local scale and meeting the needs of the local community is integral to these two modern cooperative schools.

Key words: Learning**,** Cooperativism, Activity System, CHAT, Neoliberalism, Community, Democracy, Enculturation

Contents Table

Appendices   **222**

<u>Index of Figures</u>

List of Appendices

Appendix A – A Summary of the English Education System

Appendix B – Questions for Headteachers

Appendix C – Headteacher Consent Letter

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

Appendix E – Copy of Consent Signed by Participants

Appendix F – Document Analysis Sheet, Sheply College

Appendix G – List of main interview questions for students and staff

Glossary

Academy   An independent state funded school in England

AHT   Assistant Headteacher (a member of the school's senior leadership team)

CC   Cooperative College

CPD   Continuing Staff Development (Ongoing staff training)

CSnet   Cooperative Schools Network

DfE   Department for Education

DHT   Deputy Head Teacher (A headteacher's deputy / second in charge of the school)

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

HLTA   Higher Level Teaching Assistant (support staff who help student learning)

HoD   Head of Department (Middle leader in the academic system)

HoY   Head of Year (Middle leader in the pastoral system)

ICA   International Cooperative Alliance

KS3   Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9)

KS4   Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

KS5   Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13 also known as 6th Form)

LEA   Local Education Authority

MAT   Multi Academy Trust

NQT   Newly qualified teacher

Ofsted   Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (The government's school inspection service)

Ofqual   The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (A government service which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England)

PHSE   Personal, Health and Social Education (sometimes known as Lifeskills)

RQT   Recently qualified teacher

SCS   Schools Cooperative Society

SLT   Senior Leadership Team

SMSC   Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education

Stakeholders   Individuals / groups who are involved in a cooperative setting

TA   Teaching Assistant (Support staff who help students access learning)

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview - Introducing the Research

This research explores the current place and nature of cooperative schools in the English state education sector. It seeks to understand their importance as an antidote to the prevalent neoliberal agenda. At their peak in 2015, there were over 850 cooperative schools (Woodin, 2019a; Dennis; 2019) yet by 2021 there were estimated to be 460 active cooperative schools in England (CSnet, 2021). Despite this contraction cooperative schools are still the third largest group of schools behind Church of England and Catholic schools. Schools are still self-identifying as cooperative schools, subscribing to the umbrella organisation Cooperative Schools Network (CSnet) and working in both soft confederations and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). However, it is apparent that modern cooperative schools have undergone significant change since their inception in 2007. The early optimism of becoming a significant challenger to neoliberalism has gone as they have had to compromise and adapt to survive in the current neoliberal education environment.

To understand the nature and impact of these compromises I undertook research in two cooperative secondary schools in the South of England. I applied Engeström's notion that schools can be understood as activity systems (Ploettner and Tressaras, 2016). Schools by their very nature perform a series of operations and actions in the pursuit of a wide range of activity. The activity is focused on the attainment of common goals which are shared across the school community. Cooperative schools emphasise the desired outcome of learning to be cooperative as their core activity. Using Activity Theory as the lens allows for an in-depth study of the activity and actions that enable the system to function. I use case study methodology (Yin, 2009) to explore each activity

system as an individual case. I also use Engeström's Second Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to explore how cooperativism was interpreted and enacted in each activity system. The research focuses on understanding how cooperativism impacts on the activity of a system and especially on how this feels to those who are actors in the system. This allows me to understand the compromises and adaptations that each school is undertaking to ensure its viability within a competitive system. CHAT is explored further in Chapter 3.

1.2 Researcher stance

I have had a strong personal and professional interest in cooperative education for almost 15 years. I have worked in state education in England for over twenty-seven years. I became a teacher for what may seem idealistic reasons around improving young people's life chances and making a positive contribution to society. This has had a significant impact on my career as a teacher and led me to take on the role of Assistant Principal at an emerging cooperative school in 2008. My professional experiences focused on cooperation as a powerful vehicle in empowering young people, improving educational outcomes and enacting social change. I left this role after 9 years, proud of what had been achieved but also having seen dramatic changes in cooperative education at both local and national level. This has imbued in me a realistic understanding of the pressures and difficulties for cooperative schools in the face of neoliberal pressures. These pressures were exerted by changing governments, no matter their political colour. I saw first-hand the tensions exposed and also the compromises which were reached. These experiences have contributed positively to my professional life and my research. My position is as both an insider with first-hand experience of cooperative schooling but also as an outsider, a researcher, who can

explore the cooperative school sector from outside and bring a wider perspective to the research. Berger (2015) identified that this dual position can 'enhance research' (Berger, 2015:12) but that a researcher needs to be reflexive or aware of their position within the research. From a constructionist perspective bias or values cannot be avoided and naturally shape decision making (Finlay, 2002a; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). My personal background and professional experiences have undoubtedly exerted an influence upon the design, implementation and data analysis of my research. I have considered for each element of my research, the three central reflexive questions: what I did, how I did it and why I did it (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). Acknowledging reflexivity is important to ensuring the transparency of my research and is looked at in more detail in my methodology Section (Section 4.2 Reflexivity and Section 4.5 Research Methods).

Due to personal circumstances, my research has been undertaken over an extended period of time which has brought both advantages and disadvantages. Primarily, it has allowed me to see the dramatic changes which have affected cooperative schooling from its beginning in 2007, through its peak in numbers in 2015, to its current stability, albeit with lower numbers, in 2021. The intervening instability was evident in the difficulty of finding schools to take part in my research. On numerous occasions, I changed plans as schools withdrew from the research for varied reasons including enforced academisation, changed status from being cooperative schools and change of personnel. These are issues explored in greater detail in my literature review (Chapter 2) and in my findings and discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6).

1.3 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to understand what a modern cooperative school is, how activity is undertaken to enact cooperativism and the compromises required in this

process in England. The focus is also on the experiences of participants within the activity system as this has been an overlooked area of research. The contention, that cooperative schools 'are in a precarious position' (Woodin, 2019b: 1174), is an oversimplification. The remaining 460 cooperative schools have adapted to allow them to co-exist in the current neoliberal educational climate in England. I explore the inherent tensions and compromises in my research.

My four research questions are:

- What are the cooperative values and how are they interpreted and enacted?

- What does it mean to be a cooperative school?

- How are the values enacted within the activity of a specific cooperative educational environment?

- How does the enactment of these values impact on the experience of stakeholders?

1.4 Approach

This research addresses a gap in knowledge about cooperative schools. The use of a case study methodology (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) and second generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987) allow for the generation of rich data through deep study of the two individual activity systems being researched. See Sections 3.3 and 3.6 for more detailed information on Second Generation CHAT.

Data were generated from within each activity system using a variety of methods. Various participants including staff, pupils and governors were interviewed about their

experiences Focus groups with students were conducted to learn their perceptions of what it means to be part of a cooperative school. A range of observations were carried out in lessons, assemblies, briefings, parents' evenings and social events. The intention was to gather as much evidence as possible from across the activity systems, of operations and actions leading to the promotion of cooperation. (see Figure 4.1 for details of data generation).

The two activity systems in my research were selected because they were able and willing to participate. Both expressed an ongoing commitment to their identity as cooperative schools and were also in geographical locations which made access possible. The case sampling in this research is therefore by convenience (Cohen, Manion and Morrison; 2018). Individual research participants were selected based on the capacity of the activity system to release them with minimal impact on day-to-day operations.

1.5 Importance of Research

This research is important because, despite the growing pressures of the neoliberal agenda in education in England, an estimated 460 state-funded schools continue to resist these pressures. They offer an alternative perspective of cooperation as their primary focus despite the need for compromise and resolving tensions. Whilst there is diversity in their individual approach, cooperative schools are committed to cooperativism. Some research has been done into what cooperative schools represent but the focus has been mainly on their status as democratic organisations, governance and how they enact cooperative values. Some early research explored the status of cooperative schools as providing an alternative to neoliberalism in education (Davidge,

2013; Woodin, 2011; 2012). Later research has exposed the difficulties of this position and even called into question the continuing existence of cooperativism in schools in England (Dennis, 2018; 2019; Woodin, 2019b). My research examines how cooperative schools have made compromises and adapted to survive in the current neoliberal climate, finding a space in which to operate.

In looking at cooperative schools as activity systems using second generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), this research provides new understanding of how cooperative schools operate; the activity they undertake and the compromises they make to remain viable in the current marketised educational environment.

1.6 Overview of thesis

Chapter 2 presents an in-depth study of the existing literature on cooperative schools, especially regarding their cultural-historical origins, democratic identity and their resistance to neoliberalism.

Chapter 3 explores Engeström's second generation CHAT as my theoretical framework, considering its appropriateness for my research.

Chapter 4 sets out the decisions behind my research design using Engeström's CHAT and Yin's case study approach. I outline the methods used to generate data and consider the challenges in my research.

Chapter 5 details the findings from my fieldwork undertaken at Sheply College and Mediston Academy.

Chapter 6 analyses these findings and identifies the activities undertaken in both systems. It exposes the tensions and compromises made in establishing space to operate in a marketised education environment.

Chapter 7 draws conclusions about the nature of the compromises made by cooperative schools and the implications for the cooperative schools movement moving forward.

1.7 Note on terms used in this research

Throughout this thesis I have used the term 'stakeholders' for the participants as this is the term used across cooperative schools and the Cooperative College to refer to participants who have a vested interest in the activity of the school. This is perceived to include: parents, pupils, staff, governors. The terminology contrasts with the accepted term 'member' as used in most cooperatives which conveys belonging to an organisation. 'Stakeholder' has its roots in the world of commerce and is linked to shareholding or a vested financial interest (Freeman, 1984; Gijselinckx, 2009). I contend that this term highlights the complex position of English cooperative schools as democratically focused organisations operating within a marketised educational environment. It is also reflected in terms like 'brand' used in some research (Davidge, 2013).

I have also used the terms pupil and student interchangeably as this reflects how the terms were used in the two schools, or activity systems, at the heart of my research. This allows me to remain true to quotations.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides insight into the key literature which underpins my research. Cooperative schools have undergone significant change since their inception in 2007. The definition of a modern cooperative school lacks clarity but is often expressed as being value driven (Wilson, 2013; Davidge, 2017). The use of the term values within a school context will be considered. I will explore the origins of cooperative schooling within 19th century consumer cooperatives and consider the factors leading to their unexpected resurgence in 21st century England. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the current position of cooperative schools, considering their place in schooling amidst dramatic changes that have impacted on them in the short period from 2015 - 2020.

2.2 What is a cooperative school?

Researching cooperative schools is complex because there is no single agreed definition of a cooperative school. Cooperative schools in England are a form of state schooling - schools funded by the government for the common or public good and to replicate the skills and behaviours desired within that society (Feinberg, 2016; Gunter, 2018; Benn and Downs, 2016; Benn, Fielding and Moss, 2019). Education is affected by who the budget holder is and the presence of a national agenda. As such, English state schools are accountable to the government, are required to meet government set benchmarks and are subject to a national culture of performativity whereby state schools are reduced to a group of externally set measures or judgements (Coates, 2010; Ball, 2013; Gobby, Keddie and Blackmore, 2018).

Tom Woodin, who has been a consistent voice in the discourse around cooperative schools, states that cooperative schools are often defined with reference to the history of the cooperative movement. Even in the early consumer cooperatives, education was perceived as integral to creating an ethical society by lifting people out of poverty (Gurney, 1996; Woodin, 2019a). Consumer cooperatives saw that involvement in education could contribute to a fairer and more just society by spreading cooperative values and behaviours. This perception of providing an alternative vision and establishing a dialogue for social equality is frequently included in the definition of modern cooperative schools (Wilson, 2012; Audesley and Cook, 2014; Hall, 2019).

Their focus on creating social justice means that cooperative schools are often defined as being in opposition to neoliberalism, despite owing their existence to that same ideology. The neoliberal agenda of competition and marketisation is opposed to cooperativism with its focus on collaboration, cooperation and democracy (Woodin and Fielding, 2013). Davidge (2017) comments that cooperative schools frequently employ the term 'value driven education' in their literature, linking the development of cooperative values with fulfilling society's needs. The Cooperative College website (2019) states the central tenet of cooperation as 'building a fairer world' but the word 'fairer' is subjective and open to ideological interpretation. It could be subject to neoliberal appropriation, undermining the possibility of cooperative schools being able to challenge social inequalities and injustice (Davidge, Facer and Schostak, 2015; Ralls, 2019). There is a lack of clarity in both research and in cooperative schools themselves about what makes them cooperative and 'this ambiguity brings risks' especially around the place of cooperative schools within a marketised education system (Facer, Thorpe and Shaw, 2011:3).

Central to many twenty-first century attempts at defining a cooperative school is loyalty to or agreement with cooperative values and principles as codified by the International Cooperative Alliance. These values are seen as: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity (Wilson, 2012; Thorpe, 2013; Ross, 2019). Whilst these concepts are presented as tangible and definable there is little guidance on what cooperativeness will actually look or feel like (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2018; Ralls, 2019). Multiple manifestations of cooperative schooling are possible as each school has the freedom to interpret and enact their own understanding of cooperative values. This means that this process is inconsistent, especially as there is limited monitoring undertaken (Woodin, 2017b; Dennis, 2018). Some cooperative schools are also resistant to monitoring, seeing it as undermining their autonomy and democracy which they perceive as central to cooperative school identity (Davidge, 2017).

One example of the complexity surrounding loyalty to values can be seen in the 2013 Parliamentary debate on Cooperative Education. Members of Parliament (MPs) from various parties claimed that cooperative values were vital and desirable for society. The Conservative MP, Steve Baker, listed cooperative values and stated, 'who could possibly disagree with them?' (Baker, 2013). The generic nature of cooperative values also means that different political viewpoints can fully embrace the terms yet mean vastly different things in practice.

A final approach to defining cooperative schools can be through their relationship to the developing cooperative schools infrastructure and the Cooperative College, a British educational charity which focused on promoting cooperative values and ideas. The Cooperative College actively encouraged schools to convert to become cooperative

academies (Dennis, 2018; 2019) which added to the diversity of the English school system (see appendix A for a summary of the English school system).

There was an intention to unify modern cooperative schools in England: 'We are united by a common set of cooperative values, ethics and principles shared with a global movement' (Arnold, 2013: 251). The term 'united' is an oversimplification. In joining the SCS, schools were making a formal commitment to their **own** understanding and interpretation of these values, which they then agreed to uphold and promote in their school and wider society. There were few guidelines for subscribing schools beyond being aligned in some way to the cooperative values. This has led to a complex landscape of cooperative schools. Each is potentially demonstrating different activity whilst still being accountable to the government's performativity and accountability measures (Wilson, 2014; Ralls, 2019; Woodin and Shaw, 2019). Furthermore, schools only need to profess a 'general' agreement with the codified values to be allowed membership of the Schools Cooperative Society (SCS) and its later replacement, Cooperative Schools network (CSnet). Initially there was no form of quality assurance for cooperative schools to adhere to meaning that, in practice, there is great flexibility in how the named cooperative values are interpreted and enacted (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2018; Ross, 2019).

The Cooperative College expected and even encouraged diversity: 'There is no blueprint for a cooperative school...these are your cooperatives that will serve the needs of your community' (Wilson, 2013). Davidge (2013) states that headteachers in early converting schools noted that only governance and not enactment was prescribed. The common ground is the sharing of cooperative values and principles within society. This sense of

autonomy was supported with the launch of Cooperative Schools Network (CSnet) in 2018. It acknowledges that schools individually interpret and enact the codified values, yet emphasises that they do not do this in isolation, rather they are part of a larger whole, a network which can provide support and guidance. Dennis (2018) uses the term transindividual interaction to describe cooperative schools as individual learning communities with individual agency but working together to achieve common goals around cooperativism.

The more recent literature on cooperative schools identifies this perceived autonomy as being problematic. The implied lack of cohesion in the sector suggests cooperative school identity was not clearly defined and understood. The absence of quality assurance applied by the cooperative schools infrastructure further challenged the notion of commonality in cooperative schools (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2019; Ralls, 2019). When the Cooperative College was pressured by the schools themselves into defining a cooperative school in 2012 (Dennis, 2018) they also attempted to address concerns about the lack of quality assurance by introducing a benchmark standard, the Cooperative Identity Mark (CIM). This was designed to support schools in strengthening their cooperative ethos, embedding the values and also sharing good practice with other cooperative schools. The CIM asserted that the interpretation and enactment of the codified values within society was at the heart of cooperative schooling. The Identity Mark was designed to reflect the school's everyday practice and the documents deliberately emphasised that the review visit was not an inspection. Rather it was envisaged that the reviewer would check the school's own evidence and support the school in the development of an action plan to enhance its cooperative identity (Cooperative College, 2012a; 2012b). Whilst this was presented as being a supportive

process, it does reflect a hidden blueprint from the Cooperative College for how cooperative schools were expected to develop and the expectations for how they should be applying 'each co-operative value across all aspects of their school operation' (Thorpe, 2013:8).

The diversity evident within the cooperative schools sector in the period from 2008 - 2017 is troublesome for precisely defining a cooperative school in both theory and practice. Cooperative schools sought to use the changes brought about by the marketisation of education to establish schools which were focused on making society fairer. In rejecting accountability measures like attainment or agreement with a prescribed list of compulsory features, the Cooperative College is attempting to address concerns that cooperative schooling is simply a more ethical version of neoliberalism or 'privatisation by the good guys' (Woodin and Fielding, 2013). There is no comprehensive definition of a cooperative school but self-identification and subscription to cooperative infrastructures like Schools Cooperative Society (SCS) or CSnet are relevant indicators.

2.3 Values in Schools

Within compulsory schooling in England values are simplified and codified. Mission statements are often presented as having importance in themselves and being things of worth. They express what stakeholders in an establishment believe so inclusions or exclusions of information are significant (Halstead, 1996). There is certainly a systemic expectation that aims and, what is increasingly referred to the vision, of every school are communicated. Mission statements need to be brought to life through enactment by participants but also become part of marketing strategy, designed to attract families. This dual purpose can be problematic because mission statements work at

representational level only and focus on aspirations or what stakeholders want a school to be, rather than what is happening in the actual activities of the school (Marfleet, 1996). There is an implied meaning, but it lacks clarity and is therefore open to varied interpretations. This clash between representation and aspiration is of particular importance in the cooperative sector. Many cooperative schools comment that they are 'value-driven' in their documentation and mission statement. Phrases such as 'underpinned by cooperative values' and 'What unites us are the cooperative values...' are used (Cooperative schools in the south of England). The need to promote themselves means that there is a blurring of the lines between cooperative values and market values through language and media which are used to represent them.

Furthermore, any interpretation of values as having objective meaning is problematic in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory because meaning and knowledge do not exist independently of those who construct them. Because all knowledge is socially constructed, it is the social interaction, interpretation and ongoing re-interpretation that adds meaning to any values. Knowledge is not static or absolute but is a shared process in creating and re-creating meaning through historic and cultural interpretation (Young, 2007; Daniels, Launder and Porter, 2009). Values carry meaning by undergoing a complex process which includes being conceptualised, theorised and enacted through activity - thought, speech and actions.

Conceptualised:		Theorised:		Enacted:
A principle is formed and made sense of.	→	The principle or idea is made into a framework for action.	→	Action is undertaken by participants.
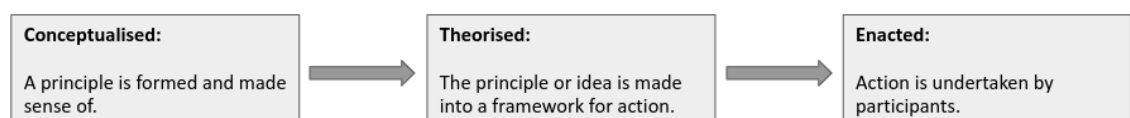
Fig. 2.1   The process by which values carry meaning

Meaning is negotiated and situated. It is carried through the process of the activity rather than the outcome. The ongoing nature of the activity creates the meaning for the values. (Ball and Bowe, 1992; Ball, 2017).

The values publicly espoused by an educational establishment are constantly affected by the interpretations and reinterpretations of others. Stakeholders in schools never act in isolation, even as academies (Wilkins, 2017), so they never engage in the process of conceptualisation alone either. Their understanding comes from conceptualisation, theorisation and enactment. Meanings are drawn from their own experiences and those of others. The conceptualisation of values involves making sense of abstract terms, utilising prior experiences, actions and knowledge to invest a meaning into the named value (Ferriera and Schulze, 2014). This creates meaning where none would otherwise exist.

This process of socially constructing meaning can be seen in the Cooperative Schools Movement. There has been an attempt to establish a group identity through use of the International Cooperative Alliance's definitions and guidance (1995). In subscribing to cooperative organisations like CSnet, stakeholders are agreeing to adopt these named values: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, community and solidarity with their collectively agreed meaning and associated activity. Stakeholders may not have been part of the historical and cultural negotiation process in determining the meaning and, potentially, they might not agree with the nuances of meaning espoused by the umbrella organisation (Young, 2007; Ferriera and Schulze, 2014; Dennis, 2019). Such an approach holds significant room for varied understanding or the creation of a new interpretation from the tensions and contradictions that will be

exposed within a system or school (Engeström, 1999). Trying to impose a set interpretation of values onto a school is problematic because values are socially constructed rather than having absolute meanings. A gap can also exist between the intentions and practical application which can leave actors unclear on what the agreed values are or how to enact them (Ferriera and Schulze, 2014).

A further complication is the simplified assumption in many establishments that the process of endowing meaning is static rather than dynamic where understanding is retained in isolation from ongoing activity. In reality, participants within establishments frequently return to their agreed values to re-evaluate them in the light of activities undertaken (Engeström, 1999). This process of ongoing activity carries the meaning for values. Individuals involved in schools are constantly engaged with making sense of activity based on individual experiences but also the collective prior historical and cultural experiences of stakeholders in other schools and also the cooperative movement more generally. Interpretations are affected by who is involved in the process of re-evaluation. Frequently, the headteacher drives the adoption of socially constructed values within an establishment but the contextualised interpretation could be disputed by other stakeholders (Siemienska, 2004). It is possible that the situational interpretation of a value, for example equity, may not tally with the meaning cited by others even within the same group of individuals or schools.

The enactment of values is an essential part of the process of creating meaning. Clear understanding of values may exist in an establishment but, without effective enactment, this understanding is ineffective. Exploring the actions of stakeholders (enactment) in addition to their comments (theorisation) provides a more exact picture of their

understanding and interpretation. Stakeholders' actions offer a vital insight into the importance and meaning of these values in the everyday life of a school. For example, a school might advocate democracy as a value yet large numbers of students might choose not to participate in a school council or elections as they feel that nothing they raise is ever acted upon – they feel excluded from the democratic process (Ruddock and Fielding, 2006). This feeling of disenfranchisement can be compounded by the actions of adults who control the democratic processes in schools (Wyness, 2006) or even the government who promote democracy as something to be explicitly taught about rather than experienced in schools (Ruddock and Fielding, 2006). Schools may pay lip service to holding participatory activity as important whilst tokenising young people (Meshulam and Apple, 2018).

Power and authority are important issues within the interpretation and enactment of values in schools. In 'Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity' (1996) Bernstein explored the concept that schools are not neutral and that various participants can be present and yet isolated within the establishment. Whether these participants can recognise themselves within an establishment is deeply pertinent to an exploration of values; do they understand the values that have been codified in documents and have created the school's aspirational mission statement? Do different participants act in accordance with these values or do their actions show that they cannot be recognised in the images that a school creates and that they are actually excluded or marginalised within the establishment?

A school metaphorically holds up a mirror in which an image is reflected. There may be several images, positive and negative… the question is: who recognises themselves as of value? (Bernstein, 1996:7)

It is a feature of most schools that power is unequally distributed and not all participants are central to the decision-making process. There is a legitimate role in being on the periphery whilst the socio-cultural practises of the establishment are learnt and absorbed by an individual. The individual can engage in ongoing learning as they develop mastery in recognising the interpreted or codified values. This growth in experience and competence can allow participants to have greater influence on the meaning carried in the system. A child's position within a school is more complex than the involvement of adult stakeholders as it can be argued that children's participation in a school is not truly voluntary - their attendance in school is mandatory. However, schools focus heavily on preparing children to become future citizens which is especially evident in the cooperative schools sector. Children's learning in school goes beyond the formal structured learning in lessons as they are part of the wider community of the school and they also engage freely in a range of informal learning opportunities around the school (Davidge, 2017). In participating in the wider school community and the common endeavour of learning to be cooperative, children are being given an understanding of what cooperative values represent.

In Britain the term values is frequently used within the compulsory education sector as a concept imbued with a pre-determined meaning which is commonly shared and widely understood (Ungoed-Thomas, 1996; Dryer, 2017). Accepting that knowledge is socially constructed means acknowledging that values are also socially constructed and reflect

the interests of different sectors of society. They are subject to the dynamics of power and are open to negotiation and renegotiation. This flexibility is important within an education system which is constantly changing like the English system. History and culture have a significant impact on conveying meaning as it is the process of activity - thought, speech and actions which generate knowledge. With cooperative schools professing to be based on a shared codification of cooperative values they provide rich ground to explore how meaning is created through the activity of a school. My research seeks to illuminate this negotiated process of carrying meaning in cooperative schools.

2.4 Enculturation

Enculturation is connected to how interpreted values and ideas are learnt within a specific community rather than the wider society in general. It is the process wherein people learn the dynamics of their surrounding culture and the required values, norms and language necessary to operate in that culture (Ferguson et al, 2016). In turn, this then impacts on the perception or worldview developed as the individual becomes more inculcated into the culture. The process of enculturation generally occurs through actions and observations between the individual or member and the cultural group. Ethnic groups, religious establishments, families and schools are often involved in this process where learning takes place on a more informal basis such as unconscious observations of significant cultural events (Ferguson et al, 2016; Schönpflug and Bilz, 2009).

The two terms enculturation and socialisation are often perceived to be similar but there are significant differences in their meaning which were identified by anthropologist Margaret Mead in 1963 (Langness, 1975). Socialisation is the process of learning to

behave in a manner that is acceptable in society - essentially how to obey society's rules and to be an effective member of society. This is often achieved through deliberate and explicit teaching of the rules. Enculturation refers specifically to being adopted into or developing expertise in a particular culture where informal learning about the culture itself takes centre stage through both conscious and unconscious means (Langness, 1975; Ferguson et al, 2016).

Schönpflug and Bilz (2009) state that the fundamental purpose of enculturation is to develop the competency of members of a culture. Once an individual is competent in their culture, they internalise it and are considered to be enculturated (Hoebels, quoted by Walker, 2007). This process ensures the continuation and potential strengthening of the culture. It is possible to see members as engaging in practices, actions and language which allow them to move from a position of cultural novice to expert through their interaction with, and engagement in, the culture itself (Esper, 2014). This apprenticeship system requires the community or cultural group to actively share their culture to ensure its continuity and even survival.

It is helpful to apply this concept to schools. Schools have a specific and nuanced identity or culture and there is an ongoing process to induct new members into the system. The school community is necessarily fluid due to the nature of schooling. Children join the system, learn the values, norms and the language of the system and then move on once they have reached the end of their compulsory schooling. It can be said that, on their arrival at a new school, children are untamed and needing to be inducted into the culture of their new school. Indeed, Parsons makes the observation that each new generation of children can be seen as "a recurrent barbarian invasion" (Parsons, 1951).

Schools are places of culture. It is important to note that children can be included or excluded from the culture that exists, but this might not be a conscious act. Howe (2021) explores the impact of westernised education on Indigenous children and notes that they are excluded from the culture of the school. Their perception and worldview, especially around what knowledge is important to learn, means that there are barriers to their enculturation in the school. An example within the English educational context would be the introduction of British Values. All schools have been required since 2014 to educate young people in what it means to be British and to ensure that they leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain (DfE, 2014). This is a clear example of socialisation with young people being taught the notion of acceptable behaviour in society. However, it has the power to exclude cultural groups from within society due to the interpretation of some of the prescribed values and their clashes with diverse cultural identities in England. This emphasises the complex nature of enculturation and notions of competency which have an impact on schooling.

2.5 The Historical and Cultural Roots of Cooperative Schooling

The origin of cooperative schools can be seen in the specific cultural-historical context of the 19th Century and the early consumer cooperatives. Rapid urbanisation, increasing food prices and housing costs led to high levels of poverty in the working class. An absence of political representation which left workers feeling disenfranchised, worker exploitation and high levels of illiteracy contributed to social unrest and fuelled a sense that things could and should be more just in the powerful British Empire. (Woodin, 2015a) In England, the cooperative movement began in the retail sector, building on earlier ideas of cooperation and solidarity. Early 'pioneers' like Owen, King and the Rochdale pioneers worked to establish trade and retail cooperatives to provide a fair

deal to workers (Macpherson, 2000; Woodin, 2015a; Davidge, 2017). The best known and most influential are the 'Rochdale Pioneers' who are regarded as having formed the basis of the modern cooperative movement. Their 'Rochdale Principles' were officially adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 1937. These have been updated several times, the latest being in 1995. These outline the principles, explained previously in my introduction and earlier in this Literature Review, upon which all cooperatives worldwide are still expected to operate. (Vernon, 2011; Shaw, 2015; Woodin, 2015b).

The origin and the symbolic importance of the Rochdale Pioneers has heavily influenced the development of cooperativism. It can be said that the Rochdale Pioneers have become a foundational myth for the modern cooperative movement, partly true but partly parabolic (Fairbairn, 1994; Dennis, 2018). In essence, the story of the Rochdale Pioneers has become an 'icon or totem pole' (Fairbairn, 1994:1) which is not necessarily factually accurate, but which promotes concepts of solidarity and resilience in the face of difficulties. It is possible that this might have attracted some schools to the 21st Century cooperative schools movement in the face of growing neoliberalism (Dennis, 2018).

The importance of general education has been frequently asserted by the cooperative movement since the establishment of the early consumer cooperatives in 1844. The approach was to educate workers so they could raise themselves out of poverty and avoid exploitation, thereby leading to a fairer and more just society (Gurney, 1996; Dennis, 2018; Woodin, 2019b). The manufacturer and philanthropist Robert Owen promoted cooperatives as socially just models, campaigning against child labour and

promoting education as the key to securing collective wellbeing within society (Davidge, Facer, and Schostak, 2015). William King helped to disseminate ideas on cooperation and knowledge being power through the publication 'The Co-operator' which was published between 1828-1830 (Woodin, 2011; 2015a; 2017a). Education only became compulsory in England in 1880 but, from 1866, there were calls for the cooperative movement to become involved in schools specifically to educate the next generation of cooperators and to impact more significantly on society (William Cooper cited by Bonner, 1961).

Early cooperative societies established worker education schemes and focused on improving the literacy of workers and their children, seeing this as a route out of poverty. Education was promoted as 'a central pillar of cooperative values and society.' (Vernon, 2011:37) but the cooperative movement's involvement in education is significantly under researched (Woodin, 2019). It is interwoven with working class activity and the development of workers' cooperatives which have previously been seen to hold less importance in society (Gurney, 1996; Woodin, 2011; 2017a). Workers' education and formal schooling became interwoven around the central distinctive feature of learning about cooperation and cooperative values, developing more just institutions and cooperative identities (Facer, Thorpe and Shaw, 2011; Woodin, 2019).

Many cooperative societies focused on adult learning as their primary involvement in education. They saw teaching adults about cooperative values and facilitating self-improvement through means such as running libraries and worker education courses as a means to achieve a more equitable society (Facer, Thorpe and Shaw, 2011; Woodin, 2015). The Cooperative College was established, in 1919, as a charity to support this aim.

Cooperative societies also realised the strategic importance of educating children to develop cooperative behaviours and attitudes. It was felt that this would equip children for life, specifically for being able to lead fulfilling individual lives but also in being aware of social justice (Shaw, 2015; Woodin, 2019b). The 1870 Education Act meant that the state would take control of and fund elementary education in England. This was a response to industrialists' calls for mass education if Britain was to maintain its manufacturing supremacy (Woodin, 2015a). The Act established that free schooling needed to be provided throughout England for 5–12-year-olds and that this needed to be funded and controlled centrally by the state, although it could be delivered by charitable groups. Local cooperative societies realised the opportunity this presented and established schools such as Wallsend Cooperative School in 1872. This was funded by government grant and focused on children's intellectual and moral development (Todd, 2013; Woodin, 2015b). The school lost its funding after two years due to perceived low standards. The friction between the expectations of government in funding the school and the school's desired autonomy to teach children about cooperativism can be seen at this early stage.

The cooperative movement has remained involved in education in the wider sense throughout the 20th Century. Their involvement in adult education has remained constant although cooperative schools as a distinct schooling group largely ceased to exist after the Balfour Act (1902), when education was brought entirely under state control. The vision for modern cooperative schools is drawn from a specific, nuanced interpretation of history. Cooperative schools are rooted in the Industrial Revolution, working class history and an associated discourse of social justice. The modern cooperative schools movement is firmly rooted in this historical context but focuses on

relevance to the specific 21st century context too. (Vernon, 2013; Ross, 2019; Woodin and Shaw, 2019).

2.6 Understanding Democracy

Democracy is a contested concept and has become an area of intense debate. There is a perception that democracy is facing a crisis and is under attack from populist politics. Globally, there is growing dissatisfaction with democracy as people feel that their voices are not heard and that a small number of powerful people dominate. The rise in populist politics has led to assaults on democratic elements of society such as the press and the legal system (Apple, 2018; Plattner, 2020).

Many researchers look back to Dewey for their understanding of democracy. The conventional notion of democracy was that an informed and engaged electorate was all that was required. Dewey stated that democracy depended on two central principles. Citizens needed to work together towards the common good and they needed to consider the perspectives of those different to themselves before speaking or acting (Dewey, 2016; Gordon, 2016). This would lead to a society where citizens appreciate and tolerate the views and needs of others, allowing everyone to participate in society. For Dewey, a democratic society is one that relies on, and is strengthened by, common associations and free interaction among diverse groups. Free interaction refers to participation that is voluntary and not done under coercion or against one's will (Dewey, 2016). Within this viewpoint, democracy is dynamic, meaning it can never be static or fixed. It is a vehicle for the recreation and reorganisation of society for the better for all citizens (Gordon, 2016). Each new generation is needed to reframe democracy (Hytten, 2009).

Education and democracy are linked. Education can be interpreted in the wider sense in terms of the growth of the individual towards the outcome of having a "flourishing and fulfilling personal and social life" (Apple, 2018:12). Citizens must constantly interrogate who they are in order to bring about change. Schools have a vital role within a democracy. They are places where people learn and practise how to exercise their agency and self-control which allows them to participate fully in society. For Dewey, schools are a microcosm of democratic society where teachers and students learn through interaction on equal terms (Kira, 2019).

Some schools have taken the step to establish themselves as democratic establishments. A democratic school is one in which structures and processes, such as governance and policy decisions, are democratic in nature as are curriculum and pedagogy. Links should be made between what is said and what is done (Gandin and Apple, 2018). Key to this approach is full and free participation by students rather than tokenism (Meshulam and Apple, 2018; Boyask, 2020). One example is Sands School, a privately funded school, which is governed by democratic processes and structures. Its status as a fee-paying school means that it needs to make compromises over its democracy as only those who can pay the fees can engage. Similarly, the cooperative schools movement in England needs to compromise over its democratic identity as only students attending those cooperative schools engage in the democratic processes that exist within the school (Boyask, 2020). The compromises that democratic schools have to make are necessary to negotiate tensions created in trying to enact democracy in a hostile environment where democracy and education are the target for groups with different ideologies. The act of compromise itself reflects the power held by certain individuals within the organisation. Who is deciding where to make compromises and

who is losing out in this process? (Apple, 2018). The likelihood is that decisions and compromises in schools are being made by adults and not children who should be at the heart of the process (Plowden et al, 1967; Richards, 2018b).

Democratic schools are sites of conflict and tension where neoliberalism has an impact on both structures and pedagogy. State funded schools, by their very nature, are not democratic places. They are required by the state to conform to externally set criteria such as academic benchmarks and are hierarchical in nature (Meshulam and Apple, 2018). Democratic schools, like other democratic institutions, are generally vulnerable due to political interference in society whereby the prevailing neoliberalism reorganises society in "truly pervasive ways" (Apple, 2018:11). Society is not running for the benefit of all and people can be marginalised as a result of class, race, gender, disability, sexuality. It can be said that common association and free interaction are not taking place in these circumstances which allows for different groups to abuse their power as not all citizens are equally valued or engaged in society. Therefore, democracy is not being fully enacted in democratic schools or in wider society (Apple, 2018).

2.7 Neoliberalism and Neoliberal Education Policy

2.7i Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is the dominant political ideology. Originally the term referred to a specific set of economic beliefs around free trade and market orientated economics, but it developed into the term for market orientated reform policies in society. In England its modern origins can be traced to the political leadership of Margaret Thatcher and the rise of New Right ideology. New Right ideology can be seen as a reaction against both Keynesian economics and post war paternalistic conservative policies. The focus was on

restructuring government and instilling 'a more individualistic socio-political framework and culture' through the deregulation of industry (Williams, 2021: 27). New Right ideology affirmed that all functions of society can be enhanced if they operate under market conditions. These market conditions involved weakening monopolies to provide greater choice for consumers and removing subsidies to achieve greater competition (Brown, 2017). Associated with this shift was the increase of the language of the market into different spheres of society, such as the term 'consumer'. This application of market principles was intended to provide greater freedom through deregulation and also to reduce government functions to a minimal level (Brown, 2017; Williams, 2021). A further thread of New Right ideology is the emphasis on self-interest seen in attention shifting to the individual rather than the collective which can be seen as a form of social selfishness (Maisuria, 2014).

Neoliberalism was further embedded under the New Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown from 1997 to 2010. New Labour had realised that there was little appetite for left wing politics and sought to reposition Labour as a centrist-left political party to be more electable (Blair, 1998; Pratt, 2016). New Right had sought to promote deregulation and a free-market economy whilst also embracing conservative social policies. New Labour recognised a rapidly changing society, so were more socially liberal in their policies but also sought to establish a more managed or controlled marketisation to replace the free market economy of New Right. New Labour were embracing capitalism but trying to mediate its impact through redefining the concept of individualism. In place of the individualism promoted under New Right, New Labour emphasised the role of the individual within a cohesive society. Blair (1998) stated that he sought the 'collective power of all used for the individual good of each' (Blair, 1998:4).

This represented a shift from focusing on the individual to how the roles of the individual and wider society are connected.

New Labour embraced the Third Way proposed by Anthony Giddens. This rejects free market capitalism but also rejects traditional state socialism. Instead, it suggests a social democratic middle way to achieve a more just and equitable society (Giddens, 1998). Giddens felt that using both private and public sectors could stimulate growth in society. New Labour recognised that a degree of market economics was necessary, believing it to be an effective and efficient means of achieving social justice.

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010 - 2015) moved to introduce even greater freedoms to the market economy which further impacted society. It marked the establishment of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology in England through successive governments of varying political leanings (Williams, 2021). This shift towards free market economics has altered how society views services provided by the state, for example, parents of school aged children and medical patients are now considered as consumers of these services. Neoliberalism has had a major impact on education in England which is explored in Section 2.7ii.

Brown (2017) contends that neoliberal policies, with their focus on consumerism, lead to negative outcomes for society. She states that corporate and financial pressures are being exerted on the state, leading to increasing social inequality and crass unethical considerations. These pressures are reflected in the focus on 'return of investment' which has become an expectation in society. Neoliberalism has led to governments placing limited value on investments that do not show a quantifiable return such as

Liberal arts degrees or the 'Sure Start' programme originally introduced under Blair's New Labour government. Brown's contention is that the inequality in society is growing because of marketisation, and that neoliberalism is 'quietly undoing basic elements of democracy' (Brown, 2017: 17).

There is an inherent ideological clash between the neoliberal agenda of marketisation and cooperativism. The overall aim of cooperative ideology is to achieve social justice and establish a dialogue for social equality through the promotion of concepts such as equity, equality, self-responsibility, self-help and solidarity (Wilson, 2014; Woodin and Fielding, 2013). Cooperative schools were set up with the aim of democratising and cooperativising English education (Woodin, 2019b). These schools have been positioned as an alternative perspective to neoliberalism (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019b). The origins of the cooperative movement were in acting as a democratic and economic alternative to capitalism (Woodin, 2019b). Traditionally, the cooperative movement opposed capitalism due to its perceived exploitation of the weaker and more vulnerable members of society. It sought to protect people against greed and develop a fairer society in which all people were valued equally (Woodin, 2019a). The cooperative movement does not completely reject all marketisation; modern cooperatives still exist in a capitalist market so adopt ethical and cooperative approaches to marketisation which seek to ensure that people's economic, social and cultural needs are met (ICA, 2020). Cooperativism exposes the imbalance between welfare politics following the Second World War and the current neoliberal ideals of privatisation and marketisation (Woodin, 2019a).

A further area of potential conflict between cooperative and neoliberal ideologies is the role of the individual. New Right emphasised the role of individual responsibility in wealth creation, something that was dismissed as selfishness by Maisuria (2014). Cooperativism promotes both self-help and self-responsibility as two of the cooperative values by which cooperatives operate (ICA, 2020), these are interpreted to mean that individual members of society have a clear responsibility to do what is needed to support and provide for themselves, as well as being responsible for how they behave in society. This is at odds with neoliberalism because cooperativism is about every member of society being responsible for social cohesion, whereas the neoliberal agenda promotes individualism.

2.7ii Neoliberalism and Education

Education in England is a political issue (Pratt, 2016). Politicians from post-war Labour Prime Minister, Clement Atlee to the Conservative Prime Minister from 2019, Boris Johnson, have stated that educational reform is central to their political policies. This is partly for social cohesion, economic growth, raising standards and, one might suggest cynically, a vote winner from the middle class. Neoliberalism as a dominant political ideology has guided education policy in England since 1979 and is seen in the promotion of competition, marketisation, self-interest and the importance of the individual (Maisuria, 2014). Under neoliberalism, diversity in education has been sought in the belief that it is a way of raising standards and improving outcomes. This has driven structural and organisational change in the educational landscape of England (Wilkins, 2012; 2017; Courtney, 2015). It also signifies a narrowing remit in education whereby academic outcomes and the meeting of arbitrary benchmarks become all important (Ball, 2007; Keddie, 2015; Gobby, Keddie and Blackmore, 2019). The clear political focus on the marketisation of education, with multiple education acts and white papers within

a relatively short time frame, have transformed schooling in England (see Section 2.8). The proposed programme of grammar school expansion and the prevalent discourse of private school superiority as a model to be emulated, seek to alter the educational landscape further and cause greater fragmentation (Benn, 2012; Benn and Downs, 2016).

This fragmentation can be seen in the education landscape in England which has been turbulent with multiple different legal classifications of state schools (Courtney, 2015). These include: academies, grammar schools, foundation schools, trust schools, faith schools, free schools and City Technical Colleges. These are all publicly funded but sit outside local authority control as independent state schools (see Appendix A). There has been criticism that the system has become so complex and competitive that it is creating confusion and division in education (Tomlinson, 2010; Wilkins, 2017; Burgess, Greaves and Vignoles, 2019). There is also the sense that this fragmentation of the public education system is distracting educationalists from the central issue of raising standards in all schools. There are clear winners and losers from the marketisation of schooling (Bridges and McLaughlin, 1994; Garner, 2011; Brown, 2017). The winners are more affluent parents with cultural and economic capital, who can choose the best schools for their children and who can provide hidden cultural resources such as dance or music classes. The losers are families with limited economic and social capital who are unable to wield power as a consumer (Apple, 2004).

Neoliberal educational discourse is also about Britain's economic development (Ball, 2017). In a marketised system schools are viewed as being a preparation for the world of work, representing a fusion of market values and education aspirations (Yandell,

2009) The improvement of educational efficiency is seen as central to ensuring that the workforce has a sustained supply of well-educated people. For the purposes of making such policies publicly acceptable it is often voiced as an attempt to redress social inequalities through improving standards and boosting results (Benn, 2012; Benn and Downs, 2016; West and Wolfe, 2018). This approach implies that market pressures improve schools despite some evidence stating that marketisation perpetuates inequality (Apple, 2004; Brown, 2017). This is explored further in Section 2.8.

2.7iii Neoliberal education policies

Neoliberal education policies enact marketisation of education and focus on the desire to improve parental choice as consumers and encourage competition between schools in the expectation, or hope, that this will drive standards higher. Integral to this is the shift in vocabulary to marketised vocabulary like customer, CEO, branding, business plan and the need to sell the school. (Brown, 2017) This represents a shift in society's perception of public education and the blurring of the line between public education and private governance (Boyask, 2020). Neoliberal education policies include elements around school choice which give more power to the consumer; reforming assessment and inspection services to improve standards through competition and changing governance models. One area of policy which has had a considerable impact on the development of cooperative schools is academisation which is an example of third way education reform.

2.8 Academisation in England

Academisation represents the main thrust of the neoliberal agenda in education policy in England. The rationale has been voiced as an attempt to redress social inequalities and boost results despite evidence that academisation does not achieve this outcome

(Francis and MIlls, 2012; Gorard, 2014; Wilkins, 2019). It also sets out to improve educational efficiency within the publicly funded school sector to recreate what is perceived as the grammar school and private sector advantage (Benn, 2012; Boyask, 2014; Benn and Downs, 2016; Sibieta, 2016). Essentially, academisation reflected a political belief, from both New Labour and Conservative governments, that institutional diversity seen in the 'independence' of the academy or free school model would improve the state school system. It would encourage competition and marketplace values. This also led to an inevitable fragmentation of the school system whereby some 77.1% of secondary schools are academies according to LG Inform (LG Inform, 2021) and 11 different types of state schools now exist (Simkins, 2015; Courtney, 2015; West and Wolfe, 2018).

The origins of the academy can be seen in the 15 City Technical Colleges, established by the Conservative government to raise standards in some failing schools in inner-city areas (West and Bailey, 2013). Once in government, New Labour amended the 1996 Education Act to replace failing schools in England with City Academies which were state schools which were outside local authority control and funded centrally by the Department for Education and Employment. Tony Blair saw academies as part of 'an education market regulated by consumer choice' and offering higher aspirations to more deprived communities (Yandell, 2009: 128). Academies and free schools were further embedded in England through the Academies Act (2000). New Labour's Academies programme is termed a 'radical piece of policy legislation' by Wilkins (Wilkins, 2012:2) who regards it as a private takeover of education with limited transparency.

Academisation accelerated under the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government through the Academies Act 2010. This allowed all maintained schools in England to become converter academies, moving outside local authority control with a promise of greater autonomy. Freedoms around governance, teacher pay/conditions and curriculum were theoretically established for schools adopting academy status (Glatter, 2012; Boyask, 2013; 2014).

The Academies Act 2000 initially provided newly created academies with additional funding that allowed more staff or resources to be employed, arguably creating greater inequality with other state funded schools (Curtis and Lipsett, 2007; Brown, 2017). The freedoms are, in practical terms, limited as schools are still part of the national state education system and are subject to national oversight. They are still required to meet a range of national benchmarks which in practical terms limits their freedoms. Schools are described as constrained by the current accountability framework (Glatter, 2012; Simkins, 2015). Schools must compromise between their individual freedom and the discourse and practices of the state (Boyask, 2013). They only have conditional autonomy at best (Wilkins, 2019). The competing demands of policy makers, service providers and other external forces mean that schools actually have limited autonomy as they are constantly vulnerable to performativity measures (Higham and Earley, 2013; West and Wolfe, 2018; Wilkins, 2019). This has led to assertions that 'Schools are not independent - they just have different masters' (Glatter, 2010). Moving to increased autonomy through embracing either the academy or the free school route relies upon a school's ability to successfully negotiate its own unique position and relationship with the national policy.

Academisation has also had an impact on the link between schools and their local community. The Government states that 'community schools' still exist in the guise of Local Education Authority (LEA) maintained schools (DfE, 2021). However, 77.1% of secondary schools in England are academies which has risen from 56.1% in 2015 (LG Inform, 2021). The reduction in the number of LEA schools is a deliberate neoliberal policy to promote the perception of consumer choice through the growth of academisation. Some schools saw academisation as an attack on comprehensive education leading to a diminished role for schools in their local community (Woodin, 2019a). West and Wolfe (2021) state that the creation of academies has damaged local communities as parents and the public are marginalised in decision making and there does not need to be local accountability in academies. The need to meet external benchmarks and involvement in multi academy trusts has impacted on the link between schools and their local community (Brighouse, 2019; Wilkins, 2019). The destructive link between MATs and their local community is explored later in this chapter.

Academisation created the environment for cooperative schools to be established, offering possibilities of connecting with other schools with similar ethos nationally. It allowed schools with strong interest in social justice or those who felt committed to cooperation not competition, to become independent from local authority control. The Cooperative College supported schools wishing to make this transition from Local Authority school to theoretically autonomous academy status. This was part of a deliberate plan, known as the Cooperative Schools Initiative (Dennis, 2018) to encourage the growth of cooperative schools as a means of pursuing greater social equality and to promote a viable alternative to the marketisation of education. Cooperative schools were regarded as both alternative and opposition to the prevalent agenda (Dennis,

2018; 2019; Woodin, 2019b). This exposes the uneasy position that cooperative schools occupy. They only exist because of marketisation and the deregulation of education yet they stand firmly in opposition to the neoliberal agenda with its fragmentation of the English education environment (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019b). Indeed, Woodin and Fielding (2013) referred to the process of Cooperative Academies as 'privatisation by the nice guys' (2013:180) which does convey that becoming a cooperative academy is viewed as a better alternative, but it still represents marketisation of state education with all the problems that this carries (Woodin and Fielding, 2013; Mills, 2015; West and Wolfe, 2018). Cooperative schools are striving to balance their own agenda of social equality and cooperation in a system which values competition (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019).

One prominent feature of academisation has been the establishment of Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT). Some schools sought to group together in some form to share expertise, to strengthen their identity or for mutual protection. Many schools clustered together in hard federations such as Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), linked chains or even localised soft federations such as teaching alliances (Glatter, 2010; Simkins, 2015). Glatter comments that 'many schools find the "stand-alone" model uncomfortable and are clustering together in various formations, perhaps partly for protection' (Glatter, 2012:569). In practical terms many schools moved away from local authority control for a promise of greater autonomy but then joined with other establishments for a variety of reasons. These included a recognition that academisation could lead to greater isolation and vulnerability within a supposedly deregulated education system. It also offered the opportunity to pool resources and provide some support in the absence of

an overarching local authority (Woodin, 2012; 2015a; Woodin and Fielding, 2013; Keddie, 2015).

The neoliberal policy of MATs has had a significant impact on the enactment of democracy in education as schools in MATs have no separate legal identity (West and Wolfe, 2020; Male, 2021). This status has led to less parental representation on governing bodies which are centralised in the MAT. Kulz (2020) raises concerns over the professionalisation of governors where certain groups of middle-class parents and community members are valued more highly due to their ability to contribute to the school's operation as a business. She states that concepts of participation and equality are not valued in MATs. The lack of separate status for academies in MATs also means that individual academies are 'slotted into structures offered by the MAT' (Kulz, 2020:78) and have less control over their curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and management as these are controlled from elsewhere in MAT wide decisions (Kulz, 2020; Male, 2021). This can be seen as 'coercive autonomy' as academies are forced to accept the decisions made by the wider MAT (Male, 2021:14). MATs can be seen as a significant challenge to democracy due to their fracturing of the links between schools and communities (Kulz, 2020; West and Wolfe, 2020; Male, 2021).

The freedoms introduced by neoliberal education policy are illusory (Boyask, 2013). Academisation has resulted in 70% of schools having less autonomy now due to being part of a Multi Academy Trust (West and Wolfe, 2018). The academy and free school programmes signify a partial handover of state funded schools to market forces with external sponsors running groups of schools as academies or MATs (Ball, 2007; 2013; Benn, 2012; Benn and Downs 2014). This supposed deregulation also introduces greater

competition between schools and groups of schools. Cooperative schools are just one of these groups fighting to exist in a system which opposes their core ethos. Their focus on cooperation and social justice is at odds with the performative environment. Society needs to rethink the purpose of education and move away from accountability and standards back to a discourse about the moral obligation of education (Ball, 2013; 2017; Heilbronn, 2016; Kulz, 2020).

2.9 Cooperative schools and Academisation

The rapid growth of cooperative schools is rooted in marketisation and the rapid expansion of the academies programme although schools joined the movement for many different reasons (Dennis; 2018). Some schools were drawn to the cooperative schools movement because of its emphasis on social justice and the concept of providing value-driven education at a time when these were perceived to be under threat from government policy (Lupton, 2011). Cooperative education seemed to provide an optimistic picture of what education could be in the face of relentless performativity (Woodin, 2019b). Other schools perceived that the move to cooperative status could offer protection from vulnerability of government intervention on performance grounds (Woodin, 2017b). Cooperative schools initially appeared to flourish within the fragmented system despite promoting a cooperativist ideology which was at odds with the prevailing neoliberal agenda (Davidge, 2013; 2017).

The cooperative schools movement also benefited from a perception that academies in general were not fulfilling their stated aims of raising standards and improving social mobility. Newly formed academies were shown to be no better than the schools they replaced, either in terms of academic outcomes or improved social mobility (Yandell,

2009; West and Wolfe, 2018).).There were concerns about a lack of transparency in academisation and concerns that other state schools could do as well as academies if they had the same levels of funding and resources (Curtis and Lipsett, 2007; West and Bailey, 2013) It is possible to see neoliberalism not just as deregulation of education but also as a re-assertion of social dominance within society as those with economic and social capital have the resources to flourish in a marketised system. This can include the mobility to travel to a 'good school' or access to hidden cultural capital such as music or dance lessons (Apple, 2004; Exley and Ball, 2014). Heilbronn (2016) writes that the marketisation of education in England has left a fragmented system which damages social cohesion and encourages inequality.

One example of the compromises made by cooperative schools to remain viable in the current performative education environment can be seen in the Cooperative Group Multi Academy Trust. This venture started with two schools in 2010 but, by 2019, included 24 schools within 3 clusters. They drew on the organisational and business expertise of the Cooperative Group and sought to utilise the codified cooperative values to empower young people (Coop Academies website, 2019). Using neoliberal performative measures the Coop Group MATs are deemed successful. Many of the schools have received good or better in Ofsted inspections, they are frequently placed highly in League Tables and the Sutton Trust have recognised their work in raising the outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Coop Academies website, 2019).

The Coop MAT has needed to make compromises in their cooperative ethos to exist in the marketised education system. Whilst their literature and website promote their

cooperative identity and values, corporate branding is at the forefront of the group's external image. The website, documentation and uniform prominently feature the group's logo and colours, ensuring that the brand is readily recognisable. The Annual Reports emphasise the business aspects of being a MAT with financial data and corporate language. Much of each report focuses on statistical analysis of each individual academy's performativity measures which are presented in such a way as to create an internal MAT league table (Coop Academies, 2019). This brings performativity into the internal workings of this cooperative MAT and promotes competition within the cooperative organisation. The strong corporate branding seen in the Coop Group MAT is in line with other large corporate MATs where individual schools' identity seems to be lost. The prominence of corporate practices in the way that the MAT is presented seem to be at odds with the cooperative stance against competition and for cooperation. The Coop Group MAT values their cooperative ethos and identity but has needed to embrace the language and practices of business to mediate their position within the marketised education system.

2.10 The Declining Numbers of Cooperative Schools

The academic discourse between 2010 and 2017 focused on cooperative schools offering a viable alternative to competition. The Cooperative College's own documentation implied that schools had a choice to make: either accept competitive marketisation from above or join billions as part of a global movement for greater social justice (Cooperative College, 2010). The Cooperative College's tone was described as 'excited and breathless' (Dennis, 2018:3), creating the sense that becoming a cooperative school was exciting and ground-breaking. There was also a suggestion that

converting to cooperative status would offer protection from external influences (Dennis, 2018). Hindsight has shown that this was not the case.

Finding data that provides definitive numbers of cooperative schools in England is difficult (Mills and Hextall, 2019). Many schools subscribe to cooperative infrastructure such as the Cooperative College, SCS or CSnet, while others self-identify without committing to these organisations. All these schools can be considered to be cooperative schools to some degree but the data on the numbers of cooperative schools in existence is based on estimates from the Cooperative College from schools who subscribe in some format.

The period from 2010-2015 saw growth in the number of schools identifying as cooperative, peaking at approximately 835 schools in 2015. This was referred to as astonishing growth and transformative by Wilson, principal of the Cooperative College (Wilson, 2013). He wrongly predicted that the number would reach 1000 schools by the end of 2015. Instead, the number of cooperative schools began to drop. Some schools were closed due to unsatisfactory outcomes, some were absorbed into existing academy chains whilst others stopped being cooperative schools, changing their underpinning ideology (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019a). This reflects that academisation offers possibilities but also challenges to schools. (Biesta, 2007; 2011; Woodin, 2015a; 2019b). By 2015, the sustainability of cooperative schools was uncertain in a neoliberal, marketised education system.

Following this rapid growth, from 2016, numbers began to fall. It is estimated that, by 2018, there were between 330-500 cooperative schools in England (Woodin, 2019b)

leading to the suggestion that 'the cooperative experiment may prove to be short lived' (Woodin, 2019b: 1097). Some of this decline can be linked to the varied reasons behind schools' original decision to affiliate to cooperativism. Some schools saw it as a 'marriage of convenience that could easily be discarded when a better offer came along' (Woodin, 2019b: 1097) or to avoid enforced academisation. Other schools saw that their own ethos was reflected in the ICA's cooperative values and remained as cooperative schools.

2.11 Exploring Potential Reasons for Declining Numbers

Multiple factors contributed to the decline in the number of cooperative schools. The flexibility in the interpretation and enactment of cooperative values initially attracted some schools to covert but also caused some confusion. This was compounded by ineffective support mechanisms and the absence of a long-term strategy (Dennis, 2018; 2019). The need to meet centrally set performative targets revealed the vulnerability of cooperative schools.

2.11i Performativity

A link can be seen between changes to the English education system and the decline in the number of cooperative schools. Early research on cooperative schools uses the term 'nascent' showing an awareness that the education landscape was rapidly evolving. Several researchers recognise the tension between cooperative schools and performativity in the era of privatisation. Cooperative schools place great emphasis on cooperation and collaboration which is at odds with the competitive nature of arbitrary performance targets (Shaw, 2015; Woodin, 2015a; Ralls, 2019). From 2015 other neoliberal policies like new GCSE exams and changes to the Ofsted Inspection system increased the pressures of performativity on English schools.

The rationale behind changes to GCSE qualifications from 2015 was to make them more challenging by including 'more demanding content' (Howard and Khan, 2019:4) and 'more rigorous assessment structures' (Gove, 2013:2). This was partly in response to international comparisons. Government was also concerned that some qualifications at Key Stage 4 were not sufficiently academic and failed to prepare students for further study or employment (Isaacs, 2014; Bottomley, 2019; Mills and Hextall, 2019). The outcomes of reformed GCSEs would be used to hold schools to account (Gove, 2013). The consequences of failing to meet benchmarks or having a negative Ofsted Inspection added to the pressure on all schools but this performativity particularly impacted on the cooperative sector where the focus was on collaboration, inclusion and embedding the cooperative values rather than on purely academic outcomes (Ralls, 2019; Swaffield and Major, 2019). Schools that were deemed to be failing could experience enforced academisation (Mills and Hextall, 2019) and even be 'pressed into noncooperative alliances' (Woodin, 2019b:1097).

Ofsted is technically an independent body whose remit is to inspect English schools and children's services to ensure that high standards are being delivered. However, Ofsted's role is controversial as it adds to the performativity experienced by schools . Ofsted exerts both direct and indirect pressure as part of the English accountability system. Regular formal inspections result in full written reports which are publicly accessible. Additional inspections or measures are put in place for schools not meeting expected standards (Elliott, 2012; Perryman et al, 2017; Richards, 2018a). More subtly, Ofsted influences activity in a school as senior leaders are constantly aware of the need to meet the standards. It influences what is actually done or valued in a school (Page, 2017; Richards, 2018a). This is described as 'a constant background hum' (Page, 2017:5) and it

is part of a negative surveillance culture which adds to constant in-school performativity (Page, 2017; Perryman et al, 2017). Ofsted is divisive. As an organisation it is tasked with upholding high standards, but it is also regarded as a flawed accountability system which promotes fear and stress (Elliott, 2012; Perryman, 2017; Richards, 2018a).

The performativity represented in the revised GCSEs and the reworked Ofsted framework puts pressure on all schools, but it is not felt equally. Keddie (2013) states that higher achieving schools can adapt to accountability and audit culture without changing their core values. For some cooperative schools being able to meet these new performative demands required a change of core belief and moving the central focus from collaboration and teaching cooperative values to being more results driven. This was a particular pressure in certain areas due to the link between deprivation and low attainment (Lupton, 2005). Whilst Woodin (2019a) notes that cooperative schools cut 'across educational, economic and social boundaries' they are over-represented in areas of deprivation (Roberts, 2019). For many cooperative schools who had seen conversion as offering protection in uncertain times or as a way to avoid enforced academisation there no longer seemed an advantage in being a cooperative school when attainment was the main judgement (Dennis, 2019). As a result, some schools turned away from cooperativism, seeing no further benefit to remaining involved in the cooperative schools movement (Dennis, 2018).

2.11ii The lack of clarity of cooperative values

A second possible reason suggested in the literature for the decline of cooperative schools is the lack of clarity around values and their interpretation. Cooperative values were seen as being central to the cooperative identity and ethos of cooperative schools but also linked to achieving social justice (Vernon, 2013; Woodin, 2012; Davidge, 2017).

However, meanings of cooperative values are rarely explored in the Cooperative College's supporting literature. Instead, they are frequently listed as key terms and occasionally expanded to include a generic explanatory sentence. This implies that they are tangible and universally understood. Schools looking for clarity and guidance from the Cooperative College found that they were expected to refer to the ICA's 1995 interpretation and then make sense of this within their specific educational context. As previously explored, this diversity deliberately provided space for interpretation and enactment on a local level (Wilson, 2013; Mills and Hextall, 2019). It also created uncertainty, a lack of cohesion and a sense of vulnerability in newly converted schools (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2019; Ralls, 2019). The consequence of this was that a unified approach to cooperativism in schools was not present.

Some cooperative schools found difficulty in articulating and implementing values into activity (Davidge, 2013). In encouraging diversity of interpretation, the Cooperative College oversimplified the complexities of cooperative values. Tensions and contradictions were inevitable with conventional hierarchical organisations discussing democracy, equality and equity (Fielding and Moss, 2011; Woodin, 2019a). Davidge's exploration of student voice as a form of democracy in cooperative schools concluded that democracy is illusory (Davidge, 2017). The headteacher overruled the student council on the implementation of a new mobile phone policy on the eve of its launch. In doing so he was both reinforcing hierarchical power and inequality but also undermining the codified cooperative values of the school (Davidge, 2017). This exemplifies the difficulties that cooperative schools face in balancing cooperative values conceptually and through enactment.

2.11 iii Changes in School Leadership

Change in leadership can account for some decline in the number of cooperative schools. The conversion process was sometimes driven by individual leaders who found that cooperative values resonated with their existing personal beliefs or those present in their school. They were committed to the process and established measures to develop a cooperative ethos (Packer, 2011; Swaffield and Major, 2019). Cooperative values and principles informed decision making and their leadership including collaborative working with other cooperative schools (Swaffield and Major, 2019) and developing an understanding of cooperativism in their establishment (Packer, 2011). However, if a school's conversion was driven by an individual's commitment to cooperativism it raises important questions about the longevity of cooperative schools in the event of a change of headship. A change of leader in a school can result in the school dropping its cooperative status, if the new leader does not subscribe to this approach. Cooperative leadership and maintaining commitment to the values is challenging (Swaffield and Major, 2019). Conflict exists between the sense of moral purpose in leading a cooperative school and the performative pressures on school leaders (Belcher, 2017). Neary et al (2017) comment that cooperative schools must not rely on the charisma of individual leaders to maintain a cooperative organisation even though this may appear tempting.

2.11 iv Lack of External Support

Schools are supported in multiple ways including financial, with expertise in a range of fields and also support with developing identity. Support initially provided by the Cooperative College to converting schools to help them develop their cooperative identity was not sustained. Many schools expected support to continue after conversion and felt abandoned when this support was not evident (Dennis, 2018; 2019; Woodin,

2019a). Some headteachers criticised the Cooperative College for not investing enough money or expertise in cooperative schools. One stated that the College lacked a long-term plan to develop cooperative schools (Dennis, 2018; 2019). There are clear differences in the amount of support that could or even should be given to cooperative schools. The Cooperative College saw their role as facilitating schools to become cooperatives and had been praised for steering schools through the conversion process (Davidge, 2013; 2017; Davies, 2015). The focus on self-help and self-responsibility meant that the Cooperative College did not perceive their role as providing ongoing support (Woodin, 2019a). However, schools were looking for a greater level of support in developing their cooperative identity (Dennis, 2019).

Woodin wrote that the rapid growth of the cooperative schools movement 'exacerbated and exposed internal contradictions' (Woodin, 2019a: 1172). The surge of membership between 2013-2015 meant it became more difficult for the Cooperative College to manage expectations and retain a focus on longer term mutual benefits (Woodin, 2019a). Problems were caused by the disparate reasons behind cooperative affiliation as not all schools were committed to cooperativism. Some schools in case studies cited alternative motives including finance, security and the promise of greater freedoms (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019a: Wilkins, 2019). Dennis (2018) is deeply critical of the Cooperative College for its failure to question schools' motivation for conversion, seeing this as an absence of a longer-term strategy which has had a negative impact on cooperative schools post conversion and led to many schools becoming disillusioned with their cooperative status.

By 2017 The Cooperative College withdrew from dealing directly with Cooperative Schools. It passed support for them to the Schools Cooperative Society (SCS) as an apex organisation (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019b). Schools were expected to join the SCS and become paying members to support the movement. Multiple criticisms were addressed at the SCS, including its inability to deal with the numbers involved and its failure to have an overarching strategy (Dennis, 2018). Schools were also reluctant to pay membership for unclear services (Woodin, 2017a; 2019a; Dennis, 2018). The website of the SCS ceased to operate in Spring 2019 and its support role has been taken over by CSnet as a 'not for profit' member network. This is still in its early stages and its full launch has already been delayed. The CSnet website (2021) states that it has over 300 active members who all pay a small subscription fee for support and representation. Additional professional services like cooperative governance or leadership training are available at additional cost. This change allows schools with their shrinking budgets to access external support for their cooperative ethos (Mills and Hextall, 2019; Woodin, 2019a). For some schools the change will have come too late and undoubtedly contributed to reducing numbers as some schools turned away from cooperativism.

The Cooperative College and SCS also appeared unable to protect cooperative schools against external accountability and performativity measures (Woodin, 2019a; 2019b; Dennis, 2018; Mills and Hextall, 2019). The cooperative schools movement did attempt to support poorly achieving schools but was felt to be unprepared for this task compared to academy chains (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019a; 2019b). This effectively removed the motivation for remaining a cooperative school from those who converted seeking protection from enforced academisation without a commitment to the values. The lack of cohesion among cooperative schools means they are ill-equipped to drive school

improvement within a performative system. The flexibility and diversity that had previously been seen as its strength (Wilson, 2013; Davidge, 2013) is now seen by some as problematic and divisive (Dennis, 2018; Wilkins, 2019; Woodin, 2019b).

2.11 v Unrealistic expectations

The initial expectations for cooperative schools as a significant challenger to neoliberalism are unrealistic and unattainable. The cooperative schools movement positioned itself as a more ethical choice within the marketised education system (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2018; Woodin, 2019b; Mills and Hextall, 2019). This is not without significant problems. Cooperative schools seek to reject marketisation and competition between schools in favour of cooperation but their very existence relies on marketisation. In essence they are complicit with the neoliberal agenda (Woodin and Fielding, 2013; Dennis, 2018; 2019; Wilkins, 2019). Although cooperative schools embrace cooperation they still need to operate under government accountability which inevitably creates pressures and entails compromises which can limit their ability to be an effective opposition to neoliberalism (Boyask, 2013; Dennis, 2018; 2019; Wilkins, 2018). It is overly simplistic to perceive cooperative schools in binary terms as they are multi positioned. 21st Century education is a compromise between public and private interests. Cooperatives operate on the boundary between neoliberalism and cooperation. This has prompted several researchers to regard cooperative schools as messy and complicated (Dennis, 2018; Wilkins, 2019; Woodin, 2019b). The reality is that for many cooperative schools they are required to constantly renegotiate conflicting interests from various stakeholders (Wilkins, 2019). Staff can simultaneously be implicated in neoliberal processes whilst trying to enact change (Dennis, 2019).

Early optimism surrounding cooperative schools emphasised their position as an alternative to neoliberalism but failed to recognise the complexity of this boundary position which meant that their transformative power was limited (Dennis, 2018; 2019). Furthermore, English schools' conditional autonomy leaves them especially vulnerable to high stakes external accountability through performativity which effectively controls their behaviour, further reducing their ability to challenge the marketisation of education (Boyask, 2014; Keddie, 2015; Simkins et al, 2015).

The decline in the number of cooperative schools in England from 2016 to 2018 has already been documented in Section 2.10. However, this contraction can be viewed in a positive way especially if one considers the previous period of rapid growth as an unsustainable anomaly. There had been concerns that the number of cooperative schools could lead to a diluted cooperative identity rather than strengthening cooperativism (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2018; Woodin, 2017a). The Cooperative College and CSnet estimate that the number of cooperative schools has now stabilised at 460 which does allow a stronger and more cohesive cooperative identity to develop because those who have remained are committed to this ethos, albeit through individual interpretation and enactment of cooperative values.

2.12 Conclusion

There is a sense in the academic literature that cooperative schools are under-researched (Davidge, Facer and Schostak, 2015; Dennis, 2018; Ralls, 2019). Initially, schools became cooperative under the umbrella of the Cooperative College. As has already been explored, this was a transitional situation and schools soon found themselves left to forge their own path without oversight or guidance from the college.

Ralls (2019) identifies the complexity that whilst some schools have moved away from formally subscribing to CSnet, they are still building on cooperative values in their everyday practices and experiences. Woodin (2019a:1166) states that more research is urgently needed to explore whether there is 'an inner defect in the DNA of co-operative schools' or whether they have just been restricted by an 'inhospitable climate'. The recent history of the cooperative schools movement raises multiple questions around the interpretation and enactment of cooperative values, what cooperative identity means in practice and how a school's cooperative status impacts on stakeholders' experiences. My research explores these questions and contributes to the body of knowledge concerning cooperative schools in England.

Chapter 3 Theoretical framework -

Engeström's Second Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

3.1 - The Importance of Framework and Background

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, understanding or skills and involves a change to a learner as it affects the way that they perceive their environment and interpret stimuli (Russell, 2001). Traditionally, theories of learning are based on the concept of a learner acquiring knowledge or skills from a more knowledgeable other. Engeström (2001) contests this view of learning, suggesting that the process of learning is more complex and is collective around meeting challenges and devising solutions. For Engeström learning is not just about thinking or knowing but is also about doing and action (Engeström, 2010). Engeström (1987) rooted his theory of learning in four key questions which he felt were vital for any theory of learning:

1. Who are the subjects of learning - how are they defined and located?

2. Why do they learn - what makes them make the effort?

3. What do they learn - what are the context and the outcomes of their learning?

4. How do they learn - what are the key processes of learning?

These central questions provide the basis for Engeström's development of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, providing a useful framework to explore learning in a social and collective setting.

There are three generations of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as established by Engeström (Engeström, 1987; 1999). All three generations state that all human activity, especially the acquisition of knowledge, is mediated historically, socially and culturally. Knowledge is a shared and constructed process which is not undertaken in isolation but is constantly evolving and changing to reflect the community in which it is

situated. Furthermore, knowledge is not absolute but created through the ongoing interactions and activity of the community which is also changed through the process of activity. (Engeström et al, 1999; Engeström, 1987; 2000; 2018; Ploettner and Tresseras, 2016; Roth and Lee, 2007; 2009).

As a learning theory CHAT provides an analytical lens to explore and understand what is going on in systems and organisations around learning. It facilitates exploration of the changes and transformations which occur in individuals and organisations through their interactions and mediation. It allows for the complexity and multifaceted nature of learning to be explored. It is this ability of CHAT to analyse human interaction and learning on both the micro and macro levels (Russell, 2001) which makes it appropriate for my research exploring how people in the activity system of a school are learning to 'be cooperative' through their activity. Schools are dynamic places for learning and Engeström himself asserted that schools were activity systems (Ploettner and Tresserras, 2016) which reinforces my use of CHAT as my theoretical basis because learning involves transformation in both organisational and individual behaviour. My research looks at what people experience as participants and how they act in cooperative schooling but also the cultural-historical context of how cooperative schooling has previously developed and how it might develop further in the future.

In this chapter I briefly explore the origins of cultural-historical activity theory in the work of Russian cultural psychologists and provide an overview of Engeström's three generations of CHAT. I explain my decision to use Engeström's second generation model in my research and explore some of the limitations of this theoretical basis.

3.2 The Roots of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory - Vygotsky and Leont'ev

It is important to see Engeström's Cultural-historical activity theory as rooted in the earlier work of Russian cultural-historical psychologists Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria in the 1920s and 1930s who sought to understand human activities as socially situated and mediated. These ideas are often grouped under the umbrella term 'Activity Theory' and are referred to as a 'well-kept secret to the Western scientific community' until the 1990s (Engeström, Miettinen and Punamaki, 1999:2). Activity Theory is often regarded as part of the wider and still developing field of sociocultural theory in psychology which explores the concept that human learning is a social process. This has led to developments in contextual and culturally situated theories of practice such as Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wertsch (1995). Activity theory is now being explored in multiple contexts especially education / teaching and the development of new technologies (Engeström, 2000; Ploettner and Tresseras, 2016) which allows CHAT to be critiqued more robustly.

CHAT is a theory of learning. Illeris (2018) identifies four distinct types of learning: cumulative, assimilative, accommodative, and transformative. Cumulative learning or mechanical learning is frequently seen in early childhood and can be referred to as conditioning in behaviourist psychology. Assimilative learning is learning by addition, where information is added to what is already known. Accommodative learning is where new learning is not simply adding to previous knowledge but causing a change to what is already known. Transformative learning is significant or expansive learning which involves major change to the self and occurs only in situations of profound importance for the learner.

Biological aspects of learning are reflected in the work of Pavlov and Bekhterev, who stated that all human behaviours were reflexes to either environmental stimuli or consequences of an individual's history. Working independently, both developed theories of conditioned reflexes, whereby there is a link between biological and neural stimuli. Bekhterev identified zones in the brain and noted the role of the hippocampus in learning and memory. This is where memories are formed and indexed ready for later recall and has significant impact on our understanding of how we learn (Hergenhahn and Henley, 2008). Assimilative and accommodative learning are foci in Piaget's work. Piaget believed there to be a hierarchy of capabilities linked to biological development and stated that learning is provoked by specific situations or experiences (Piaget, 1964). For Piaget knowledge and action were linked with a focus on learning taking place through doing and action with children learning through play and practical experiences (Piaget, 1964; Kamii, 1979). The impact of Piaget's work can still be seen in the English education system of today, where children are expected to have acquired set skills at particular ages, for example understanding of phonic principles and knowledge of times tables by Year 4.

Like Piaget, Vygotsky saw the child as an active participant in its learning and was interested in the development of the individual. However, for Vygotsky, learning occurs through participation in society and social groups. Social interaction is at the core of Vygotsky's ideas with the basis of learning being seen as the interaction with others, meaning that the wider community and culture are responsible for developing higher order functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Once interaction has occurred then information is integrated on an individual level, but learning does not take place as a self-contained process inside the individual's head as it cannot be isolated from the social, cultural and

historical influences of the wider community or society (Roth and Lee, 2007; Philpott, 2014). For Vygotsky learning depends on these cultural and social influences so Piaget's notion of a universal intellectual development was flawed because cultures can vary dramatically (Shaffer, 2009).

Vygotsky's research led him to the conclusion that social learning precedes development. He termed this concept the social formation of the mind where higher mental processes have their origin in social processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky saw intramental psychological abilities as existing within the child, for example, a baby's cry is not initially a learnt action, but simply what babies do. As a baby learns that their cry elicits a response, it becomes an intentional act of communication, which Vygotsky termed intermental development. This socialisation allows inner speech to develop as a result of external speech and social interaction. Vygotsky stated that the gradual process of internalisation allowed the development of higher mental processes and led to independent spoken language and thought. His theory places emphasis on the role that social interaction plays in the development of a young person's mind. Vygotsky saw learning as a mediated process where children acquire cultural values, beliefs and skills through collaborative dialogue with more knowledgeable members of society (Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky's theory is generally represented in a triangle showing the interrelationship between the subject (or learner), the outcome (or problem to be solved) and the tools (cultural and historical beliefs, artefacts, theories). See Figure 3.1. This reflects the common object and motive in the learning undertaken but also the mediation of learning by cultural tools (Russell, 2001). The three aspects of the triangle are

interconnected and influence one another. For example, any change in one aspect such as the outcome has a direct impact on both the subject and the tools in the system. As learners engage in joint activity they learn and change, renegotiating both the ways of acting and the tools. The subject and object have a direct link described by Roth and Lee (2007) as a 'reciprocal relationship' and Philpott argues that you 'can't understand one without understanding the other' (2014:46). This relationship is affected and complicated by the influence of tools or mediating artefacts which can be a wide range of cultural, historical or social elements including beliefs, rules or physical items which wield an influence upon subject, object or both. Tools are the product of particular cultures and represent the wider nature of gaining knowledge or meeting a challenge within that specific context.

Mediational Mean (Tools)
machines, writing, speaking, gesture, architecture, music etc.

Subject(s):
individual, dyad, group

Object/Motive -----▸ Outcome(s)
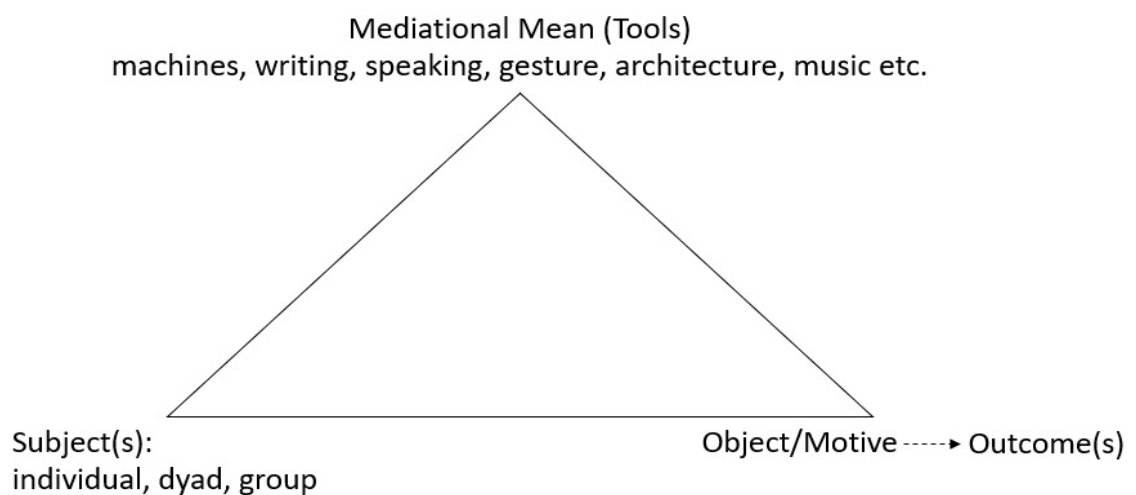
Figure 3.1 The common reformulation of Vygotsky's model of mediated activity

Vygotsky emphasises the social, cultural and historical aspects of learning rather than the idea of an individual and isolated participant. Individuals cannot escape the influence of their social or cultural context as these actively affect their thoughts and actions; we also only work with ideas that are valued in our context (Roth and Lee, 2007;

2009; Edwards, 2014). Vygotsky emphasises that a change in one aspect of the triad directly affects the other aspects as they are all interlinked.

Activity Theory is also rooted in the ideas of Leont'ev who had worked with Vygotsky in Moscow and continued the work on Activity Theory after Vygotsky's death. Whilst the focus of Leont'ev's work remains on the individual and their learning, it focuses more on the role of the individual within the overall system, laying clear foundations for later development into what is now regarded as the second generation of Activity Theory.

Leont'ev contributed to the development of Activity theory by refining what constitutes activity. Leont'ev separates action from activity by creating a 3-tier system or hierarchy for levels of operation including activity, actions and operations. Leont'ev regards activity as being undertaken by a community with objects and motives, which contrasts with Piaget, who states that learning is about the individual interacting with their environment. It relates to higher order thought and is rooted in the cultural and social environment. An 'activity' by Leont'ev's definition could include teaching a course or completing a project, all of which require higher order thinking. Within Leont'ev's system 'activities' are different from 'actions'. Actions are specifically goal oriented to fulfilling a particular and often short-term outcome whilst 'operations' are the lowest level and often unconscious tasks such as pressing the keys of a keyboard or changing gear in a car (Leont'ev, 1978; Kaptelinin, 1996; Hasan, H. & Kazlauskas A., 2014). Leont'ev states that activities fulfil a need whilst actions are the steppingstones to fulfilling the need eventually. These developed definitions allow for the role of individuals within organisations or systems to be explored and allow some focus to be placed on motivations for activity and actions. See Figure 3.2.

```
Activity          ↔        Motive

⇕   ↓                      ↑   ↓

Actions           ↔        Goals

↑   ↓                      ↑   ↓

Operations        ↔        Tasks
```
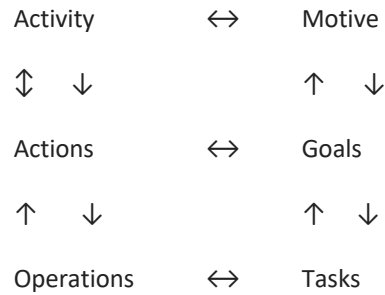
Figure 3.2 The activity hierarchy of Leont'ev 1981

Leont'ev reinforces the idea that social and cultural elements affect activity, that individuals cannot just complete 'actions' or 'activities' in isolation but that activity must be collective if it is to be valued as meaningful practice which can achieve outcomes or enact transformation within society. This signifies a movement away from Vygotsky's system on the importance of the individual and how their learning is affected by the socio-cultural influences. For Leont'ev the focus is on how groups of individuals are affected by these influences and how individuals act within a unified system. Activity systems are dynamic and can constantly change. Historical aspects and external factors can affect the community and so create potential for forward movement. (Leont'ev, 1978; Roth and Lee, 2007; Philpott, 2014).

3.3 Second Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Vygotsky and Leont'ev established the roots of Activity Theory through focusing on the individual and their learning within a wider social-cultural context. Whilst their work was known as far back as the 1960s, it became better known internationally as a theory under the Scandinavian Activity Theory school of thought from the 1980s onwards. Engeström further developed CHAT, adding additional elements or nodes (Russell, 2001) to the original triangle to allow for a more systematic analysis of communities.

Engeström's second generation model retains the reformulated Vygotskian triangle with subject, object and tools leading to the desired outcome. There is a clear understanding in the second generation that the object is culturally formed and reflects a history to which it is indivisibly linked. Engeström further refined the Vygotskian concept by extending the triangle to include the components of rules, community and division of labour (see Figure 3.3). Russell (2001) sees the extension of the model as more fully representing the social relationships which are essential in understanding learning. The addition of 'community', meaning social group or environment, as an element in the triangle reinforces Leont'ev and Engeström's assertion that activity systems are about group or community engagement in a shared outcome which is transformational for both the individual and the system itself. Engeström also developed Leont'ev's ideas around 'division of labour' or who, within the community focused system, is undertaking which particular aspect of activity (Engeström, 1987; Bakhurst ,2009; Philpott, 2014). Like the other nodes, the division of labour is not fixed. Rather it is fluid with different actors fulfilling labour roles according to the needs of the system at that specific time. A further addition to the social basis of Engeström's reformulated CHAT model is the inclusion of rules. These are the socio-cultural norms that influence the activity in question. They could include written policies or conventions of behavioural expectations which actors adhere to whilst engaging in activity (Engeström, 2001). Once again these are not fixed and can change. An example from a school context can be the influence of Ofsted or school inspection on a system as a change in the inspection criteria used will lead to a change in the rules in the school 's activity system. This reflects Russell's idea of rules allowing the activity system to be stable 'for now' whilst also being capable of change. (Russell, 2001:71)
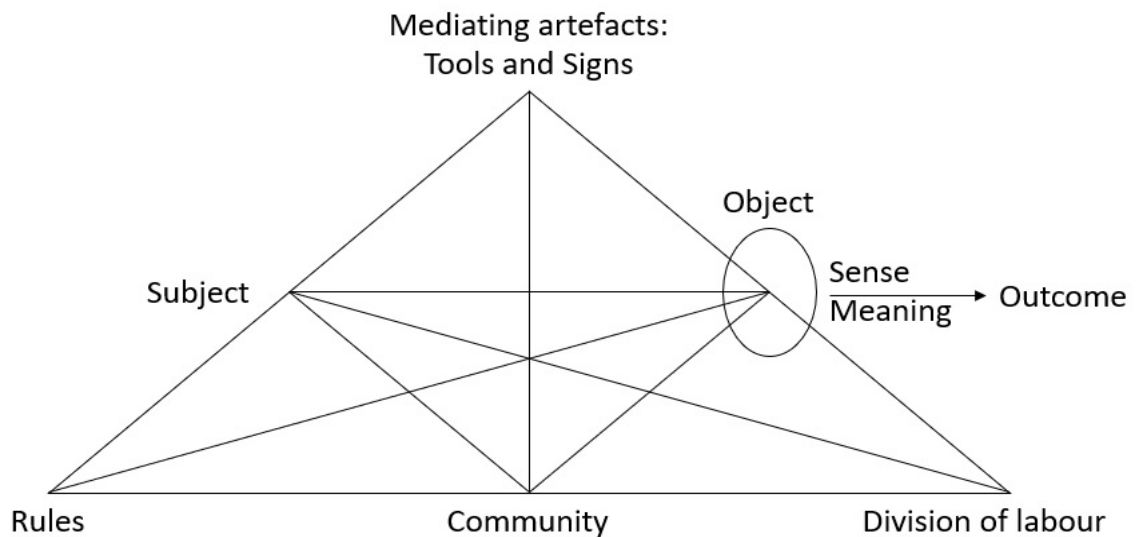
Figure 3.3 Engeström's model of human activity system 1987 (Second Generation Activity Theory)

Another change, in Second Generation Activity Theory is the inclusion of multiple lines connecting the nodes or separate elements of the system which allow for tension and stresses in the overall system to be identified and commented upon. Engeström (2001) emphasises how these contradictions and tensions between nodes can drive change to the system itself and allow for transformations although the reality of the connections is that they are likely to be messier than the simplified connections suggested by Engeström's model (Bayat and Naicker, 2016; Bligh and Flood, 2017;. For example, the newly added node 'community' is situated between rules and division of labour indicating that these components directly affect one another. Any change to the community, such as a new headteacher in a school or new students entering the system will impact on, and be impacted by, both the rules and the division of labour as these require actors to renegotiate their new ways of acting together. Community is also linked to tools, subject and object emphasising the intertwined nature of the complete system – as one aspect changes there are implications for other nodes in the system. This allows the system to be dynamic and evolving (Russell, 2001).

Engeström's adaptations to Second Generation Activity Theory allow greater emphasis on learning and transformation of systems through the identification of tensions or contradictions and the attempt to resolve them through new ways of working and thereby allowing transformation of the system and the individual (Engeström, 1999; 2001; 2010). Furthermore, Engeström refers to this process as 'expansive learning' - a situation where the existing, authoritative sources cannot resolve the contradictions, so we need to create new ways of making improvements (Engeström, Miettinen and Punamaki, 1999; Engeström, 2000; 2001). Learning leads to the formulation of new theoretical concepts because learning is not about acquiring skills or knowledge that exist already but rather being able to evolve and learn something new, even something that does not exist yet (Engeström, 2001; Robertson, 2008; Somekh and Nissen, 2011; Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014).

3.4 Third Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Engeström (1999) suggests that CHAT can be understood in the application of five principles which are seen as a summary of the theory and which can be seen operating within activity systems. These five principles include:

1. Learning is a collective process which is centred around a shared object or sought outcome and is mediated by artifacts (signs and tools).

2. An activity system is always multi voiced with a collection of different viewpoints, traditions and interests.

3. Problems and potentials for growth can only be understood against the history of the system - they cannot be taken out of context.

4. Contradictions and problems are positive aspects as they are sources of change and development.

5. Expansive learning can take place when contradictions or problems are rethought.

These five principles also underpin the third generation of CHAT which develops the second generation model by considering the connectivity of a minimum of two interconnecting activity systems (Engeström, 2001). The four questions and the five principles retain their importance, but additional focus is placed onto networks of activity rather than activity systems existing, and operating, in isolation. This allows for greater examination of multivoicedness and the tensions and contradictions which exist. Engeström identified that such inter-organisational learning brings additional challenges and possibilities for expansive learning. (Engeström, 2001). See Figure 3.4.
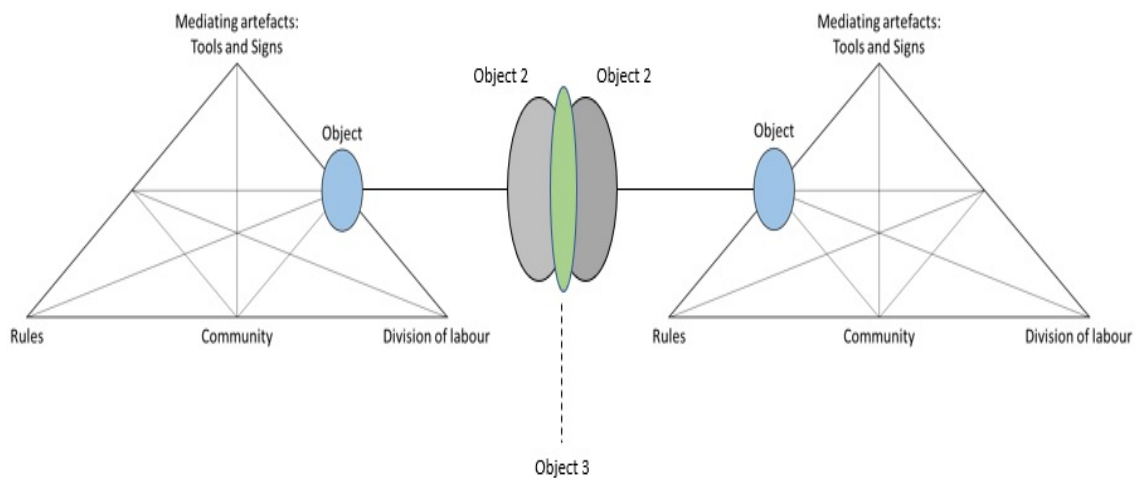
Figure 3.4 Engeström's model for interconnecting activity systems

(Third Generation Activity Theory)

The interconnectivity of activity systems at the heart of the third generation allows for greater focus on the process of social transformation through contradictions. There are more opportunities for contradictions when actors from different activity systems learn together as objects and motives can be nuanced. The clashes and contradictions which exist in all systems are heightened in these interlinked systems (Russell, 2001). In

refining his theory in 2010, Engeström states the importance of partially shared and contested objects for bringing challenges and transformative possibilities to activity systems. He sees 'conflicts, dilemmas, disturbances and local innovations' as the driving forces of expansive learning (Engeström, 2010: 78). The contradictions make new activity and new learning. These ideas were all evident in the second generation, but contradictions are seen to be more prevalent in networked activity systems due to the joint activity undertaken.

Engeström (2010) sees expansive learning as a core concept in third generation CHAT. It is a process of redefining and reworking to resolve successive contradictions. Expansive learning requires practical engagement and agency from the learner because learning is constantly shifting and transforming, on both an individual and collective or system level. The process of recognising contradictions and devising new solutions is essential to expansive learning. The object itself is subject to contradictions and new tools are constantly created in the joint activity through resolving such contradictions. The system itself is dynamic and in a constant state of flux as learning is undertaken (Engeström, 2010).

3.5 My decision to use second generation CHAT

I was clear on the rationale of using activity theory in my research for the reasons outlined in Section 3.1, seeing it as a 'heuristic framework' (Russell, 2001: 66) which would facilitate deep analysis into a complex and messy context. In my original research design, I had anticipated using Engeström's third generation CHAT in order to examine interactions between activity systems. Both of my activity systems are in the same geographical area and supported by the same cooperative umbrella organisation

(originally Schools Cooperative Society and now CSnet). This originally implied that there would be interaction between the two systems or schools, which would have met the minimal unit of analysis for third generation CHAT to be used (Engeström, 2001). I felt that third generation CHAT would allow me to explore the contradictions and transformative learning that might arrive from having participants operating across two sites but engaged in joint activity (Engeström, 2001; Russell, 2001).

Once I began my fieldwork, it became apparent that the two activity systems were not interacting or operating as a network despite their geographical location and despite sharing similar objectives around cooperativism. This lack of network intervention meant that I decided that Engeström's Second Generation CHAT was the most appropriate theoretical framework to allow detailed examination of the two activity systems at the heart of my research and to illuminate the learning to be cooperative.

Engeström's second generation CHAT facilitates the exploration of learning as a collective process undertaken by a group of people with a shared purpose (Engeström, 1999; 2001). What makes this appropriate within my research is seeing cooperative schools as learning systems where participants are learning about how to behave in cooperative ways - there is a shared purpose which has been negotiated and imbued with meaning through collective activity and actions.

Furthermore, in CHAT, if activity is understood to be higher order thinking, it needs to be supported by actions in a wider sense, incorporating words, gestures, and interactions regardless of whether they are consciously or subconsciously undertaken

(Roth and Lee, 2007; 2009; Somekh and Nissen, 2011). Humans learn through activity and goal-oriented actions which means that collective communication is central to both learning and the creation or re-creation, of new knowledge. Learning is a socially situated phenomenon so we cannot separate learning from the cultural and historical context as it is not abstract or unconnected to the world that we inhabit and work within (Roth and Lee, 2007; 2009; Engeström, 1987; 2001, Bligh and Flood, 2017). This emphasis on cultural and historical context makes CHAT appropriate for a detailed exploration of how two particular establishments interpret and engender meaning onto the abstract concept of values in schools and how participants learn to be cooperative. Hence, learning is not a static process but is constantly changing and evolving to reflect the self-evaluation of the participants of the community within which it is situated (Lektorsky, 1999). This makes it ideal as a framework to illuminate my research as I am particularly interested in how different stakeholders experience the interpreted and enacted values but also how their voices are heard as part of the process of imbuing the abstract values with meaning and the ongoing renegotiation of meaning that is necessary for learning to be cooperative.

Engeström developed Vygotsky and Leont'ev's ideas on the impact of mediating artefacts on activity. Mediating artefacts are physical items or symbols that influence the activity and can be used by actors to help accomplish the outcome of the activity system (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006; Kain and Wardle, 2014). Tools can mediate actors' activity in the physical and social world; tensions arise between different aspects of the activity. In my research I was aware that many artefacts could influence or mediate the actions of participants as collective subjects in fulfilling their outcome of being cooperative. These might include the school motto or crest, the pedagogy employed,

the documentation, technology, pictures, videos and even displays. However, I was also intrigued by the possibility that artefacts can be less durable, seen in the 'making' and not just the 'made' (Friedman, 2007). This suggests that artefacts are not just physical objects but that less tangible signs like verbal communication can be seen as mediating artefacts within an activity system. An essential element of my research needed to capture the interconnected aspects of the cooperative school as a fluid and evolving system. Vital to this was my belief that learning is not static but is constantly changing to reflect the self-evaluation of the participants of the community wherein it takes place (Lektorsky, 1999).

Engeström's focus on the 'multivoicedness' of CHAT (Engeström, 1999; 2000; Ploettner and Tresserras, 2016) allows for the study of groups rather than individuals as knowledge is a shared process that does not exist in isolation but is rooted in a specific community with its unique cultural-historical context. A learner is inevitably influenced by their context but is, through their activity, an active constituent of this community too (Roth and Lee, 2009). The impact of this on my research was to recognise the importance of capturing the voice of multiple stakeholders who would have their own unique perspective as participants of the activity system. CHAT, as a theoretical approach, pointed to the importance of exploring this diversity of voices and activities within the system but also to look for contradictions and tensions created which would provide vital information about the interrelated nature of the activity system.

In designing my research, I needed to embrace methods which would allow me to explore the diversity of the system, seeing not just what participants said but also what activities and actions they undertook. An example of this was to incorporate practical

tasks into my research such as pupils sharing places around the school that were important to them and their perceived sense of cooperativism.

CHAT identifies that knowledge emerges from aspects of practice and that learning is not separate from action. Self-reflection at moments of tension and contradiction might lead to instability but they are not necessarily negative as they can create new knowledge and practice (Engeström, 2000; 2009; Somekh and Nissen, 2011). This ability to change or transform the activity systems is expressed as expansive learning in CHAT whereby the constant process of self-reflection and active learning is integral to development. The activity system can make a deliberate shift to embrace new opportunities or activities which would change the nature of the organisation, creating individual and collective learning.

In some ways this oversimplifies the potentially destructive nature of contradiction within systems but within CHAT the multiple voices and the potential contradictions demonstrate that the system is healthy and is capable of transformation (Engeström, 1999, 2000; Roth and Lee, 2009). For Engeström, in recognising both the richness and the complexity of activity systems, he foresees that contradiction and reflection will allow the evolution of new activity systems and the development of interacting activity systems (Engeström, 1999; 2001; 2018). Accepting the idea that contradictions or lack of cohesion are not necessarily negative needed to underpin my data generation and analysis. My findings could be conflicting and 'messy' but this was expected in exploring activity systems which might be evolving and changing.

3.6 Limitations of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Whilst CHAT undoubtedly provides a useful framework to analyse systems there are some limitations in its use. Bakhurst (2009) is critical of Engeström's CHAT as being too general and vague in its terminology, although he recognises that its flexibility and adaptability appeal to researchers like myself who are looking closely at a specific context such as schools as activity systems and exploring the activity undertaken. It does have a 'perceived empirical utility' (Bligh and Flood, 2017:148) and Engeström stated that schools can 'be understood as activity systems' (Ploettner and Tresseras, 2016:91).

One criticism of CHAT is that Engeström has underplayed the significance of Vygotsky and Leont'ev's ideas being rooted in Marxist society and the socialist world view (Langemeyer and Roth, 2006; Philpott, 2014). Engeström retains the use of some Marxist terminology namely commodity, contradiction and exchange of labour but, in applying this terminology to capitalism, it moves too far away from the socialist origins. Terms like agency and seeing labour through the focus on the value of goods created means that activity theory misses its potential to alter society (Warmington, 2008; Avis, 2009). Warmington (2008) also states that activity theory, as it is currently envisaged, under-represents the power of labour to lead expansive change in organisations and in wider society.

The notion that CHAT fails to acknowledge power imbalances in society or to fully consider personal agency is a common critique (Avis, 2009; Martin and Peim, 2009; Bligh and Flood, 2017). Avis (2009) argues that activity theory ignores issues of power and conflict whereby gender, social class and ethnicity are neither analysed nor their effect on the system considered. However, I would contend that, whilst these elements of

70

social diversity are not explicitly identified in the model formulated by Engeström, they are essential aspects of society and therefore any analysis, such as my exploration of some cooperative schools in multicultural 21st century England, needs to consider these aspects as being embedded in the system.

Whilst power is not explicitly identified by Engeström he does say that activity systems are multi layered and interconnected rather than hierarchical. I contend that schools are generally hierarchical places where power and imbalances can often be seen in the actions of the organisation (Engeström, 2001; 2018). Being aware of power and its potentially pernicious impact needs to be considered as a relevant element of the activity system affecting many of the aspects of the model including rules, community and division of labour. Whilst the lines of tension make CHAT 'messy' in application (Bakhurst, 2009) it also enables a researcher to undertake detailed exploration, examining the interconnectedness of the system. This needs to be actively considered when gathering and interpreting data from the two schools as there is a potential conflict between co-operative schools as individual activity systems and the general accountability measures placed on publicly funded cooperative schools in England.

Many of those who are critical of CHAT identify that individual agency is pushed aside in order to see learning as a social or community event which can transform society (Martin and Peim, 2009; Roth and Lee, 2009; Philpott, 2014). Indeed, there is currently development of 4th generation CHAT to include greater focus on the individual by adding motivation to the triangular model (Spinuzzi and Guile, 2019) thereby allowing an exploration of both individuals and the collective within the activity systems.

3.7 Conclusion

Despite an awareness of the limitations in Activity Theory regarding social class, diversity and power I believe that the second generational model CHAT, as reformulated by Engeström, is the most appropriate theory to underpin my research and to illuminate learning to act cooperatively and endow meaning. I appreciate the criticisms of Second-Generation CHAT outlined above and contend that using CHAT as a theoretical approach will clarify my research rather than mask what is being examined (Russell, 1997). The advantages of a theory which allows detailed investigation of a specific context whereby culture and history are recognised as being vitally important allow me to study the activity undertaken in two cooperative schools within their specific context (Roth, 2004; 2007; Bligh and Flood, 2017).

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology and Methods

4.1   Introduction: Research Questions and Focus of the Research

My intention in undertaking this research is to further explore the recent phenomenon and development of cooperative schools in England and particularly how stakeholders enact their individual understanding and interpretation of the collective 'core cooperative values'. This specific focus meant that I had to develop the most effective approach to understand the complexities within cooperative schools as multifaceted and context specific activity systems, not just in my theoretical perspective of second generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) but also in the design of my research project. I was also aware that educational research is 'messy research' (Newby, 2014:9) due to the complications and contradictions that can be seen when researching within rapidly changing environments.

Any research project requires epistemological consistency and for this project I have adopted constructionism. I hold that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed; humans actors engage in the world and construct knowledge from their individual and collective experiences (Crotty, 2011). These meanings are socially constructed, culturally defined and historically situated interpretations of the social world (Ploettner and Tresseras, 2016).

This stance is reflected in my research questions:

- What are the cooperative values and how are they interpreted and enacted?

- What does it mean to be a co-operative school?

- How are the values enacted within the activity of a specific cooperative educational environment?

- How does the enactment of these values impact on the experience of stakeholders?

It was always my intention to research cooperative education. As a practitioner with prior experience in the cooperative education sector, I had a significant personal interest in exploring the place of cooperative schools in the neoliberal education system which is explored further in Section 4.2 on Researcher Reflexivity. From this starting point, I narrowed my research focus to ensure it would be feasible and would make a significant contribution to knowledge around cooperativism and schooling. I understood that my research questions needed to 'render the research practicable, useful and workable' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:153). My initial research questions were repeatedly moulded and refined with the support of my supervisors at the University of Plymouth. My final research questions allowed me to explore the activity being undertaken in cooperative schools and to interpret findings in the light of actors' experiences to answer these questions.

4.2 Reflexivity

My role as an education practitioner and my previous experiences within the cooperative educational sector meant that reflexivity was vital to the production of trustworthy knowledge. When designing my research, I understood that qualitative research is not a neutral activity and that the researcher wields a considerable influence on the research undertaken (Finlay, 2002b; Savin-Badin and Howell-Major, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Acknowledging that qualitative research is messy, and a social construction means that researchers need to make their position transparent as the experience of others is negotiated through the researcher's voice (Finlay, 2002a;

2002b; 2017; Clift, Hatchard and Gore, 2018). Heath (2018: 87) states that 'The beliefs, values, and moral stance of a researcher are as present and inseparable from the research process as their physical or virtual presence'. In researching cooperative schools, it is inevitable that my biographical and professional experiences have influenced the research process in the three ways identified by Berger (2015): access to the field, shaping relationships with those researched and constructing my own world view. I was aware that my research could not be separated from me as the researcher and that my thesis was the researcher's narrative, affected by my researcher stance and my situatedness within the research (see Section 1.2). I was not simply presenting facts but actively constructing interpretations too (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Finlay states that because meanings are negotiated by the researcher within that particular social context that a 'different researcher will unfold a different story' (Finlay, 2003:5). In qualitative research, this researcher's subjectivity can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a problem, but it must be acknowledged in the research (Finlay, 2002a; Berger, 2015; McGowan, 2020).

Reflexivity is therefore a core aspect of qualitative research and should underpin every aspect of research from the formulation of the research question, the design of the overall research, through to the collection and interpretation of data and the final writing of the report or thesis (Finlay, 2002a; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017; McGowan, 2020). In each element of my research, I have considered Tuval-Mashiach's Open Transparency model for prompting ongoing reflexivity (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). The model requires researchers to consider three questions at every stage of the research: what I did, how I did it and why I did it. This means that I frequently returned to justify decisions, actions, and interpretations, critically considering my own

role in the research process.

In chapter 1, I acknowledged my dual role as being both an insider and outsider in my research. This meant reflexivity was key to producing trustworthy knowledge as well as recognising the influences of my experience on the research (see Section 1.2 Researcher Stance). Berger (2015) stated that the insider / outsider dichotomy could 'enhance research through reflexivity' (Berger, 2015: 12). My professional experiences undoubtedly provided me with advantages in knowing the cooperative education environment well and providing a greater awareness of both how to frame questions and understand more nuanced replies. The shared understanding can make participants feel more able to open up as the researcher understands their experiences.

The insider / outsider dichotomy for research is complex. There are potential difficulties for a researcher caused by this positioning. It is vital to remain neutral and listen to what is being said by participants rather than hear what you expect to hear. Likewise, imposing one's own experiences as an insider on what one sees and hears when conducting research must be avoided to ensure that the findings are trustworthy and transparent. The connection between the insider / outsider status can be blurred and need renegotiation during the research project (Folkes, 2018; Lisiak and Krzyżowski, 2018). Ingram and Abrahams (2016) proposed the concept of a third space as a hybrid position where boundaries are blurred. In conducting my research, I gained in-depth knowledge of the two activity systems, which is an example of local knowledge. However, I remained an outsider looking in, in my role as researcher.

I employed several strategies for maintaining reflexivity and developing the trustworthiness of my research (Berger, 2015; Malaurent and Avison, 2017). I utilised multiple sources of information, repeated interviews with the same participants and had prolonged engagement with my research settings (see Section 4.6). Because our own position and subjectivity is not always clear to us, I kept a reflective journal during my research which allowed me to revisit actions and emerging findings to create a self-audit trail (Berger, 2015). Peer review, in the form of ongoing critical challenge from my research supervisors at the University of Plymouth, was invaluable in challenging my subjectivity and ensuring that my developing findings were reasonable and reliable in the context of my research.

4.3 Research Approach

In designing my research project and determining a research approach I focused on 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018: 285) and organising a project which would generate evidence to convincingly answer my research questions (Gorard, 2013). I also considered the importance of the relationship between design in theory and in its practical enactment, drawing on Crotty's four important questions for researchers which emphasised the importance of cohesion and coherence in research (Crotty, 2011).

There is variety in the literature on the nature of qualitative and quantitative research. Many of these debates focus on whether qualitative and quantitative methodologies involve divergent assumptions about the world and knowledge (Gorard, 2013; Hammersley, 2013) with an implied superiority dependent on the research being undertaken (Hammersley, 2013). Qualitative methodology is often seen as useful for in-

depth and detailed understandings of social interactions which can be messy and multi-layered whereas quantitative methodology is seen as a useful approach for systemic investigations such as proving a hypothesis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). These divisions in methodology are described as pointless and distracting when the most important aspect is to ensure that overall research design is robust and detailed (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Gorard, 2013). Instead, the terms qualitative and quantitative are best applied to types of data (Hammersley, 2013).

4.4 Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

The decision to use second generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical perspective has implications on my research approach and the methods. CHAT determines what elements you need to look at to make sense of activity but not how you look at them (Postholm, 2015: 48). I did consider utilising CHAT as my methodology as well as my theoretical perspective, reflecting on Postholm's use of Activity Theory as her methodology for exploring Engeström's Expansive Learning within school based professional development (Postholm, 2015). I felt that this would ensure cohesion but Postholm acknowledges herself that CHAT lacks clarity as methodology.

Several studies have been undertaken in recent years linking case study and activity theory but with activity theory being used as a theoretical perspective rather than methodology. CHAT is used as a lens to interpret findings from a real-world context and to analyse human activity, especially elements which might be invisible. Its strength is seen in its ability to determine what you should look to make sense of human interaction (Er, Kay and Lawrence, 2010; Craig 2017; Abella, 2018). I specifically drew on research which used activity theory as the theoretical framework within case study seeing them

as complementary elements to achieving deep rich data about human activity within a real-world context (Craig, 2017; Abella, 2018). I am going to use case study methodology to explore my two activity systems, centred in schools seeing each one as an individual case. This will create a cohesive approach as I will be treating each activity system as a case and then employing CHAT as my theoretical perspective to make sense of each case, their social historical context and their links as cooperative schools.

4.5 Case Study Approach

In deciding to use case study as my approach I was very aware of the refrain 'You cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything' (Miles and Huberman 1994: 27) and that there were other perceived problems surrounding rigour and validity when using case study which will be explored further in this chapter.

Case study methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific case or a phenomenon within its natural setting, to gain a deeper insight into an issue, with a focus on depth rather than breadth (Nisbet and Watt, 1984; Merriam, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin 2009). Case study research can focus on a single site or process or can be multiple case design thereby making it appropriate for exploring my activity systems as two distinct cases, each working on a specific desired outcome. Yin stated that case study 'can explain, describe, illustrate and enlighten' (Yin, 2009:19-20) making them both flexible and practical for enabling readers to understand ideas and in exploring individual's experiences (Yin, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Newby, 2014; Palys and Atchinson, 2014).

Case studies are based on observational and experiential studies, meaning that they are looking at a specific context in depth and exploring the experiences therein; there is a strong focus on recognising the complexity and context of the setting although the boundaries could be blurred to an observer (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Yin states that the strength of the case study is that it allows the researcher to 'retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (2009:4) and advises that a case study approach works well if the research questions ask 'how' or 'why' – all of which are the reasons why I felt that my four research questions were best addressed through using case study - seeing each activity system within a cooperative school as contextually distinct and unique.

I was aware of the advantages of using case study especially as it is an approach that is rooted in experience. It allows the complexities, contradictions and tensions to be recognised which means it is better able to allow for variables (Nesbit and Watt, 1984). Case study also allows for depth and richness in the data generated which can facilitate both description and analysis (Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 2009; 2018; Thomas, 2016). Seeing each activity system as a case provides an effective means to explore the societal and individual human interaction.

In addition, case study can be researched effectively by a single researcher. In using this approach, a breadth of study that might have been achieved through an alternative methodology, but that I achieved a deeper and richer understanding of activity systems within the two cooperative schools - Sheply School and Mediston Academy. Essentially, I was able to build a 'rich picture with many kinds of insight coming from different angles, from different kinds of information' (Thomas, 2016: 21).

Case studies are context specific, and they may have limited relevance to other contexts (Punch, 2005; Yin 2009; Newby, 2014; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). However, a case study can be interesting in its own right and for what it has to say about that specific context (Yin, 2009; 2018). Additionally, findings may allow readers to see similarities between their case and the cases in my research (Stake, 1985) especially if they are interested in the cooperative schools movement; how schools interpret and enact values or how schools are activity systems with shared outcomes. It is important to consider that, though a single case cannot be representative of social phenomenon, where a case is proven, it can be tested on existing social theory (Boyask, 2020).

4.6 Research Methods

Yin (2009) suggests that there are six main threads of data collection which are appropriate for a case study approach: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. There are undoubtedly advantages in using multiple methods as it improves the range of data generated and allows the resulting analysis to be richer and more detailed. In order to fully explore the two activity systems, I designed my research to use a range of methods: documentation, interviews, observations and artefacts, the benefits of which I discuss in more detail in Section 4.6. I reviewed documents, conducted interviews, met with focus groups and conducted observations (see Figure 4.1). My data generation in each system was undertaken over several months which allowed me to make repeated visits to the school. I was able to follow up on interesting aspects as they emerged and to observe specific events in the school year. My chosen approach and methods allowed me to delve more deeply into the activity undertaken and examine how rules and mediating artefacts affect the actor - structure interactions. Prolonged engagement with

my setting and the use of multiple methods to generate data also enhanced

trustworthiness and integrity which Is important due to the reflexive nature of my

research (Finlay, 2002b; Savin-Badin and Major, 2013)).

	Description	Method	Persons	Observations
Phase 1	**Trial - Smithley School (April 2018)** 1 x interview with person responsible for cooperative identity and values 2 x interviews with pupils in KS3 (2)	Interview	3	0
Phase 2	**Sheply School (June 2019 - Nov 2019)** 2 x school principal interview 4 x school leadership team interviews 3 x teacher interviews 1 x headboy interview 2 x staff interview groups (18) 1 x mixed stakeholders (9) 1 x pupil focus group - KS3, (8) 3 x group interview KS3, KS4 and KS5 (18) 40 x Observations of social spaces, reception, lessons, assemblies, canteen, staffrom, evening events Analysis of documents including 2 years of newsletters Guided tour of the school by KS4 pupils	Interviews Focus groups Observations Document review	62	40
Phase 3	**Mediston Academy (Nov 2019- July 2020)** 1 x school principal interview 4 x school leadership interviews 5 x staff interviews 5 x ex staff interviews 5 x support staff interviews 4 x parent interviews 1 x staff focus group (7) 1 x pupil focus group (6) 17 x observations of social spaces, reception, lessons, assemblies, canteen, staffrom, evening events Analysis of documents including 2 years of newsletters Guided tour of the school by KS3 pupils	Interviews Focus groups Observations Document review	37	17
				Total number of participants 99
				Number of interviews and focus groups recorded 43
				Number of observations undertaken 57

Figure 4.1 Data Generation undertaken

'People inhabit worlds which are increasingly documented' (Savin-Badin and Major, 2013) Documents can be defined as being present records of events or processes which are produced either by organisations or by individuals and provide information that they are actively seeking to convey to others (McCulloch, 2011; Savin-Badin and Major, 2013; Newby, 2014). They can provide a valuable insight into social interaction which is especially useful within activity systems. Documents serve multiple purposes in research. They can provide context, especially on the cultural historical roots and they allow changes and development to be tracked. They also contribute knowledge and identify pertinent questions to be asked during the research (Bowen, 2009).

Documentary evidence was a rich thread of data in my research as many documents were in the public domain and reflected varied viewpoints of participants. I interpreted 'document' as including both print based and digital documents, seeing such documents as examples of mediating artefacts and rules which exerted an influence on the actors. Before my first visit to each system, I looked at existing documents such as the website and prospectus. I used a 3-step approach for analysing the documents (Bowen, 2009:32). I began by skimming the document (a superficial reading). This provided me with an overview of the document and an opportunity to identify key terminology such as democracy, community, and equality. Having identified documents that contained relevant data, I then completed a detailed close reading of those documents. Here, I was looking to gain familiarity with the documents and to improve my understanding of the nuances contained within them. The third stage was to interpret the document. At this stage, I was applying the principles of categorising and coding to the data generated. I was identifying patterns in the data. I analysed documents from the two systems

themselves but also from the Cooperative College, the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS) and CSnet. These sources were in the public domain and were freely available. I used the information I gained to frame the questions that I asked during my fieldwork to ensure that the data generated was relevant to my research questions.

Once I started my field work in the activity systems more documents (mediating artefacts) were analysed as identified in Figure 4.2.

DOCUMENT	AUTHOR	PRIMARY AUDIENCE
Website	Designated staff member	Community
Prospectus	Varied staff	Parents of prospective students
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	Designated staff member and middle leaders	Various subjects
Policy documents	Headteacher, senior leaders and governors	Subjects Community
Staff newsletters	Senior Leaders	Subjects (staff)
Parent newsletters	Senior Leaders	Community
Feedback from voice groups	Senior leaders (including student voice groups)	Subjects Community
Staff briefing notes	Headteacher	Staff
Minutes of governor meetings	Chair of governors	Subjects

Figure 4.2 Documents analysed

In deciding which documents were relevant, I drew on Scott's criteria for evaluating and analysing documents (Scott, 1990). I asked myself whether documents were authentic, credible and representative. I created a grid which included information on who created the documents, for whom, the format of the document, the purpose and issues such as where the document was held (see appendix F).

The documents analysed also included a wide range of official policies which were generally written by senior leaders and agreed by governors becoming rules of the activity system. Some of these policy documents were rewritten over the period of my research. Whilst some of these documents were intended for the general public and written accordingly, others were originally written for internal purposes or to guide potential subjects, but these were still publicly available. (This is further addressed in Section 4.9).

A further source of documentary evidence which I drew upon was the individual blog or headteacher communication, a key primary source in my research. The blog is becoming an increasingly common feature of schools whereby the headteacher writes a regular blog or digital communication to parents and other stakeholders to share school news and events. At both schools I was added to the distribution list as a researcher and received regular copies of the blog and newsletters from over a two-year period. I decided on this time frame as it provided insight into the recent history of each school as well as context for the enactment of cooperativism in the two schools. These documentary sources further illuminated the outcomes that are espoused through the mediating artefacts (documents) and in the official discourse of the system, being disseminated by the school's leadership team. It allowed me to look more deeply at how these values were then re-interpreted and enacted in a practical way within the school.

Documentary data requires careful interpretation and analysis of a specific social context which again draws on the axiology of the researcher (Verschuren, 2003; McCulloch, 2011). It is important to represent the documents fairly and sensibly,

considering the audience and context for each documentary source (Bowen, 2009; Savin-Badin and Major, 2013).

This approach allowed for content and theme analysis. For example, in the newsletters I was able to identify key cooperative terminology like 'equity' on skimming but only understood the context on a closer reading. Some of the documents which I analysed, for example the newsletters, were available in large numbers, so I decided on a two-year limit for newsletters as that provided context and some historical context but remained manageable. The researcher makes decisions on what is and is not important at the analysis stage (Savin-Badin and Major, 2013). In making these decisions, my voice as a researcher is impacting the research because I am choosing what to include. My choices are constantly being guided by the research questions and transparency of the research process.

4.6 ii Interviews

Interviews are a highly flexible method of generating data in educational research. Interviews can allow for probing questions and thereby generate rich data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). They allow insight into personal experience and encourage interviewees to discuss their own interpretations of the topic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Powney and Watts (1987) refer to an interviewer as an explorer. When designing my research project this appealed to me as my research questions focused on exploring the interpretation and enactment of cooperative values as part of an activity system. I saw the benefits of using a method that allowed me to engage on a human level with various subjects regarding their participation in the activity system. I understood the importance of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee and took measures to ensure trust and transparency. Interviews, with well framed

questions based on both my research questions and my prior analysis of documents, allowed me to probe more deeply into an individual's experiences and, through this method, examine the activity system itself.

Interviews are highly subjective and open to interpretation by the researchers (Atkins and Wallace, 2012; Savin-Badin and Major,2013; Newby, 2014). It is a deeply complex process, dependent on both the bond of trust between interviewer and interviewee and the quality of the questions. Avoiding leading questions and piloting the questions were logical steps and my initial research design allowed me to pilot my interviews which resulted in considerable alterations in how questions were phrased to ensure that I generated relevant data.

I conducted three pilot interviews in a cooperative school - two interviews with pupils and an interview with a teacher. I used a semi structured approach with the same base question. I found the students' responses were stilted and undeveloped due to the inclusion of technical terms like 'pedagogy' which were not part of the students' sociolect (Wright and Powell, 2006). This pilot experience had an impact on the interviews undertaken in my field study as I decided to avoid individual interviews with pupils and instead used one hour group interviews for exploring the views and experiences of young people within co-operative schools. I felt that being part of a larger group would enhance pupils' confidence when answering questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This approach recognised the children's vulnerability, reducing their anxiety and facilitating space to speak honestly and openly, all of which can be difficulties when interviewing children (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Shaw and Smith, 2006). Furthermore, these are essential considerations when undertaking an ethical and

well-planned research project involving children and young people. Ethical issues are considered further in Section 4.8.

Another factor that I carefully considered in planning interviews was the actual format of the interview and the questions used. I used semi structured interviews as this provided me with the chance to frame interview questions about subjects' personal experience of being part of an activity system. I initially focused my questions under four key headings: the background of the school; the interpretation and enactment of cooperative values; stakeholders and voice; looking outwards. Specific questions were framed for the different groups of stakeholders within the system under these four headings. The questions were framed to elicit data that would help me to address my four research questions and drew upon my understanding and prior experiences of the cooperative education sector (see Section 4.1) I was keen to explore students' and staff perceptions of being participants in a cooperative setting and how this feels in practice. I was particularly interested in their experience of the cooperative values and their agency in the enactment of cooperativism so this became a focus of some questions (see Appendix G for the full list of stem questions which were used in interviews with students and staff). I was still able to ask follow-up questions to explore interesting issues that might arise during the interview. This ensured that I was gathering rich data, albeit data that could, in some ways, be difficult to analyse. I also welcomed the chance to rephrase or clarify questions, when necessary, to minimise misunderstandings (Newby, 2014). Whilst the semi structured approach can also be also time consuming, it provided a useful and practical alternative to open or unstructured interviewing. Initially, I avoided telephone interviews because I valued the face-to-face contact which is an essential part of human communication and developing trust with the interviewee.

The Covid-19 pandemic prevented face-to-face research in schools, and I switched to video calls with some participants (See Section 4.8 for Research in a Pandemic).

I used a blend of individual and group interviews in each activity system (see Figure 4.1). I conducted individual hour-long interviews with significant figures such as the headteacher, senior leaders and headboy as I wanted to interview them in depth about their specific role. (See appendix C: Questions for headteachers and appendix G: List of main questions for students and staff.) Interviews are a representation of experience and a form of constructed narrative (Atkinson, 2005) so interviewing key figures individually provided an insight into the cultural and social conventions in the activity systems. Other subjects were interviewed in groups as a practical approach due to limitations of time and access, but I kept interviews with students of different key stages separate to minimise their inhibitions. The focus for all my interviews was the individual experiences of the actors and their reflections on the outcome, rules, artefacts and community of the activity system. My interviews were audio recorded and transcribed electronically to allow greater ease in analysis where I could identify key terms and narratives. I read the interview transcripts several times to ensure my familiarity and full understanding of what was said. and noted key words and ideas. I then conducted a categorisation process which enabled me to begin cross-referencing contributions from different participants to explore their use of certain language or references to key themes.

4.6 iii Focus Groups

In addition to using collective interviews, I also used focus groups in my research. I asked groups of students to explore and discuss their own school's prospectus with the question of 'Does this show an accurate reflection of your school?'. They were then

asked to work together to plan their own version of the prospectus. A school's prospectus can be viewed as a marketing document, often glossy, with the express aim of attracting parents and pupils to the school. However, it is also a valuable document for reflecting the espoused values and ethos of a school as it wishes to be seen and pupils' engagement with this representation can provide a useful insight into their thoughts and experiences of being within the activity system. In asking students to reimagine the prospectus based on their own perspective, I hoped to gain insight into how students perceive their school and, more importantly, their place in it.

I decided to utilise focus groups in this way in each school as such a task engaged students in an interactive explorative task with peer support. From a practical perspective I was aware that using a focus group would generate rich data in a short time period and it would allow wide coverage of issues and ideas (Lichtman, 2013; Thomas, 2016; Gibbs, 2017). I was also aware that focus groups are helpful where research is 'underpinned by values and beliefs' (Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey, 2016:104) which made it a valuable method in my research for exploring perceptions and experiences of learning to be cooperative within the activity system.

I did take steps to minimise the criticisms of focus groups around seeming contrived or unnatural (Hyden and Bulow, 2003) and the potential for confusion around the public nature of the forum (Tolich, 2009). I undertook a pre-activity briefing with pupils involved in focus groups using language and content previously agreed with the school's gatekeeper. This covered the content and purpose of the prospectus task alongside the voluntary nature of their involvement and clarification that the forum was not private. These measures allowed me to minimise the risks and ensure that the pupils were

protected appropriately from harm whilst allowing me to gain an insight into their views and experiences within the activity system. In analysing the data generated from the focus groups, I reviewed my audio recordings of the sessions, focusing on students' use of key terminology associated with cooperativism such as democracy and equality. I tracked the way that students spoke about the school, both positive and negative, to gain an insight into their experiences at the school. I noted the physical places that they named as representing their school's identity and ethos. This data was categorised to make the analysis more effective.

4.6 iv Observations

Throughout my data collection phase I was interested in understanding the practical experiences of the stakeholders (actors) within cooperative schools and how they enacted the espoused cooperative values such as equality, solidarity and democracy at institutional and individual level (see Section 2.2 for more details on cooperative values). I was also seeking deeper understanding into how this affected their experience and action within the activity system. In designing my research project, I employed methods that would allow me to hear what stakeholders said about their experiences, but I also wanted to see what these experiences, perceived values and activity looked like in practice (Savin-Badin and Major, 2013). As part of my data generation, I undertook 57 observations. (See Figure 4.1 for details of the range of stakeholders participating in the research). I was aware that in selecting specific aspects to be observed within my research I was making informed decisions on what to observe, how to record it and then make sense of these observations which could reflect unconscious bias based on my prior experiences (see Sections 1.2 and 4.2).

I decided to use unstructured observations to explore these enacted experiences within the two activity systems. Observation, at its simplest level, means to watch and record what you see; it provides an opportunity to notice details that might otherwise have gone unnoticed within the busy environment of a school. In each system I undertook a range of observations of different durations, to see actors in situ. I used predetermined themes to frame my observations: setting, participants, actions and relationships. I summarised what was seen with detailed notes in my field notes. See Figure 4.3 for a summary of the observations undertaken at the two schools which, for the purposes of my research, are referred to by the pseudonyms Sheply School and Mediston Academy.

Aspect Observed	Focus	Observations at Sheply June - Nov 2019	Observations at Mediston[1] Nov 2019 - Jan 2020
Social spaces (including canteen facilities)	Students Staff	11	5
Lessons (including PHSE)	Students	11	4
Parents' events	Parents Students	5	4
Staff meetings / briefing	Staff	4	2
Reception Area	Parents Community	3	2
Student voice groups	Students	4	0
Assemblies	Students Staff	2	0

Figure 4.3 Showing observations undertaken

I wanted to achieve a broad overview of the different aspects of activity undertaken by actors within the system and, where possible, to observe actors in multiple situations. The rationale behind this decision was to observe actors engaged in learning in both formal and informal learning environments. I identified events such as lessons, meetings, assemblies and voice groups as situations for formal learning to be

---

[1] Face-to-face observations at Mediston were halted due to the Global Pandemic - see Section 4.8 on Researching in a Pandemic

undertaken by various participants. Informal learning was observed in social spaces and through interactions in the reception area. This contributed to my understanding of the rules and artefacts of the activity system and provided the opportunity to observe the institutional enactment of cooperative values as they were being interpreted. Observations of lessons, tutorials and social spaces reflected how rules impacted on subjects' actions. These scenarios were unstructured observations as a non-participant observer which meant that I was able to watch and record events without being actively involved in the event itself. I recognised that my presence did affect the event being observed and that the line between being a participant and non-participant is sometimes blurred in practice (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018; Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey, 2016). As an adult in a school environment, there is the potential for impact upon the behaviour of actors, especially students, due to the power imbalance at play. To minimise this impact, I made multiple visits to these environments, thereby allowing students to become familiar with my presence.

Whilst observations are often focused on the interactions between people, they can also be the observations of objects or the physical traces left behind (Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey, 2016). One key aspect in my research is the importance of mediating artefacts, tools and signs such as the headteacher's blog which indicate the activity and enacted values being shared within the system. These artefacts can be formal policy documentation, the wall displays around the school or even the items on the coffee table in the reception. These artefacts once again reflect what activity and actions people undertake as opposed to what people say they do and this, along with the observation of people, provides greater insight into the specific activity system.

A final method that I utilised was the keeping of a research journal whilst undertaking my field study phase in the case study schools. In designing my research, I was aware that being in schools was likely to be busy and potentially overwhelming due to the wide range of aspects that interplay in an activity system. I drew on the experiences of colleagues and recommendations of researchers in using a research journal to record field notes 'in situ' and immediately (Bogdan and Biklen 1992; Berger 2015; Thoresen and Ohlen, 2015; Phillipi and Lauderdale, 2017). This provided a wealth of notes and observations to reflect upon. Using a journal meant that I was able to look back on notes of the varying aspects seen and reflect on how they illuminated the interconnectivity and contradictions of activity systems. Essentially, the field notes were an integral part of my data generation and analysis which included opportunities to note down questions, confusions, feelings, identify problems or possible lines of further enquiry.

4.7 Selection and Access

The selection of the case is vitally important as it impacts on the fitness of the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). In my initial research design, I had planned to examine two activity systems which were significantly different, one situated in a newly converted cooperative secondary school and one in an established cooperative school. I approached cooperative schools who fit these criteria. Several schools, having initially agreed to be part of the research, withdrew due to significant changes in their circumstances. These included the change of headteacher, damaging Ofsted inspections, joining a non-cooperative multi-academy trust and enforced academisation. The two activity systems examined in my research were selected for multiple reasons - including that they were able and willing to participate. They are

situated in established cooperative schools (Sheply School and Mediston Academy) who remain committed to their cooperativism and both are also in geographical locations which made repeated access over several months possible.

The 99 individual participants in the research were selected as they fulfilled several criteria: they were subjects or actors in the activity system; there was the capacity to release them with minimal impact on day-to-day operations and they were willing to participate in the research, sharing their experience and understanding of the activity system. In selecting individuals to be interviewed I ensured that there were some individuals representing the various elements of the community of the activity system: pupils, teaching staff, support staff and parents. Figure 4.1 presents the data generation undertaken in my research and outlines in more detail who the participants were. At Sheply, the 62 participants in my research comprised 27 students. I deliberately involved students from all year groups to allow me to achieve a broad and balanced view of the student experience. Thirty-five adults took part. They came from a range of positions within the school, including the headteacher, senior leaders, other teaching staff, but also support and site staff. These participants were selected to facilitate insight into the varying experiences of a range of stakeholders, but also to reveal nuances in their understanding of cooperativism. The impact of the pandemic affected participation at Mediston (see Section 4.8). Six KS3 students comprised the focus group, looking at the school prospectus, but the remaining 31 participants were all adult stakeholders who were selected based on the same criteria as those employed at Sheply. Further guidance provided to prospective participants to inform their decision on participation is considered in Section 4.9.

4.8 Researching in a Pandemic

Like many other researchers the Covid-19 crisis affected my ability to conduct my research as originally planned (Lupton, 2020). My original research design involved completing fieldwork, in two activity systems, over a 12-month time period. I planned to make repeated visits to Sheply School from June 2019 to November 2019 and then Mediston Academy from November 2019 to May 2020 to examine the activity systems. I completed the fieldwork at Sheply on schedule and began the fieldwork at Mediston in November 2019. By the end of January 2020, I had completed some of my planned data generation when face-to-face research became impossible because of restrictions put in place. This unexpected event necessarily instigated some changes to my research design. I made the decision that I would not complete any additional interviews with student participants using video conferencing for safeguarding and ethical concerns. I did complete interviews with adult participants via video conferencing and have also provided feedback to adult participants using Zoom and Google Meet. Some of my planned field study became impossible to complete but the data already generated and additional individual adult interviews provided sufficient detail to make sense of the activity system in Mediston. The restrictions on non-essential visitors to schools are still in place in September 2021.

4.9 Reliability and Validity in Research

Many of the criticisms of qualitative research are centred on its inability to conform to traditional concepts of validity and reliability alongside a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of qualitative research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hammersley, 2007; Cooley, 2013). The concept of reliability refers to the extent that the results can be reproduced under the same conditions. Validity refers to the extent that results are accurately measured

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This means that quantitative research has the strength of being easily verifiable to other researchers. Qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data to understand opinions and experiences. It is this focus on human experiences which makes the concepts of validity and reliability inappropriate for qualitative research.

Case study research is undertaking situational research on a specific context and achieving a deep, detailed and rich understanding of that individual context. Knowledge can be generated from that real-life context and people's experiences, but findings cannot be generalised as they are tied to that specific context. This approach is relevant for my research which seeks to explore the experiences of subjects as they learn to be cooperative within their specific context or activity system. It would be wrong to dismiss case study research as invalid because it fails to fulfil positivist expectations of research over validity and reliability.

Accepting the different nature of qualitative research has meant attempting to redefine the concept of 'validity' using terms like 'fidelity to real life' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) or 'trustworthy' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Other terms suggested as replacements include: plausibility, credibility, fittingness and auditability (Whittlemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001). All these terms recognise the inherent problem of trying to evaluate the validity of case study research using positivistic terminology and a more appropriate approach is to reframe the question as 'What is quality?' in qualitative research.

The individual and unique nature of a case study means that it is not representative of social phenomenon on a wider scale and that knowledge 'in-situ' is in a constant state of flux which makes generalisations difficult. Replication is affected by numerous external and socio-cultural factors (Burawoy, 1998). Instead, a case study has a focus on the uniqueness of the case and the ability of this case to test out or reconstruct social theory (Boyask, 2020). Cases are not reduced to general principles or rules which would have the ability to generalise on a macro scale rather they operate on a local or micro level. Each case is contextually situated and unique, but cases can help to illuminate one another in a similar context or contribute to the testing of social theory or methodological principle. (Burawoy, 1998; Hammersley, 2007; Boyask, 2020).

Quality then becomes about the appropriateness of the case chosen and the justification of the context (Thomas, 2016; Atkinson, 2005). A good case is one which meets the purpose of the study, is relevant and is capable of contributing new knowledge or insight on the topic (Yin, 2009). My cases are two activity systems, in Sheply and Mediston, which illuminate cooperativism, the activities being undertaken and the tensions or contradictions evident within the system. The selection of these two systems allowed me to research cooperative schools and their place in the wider English educational context. Their individual cultural-historical context is important to the concept of them being good cases for my research. Both schools were early adopters of cooperative identity and are committed to cooperativism as their ethos, despite operating in a neoliberal and marketised education system. They have something interesting and unique to contribute to the debate about schooling in England and the place of cooperativism in education. Chapter 2 explored further the discussions on the context for my cases.

Another aspect which contributes to quality in qualitative research is the research design being robust and rigorous (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2001; Atkinson and Delamont, 2006). This is important as it means that there is transparency and that the processes of the research: data collection and analysis can be scrutinised. Yin (2009) advised researchers to consider reliability as someone standing behind them at all stages of the research checking their actions were rigorous and appropriate (Yin, 2009:45). Thomas (2016) reiterates this need for academic rigour and the application of multiple methods to ensure that the richness and depth that is essential for a case study is present. He refers to Foucault's Polyhedron of Intelligibility, stating that the different directions and methods are what lead to intelligibility (2016:67). I was mindful of this concept when designing my case study and deliberately included multiple methods to gather data that could illuminate the activity systems.

The nature of qualitative research means that details are subjective and could be biased due to a researcher's axiology (Yin, 2009; Lichtman, 2013; Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey ,2016). However, in the paradigm that I use, bias or subjectivity is expected as the information is filtered through the researcher's eyes (Bogdan and BIklen, 1992; Burawoy 1998; Yin, 2009). It is not possible to escape this bias and is potentially undesirable to do so, as qualitative research is focused on gaining a deep insight of the world and the growth of knowledge (Borawoy, 1998; Lichtman, 2013). My background as a practitioner within cooperative education (see chapter 1) meant I was already immersed in the topic, and this has an inescapable influence on my research.

4.10 Research Ethics

Addressing ethical concerns is an integral part of any research design and I was mindful of the responsibility of ensuring that my actions throughout my research were 'ethical, justifiable and sound' (BERA, 2018). I drew on two sources for guidance in developing an ethically sound piece of research: the latest Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research from BERA (2011; 2018) and the guidelines from the University of Plymouth, including feedback on my ethics protocol which I implemented. Ethics were considered at all stages including design, methodology, data generation and even the writing of my thesis. I understand the importance of researching in an ethical and appropriate manner that would protect the 'dignity of individuals and groups' (BERA, 2018).

I was mindful of the guidance for research involving human participants from the University of Plymouth (2018) which focused on 4 principles including: informed consent; openness and honesty; protection from harm and confidentiality. In addition, as my research was school based, I followed the specific guidance for research which involved children under 16 (NSPCC, 2018; updated 2020; University of Plymouth, 2018). Amongst these was the importance of following the procedures that were in place at each of my research schools as an established part of their safeguarding process. After initial permission to undertake research, I was appointed a gatekeeper in the school who was my regular point of contact when in the school. I needed to supply a copy of my enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, always wear a photographic ID card and sign in each time I visited. These actions ensured that I was compliant with their safeguarding regulations.

I took steps to ensure that informed consent was sought from all my participants, that they understood that their participation was voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw. This included measures such as ensuring that the focus of my research was identified in the email consent letter with the schools' headteachers (Appendix D) and also negotiating research boundaries with the schools' assigned gatekeeper. In advance of my field study, I shared with each school a participant information sheet which outlined my research project and its focus (See Appendix E). This was also shared in advance with the individually named participants as I wanted them, especially the children and their parents, to have the chance to read and understand what was involved before any interviews and focus groups took place. This maximised the opportunities for participants to ask questions or seek more information on my research. At the start of interviews and the focus groups I also showed participants the information sheet again and provided another opportunity for any questions to be asked. I also verbally reminded participants that their involvement was voluntary; that they could withdraw from the process or decline to answer any question without needing to give any reasons for their decision (See Appendix F). On two occasions additional questions were asked to clarify details but no one decided to withdraw.

Given the hierarchical nature of schools I explained to all participants that the establishment was fully supportive of their individual decision on whether to participate or withdraw from the activity and that they were able to change their mind. As with all research involving children, I was mindful that my status as an unknown adult and a researcher could be problematic, especially around power and social expectations (Graham et al, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). I attempted to mitigate these potential difficulties through careful design in my research which sought to recognise

children's agency (Graham et al, 2013). Some of these were practical measures such as paying attention to where and how activities took place in an attempt to lessen the power imbalance. One example was the focus group activity around the schools' prospectus. Initially, I was offered the headteacher's office at Sheply as a location and then a formal conference room which was never used by pupils. I felt that both of these locations heightened the power imbalance, and I eventually negotiated the use of a Personal, Health, Social and Education (PHSE) classroom which was already set for group work and was a location where students were used to discussion-based tasks.

These steps reflect the four elements of competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension which are necessary for the consent to be informed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). They are also linked to openness and honesty in research. I wanted the participants at both establishment and individual level to understand what I was researching, namely exploring how cooperative schools interpreted and enacted cooperative values and how this was experienced by stakeholders within the school. I also wanted them to know that I was genuinely interested in their experiences and perceptions, so I was not seeking evidence to test a hypothesis or pre-existing viewpoint. Hence, I focused on ensuring transparency in my research which included how the research findings would be disseminated. A key part of my transparency was seeking clarification and providing verbal feedback to my participants to ensure that I had not misrepresented their views. In my first activity system at Sheply School this was fairly straightforward as I made repeated visits to the school extended over several months and was able to meet again with participants. However, the global pandemic was having a considerable impact whilst I was completing the data generation in my second activity system at Mediston Academy. I had again made repeated visits over several months but

physical visits to school were then banned which meant I needed to amend my original research design to incorporate greater use of technology (see Section 4.7). Feedback to participants became more difficult and I utilised video conferencing and digital exchanges to complete some interviews with adult participants and to complete feedback.

Researchers have the responsibility to protect participants from harm. Harm is a subjective term but can include elements such as psychological, physical, reputational or professional damage. The overarching principle is that participants should not be negatively impacted upon from the process of the research. Anonymity is one approach to protecting participants, but I ensured that participants understood that total anonymity cannot be guaranteed in case studies where some elements could be recognisable to local people or multiple data sources can be combined to give clues to actual identity (Walford, 2005; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). I focused on confidentiality to protect my participants[2]. All data in my research was anonymised with place and people's names represented by pseudonyms and the two activity systems being presented as being in the South of England, a large geographical area to maximise confidentiality. My data was also stored in two different ways: physical data such as documents and field notebooks were kept in a locked filing cabinet whilst digital data was password protected and kept in a secure electronic folder.

---

[2] I ensured that participants understood that confidentiality could be broken if there were safeguarding concerns that became apparent.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explain the process and thought behind my research project. It has outlined the coherence of approach, utilising case study and methods to explore my two identified activity systems as individual cases or examples. I have tried to explain how methods were identified and employed after a due consideration of their advantages in generating data. Throughout this research I have taken steps to ensure that my research is 'ethical, justifiable and sound' (BERA, 2018).

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the two case studies, examining the interconnected nature of the activity system within each cooperative school. Sheply College and Mediston Academy are introduced with details of their context and pupil profile. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) has enabled me to use the structures of human activities to analyse the data generated in order to understand the process by which stakeholders learn to be cooperative. The actors in each system use mediating artefacts and tools to fulfil the desired outcome and this process is examined in detail.

5.2 Introducing the Findings

The purpose of this research project is to explore cooperative schools as activity systems which enable stakeholders to learn to be cooperative and to fulfil their espoused outcome of producing pro-active citizens of the future. I am especially interested in the interpretation and enactment of what are referred to as cooperative values and how this affects the experiences of stakeholders through the range of activity undertaken within the school. Much of the research on cooperative schools since their resurgence in 2008 has been around academisation, governance and their opposition to neoliberalism rather than the experiences that stakeholders have within the school.

5.3 Introducing Sheply College

Sheply College is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive with 1300 students. It is considered by the DfE to be larger than average in size for a secondary school. It is centred in a small town with approximately 60% of pupils living within the town itself but its catchment area spreads over a 10-mile radius into rural areas and approximately 40% of pupils

travel in excess of 4 miles to get to the school. Sheply College is the only secondary school in the area and initially joined the Schools Cooperative Society in 2012. It is now a cooperative academy having converted in February 2018 and is now part of a cooperative multi academy trust (MAT) with 14 other schools and a Higher Education provider. The MAT is a cooperative MAT spread over a large geographical area. Sheply's pupil profile is predominantly White British which is typical for the area. The number of pupils with Special Education needs and those for whom the college receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for looking after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is below the national average. Many of the challenges for Sheply come from its geographical location: students' reliance on school buses limits extra-curricular activities, intervention and support services that can be run. Students' punctuality can also be affected by poor infrastructure outside the town boundaries.

5.4 Introducing Mediston Academy

Mediston Academy is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive with 1100 students, meaning that it is considered by the DfE to be an average sized secondary school in England. It converted to being a cooperative academy in 2011. Mediston Academy is centred in a deprived area of a large city with approximately 80% of students living within one mile of the school; the majority of students walk to the school. The geographical location has a considerable impact on the school as it is at the centre of the local community, offering a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils and hosting community groups in the evening and at weekends. Mediston Academy is one of 14 secondary schools serving the city of Crowley where falling pupil numbers and academisation has led to increased competition between schools in the city. Mediston's student profile is consistent with

serving an area of deprivation. It has 22% of students with special educational needs which is more than twice the national average and 44.5% of students have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years which is perceived as an indicator of deprivation by the Department for Education (DfE 2019). The latter figure is significantly above the national average. Mediston's persistent absence figure is also above the national average. Many of the challenges for Mediston Academy come from its location in an area of deprivation. A negative Ofsted report in 2017 also affected the relationship between the school and its local community. Mediston has been reinventing itself as a cooperative school since 2019, drawing on its history and prior experiences.

Sheply College and Mediston Academy

My research has focused on Sheply College and Mediston Academy as examples of cooperative schools. My focus was on exploring how learning to be cooperative is undertaken in both systems and- how stakeholders experience the enactment of cooperative values. Both schools have had a negative Ofsted experience within the last ten years leading each headteacher to rethink the interpretation of what it means to be a cooperative school in the 21st Century and its role in enabling people to learn to be cooperative.

Utilising CHAT as my theoretical basis allowed me to replicate Engeström's second generation model (See Figure 3.3.) and map the varied aspects of Sheply and Mediston's activity systems to the six nodes identified by Engeström (see Section 3.5). This served to illuminate the activity undertaken by actors within each system and to identify tensions or possible contradictions. What follows is an exploration of the nodes as enacted in each activity system, I consider each activity system separately, beginning with a figure of the complete activity system with the relevant details added. Following

the figure is a detailed exploration of each of the six nodes and how it was expressed in that particular activity system. My approach is consistent across both schools as I follow the same order in exploring the system. I begin with the outcome as the shared purpose and then consider the subject as those who are undertaking the activity. I then consider the social basis (rules, community and the division of labour) before exploring the mediating artefacts or tools which are used to achieve the outcome.

5.5 The Activity System at Sheply College
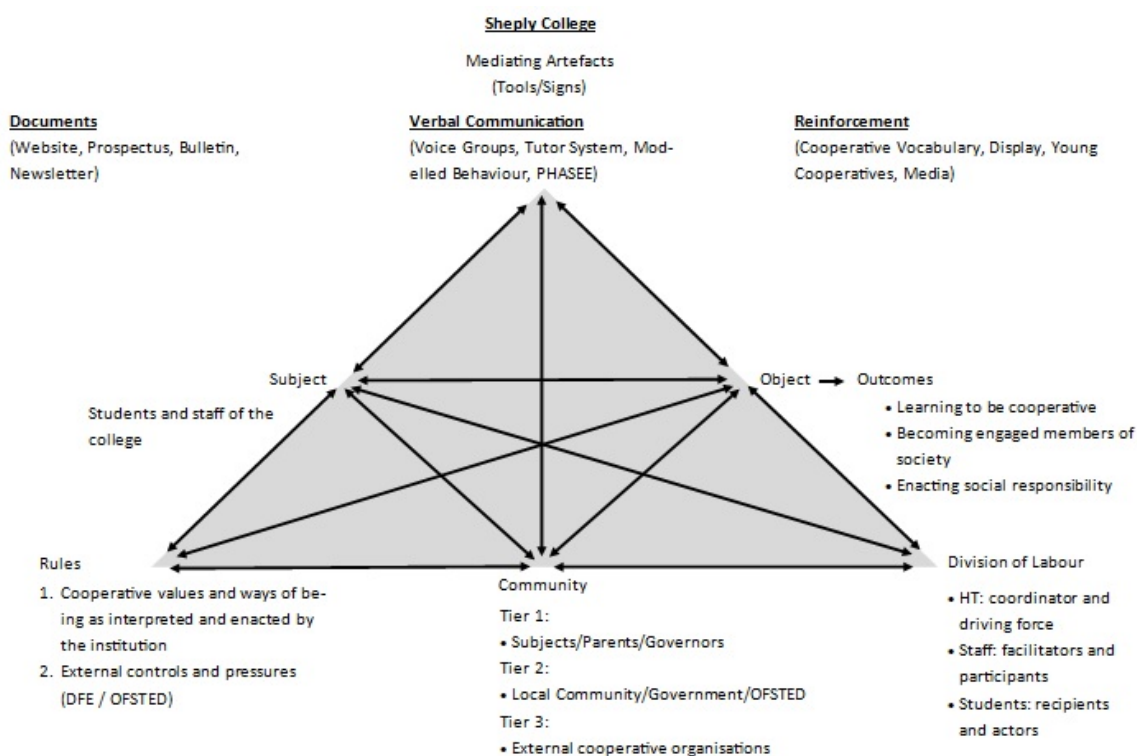
Figure 5.1 Diagram of Sheply as an activity system

The importance of the Outcome

My research at Sheply College found that it was an activity system with a very clear sense of its subject (pupils and staff) and its desired outcome of producing pupils who are equiped for citizenship of a just society through their learning about cooperation. This

is the most important aspect of Sheply as an activity system as the other elements are used to strengthen this outcome. Three conscious learning outcomes were apparent in the school's documentation and illuminated further during my research:

1. Learning to be cooperative

2. Becoming engaged stakeholders of society

3. Understanding and enacting social responsibility

The school presents an interwoven system wherein the outcome depends upon the interrelated connections between all the various aspects of the activity system which include the subject, community, division of labour, rules and mediating artefacts. For Sheply these interrelationships are all focused on the outcomes stated above.

In generating data at the school, I saw a variety of tools and signs which were reinforcing cooperativism and were mediating tensions, stresses and potential contradictions within the activity system. My experience as a practitioner and researcher in the field of cooperative education enabled me to group the tools and signs into sub-categories (See Figure 5.1). Many of the mediating artefacts drawn upon by the human actors could be considered documents because they were written sources used to define the cooperative identity of the school, thereby mediating tensions. In a second sub-category, which I identified as 'reinforcement', I have included visual tools and signs. These provide a constant visual reminder of the behaviours expected and sought within the activity system. As my fieldwork progressed, I became aware that many elements such as the tutor system and voice groups were being used as mediating artefacts to resolve conflicts within the system. These did not fit into the traditional concept of mediating artefacts being tangible and durable, as in Engeström's definition (Engeström, 1987). Having read Friedman's paper on artefacts (Friedman, 2007), it was clear that

verbal communication at Sheply were mediating artefacts, despite their less tangible nature. (See Section 3.3)

The lower half of Engeström's model situates the activity system within its wider social context and explores influences that shape the activity undertaken (Russell, 2001; Kain and Wardle, 2014). Rules can be defined as collective agreements which impact on the action undertaken. At Sheply, there were two distinct rules, which were present in the data – cooperative values and ways of being, and external controls. Participants in the research frequently spoke about them in a way that suggested a lack of parity between the two. Based on this data, I have included the two rules in a hierarchical way with primacy given to cooperative values as the dominant rule. Rules can mediate tensions and influence the actions of the actors (see Section 5.7). In a similar way, I have included the different elements of community in a hierarchical form, as it became apparent that not all actors in the system influence the system to the same degree (see Section 5.8).

The diagram (Figure 5.1) shows the complex lines of influence which exist within the activity system. The multiple interconnected lines emphasise how the separate components impact upon one another whilst all converging on the outcome as the transformational end point of the activity system.

In interviews with Sean Jameson, the headteacher of Sheply College, he made it clear that the main focus of the school's actions was directly related to the outcomes identified in Figure 5.1 and which permeated the school's documentation (see Section 5.10). For Jameson all other aspects of the school needed to support and promote this endpoint whereby students were encouraged to behave in a cooperative manner, enact

social responsibility and become engaged citizens. Jameson had introduced measures to ensure staff continuous professional development (CPD) was focused on the long-term outcomes and that staff and pupils understood that education was about 'more than results but rather about being ready for life' (Sean Jameson, 2019).

A significant factor in this outcome driven approach can be seen in the system utilised at Sheply for encouraging student responsibility and future citizenship through student leadership roles including school council, voice groups, prefects and through the appointment of a headboy and headgirl. The latter is a traditional system still common in many English schools whereby two senior pupils who are seen as role models both academically and socially are appointed to represent the entire student body. At Sheply there is also the expectation that such senior pupils lead others in enacting social responsibility and modelling this active citizenship. My interview with the Headboy reinforced this sense of the school having this clear sense of purpose, which is inculcated across the establishment, from the top down. He spoke of his pride in his role and the chance to model the 'responsibility that we have for each other in school and in society' (Headboy, KS5) alongside other prefects, council stakeholders, and indeed, all pupils. He spoke about how pupils were encouraged and challenged to live this out in their personal actions. Both he and many of the older students who were interviewed were clear that this desired outcome around active citizenship was consistently reinforced through actions in the school, both within lessons and within the school's pastoral support system. Several pupils spoke of their involvement in charity and community events such as litter picking by the river, volunteering at the local food bank and regularly visiting the elderly being encouraged by the school. 'We went first in Year 8 with our tutor and I just kind of carried on going. I really like it. It makes me feel useful'

(Rosa, 14). The school also encourages students to be involved in democracy through the National Youth Parliament, 'Have your Say' youth politics campaign and representation on town / parish councils. These elements will be explored further in Section 5.8. Engeström's first principle (1987; 1999) states that learning is a collective process centred on a shared object of sought outcome. This aspect was clear at Sheply with the school being centred on the outcome of developing socially active and responsible citizens who understand the importance of cooperation.

5.6 Who are the Subjects at Sheply?

Whilst Sheply is focused on a collective outcome, all elements of the system are interconnected and depend upon the dynamic relationship which is subject to both stresses and internal contradictions. There is a direct link between the outcome and the subject at Sheply College with the most obvious groups engaged in the activity being the pupils and staff within the school (See Figure 5.1). These are the actors most heavily affected by, and participating in, the activity of learning to be cooperative, enacting social responsibility and engaging in society. The subject here is collective and encompasses many different viewpoints and roles - the staff and students at Sheply have different individual experiences and voices but are engaged, albeit at different levels, in learning to meet the shared outcome. These diverse roles are considered further in Section 5.9. In joining the school pupils become part of the activity system but their engagement in it can and does vary depending on how immersed they are.

When interviewing a selection of pupils, I saw a marked difference in their perception of the school's priorities with older students generally showing a greater awareness of the collective outcome than younger students. When asked about what made the school

special KS4 pupils included phrases such as 'You have a voice' (Sarah, 15) and 'We work to co-exist with people rather than clashing' (Mark, 15). Pupils in KS3 focused on 'You get good results' (Shaun, 12) and the cooperative values 'don't really affect you much - you know how to behave and just get on with it' (Joe, 12). It was evident that as students work their way through the school their awareness of and the importance they place on the cooperative aspects of their education increase. This may be attributed to the fact that they have been learning within the activity system for a longer period of time and the sought outcomes are more securely embedded.

5.7 The Social Basis of Sheply

Engeström (1999) identified the three aspects at the bottom of the triangle: Rules, Community and Division of Labour as the social basis of the activity system. These elements allow the activity system to be situated in a wider context and provides additional detail on the influences that shape the activity (Kain and Wardle, 2014). For this reason, I have grouped these three aspects together in considering Sheply as an activity system and they can be seen at the base of Figure 5.1.

Rules

Rules are a key aspect of activity systems although they are not necessarily written formal rules but rather agreements that people adhere to whilst undertaking the activity. They can be unconscious agreements that are embedded in the collective experience and actions - an accepted usual way of doing things. Actions here follow Leont'ev's interpretation as being short-term and goal orientated. Engeström (1999) emphasised the importance of rules in bringing stability to the activity system. Like every state funded school in England, Sheply is affected by performativity as it is subject to pressures exerted by the government and also Ofsted, the schools inspection service, to

meet external floor targets and benchmarks. There are consequences of failing to meet government benchmarks (see 2.11i on Performativity). This has a significant impact on the activity undertaken at Sheply with the headteacher, Sean Jameson, describing a difficult balancing act between meeting these external measures and reaching its own desired outcome in the learning to be cooperative, socially responsible and active future citizens. Sheply has adopted an approach whereby the inevitable external pressures are mediated through a focus on this collective outcome. Jameson vocalises this as trying 'to make sure that everything points in the same direction'. Many members of staff whom I interviewed reinforced this with statements like the school being 'driven by values' (Chapman, NQT) and 'We have complete confidence in the Head. Leadership decisions are made according to the guiding principles' (Craven, experienced teacher). Ripon (deputy headteacher) described how the interpreted and enacted cooperative values are used when there is a clash between external pressures and stated outcomes. In this way the rules, with the dominance of the cooperative values and the ways of being, become agreed codes to bring stability and cohesion to the activity system of Sheply.

It is important to note that whilst the rules shape interactions in the system they are not fixed and can regularly change as aspects of the system change. This is especially important within schools as they are constantly in a state of flux where there is a regular turnover of subjects as students leave the school to be replaced by new students allowing for an ongoing renewal of the activity system. This renewal allows the rules to be questioned and potentially refined, a process that can also occur due to internal conflicts or clashes of power, but which can be stabilised by reference to the rules and mediating artefacts.

There are tensions between established traditions and the newer guiding cooperative values and ways of being. These rules do not always lie smoothly alongside the practicalities and pressures of a 21st century school in England where protecting your public reputation has a significant impact on matters as diverse as recruitment and budget. The role of the headboy and headgirl as student representatives has existed at the school for more than 50 years. As previously explained their role is to represent the wider student body but also to model the sought for cooperative behaviours. Given that democracy is a key aspect of the cooperative values and the ICA promotes 'one member one vote' I expected the headboy and headgirl to be elected roles whereby the students were voted into office by their peers. However, this was not the case and students were nominated by staff and the decision was made by the school's leadership team on who they felt would best fulfil the function of the role. The school is trying to balance tradition, parental expectations and the importance of the Head students' role in representing the school in public events against the school's interpreted cooperative values and the desire to act in cooperative ways. This is an example of where tensions or contradictions lie within the activity system and reveal a further clash of power or influence.

5.8 The Importance and Role of Community at Sheply College

A second aspect that situates the activity system in the wider context is through the interpretation and importance of community. This is a wider group than the 'subject' represents within an activity system but is the group of people 'whose knowledge, interests and goals shape the activity' (Kain and Wardle, 2014:277). As previously considered, at Sheply the subjects are the students and the staff engaged in the activity

but the wider community includes all the people who have a vested interest in the school so includes parents, governors, local community / 'neighbours', the multi academy trust, the government and even the Cooperative College (see Figure 5.1). Within the vocabulary employed by the wider cooperative movement these groups are regarded as stakeholders but as evidenced at Sheply they have varying degrees of significance or impact on the activity that is actually undertaken. I have divided the community at Sheply into 3 distinct zones based on their immersion and influence on the current activity system which can be seen in Figure 5.2, Tiers of Community at Sheply College. The closer I have placed a group to the centre of the diagram the greater its influence is on the current iteration of the activity system. Once again positions are not fixed and can be changed over time which can be seen in the placement of organisations like Csnet in the outer circle. This is explored in more detail below.
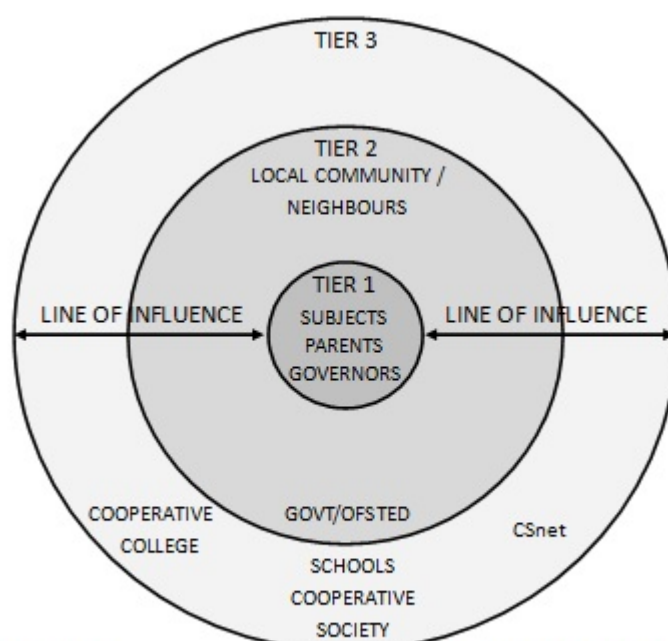
FIGURE 5.2   TIERS OF COMMUNITY AT
                                              SHEPLY COLLEGE

In the outer zone are the external cooperative groups which have, theoretically, had an impact on the activity system's development historically but have less impact on the current system's activity. Like many cooperative schools, Sheply was supported by the

116

Cooperative College through the conversion process in 2012 and was also a paying member of the Schools Cooperative Society for several years until 2016. This might imply that the Cooperative College should have a significant impact on Sheply but Jameson is critical of both the Cooperative College and the Schools Cooperative Society (SCS) for 'having abandoned' schools. A deputy head, Gill Murphy, reinforced this message by saying that they have had 'little contact' with any of these organisations for at least 3 years, deeming them as now 'irrelevant' to the activity undertaken at Sheply.

Multiple reasons lay behind these negative responses about these external cooperative groups. There was a feeling from both Jameson and Murphy that the Cooperative College lost interest in schools once they had converted. The SCS, which was specifically established to support schools, struggled to maintain contact with the vast number of schools who had converted in such a short period of time (Dennis, 2018; 2019). Theoretically, Sheply had joined a sizeable network of schools under the umbrella organisation of the SCS but Jameson states that he felt 'disappointment' when he joined Sheply at how little progress had been made in embedding or developing the cooperative values in the school over the 3-year period since conversion. He also felt that the SCS were disorganised and lacked the ability to support them further. Instead, he looked to other cooperative schools for support and joined a local cooperative MAT instead to develop Sheply's outcomes.

Jameson's feelings of abandonment by the external cooperative bodies were exacerbated by both the delays in the establishment of CSnet (Cooperative Schools Network) as a mutually supportive network for cooperative schools nationwide and the high cost of accessing their services in a time of dramatically falling school budgets.

Instead, Jameson speaks about the importance of 'holding true to the values of the ICA' as the school has interpreted them and trying to draw on the support of its partner schools in their cooperative multiple academy trust (MAT). In essence, Sheply has been involved in the development of a local cooperative hub for many of the services at one time offered by these external cooperative organisations. This also indicates that these cooperative organisations are no longer fully immersed in Sheply as an activity system and that other representations of community are now more significant and influential. Sheply is itself an activity system, but it is also part of a wider activity system as it comes into contact with others that have similar intended outcomes.

Another group which is part of the wider community at Sheply is the Government through the Department for Education and the inspection service Ofsted. I have previously explored the illusional freedoms offered by academy status and Sheply needs to meet externally set performativity measures, academic benchmarks and external expectations which undoubtedly wield an impact on the school's actions. However, I have explained how Sheply attempts to mediate the impact of these measures by filtering them, wherever possible, through the lens of cooperative values as they have interpreted and enacted them. In practical purposes the impact of these external pressures is lessened but not removed. The pressures are felt more strongly by certain actors in the activity system, namely the headteacher and SLT who are required to mediate these pressures- I will be exploring this aspect in greater detail when writing about the division of labour.

Like many schools, Sheply is aware of the advantages of involving the wider community, and especially its geographical neighbours, in its actions and activities. It actively

encourages the relationship between those in the school and the catchment area. Ripon, another deputy head, stated that Sheply aspired to be a 'A College that is at the very heart of its community'. Her reasoning behind this was practical around minimising potential conflicts between the schools and the town but also that if the community and college are working to the same outcome of developing a more equal society it increases 'the chances of it actually happening' (Ripon). Sheply also utilises its role as the only secondary school in the town, acting as a hub encouraging its various stakeholders to become active participants in the local community too. This is manifested through the school promoting local art, crafts, drama groups, churches, the town's food bank and even taking part in the town's annual parade. Sheply's fortnightly communication newsletter with parents and the wider community includes a list of all the local events and encourages people to attend. Details of community events are circulated to students through school assemblies and daily notices which are shared electronically with students. There is also a large display area promoting events in the reception of the college so that any visitor is also aware of the events taking place and which groups are operating within the catchment area. Sheply is deliberately attempting to reinforce this link between college and the wider catchment area in terms of developing practical connections and developing a sense of unity or community.

At the centre of the community, as I saw it at Sheply College, are the most significant actors who, in cooperative terms, are frequently referred to as 'core stakeholders'. These are those with vested interests in the success of the school and whose interests shape the activity; I have referred to this group as Tier 1. This group includes the subjects (students and staff), parents, and governors who have the greatest opportunity for involvement in the school. Although this group is linked by their vested interest or stake

in the activity system there are differences in their role and engagement. For example, a governor has voluntarily chosen to be involved in the system so is likely to engage fully whereas a student's participation is based on a decision that they might not have been involved in. This can contribute to varying levels of engagement and add to the inevitable tensions that arise through the unequal distribution of power and influence within the system.

One significant feature of this central tier of community at Sheply is the high profile given to the various 'voice' groups which operate at the school and provide opportunities for these central stakeholders to engage in the activity of the college (See Figure 5.2). Jameson, as headteacher, said 'Voice Groups are important to us' and that they provide vital opportunities for the college's leaders to disseminate their ideas and potential policies to their stakeholders. Ripon describes the voice groups as 'groups working to the same goals', essentially different elements of the community working to promote the cooperative ethos and the future citizenship of the pupils. Voice groups are tied to Sheply's enacted cooperative values of self-help and self-responsibility, acknowledging that these groups offer actors the chance to participate but that individuals need to want to take these opportunities. These voice groups represent actions which lead to activity within the system. Jameson also stated that 'The quality of these voices is important' but there remains the concern over who holds most power to have their voice heard and affect the activity undertaken. Defining voice groups in the activity system is difficult as they fulfil a primary function as community of the system, but they can also be seen to impact on the division of labour and are also a place for mediation.

Pupil, parent and staff voice groups are held regularly, and stakeholders are actively encouraged to participate through a variety of means including personal contact and open invitations. The regularity of the voice meetings does vary with student voice occurring most frequently; the staff and parents' voices meetings are held termly, and the various students' voice groups meet monthly.

Sheply has enacted some measures to support students in developing awareness and use of voice. In Year 7 the representation process is explained in tutor time and in all year groups students are given time to gather ideas from the class and to feedback from their voice meetings to disseminate the discussions that have taken place. In addition, there is a collapsed day each academic year, when lessons are suspended, to allow students to work on their ideas for the direction of the whole school which are then fed back to Sheply's leadership team.

There are multiple student voice groups that take place at Sheply including within year groups, house teams, and academic departments. These encompass two different approaches as some groups are populated by those 'invited to join' (Ripon) by Sheply's senior leaders or heads of department as they are seen to have good ideas and the enthusiasm to be involved and drive change. Other groups are for volunteers. For example, tutor representatives are elected to this role annually after convincing their peers that they would make effective representatives, reflecting a more democratic process. Their role is to liaise between the whole tutor group and the representative voice group bringing ideas and feedback from the tutor group.

Students in my research, from multiple year groups, were all aware that they were involved in decision making and that they were listened to: 'You have a voice' (Elsa, 13) and 'Teachers will ask your opinions and they care to hear what you think' (Ciaran, 15). Students spoke about how they had campaigned for significant change in the school's canteen on the range of healthier food being offered, at a better price and how the space was reorganised to make it more efficient in terms of access. Student voice groups were also heavily involved in two major reviews at Sheply: on the curriculum offered by the school and also on the mobile phone policy. Multiple voices were sought on these reviews: 'It was a proper consultation - we wanted people to have the chance to be part of the dialogue' (Ripon). Students were able to respond via an anonymised questionnaire, they discussed the proposals in their tutor group and then voted. Overall students argued that phones were distracting and that the penalty for breaking the rules should be harsher than initially proposed by SLT. This led to a stricter policy being established than had been proposed by SLT.

There is an inherent danger in the rules for student engagement at Sheply. Whilst the school's SLT see both threads as important for providing students with opportunities to engage some students described feeling that only 'elite' students were invited to join certain voice groups. One student said, 'other voices are heard but maybe not as much' (Dan, 15) which is problematic for seeing cooperative schools as enacting democracy. Furthermore, not all students want to be part of the voice mechanism at Sheply, stating that it could be a distraction from academic work (Maisie, 15) or that student voice is illusory and without power (Ciaran,15). Stakeholders can have variable engagement within a cooperative school and the uneven relationship between subjects can add to the tensions.

Staff voice is also encouraged and facilitated at Sheply with regular voice meetings led by Murphy, an Assistant headteacher. Topics for discussion are announced in advance and at every session staff can put forward other subjects for the subsequent meeting. There is a dedicated noticeboard in the staff room for discussion topics and feedback to be shared more widely with staff. Again, there was extensive participation by staff in both the mobile phone and curriculum reviews. Staff in my research felt that they were actively encouraged to participate in voice activities and listened to: 'Everyone is involved in decision making and can have a say' (Whitman, experienced teacher) and 'Everyone is responsible - you have a voice' (Innes, experienced teacher). The impact of this staff voice can also be seen in the 'You Said: We did' document where staff flagged issues such as workload, too many IT interfaces and a desire for more social events and the SLT brought in changes based on the feedback.

In a similar way the participation of parents is regarded as important to ensure that the core object of the school is reinforced, and parents are seen as vital stakeholders. They hold a position of power as they could withdraw their child from the school and potentially undermine the stability of the activity system. Whilst this is a rare occurrence, the knowledge that it could happen creates tensions within the system. Traditionally, Sheply has run a Parent Council, chaired by a parent with a formal agenda and minutes which are then posted on the website for all parents to access. The Parent Council contributed to the mobile phone and curriculum reviews with special meetings being held and multiple communications with home. However, there has been a growing awareness that the number of parents attending has dropped significantly over the last couple of years (minutes from Council meeting - January 2020). Jameson spoke about

parent voice 'removing barriers' to parental participation and the senior leaders frequently explore how employing new technologies might facilitate greater involvement especially across Sheply's vast catchment area. This has led to several changes to the way that parent voice is organised to complement the formal council meetings including some measures that were used during the reviews on mobile phones and curriculum. There is frequent electronic contact with parents; they are encouraged to use a dedicated email address to contribute to discussions and give their viewpoint. Furthermore, there is an open invitation for parents and the wider community to give feedback or simply share their ideas for improvement at any time by using a Google form. Both Jameson and Ripon see these measures as a reflection of solidarity - that stakeholders are united in trying to achieve the sought outcomes, reflecting the interconnectivity of the system.

The impact of stakeholder consultation is reflected in Sheply's annual document 'You said: We did' wherein practical changes are made based on feedback from stakeholders. When I interviewed parents, staff and students, all mentioned this sense of having a real voice and of being listened to with one teacher saying, 'You feel that you can bring things up and get listened to' (Mayhew, NQT). This can be seen as an example of participatory activity evident at Shepley which will be explored in greater depth later as democratisation, one of the main activities taking place at both Sheply and Mediston.

5.9 The Division of Labour at Sheply

What is apparent from exploring Sheply as an activity system is that different community stakeholders divide up the work that is needed to accomplish their object and that this division of labour can be unequal and variable. The division of labour is broader in

second generation CHAT. It also includes the rules which underpin state education in England such as who can teach, who establishes the curriculum and who inspects schools. Division of labour can also be the cause of tensions and conflicts which need to be mediated by the other aspects of the system such as rules and mediating artefacts. See Figure 5.1 for the lines of tension and interconnectivity.

The driving force behind Sheply as a cooperative school is the headteacher, Jameson, and his personal commitment to cooperative education and the cooperative political movement. He stated that the main focus of the school was related to its cooperative aspects, seen as the objects of learning - to be cooperative and to be able to enact socially responsible citizenship. Jameson spoke of the importance of the college 'Holding true to the values of the International Cooperative Alliance' and that there is 'now a sense that the values need to be understood and enacted' in the school (headteacher). Jameson perceived that much of his time and energy had been taken up by embedding cooperation and cooperative values, addressing the mistaken idea that cooperative schools lacked rigour and that the values were 'woolly'. In contrast he argued that the values were 'hard edged' especially around self-help and self-responsibility.

Jameson's ongoing role and labour is also significant as both a coordinator and facilitator in the activity system. In addition to being a figurehead, he is responsible for sharing the central message or object across all stakeholders and convincing them of the ongoing importance of learning to be cooperative and socially aware citizens. Jameson ensures that cooperative values and ways of being remain central at Sheply by utilising assemblies and the pastoral system to reinforce these ideas with students. Mediating artefacts like the fortnightly newsletter are numerous and serve to influence the

interactions between the actors and the system. A parental version is emailed out with details of events, a celebration of successes but also reflect on the role that cooperative values play in the school. A staff version includes academic articles on effective pedagogy and the interpretation of cooperative values and their enactment. The regular staff briefings led by the headteacher also act to reinforce Sheply's shared outcomes around being cooperative.

Sheply's staff act as both participants and facilitators in the system. As facilitators they are called on to ensure clarity within the activity system, reinforcing the cooperative nature of the school and upholding the standards and practices defined by the headteacher. For teachers this role underpins both the teaching and pastoral aspects of their work as they have a greater level of contact with the students on a day-to-day basis then either the headteacher or SLT who drive the cooperative ethos of the school. In practice this means that the ongoing enculturation is enacted by teachers who also fulfil the role of pastoral tutor. Jameson, Murphy and Ripon all see the tutor's role as integral to the cooperative activity of the school through modelling cooperation and using agreed terminology. Ripon stated that 'What's beneath the words is the more important aspect' and explained that the whole pastoral system was developed around enabling pupils to understand and act in cooperative ways. Tutorial times include the usual acts to develop the link between pupil and tutor on matters such as wellbeing, safety and careers but also include additional compulsory actions to 'raise the importance and discuss real life examples of our cooperative values' (Sheply's Tutor Mission statement, tutor handbook and CPD sessions). Staff whom I interviewed understood the object of the enactment of cooperative values. They saw their role at Sheply as preparing students for life beyond the school and giving them the skills that they need for their future life:

working together, self-responsibility, self-help but also about creating greater social equality (Brooker and Innes, both experienced teachers).

This view of teachers as facilitators is a significant factor in its staff retention and recruitment at Sheply. When recruiting staff externally the headteacher, Jameson looks favourably on staff from other cooperative schools both nationally and locally as he feels that they are already heavily invested in cooperative values or ways of behaving so can fulfil the role of facilitators. However, Jameson also spoke about the importance of promoting staff internally, encouraging staff to stay, referring to it as 'a logical step' and the 'most effective way' to spread the values across the establishment. The practical impact of this approach can be seen in the fact that since Jameson's appointment all the school's senior leadership vacancies have been filled with internal promotions.

Staff are participants in the activity system, learning to act in a cooperative way. As such they are responsible for their own knowledge and understanding of cooperative values. In addition to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) expected in an English Secondary school around teaching pedagogy, classroom management and subject specialism there is an additional thread around understanding the school's interpretation and enactment of cooperative values. These sessions are compulsory, led by senior teachers and are planned to allow staff to deepen their understanding although it was acknowledged by Jameson that 'some staff have been resistant to the cooperative values'. These sessions are supplemented by mediating artefacts. Whilst most staff seemed engaged in the cooperative activity at Sheply, Jameson's comment did imply tension in the system which was illuminated further in some of my interviews and focus groups. Jameson himself said 'Some older staff have the mistaken idea that

cooperative values are woolly or soft' whilst Olsen, an experienced teacher said 'I think some teachers don't get it but I think some teachers don't want to get it' echoing Davidge's concept of 'Getting it' (Davidge, 2013). The perception at Sheply seems to suggest that fully understanding the cooperative context challenged some more established staff highlighting that the teacher role could be as both facilitator supporting others in learning to be cooperative and as a participant in their own learning to be cooperative. This again reflects the messy nature of activity systems.

Students also engage in a number of different actions at Sheply. Many students engage with the practices and display these values in their wider life and not just in school, for example in young cooperatives or volunteering work in the community. They are subjects in the system through their attendance at Sheply where they are learning to be cooperative in lessons and through the pastoral system. It is also possible that students bring cooperative ways of being into Sheply from their wider experiences. Some students also take on leadership roles in promoting the enacted cooperative values through aspects like the voice groups, mentoring schemes or student leadership opportunities. Many of the students in my research spoke about 'Everyone can be involved' (Maisie, 15) but there was also an awareness that 'not all students want to be a part - they don't volunteer' (Ciaran, 15) which reflects the pattern seen with staff too.

5.10 The Role of Mediating Artefacts

Engeström (1999) identified four classifications for exploring mediating artefacts:

- What (used to identify and describe the object)

- How (to guide the process)

- Why (to diagnose and explain)

- Where to (to envisage the future)

However, I found the reality at Sheply is more complex and messy; it was difficult to fit many of the tools and signs being used into just one of these categories and the lines between them were blurred in practice. I have divided the mediating artefacts seen at Sheply into three categories around documentation, personal interactions and reinforcement with many of these serving multiple functions from Engeström's list. These are also shown in Figure 5.1.

Documentary artefacts

Like all schools in England, Sheply has a wide array of policy documents which are made available via the school's website. There are over 35 publicly accessible policy documents on Sheply's website, many of which fulfil the school's statutory requirements. The school has embedded cooperative terminology such as 'equality', 'equity', and 'solidarity', in these compulsory policies. This attempts to convey the school's cooperative identity. Situated amongst these statutory documents are several other policy documents which emphasise the cooperative nature of the school. One clear example is the curriculum policy. This states that the curriculum is built on 'The golden threads of British and Cooperative Values that underpin everything that we do.' This is evidence of Sheply's compromise and its response to policy on British values. In this way the policy documents represent Engeström's 'What' and 'How' - serving both to identify and describe the object at Sheply but also to guide the process.

Sheply also utilises an online prospectus as part of projecting the school's cooperative image to a wider audience. The headteacher's 'Introduction to Sheply' immediately establishes the importance of cooperation at Sheply stating that it is at the 'heart of what we do' and linking this cooperation with future citizenship. There is reference to cooperative values, being part of the local Cooperative MAT and a whole section of the

prospectus on democracy and the importance of voice. Overall, more than 65% of the prospectus is focused on the school's cooperative ethos and this is reinforced by the Schools Cooperative Society logo being on every page, despite Jameson and Ripon being negative about the impact of this organisation on Sheply.

The school's interactive website also places emphasis on Sheply's cooperative ethos. Jameson's welcome is reproduced on the home page and the first three links are to the school's values and principles, how the principles are put into action and a formal document entitled 'Statement on Cooperative Identity- Sheply College'. The placement of these links reinforces the sense that the cooperative identity is important and that Sheply takes every opportunity to raise awareness. One interesting feature of the website is that the college states the values and how they are interpreted using the 1995 ICA definition, but there is also emphasis on enactment. Sheply is attempting to explain how the written values are put into action and what it might look like to an observer or feel like as a participant.

The regular student bulletins and fortnightly newsletter are additional documentary mediating artefacts. The bulletin is a daily electronic document for students with notifications and its function is mostly utilitarian. The newsletter exists in two different formats - a staff version and a community version; the latter is written by various stakeholders of SLT. The newsletters are a regular communication tool for both dissemination and mediation within the activity system. Drawing on my prior experience as a practitioner and my knowledge of the cooperative education system, I was able to categorise articles and identify certain common threads over a two-year period. Every newsletter contained articles about the importance of community and social cohesion.

Eighty-seven percent of the newsletters contained articles about the collective cooperative values, their importance and how to understand them. Often specific values such as 'equity' or 'self- responsibility' were referenced but they were presented as a part of this whole body of interpreted values that was voiced as the ethos of Sheply. Democracy was mentioned separately as a specific aspect of the school in 27% of the newsletters, despite it being one of the cooperative values identified by the ICA. It was defined as the opportunity to have a say and participate. What was clear from exploring this rich vein of documentary evidence was that Sheply was conscious of its cooperative identity and was keen to disseminate this as widely as possible to encourage a 'buy in' from both the subjects of the activity system but also the wider aspects of community.

Verbal Mediating Artefacts

Tools and signs are encompassed in the range of verbal communications that occur at Sheply and can create mediating artefacts of 'doing' (Freidman, 2007). These can include the feedback from voice groups that I have previously commented on, the pastoral education and modelled behaviour from staff and older students, especially prefects and head students. These verbal communications, around the act of doing, are powerful because they allow the community stakeholders to share their experiences and understanding of learning to be cooperative, allowing the knowledge to evolve. Verbal communications as tools can occur both informally and formally within the system, that is in informal exchanges between different actors but also as structured opportunities.

In addition to the informal learning opportunities at Sheply, there is explicit teaching around the values whereby community stakeholders facilitate collective learning. This was evident during my research when observing PHSE lessons and in assemblies. The latter take place weekly, led by SLT and focus explicitly on the importance of using cooperative values to make sense of society and common teenage problems like cyber

bullying. Whilst the key concepts were referenced frequently and students were provided with information on the interpreted cooperative values, there was no evidence of a common cooperative vocabulary being used in assemblies and with all students.

Explicit teaching about cooperative values occurs in PHSE lessons at Sheply across all year groups. As part of my research, I observed Year 7 students exploring issues around society and democracy in the 'Shipwrecked' scheme of learning. Here they were given the scenario of being part of a multigenerational group who needed to establish a new community on an island after a shipwreck. They needed to explore different aspects to make their community a success, including whether age, gender or race affected a person's value, how people's actions affect others and how the island could be governed effectively. Students were fully engaged in the project and conveyed their perception of it being important when I questioned them. Again, the focus was more on understanding the wider concepts of cooperation such as equality and equity and how it could positively affect society although some cooperative terminology was used around democracy and social responsibility.

These verbal communications around modelled behaviour, assemblies and the explicit teaching of cooperation act as mediating artefacts as they support subjects in achieving the outcomes at Sheply around learning to be cooperative and in preparing for future citizenship. They provide a framework for reference which can mediate tensions and facilitate the activity of enculturation.

Visual Mediating Artefacts

Visual artefacts reinforce enculturation fulfilling the functions of 'how', 'why' and 'where to' from Engeström's classification. A media wall, situated near the reception area,

provided an insight into the outward image that the school wished to present to visitors. It showed students' artwork and newspaper articles about the successes of students academically or in sports but there were also numerous newspaper articles about the contribution of students within the community: supporting charities, working at the foodbank and litter picking. Many of these emphasise the importance of the link between the school and the community, especially around terms like 'solidarity' and 'social responsibility' which were included on the display board. This pattern was repeated throughout the school with various display boards of photographs and media pieces reinforcing the expected behaviours and celebrating success although not necessarily using the cooperative terminology. The focus was on the visual image and its role in reinforcing sought for behaviours. Near the PHSE classrooms there was a large display on democracy and explaining that it was a key cooperative value which underpinned Sheply's ethos. Formal cooperative vocabulary was almost invisible; there was one old display board in a remote block which listed the cooperative values, drawn from the SCS. What was clear was that the school was conscious of its cooperative identity and was keen to disseminate ideas on how it might look or feel for pupils engaging in the activity rather than being an abstract concept.

According to the students there is limited exposure to cooperative vocabulary at Sheply. Students are surrounded by artefacts that reinforce cooperative behaviours and they are encouraged to reflect on how these largely visual and aural cues might be reflected in their own actions. For many students this means that they have limited experience of terminology such as equity or solidarity which underpins the school's activity and contributes to the sense of being part of a global movement focused on cooperativeness. Students can recognise the 'sought for' behaviours or outcomes even

if they do not know the labels being used by other cooperative organisations. Ripon expressed this as 'I'm not sure that our students have ever cracked using the vocabulary' and explained 'we have focused much more on the concepts in action as much as possible' implying that this is a deliberate decision around enactment and enculturation. The cooperative vocabulary is in a sense a label, but you can act cooperatively without knowing this label.

5.11 Summary of the Activity System at Sheply College

The activity system at Sheply College is focused on acting in a cooperative manner and to prepare its subjects for socially aware citizenship. The student experience is heavily based on enactment and recognising how the interpreted values might look in terms of actions. The use of cooperative vocabulary at Sheply is in some ways marginalised and only fully used within certain stakeholders' groups such as staff and parents, which could create tension or contradictions. Some existing tensions are displayed at Sheply, particularly around language cohesion, voice and issues of power. In many ways this encapsulates the complexity of Sheply as an activity system with its conflicting pressures as a state funded secondary school and its cooperative school status.

5.12 The Activity System at Mediston Academy

Mediston has been a cooperative school since 2011 when it saw joining the cooperative schools movement as a way to formalise its commitment to cooperativism. In many ways, it reflects the overall journey of the cooperative schools movement in England over a ten-year period from an initial sense of optimism to needing to significantly reconsider its cooperative identity. The school had struggled with retaining staff and students alongside low academic outcomes from 2016 and a negative Ofsted report

which had affected its reputation across the city. This process of reconsideration and the resulting reinvention of its identity is a significant factor at Mediston and the current activity system.

Mediston Academy

Mediating Artefacts
(Tools/Signs)

Documents
(Website, Prospectus - physical and online, Head's blog, half-termly Good News), Twitter

Verbal Communication
(PSHE, Tutor system / SMSC, Alumni, Student leadership)

Reinforcement
(Displays—"Be...", Young Cooperatives, Absence of Cooperative Values in school itself)

Subject
Students and staff of the college

Object → Outcomes
• Learning to be cooperative
• Contributing successfully to society

Rules
1. Mediston Respect / PERKS
2. OFSTED pressures

Community
Tier 1:
• Subjects/Parents/Governors
Tier 2:
• OFSTED
Tier 3:
• SCS / CSnet

Division of Labour
• HT: driving Mediston Respect
• Staff
• Students

Figure 5.3 Diagram of Mediston Academy as an activity system

5.13 The Importance of the Historical Context on Outcomes and Activity

The current outcomes within the activity system at Mediston (see Figure 5.3) have been affected by this turbulent journey which includes recent negative Ofsted inspections. I interviewed five members of staff who had previously worked at Mediston when it became a cooperative academy or in the time immediately afterwards, focusing on their perceptions of what the school was trying to achieve through becoming a cooperative school. There were several threads in the responses around 'working to a common goal' (Kelly, NQT) and preparing people for their 'future citizenship' (Wilkes, AHT; Lillard, RQT). Several interviewees spoke of the importance of life skills and named the ICA's

interpreted cooperative values such as self-help, self-responsibility, equity, equality and solidarity to illustrate this point. Several emphasised how the interpretation and enactment of cooperative values, being 'value driven' (Wilkes, AHT), was preparing students to take their place in society and changing society for the better. There was an acknowledgment that it was a 'political dream' (Smith, DHT) and about 'changing society' (Lillard, RQT). Staff seemed genuinely optimistic about the potential for transformation being offered by conversion on both a local and national level.

These aspired outcomes of Mediston Academy were around improving society and facilitating proactive citizenship. However, it was also clear through my research that the challenges to Mediston's identity as a cooperative school were considerable during the period 2015 - 2019 for many reasons including leadership, staffing instability and national performativity measures. This meant that Mediston had needed to rethink, and ultimately, reinvent its identity as a cooperative school undergoing a cycle of expansive transformation.

Mediston's turbulent experiences around its cooperative identity and its simplification of more traditional cooperative terminology meant that references to cooperative values were less overt. Senior staff state that 'Mediston Respect' conveys cooperativism but with alternative language use. It was necessary to look beyond the language used to analyse the cooperativism. Engeström's model enabled me to make sense of the data and explore the interconnectivity of the activity system at Medistion (shown in Figure 5.3).

Once again, I divided mediating artefacts into the three sub-categories of Documents, Verbal Communications and Reinforcements to reflect the range of tools and signs which mediated potential conflicts and stresses in the system. Again, I noted a hierarchy of rules and community in participant responses and in my observations (see Section 5.5). One significant difference at Mediston is the inclusion of Ofsted as a community member, due to its current position of having regular inspection visits. Ofsted's influence exerts an impact on the whole system and creates additional tensions and stresses which are visible in the rules, division of labour, mediating artefacts and outcomes.

5.14 The Importance of the Outcome at Mediston

In the current activity system at Mediston Academy and reflected in Figure 5.3, there were two main intended learning outcomes which were apparent in the school's documentation and illuminated further during various aspects of my research:

1. Learning to be cooperative enacted through respect and kindness

2. Becoming successful contributors to society

Moira Benning, the headteacher of Mediston Academy, spoke about the turbulence which had negatively affected the school over several years and the ongoing impact of failing to meet externally set benchmarks. She had initially been brought in by governors and the school improvement partner as a temporary appointment to bring stability. In July 2019, Benning was appointed as the permanent headteacher, tasked with raising standards and developing cohesion within the school. Benning was an experienced headteacher, but her background was not in the cooperative sector. She stated that 'I didn't know anything about cooperative schools when I started'. Benning explained that she saw the school's desired outcome as ensuring that students have the skills and

academic results that they need to successfully contribute to society. She saw this as meaning improving academic outcomes but also in developing students' life skills which would enable them to become proactive and engaged citizens. Benning saw that cooperative values would be important in Mediston's future but that they were in many ways too complex and had become a 'smokescreen' during the problematic period - essentially that the school's ethos needed to be renewed through interpretation and enactment.

Benning's welcome section in the prospectus and on the website reinforce these two threads around future citizenship and enacted values as the outcomes that underpin Mediston's ethos. She states that students need to be 'able to play a full role in the world in which they live' and 'have the necessary qualifications to earn their way in the world'. Benning comments on the 'complexities' of the modern world and employment. She sees the importance of Mediston in preparing students to participate politically, socially and contribute economically to their wider community.

The focus on future citizenship and socio-economic participation as outcomes was a recurrent feature in my research at Mediston. In interviews with parents this 'clear sense of preparation for life after school' (Year 12 parent) was cited as an important feature of the school, with one parent stating it was the main reason for choosing the school in the first place (Year 7 parent). The phrase 'life skills' was stated several times by parents as the most important aspect of the school and another parent commented that the 'students are challenged to make an impact on society' (Year 10 parent). Interviews with support staff also reinforced this aspect of the school with a focus on 'being ready for their future citizenship' (Fox, HLTA) and to make a 'positive contribution to their

community' (Ryan, TA). Separate interviews with teaching staff elicited similar responses around students being prepared to 'take their place in society and have options in life' (Ness, HoY) and 'the school is about producing future citizens' (Haddon, AHT). Whilst there was a focus on the shared outcome of preparing students for the future there seemed to be a lack of detail on what this would look like.

A second outcome at Mediston focused on the students learning to be cooperative. The school converted to being a cooperative academy in 2011 and publicly embraces cooperative values. Approximately 25% of the website is focused on Mediston's cooperative values and identity. There are pages on how the cooperative values as encapsulated by ICA, and adopted by Mediston, help to prepare the students for life. The cooperative values are seen to guide the school's activity. The pastoral system is based on encouraging students to reflect on 'our Cooperative Values' and how values impact on everyday life. There is a statement that cooperative values 'prepare students for successfully living in modern day Britain' (Mediston Website). Yet much on the website had not been updated since 2017, the date of the first negative Ofsted Inspection. In my first interview with the long serving senior deputy head, Penny Burns, I was told 'We are not the same cooperative school now'- that the school's manifestation of cooperative identity had changed. The overt visual displays of cooperative values had been removed and cooperative learning was no longer promoted as preferred pedagogy; the new head had argued that this had not brought the necessary academic outcomes. However, Burns was adamant that the cooperative values still underpin the ethos of the whole school.

It was clear that the period of turbulence and governmental challenge had caused Mediston to undertake a major re-evaluation of its cooperative identity and how it expressed this ethos in its activity. Benning had spoken about cooperative identity being a 'smokescreen' and Burns had referred to the previous cooperative identity as a 'facade', speaking about the dangers of expressing a 'showy' cooperative identity but having a lack of depth. Both argued that cooperative values and identity were important at Mediston but that the process was not and should not be static. Overt manifestations of cooperative values in the period 2016 - 2019 had lacked depth, become too complex and also too distanced from the goal of effective future citizenship. Burns stated that 'Now cooperative values are not that overt, but they do guide us and subtly influence what we do - they provide an important basis to build on. It is more realistic'.

One of the significant changes at Mediston has been to simplify and re-energise the cooperative ethos or basis of the school. This has been done by stripping it back to basics with Benning emphasising the 'importance of kindness' and stating that kindness underpins all the policies and practices in the school. The school has embraced rules known as 'Mediston Respect' as a simplified practical expression of the cooperative values. Students are called on to remember 5 rules - the PERKS approach:

Be Prepared

Be Engaged

Be Respectful

Be Kind

Be Safe

which are seen by the school's senior leadership team to summarise the previous expression of cooperative values which had used the ICA definitions. Many of the staff spoke about cooperative values being summarised and made more relevant through this reworking with some comments including 'The Values have been simplified into community and kindness' (Ness, HoY) and the 'Cooperative values are still our ethos underneath' (Marten, HoD). Several parents whom I interviewed referenced the cooperative values as being an important aspect of Mediston especially solidarity, equity, self-help and self-responsibility which had had a lasting experience on their child.

Several senior members of staff focused on Mediston Respect and PERKS as an updated and apolitical reflection of the cooperative values albeit simplified and rooted in practical action. The cooperative movement is rooted in a political and economic movement, but this re-wording implies a more socio-economic interpretation of cooperativism. The school's sought outcome is still that students understand about the identified cooperative values like solidarity, equity and self-responsibility as these are tied in with effectively and successfully contributing to society. In attending Mediston Academy and through adhering to Respect and PERKS students are engaged in actions.

5.15 Who are the Subjects at Mediston?

At Mediston Academy students and staff are the two groups most heavily involved in the activity, participating most in learning to be cooperative and contributing to society (See Figure 5,3). Not all subjects are equally involved at all times. Subjects can be marginalised or make a deliberate decision not to participate. Even if subjects decide not to take action, they remain part of the activity system albeit at the boundary, generating contradictions which can support change. Staff and students are the subjects

at Mediston and can be both facilitators and participants within the activity system, being empowered through engagement with the activity.

Benning states that 'Staff are the most important aspect in the school' implying a hierarchy where staff are deemed more important than the student subjects. The cohesion of staff working together to achieve a common outcome is seen as the vital aspect of the moral drive of the school (Burns). Staff expressed a sense of being valued and trusted within the system (Mosse, experienced teacher; Ness, HoY). They also shared in the expansive transformation of the activity system.

The second group who are the subjects at Mediston are the students at the school. The focus again is on cohesion and working together towards the shared outcome. The phrase 'Mediston family' was used frequently by staff, students and parents, to indicate belonging and being valued. The website uses the phrase 'Our school' and at a sixth form event the phrase 'Your school, Your future' was shared (Stein, head of 6th Form). Students commented that they were encouraged to develop a sense of worth and provided with a voice by the school's leadership team: 'We all work together to a common goal' (Aidan,13). Unlike Sheply I did not see a difference in the student's perception of the school's priorities at Mediston based on student age, possibly due to the more recent reworking of the cooperative values and the involvement of the student body in this process.

5.16 The Social Basis of Mediston

Rules

As previously explored, rules help to mediate the activity system and limit tensions that develop between different aspects of it. Pressures can also come from outside the school - from the need to meet government benchmarks or from the Ofsted judgement system. At Sheply I saw the balancing act between this external performativity and the school's enactment of its interpreted cooperative values. The senior leadership team used the outcome and cooperative values to guide their decision making within this context and to limit the effects of performativity.

As with the outcomes, the rules at Mediston were more complex to analyse due to the recent turbulence which had both created conflict and instability but working through these contradictions also resulted in the renewal of the activity system. Benning spoke about the importance of having a common direction which was shared by staff and students; Mediston Respect and PERKS provides this focal point and acts as rules for the activity system (See the Rules node in Figure 5.3). Various respondents spoke about the importance of respect and kindness with phrases like 'It needs to all be about kindness' (Benning), 'kindness is important' (Burns) and 'All cooperative values together means kindness' (Ryan, TA). Values were turned into rhetorical questions - I heard students being asked 'Is that kind?' and 'Is that respectful?' when they were asked to reflect on inconsiderate behaviour. One of the main rules at Mediston was the importance of cooperative values being enacted in daily actions through kindness and respect.

At Mediston there is a practical imperative to achieve a balance between cooperative values and the pressure for results (Benning and Burns). Pressures from Ofsted and the

143

need to meet external benchmarks brought additional tensions and stresses to the activity system and contributed to the turbulence at Mediston from 2016 onwards. Many participants showed an awareness of this conflict between what Mediston wanted to achieve as a cooperative school and the impact of performativity on the activity undertaken. One parent commented that 'It seemed like the school couldn't stand against government pressure' (Year 12 parent) and multiple staff explained that academic results and meeting externally set targets became the most important thing in the school. Cooperative values such as equality, democracy and equity were described as 'side-lined' in the pursuit of improved academic results (Wilson, AHT).

This destructive conflict suggests that the original interpretation and enactment of cooperative values at Mediston were not sufficiently robust to stand against external challenge - that the cooperative identity was 'just a soft touch' (Mosse, experienced teacher). However, this conflict also led to a renewal of the activity system with a simplified interpretation and enactment of cooperative values alongside the required curriculum of an English state school. Reinforcing cooperative values is therefore one of two aims at Mediston which can negotiate tensions and bring stability. A second aim remains to address the persistent threat of Ofsted and benchmarks. Ensuring that systems are in place to address these external challenges is an equally important rule at Mediston. Staff acknowledge that 'We are not whipped with the Ofsted stick' (Mosse, experienced teacher) but 'it is always there in the background' (Ness, HoY). It is this difficult balancing act that Mediston is attempting - to enact its interpreted values but also to mediate the impact of performativity. It also demonstrates the different levels of rules with some imposed from government and Ofsted, but others developed internally

by the individual school. Compromises are being made around the political nature of cooperativism.

5.17 The Importance and Role of Community at Mediston

Another aspect that situates Mediston in the wider social context is the interpretation and importance of community. Again, I divided the community into 3 tiers of influence or engagement on the activity system as it exists now. The community members placed more centrally have the greatest influence on the current version of the activity system (See Figure 5.4). At Mediston some external actors, represented in the government and Ofsted, wield considerable influence on the activity system whilst cooperative organisations seem to be marginalised.

TIER 3

TIER 2
LOCAL COMMUNITY

TIER 1
SUBJECTS
PARENTS
GOVERNORS
GOVT/OFSTED

LINE OF INFLUENCE — LINE OF INFLUENCE

COOPERATIVE COLLEGE
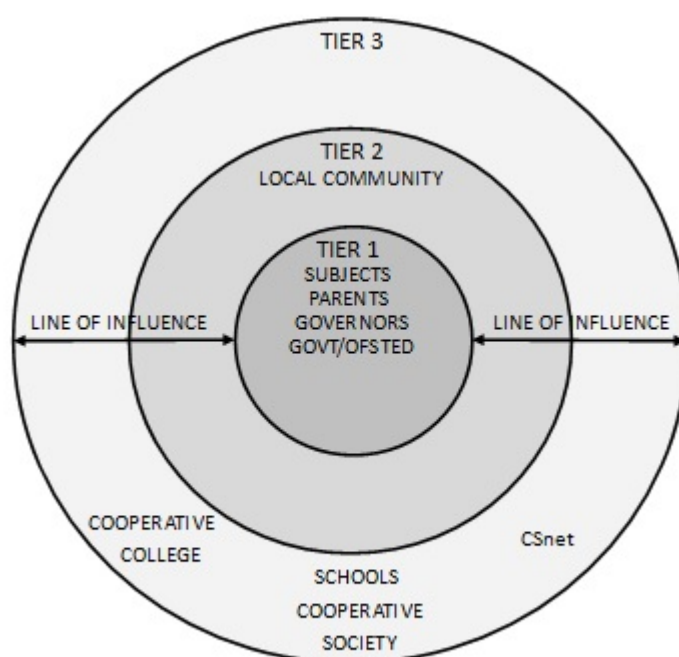
CSnet

SCHOOLS COOPERATIVE SOCIETY

FIGURE 5.4   TIERS OF COMMUNITY AT MEDISTON ACADEMY

I placed external cooperative organisations in the outer tier as they were important in the initial development, but they have had little impact on the 2019 reworking and transformation of the activity system at Mediston. The school was supported by the

Cooperative College through their conversion in 2011 and did subscribe to SCS for several years but they have no contact with either organisation now. Several senior staff at Mediston spoke of feeling 'isolated' and abandoned' (Wilson, AHT) and that the movement has 'lost direction' (Burns). Whereas Sheply had been able to find support by joining a MAT, Mediston had no local support which increased the feeling of abandonment, especially with the repeated delays in getting Csnet launched.

The Department for Education and Ofsted form another powerful part of the community at Mediston Academy. The SLT at Sheply were able to mediate the impact of performativity by filtering them through their cooperative values which theoretically might lessen the impact of external performativity. The situation at Mediston means that Ofsted wields a considerable impact on the activity undertaken at the school. Addressing the requirements of performativity measures is one of the rules at Mediston alongside the reworked cooperative values and this ensures that Ofsted / DfE is an important part of the Mediston community. Decision making needs to be filtered through both the school's cooperative values but also against the expectations of Ofsted making it a complex and uneasy process. Senior staff at Mediston are aware of the need to balance the sometimes-conflicting requirements: 'it is a stressful balancing act and we can't always do things that we want to do.' (Burns, DHT).

Mediston is very aware of its role in the wider community and the need to develop positive relationships with its stakeholders, regarding itself as a 'community school'. Benning reinforced this view: 'Mediston has always been the focal point of the community and we take that responsibility very seriously'. Many of my interviewees emphasised the importance of the links between the school and its community. One

parent spoke of the links between Mediston Academy and the primary schools describing it as 'wider family' (Year 8 parent) whilst another spoke of the school's charity fundraising and support of the local foodbank as showing that the school actively cared for the wider community. Burns (DHT) cited that 'We do what is right for the community that we serve' and this approach can be seen in the role of Mediston as a community hub with the facilities being rented out to numerous groups for a range of creative and sporting purposes. Commercial organisations are offered a reduction in hiring costs if they offer free and subsidised places for students and local residents whilst charity groups and cooperative social enterprises are offered the use of facilities at minimal costs or free. This approach has meant that the site is always busy in the evenings and the weekends with many students and local residents using the site for more than just compulsory education. The school also encourages wider family involvement in the school running drop-in sessions with senior leaders and HoY. I observed a very busy sixth form options evening at Mediston which had multi-generational attendance; for many students it was a family event with younger siblings and grandparents attending too. The school had encouraged this and organised a free cafe with refreshments by the catering cooperative and music by their cooperative music academy. Burns explained that this was partly to encourage community cohesion and to showcase cooperation in practice but also to encourage the community to see Mediston as 'their community's school'.

Again, a significant aspect of the community at Mediston is in empowering stakeholders and encouraging them to feel valued in the activity system. From 2011 onwards selected students would be invited to participate in voice groups and, whilst parents generally were invited, some 'more desirable parents' were targeted to attend. These meetings

were initially deemed successful and provided opportunities for participation although several long serving staff indicated that by 2017 it had become a 'token effort' (Simpson, experienced teacher) and that there was 'an illusion of voice' (Khan, HoD). This indicates the potential problem with making participatory activity genuine and meaningful. Both Benning and Burns spoke of the importance of voice at Mediston and how much the school values stakeholders being able to have their say but in a realistic manner. Long serving staff spoke of the absence of formal staff voice groups now and were aware of the irony that the current informal approaches were, in their opinion, more successful. 'They really do want to hear your opinion' (Mosse, experienced teacher) and 'We feel valued and listened to now' (Ness, HoY). Parents spoke of the 'genuine open door' and that it was easy to approach the school to share feedback, ideas or concerns. Parents were also encouraged to use Ofsted's 'parent portal' to express their opinion of the school - another sign of the delicate balance between the two rules at Mediston. This was all in marked contrast to the formal processes and procedures that had previously been in place at Mediston before 2017, according to staff's descriptions. The changes seem to fit with the transformative expansion of the activity system with renewed interpretation of the cooperative values developing from the tensions and contradictions.

In contrast to the informal processes for staff and parent voice, student voice is enacted through a formal Student Parliament. In the prospectus Benning states, 'we are passionate' about student voice and that 'their opinions are valued highly'. The Student Parliament is the body that represents students across the whole student body. Students formally apply for the Parliament explaining what they would bring to the role. Students are interviewed with SLT to discuss their ideas and 12 students per year are

appointed by staff as stakeholders. This kind of decision-making process seems in conflict with cooperative governance. Year 11 students follow the same processes to become prefects or headboy / headgirl. Regular opportunities are provided for student MPs to report back to the wider student body, and to hold consultations with their peers. This process is very formalised and, one year after its launch, seems very popular with students who see it as a way to have genuine input on key decisions in the school. 'You can actually make a difference' (Molly, 14). Over the last twelve months this has included changing the PE kit and reviewing extra-curricular activities. The Student Parliament is designed to develop students' leadership skills and understanding of responsibility. It did make me question whether this regulated system is a missed opportunity for students to exercise democracy as they are also selected by senior staff rather than being elected by their peers. It is possible to see the process as further subtle reinforcement of a traditional and hierarchical power structure. It is also a practical example about the tensions between the need to maintain control and the desire to act cooperatively.

5.18 The Division of Labour at Mediston

As previously explored not all actors in an activity system are equally involved although Mediston says on its website that 'As a co-operative academy all stakeholders are encouraged to take an active role'. A headteacher's primary role is to steer the school and to establish its ethos. Benning was appointed by governors as an experienced leader from outside the cooperative system to bring stability and academic improvement. Her initial focus was to 'rebuild purpose and trust' by establishing the importance of kindness and respect within the school. This was done through the policy of 'Mediston Respect'.

Whilst Benning was the driving force behind the resurgence of the school in general terms, she credits the importance of long serving staff, some of whom had worked at the school for more than 15 years, in the renewal of Mediston as a cooperative school. She states that they were the ones who linked her concepts of kindness and respect to the cooperative values as enacted previously. Benning calls these staff 'stalwarts' and credits them with teaching her about cooperative values and allowing staff to be rejuvenated as subjects. Burns describes Benning's focus as being on actions not just words. Benning is leading the school in a cooperative direction, reinforcing the shared outcomes but moving away from the ICA terminology which had been used previously. This rejected terminology had been described in some interviews as 'excluding people' (Khan, HoD) and 'empty' (Mosse, experienced teacher). Benning's position is both as an outsider in cooperative terms but also as an important subject in CHAT terms, so she is able to drive the activity and has the respect of the other subjects. Staff interviewed used phrases like 'We trust the head' (TA), 'It has been transformational' (Ness, HoY) and [she is] 'empowering staff' (Mosse, experienced teacher).

This implies that the cooperative values reside in the six nodes of the activity system and the lines of tension identified in Figure 5.3. rather than it being a label adopted by the school or being imposed from above. The outcome of cooperativism remained important to subjects and was deeply embedded in the actions of long serving staff. Benning's leadership has facilitated the resurgence of these cooperative values and a renewal of the activity system. The fact that Benning had no prior experience of cooperative schooling becomes immaterial as through his participation as a subject of

the activity system and discussions with other subjects the shared outcome was reinforced.

Benning's lack of prior experience in a cooperative school does mean that staff at Mediston have an important role as both facilitators and participants within the activity system. Longer serving subjects quickly made the connection between Benning's ideas and cooperative values, expressing the importance of this connection. They worked to share this understanding with other staff stakeholders informally through personal interactions but also through formal CPD. This was especially important due to the number of new staff who had joined the school since 2018, with many of these coming from outside cooperative schools. Enhancing staff's understanding of cooperative values is seen as vitally important towards the shared outcomes of Mediston as staff are learning to be cooperative themselves but they are also facilitating students' learning too.

The teachers' role as facilitators of learning to be cooperative can be seen clearly in their actions as tutors within the pastoral system. Mediston regards its pastoral system as 'exceptional' (Prospectus) and 'one of the school's strongest assets' (Abbott, AHT) The majority of staff act as a tutor, meaning that they have daily contact with a group of students but at Mediston they also teach citizenship once a week to the same group of students. In these sessions students are expressly taught about topics necessary for successful future citizenship, including money management, wellbeing and British values. The students are encouraged to approach their citizenship through the cooperative values and to consider how they will 'show kindness and respect in their everyday actions' (Abbott, AHT). Every term there is a collapsed day for SMSC (spiritual,

moral, social and cultural) learning which supports the tutorial system and assemblies in developing citizenship. On these days students complete a series of activities on a shared theme such as 'Democracy'. Through their pastoral work teachers are facilitating students in learning to be cooperative. Both staff and students are encouraged to reflect on the impact that they can have on the school but also on their community, seeing Mediston as a 'microcosm of wider society' (Fox, HLTA).

Again, some students are more submerged in the action of the activity system and are more conscious of their role as subjects. Mediston's intention is that all students learn to participate effectively in society by drawing on their understanding of cooperative values as represented in the duo of kindness and respect (Ness, HoY; Abbott, AHT). The compulsory nature of the formal citizenship curriculum at Mediston Academy means that all students learn about democratic society as represented in the political system. They learn about local government, voting and their role as citizens. It also reinforces the idea that they can choose to be a 'respectful, good person' (Ness, HoY) who model this to their peers and that all students recognise that 'people being kind to one another' is important (Omar, 16). The danger of this approach is that some students might regard it as simply another curricular subject. Students might even feel distanced from this if the ideas around kindness, respect and equality are 'in conflict with their experiences outside of school' and in the wider community (Burns).

Students contribute to the division of labour. They can support other students' learning to be cooperative and student leadership is actively encouraged. In addition to the Student Parliament representatives there are opportunities to be trained in leadership including sports leaders who organise multiple sporting events for primary schools,

student academic mentors and literacy leaders. These roles offer students the chance to model the school's interpretation of kindness and respect acting as facilitators too. Some students whom I interviewed were able to comment on how these terms represented additional concepts like equality - 'Kindness means that you have to treat people fairly' (Lisa, 15).

The division of labour at Mediston was messier than the Figure 5.3 suggests as the place of student voice in Engeström's second generation model is a complex one. Whilst elements like the Student Parliament represent the division of labour in the activity system, they also indicate a vital place for the creation and use of mediating artefacts. Similarly, the headteacher acted as the driver for the reworked system but it was established subjects who ensured the continuity of focus on cooperation as the outcome in the activity system. Actors in the activity system seemed to move frequently between different roles such as teachers being participants in the system through their own learning to be cooperative but then acting as facilitators for students to learn through the pastoral system. This flexibility is a strength as it can ensure cohesion in the system and prepare participants for possible future change.

5.19 The Role of Mediating artefacts

During my research I was aware of a range of different objects and symbols being used to mediate the interactions and to enable the actors to accomplish their outcomes. Again, the messy nature of an activity system meant that I used the same 3 categories to explore the mediating artefacts at Mediston as I had employed at Sheply and these are represented in Figure 5.3.

Documentary Artefacts

There are over 50 publicly accessible policy documents on Mediston's website, more than necessary to fulfil the school's statutory requirements. Cooperative terminology is embedded in these documents with words such as 'equality', 'solidarity' and 'responsibility' being used. However, in the policies that have been reviewed since 2019 there are more instances of the words 'kindness' and 'respect' being used instead of the ICA's terminology, reflecting the simplified interpretation of cooperative values. The citizenship policy, dated December 2019, begins with 'Mediston Academy is a value driven school which is already deeply committed to an international set of values and principles' and reiterates the importance of the interpretation of cooperative values drawn up by the ICA in 1995. It emphasises that the school regards these values as 'underpinning every aspect of the school' (Citizenship Policy, 2019) before simplifying them by using kindness and respect for the remainder of the policy.

Mediston's prospectus reflects the ability of mediating artefacts to evolve and how they are influenced by culture. The prospectus is now available online - in common with many other schools - but more unusually also as a physical document which allows it to be placed in local primary schools and throughout the community in significant local establishments like libraries. The prospectus immediately conveys the school's cooperative identity with a large graphic of SCS logo on the front cover and the entire back cover being a graphic of the cooperative values as interpreted by the ICA. The headteacher's welcome states the importance of cooperation being at the heart of the school and Benning also uses the terms kindness and respect in her welcome. This developing terminology reinforces the concept of continuity and roots the newer vocabulary in the cooperative context which can add to the stability in the activity system at Mediston.

Mediston's website is another artefact which can provide guidance to the subjects. It is divided into 4 areas each prefixed with 'our' which reinforces the inclusive ethos of the school and encourages a sense of ownership. One of the areas is entitled 'Our Co-operative School' and links to formal documents on how the school has interpreted cooperative values and how it perceives its own identity as a cooperative school. Some information has not been updated, for example one page is dated December 2017. When asked whether this outdated material meant that the school's priorities had shifted Burns explained that it provided the full background to the school's values and was the detail behind kindness and respect. It was due to be updated in 2020 but was delayed due to the Covid 19 crisis. Several other subjects saw the website as providing a guide for stakeholders, enabling them to better understand cooperation and its role in underpinning the activity at Mediston (Ness, HoY; Mosse, experienced teacher).

There are additional changes in the documentary communication between the academy's SLT and other stakeholders. Until early 2019 there was a weekly newsletter which included the Principal's blog post, sports' news and procedural updates. Before 2017 it had also included specific reflections on the cooperative values such as 'Why is solidarity important to us?'. Benning adapted this in 2019 to be a short fortnightly blog plus a half termly magazine which celebrated students' achievement across the curriculum and in enrichment activities. The intention was to use students' achievements to inspire others, essentially acting as role models through their action. This again represents a blurring between the nodes with the mediating artefacts presenting students as role models which is a division of labour. Two threads running through the blogs are cooperative values as defined by the ICA (1995) and the

importance of community with approximately 60% of Benning's blogs referencing these elements. Terms like respect, solidarity, active citizenship and responsibility were used multiple times and the various stakeholders were asked to apply their understanding of these concepts to make sense of events such as National Holocaust Day, the National elections and Remembrance Day. The activities of the Young Cooperative groups were also shared as an example of what can be achieved 'when people work together' (Benning, blog).

Mediston has a prolific Twitter account which shares student work, sporting successes and careers information. There are also messages about safety and the promotion of events running at Mediston and in the linked primary schools. The primary target audience for the tweets seems to be subjects themselves with many students and staff following the account and retweeting. Many of the tweets over a two-year period are linked to raising aspirations and social justice. There is an appeal for the food bank, an 'End Poverty' campaign and support of Black Lives Matters movement. Alumni messages are regularly tweeted, and the school has even run a 'Choose Kindness' campaign reminding students of the importance of enacting the values in the community as well as at school. Kyle Ness (HoY) stated that Twitter was seen as an important way to reinforce the school's ethos and 'some parents might read it, but I see it as more for the students, ex students and staff.' The school's social media reasserts its cooperative ethos but also, more pragmatically, it ensures the school has a high profile to ensure maximum student recruitment and to build its reputation after the previous turbulence.

Auditory Mediating Artefacts in Mediston

The verbal communications and the personal interactions at Mediston encompass other tools and auditory signs that help to mediate the activity (See Figure 5.3). Community

stakeholders are encouraged to share their experiences in learning to be cooperative and in developing their citizenship through formal and informal interactions which include the pastoral system, student leadership, citizenship lessons and assemblies.

During my research I saw the importance of artefacts of 'making' (Friedman, 2007) in reinforcing Mediston's outcome. This is the idea that artefacts can be seen in the act of making and not just in the made. This was especially evident at the busy sixth form options evening where students and parents were invited to consider the post 16 provision in the academy. Benning's welcoming speech emphasised kindness as the key aspect of the school and how important cooperation is in preparing students for the future. This was supported by phrases like 'Team Mediston' and 'Mediston Family'. John Stein, the head of sixth form, repeated the personal pronouns 'you' and 'your' to reinforce the academy's inclusivity. Students' perspectives were presented from current students and alumni, encouraging younger students to be aspirational about preparing for their future life and citizenship. As with Twitter, alumni showed examples of success - solicitor, doctor, plumber and professional athlete - all of whom spoke about how the values at Mediston had provided them with 'excellent preparation for life' (Alumni). The actions and the vocabulary used reinforce the academy's cooperative ethos and enculturation but also provides a framework for resolving conflicts and easing tensions if they arise.

Visual Mediating Artefacts in Mediston

During my research it was evident that many of the mediating artefacts at Mediston were visual reinforcements especially in displays positioned around the school. The most obvious of these was the prevalence of the cooperative logo which had been developed by the Schools Cooperative Society to represent cooperative values visually.

This multi-coloured logo is a compass representing all the cooperative values as destinations. It was adopted by many cooperative schools to be their school logo demonstrating a commitment to their cooperative identity. At Mediston understanding the symbolism of the logo is taught in Year 7 citizenship using definitions developed by students in 2011 and updated in 2015. Students are surrounded by the cooperative symbol; it appears on the blazer, prospectus, website, Twitter and most of the school's displays. It is also used on powerpoints at community events and is the school's letterhead, so the symbol is also familiar to other stakeholders.

One notable feature of Mediston was the absence of displays that were overtly sharing the vocabulary used in the ICA's interpretation of cooperative values, despite my having been told that these still underpin the school's cooperative identity. One exception was in the conference room which is used for events like SLT and governor's meetings. Here was a large mural of cooperative values including terms like equality, equity and solidarity. Burns explained that this was a 'legacy' but provided a 'useful reminder of our ethos' to the leadership team and the governors. The room is also used to host external visitors such as primary headteachers and Ofsted, so this mediating artefact ensures that cooperative values and their definitions are seen by external visitors, thereby reinforcing the school's ethos.

During my interviews, several staff spoke about the use of displays before 2018 and described multiple colourful posters and banners which were in all corridors and classrooms. These named and defined the cooperative values which all students were expected to know with some teachers reinforcing them with rote learning (Ness, HoY). They felt that this presented an outward image of cooperative values being embedded

but they were not acted upon (Mosse, experienced teacher; Ness, HoY; Wilson, AHT). Burns stated 'words on walls are meaningless - you need action underneath' to illustrate what she perceived as the problem.

As headteacher, Benning simplified Mediston's interpretation of cooperativism in 2019 and used mediating artefacts to reinforce a more subtle expression of the shared outcome. She removed the older and outdated posters, replacing them with displays focused on the vocabulary of kindness and 'Mediston Respect'. This key terminology is used alongside visual images of students modelling the sought cooperative behaviours, showing how tools can influence actor – structure interactions within an activity system.

5.20 Summary of the Activity System Mediston Academy

The current activity system at Mediston is emerging from a period of renewal and rejuvenation with a reworked sense of its outcomes. It has simplified its interpretation of cooperative values, from the ICA's 1995 interpretation which it had used previously, into the codified terms of kindness and respect. One reason for this is to make its outcomes 'more realistic and achievable' (Benning HT) after a period of considerable turbulence. Contradictions and tensions are evident within the activity system from trying to balance the desired outcomes: learning to be cooperative and promoting citizenship against external performativity. This is seen in the rules, mediating artefacts and the community of the activity system at Mediston with Ofsted and the DfE exerting influence. In CHAT these tensions and contradictions are not necessarily negative and can facilitate expansive transformation which is what can be seen in the activity system at Mediston.

In many ways Mediston can be seen to represent the journey of the cooperative schools movement from its launch in 2009, full of promise for social change, to needing to reassess its interpretation and enactment of cooperative values in the face of growing performativity.

5.21 Conclusion

Sheply College and Mediston Academy are situated in vastly different catchment areas. Sheply serves a small market town and the surrounding countryside whilst Mediston serves several inner-city housing estates. Both schools are examples of interwoven activity systems which are focused on enabling stakeholders to learn to be cooperative and to be socially aware citizens who can make a positive impact on their local community which is reflected in Figures 5.1 and 5.3. These desired outcomes clearly affect the activity which is undertaken in each system. Both schools state that they draw on the same source, the International Cooperative Alliance's 1995 definition, for their interpretation of cooperative values but they are enacted in many different ways. This enactment is the result of how contradictions and tensions are felt within the activity system itself. Both Sheply and Mediston have needed to make compromises between the theory of cooperativism or *how they want to operate* and the practicalities of surviving as cooperative schools or *how they need to operate*. External performativity measures such as Ofsted inspections and the need to reach attainment benchmarks have had a direct impact on the actions and activity of each system as they attempt to enact their cooperativism and try to thrive within the illusory freedoms of academisation. At Mediston this pressure is acute because of recent negative Ofsted inspections which have left the school vulnerable to consequences such as re-brokering

to a Multi Academy Trust, but these tensions have led to an ongoing reworking of their

cooperativism and an expansive transformation.

Chapter 6 - Discussion of Findings

6.1 Understanding Sheply and Mediston

Despite their vastly different context, there are many points of similarity between Sheply College and Mediston Academy. Most significantly, they both received a negative Ofsted inspection which led first to a period of instability and then into renewal as they sought to re-invent their cooperative identity. At both schools there is also reference to the ICA's statement of cooperative identity (ICA, 1995) and both regard this definition of cooperative values and principles as underpinning their own interpretation and enactment of cooperativism. As stated by Dennis (2018) and Woodin (2019b), two of the expected features of cooperative schools are a cooperation and the enactment of cooperative values, and both schools seem to share a commitment to these principles. Whilst both share a focus on learning to be cooperative, there are subtle and nuanced differences in the object or outcome of the system in each school around interaction with society. In the activity system at Sheply the object is focused on engagement in society and showing social responsibility which conveys a sense of cooperativism being able to enact widespread social change. The system at Mediston has an outcome of being successful in society which seems to convey a greater focus on the individual. Maisuria (2014) identifies this focus on the individual as a key feature of neoliberalism which was discussed in Section 2.7i. The inclusion of the term 'success' at Mediston implies that compromise with the prevailing neoliberal agenda is necessary in state funded education. Boyask (2013) writes that schools make a compromise between individual freedoms and the constraints imposed by the state. The situation at Mediston reflects these contradictions and tensions which have been explored in Sections 2.7 and 2.8.

The two schools have embraced different approaches in their enactment of cooperative values. This is not unexpected as there was little guidance from the Cooperative College on what cooperativism in schools might look like and this is explored in Section 2.2. For Sheply this has meant linking with other cooperative schools as part of a geographical MAT within the county which provides support locally to replace the gaps left when the Cooperative College and its operational arms failed to provide the support which had been expected. This approach allows Sheply to pool resources and deepen their understanding of cooperativism through engagement with similar establishments, creating an additional activity system which would count as a third-generation activity system as defined by Engeström (2010). Third-generation activity systems operate in a manner that can lead to additional contradictions which can provide opportunities for transformation. This is explored in Section 3.4. With no neighbouring schools to draw on for support and being situated in a city with many competing schools, Mediston reflects the isolation and vulnerability which was identified by Wilkins (2019) and West and Wolfe (2020). It has found that, despite its cooperative status, external regulation is enforced through agencies like Ofsted and Ofqual which has an impact on the day-to-day operation of the school.

Both schools have sought to create a workable model of a cooperative school that fits with their specific context and represents their individual interpretation of cooperativism. Their core differences in enacting cooperative values also reflects the complexity of cooperative schooling in England. Diversity was expected from the outset (Wilson, 2013) yet added to the ambiguity surrounding the rapid growth of the cooperative schools movement (Davidge, 2017; Dennis, 2018; Ralls, 2019). Dennis (2019) identified that the focus on autonomy and self-responsibility meant that schools

like Sheply and Mediston were able to self-identify as 'cooperative' based on a loose agreement with the perceived cooperative values but without a coherent agreed interpretation to guide them.

6.2 The Importance of Community

An understanding of community is vital to activity systems, as explored in Section 3.3. Engeström's Second generation CHAT states that community is an essential part of the social basis of an activity system providing meaning and context for learning. The learning is a shared collaborative process which is rooted in a specific and unique community (Engeström, 2000) and members of the community are encouraged to be active constituents rather than passive associates. One focus at both Sheply and Mediston is to develop a sense of community and to encourage participation by offering multiple opportunities to be involved in the activity system. The emphasis here is on developing local community cohesion and participation, to involve as many people as possible in the system, which reflects Dewey's emphasis on democracy being enacted in common association and free will (Dewey, 2014).

6.2i What is 'community' at Sheply and Mediston?

In chapter 5 I explored the concept of community as a key part of an activity system, identifying varied tiers of influence which allows learning to take place within the two activity systems (see Sections 5.8 and 5.17). Both schools referred to their community as 'stakeholders' - people who had a vested interest in the activity system and its outcomes around learning to be cooperative. Not all the elements of community were seen to exert similar influence though and the spheres of influence were not fixed which is reflected in my Figures 5.2 and 5.4. Davidge (2013) and Dennis (2018) identified that the Cooperative College had been influential in the development of cooperative schools

yet, by the period of my research, it exerted minimal influence on the two cooperative schools at the heart of my research.

Two elements of community are shared across Sheply and Mediston. Firstly, each school links the importance of their geographically 'local' context to their understanding of community. Secondly, social cohesion is essential between the school and its geographical neighbours. The latter means that the school needs to provide opportunities for participation; the school as a system needs to actively engage with its neighbours whilst also working to encourage its neighbours to engage with it in a meaningful manner. This definition of community is more nuanced than the interpretation of community that is normally seen in an activity system (Engeström, 1987) and possibly represents another site of contradiction in cooperative schools.

6.2ii Community as local

There is a growing perception that the creation of academies has damaged the relationship between schools and their local communities as they move away from local authority control and local accountability. This was explored in Section 2.8. Wilkins (2019), Kulz (2020) and Male (2021) have all identified the negative impact of Multi-Academy Trusts on schools' connection to their local community. Involvement in MATs requires academies to conform to expectations of the academy trust which can diminish the attention paid to their local community. Mediston and Sheply are both academies and Sheply is part of a cooperative MAT but there is strong evidence of their commitment to their local communities.

Despite Sheply being part of a MAT, it has a clear focus on community and interprets 'community' as being local to the physical building of the school and views the school as

being the centre of their local community. At Sheply the catchment area is regarded as being larger than average by the DfE and around 40% of students travel for more than 4 miles to get to school. This has led to community hubs, linked to the school, developing outside the main town and in addition to town / school links being developed. At a public speech in 2019 Ripon (DHT at Sheply) said that Sheply aspired to be 'A college that is at the very heart of its community'. She stated school and community were working collaboratively to improve society through a shared interpretation of values. Jameson (Headteacher, Sheply) said that 'community' needed to be interpreted predominantly on a local scale and to make a difference to everyone living within that location if it was to be 'relevant' and 'transformational'. This link between school and local community was seen in many actions at Sheply which I have explored previously in Chapter 5 and include actions as diverse as the pupils' volunteering programme in the food bank, engagement in civic events like the council and representation at significant local events like the annual parade and Remembrance Day. The school also promotes and hosts local arts and crafts events which encourage local people to utilise the school's buildings. The importance of the local community to the school is seen in the newsletter where aspects of community were shared in every single newsletter over a two-year period.

The focus on being local as a manifestation of community was also evident at Mediston. The majority of students attending Mediston Academy live within one mile of the school, in different estates of social housing clustered around the school. Here the school buildings are both literally and symbolically at the centre of the local community. Benning (headteacher, Mediston) stated that the school had always been the 'focal point' of the community and that they took this 'very seriously'. He stated that this was a part of their conscious planning - to facilitate participation by members of the local

community in the actions of the school, regardless of whether they had children attending the school. Burns (DHT, Mediston) said that cooperative schools need to 'be rooted in the local community' and address the specific needs there. For Mediston this has meant considering the educational and social needs of their catchment area which Burns described as 'the working-class estates that we serve'. Part of this has been to utilise social, sporting and arts-based school events to encourage community members to engage with the school and develop participation within the activity system. Mediston's efforts to involve the wider local community stand in contradiction with Kulz's contention that working class children and communities are the losers in academisation because middle class parents are valued more highly due to their ability to contribute to the school's operation as a business (Kulz, 2020). This is at odds with the concern that academisation fractures the link between schools and the communities they serve.

There were conscious efforts to involve the community at Mediston. I observed the 6th form options evening which incorporated a free cafe and live music from young cooperatives to create the feel of a social event and to encourage a multi-generational attendance. Whole families, from younger siblings to grandparents, attended the event. Several members of Mediston's senior leadership team saw these as vital actions to encourage local people to see Mediston as their 'community school'. The options evening, whilst having the feel of a community social event, is likely to be more for those with a connection to the school which reveals another potential contradiction. Similarly, the school's letting protocols reflect the importance that Mediston places on community engagement with reduced rates offered to geographically local organisations and to

commercial organisations which offer free places to local people or students and their families.

Meshulam and Apple (2018) comment that the language used by a school demonstrates how it seeks to represent itself in its respective community. This desire to be seen as a community-based school is reflected in the inclusive language used within both activity systems. Terms like 'our community' (Jameson, Sheply) and 'our neighbours' (Benning, Mediston) were frequently used. Pupils in both schools used 'our school' whilst one parent spoke of Sheply being 'integral to the town's identity' (Parent of a year 10 pupil). At Mediston the phrase 'Mediston family' was used both visually and verbally, reinforcing the concept of the school being a tight knit and cohesive community. This language use, along with the participatory events, reinforce the sense that both Mediston and Sheply are at the heart of their respective communities and are actively seeking to develop cohesion around a common purpose.

The common purpose which is used to encourage meaningful collaboration between each school and their local community is the activity systems' outcome of 'learning to be cooperative'. This was spoken of as a 'unified goal' (Davies, AHT Mediston) and a 'common goal' (Murphy, AHT Sheply) which influenced the activity undertaken within each school. Both head teachers felt that the interactions between the school and community were driven by their interpreted and enacted cooperative values. These had the capacity to transform society, thereby making life better for everyone in the local area. In one public speech cooperative and ethical values were presented as the 'answer to society's problems' (Ripon, DHT, Sheply). However, there was an awareness in both places that their cooperative values needed to be put into discernible actions if they

'wanted people to respect and value them' (Burns, DHT, Mediston). This asserts that cooperative values need to be carried in the activity and actions undertaken rather than just being expressed in mediating artefacts. This concept is reflected in Dennis's writing (2018) where she contends that cooperative values need to be carried in both the words and actions of a cooperative school (See Section 2.2).

Maisuria (2014) stated that in a neoliberal system, success is largely measured by academic outcomes and being oversubscribed, meaning there is competition for places. However, at Sheply and Mediston, this is not how success is perceived. Both schools are focused more on the individual's development and the importance of contributing to community. Both headteachers describe how their schools are represented as being community schools as well as cooperative schools. They see these two aspects as intertwined. Whilst many schools describe themselves as community schools, this often relates to the school itself as an internal community. The focus is often on school identity which is labelled as 'community' but this is a very different connotation to what community means at Sheply and Mediston. At these two schools, the commitment to cooperativism drives the activity within each system but they see the most significant impact of their activity in the transformation of the local community that they serve. This focus on community is a conscious effort to redress the perceived negative impacts of academisation which were identified by researchers including WIlkins, (2017) and Male (2021) (see Section 2.8). Mediston's deputy headteacher Burns expressed this as 'We are a community school that is shaping our own destiny'.

6.3 Shared Activities at Sheply and Mediston

Despite the differences and individual challenges facing Sheply and Mediston there are two distinct areas of activity that are visible within both schools and which wield an impact on the actions of each: enculturation and democratisation. These activities are transformational, require higher order thinking and are culturally situated.

6.4 Enculturation

6.4i The importance of enculturation

Howe (2020) stated that schools are places of culture so it is logical that a process of enculturation takes place in schools where participants engage in the process of learning the language, values and norms of the dominant culture (see Section 2.4). Many of the actions undertaken in the activity systems at Sheply and Mediston are deliberately centred on sharing their interpretation of cooperativism and in facilitating their various stakeholders in learning to be cooperative. Through their exposure 'to' and engagement 'with' the dominant culture both Benning and Jameson, as headteachers, are seeking to deliberately influence the various stakeholders into adopting cooperative behaviours and attitudes. It is possible to see that both systems are seeking to normalise cooperativism as the prevailing culture (Ferguson et al, 2016).

Both activity systems would agree with Schönpflug and Bilz (2009) about the purpose of enculturation but emphasise a particular set of values to achieve this. Sheply and Mediston both state that they are 'value driven' despite the inherent problems around what is meant by this and how this looks in practical terms when meaning is negotiated and situated (see Section 2.3). Ferriera and Schulze (2014) state that values are given meaning by drawing on prior collective experiences, action and knowledge which is seen

in both systems through their use of the International Cooperative Alliance's 1995 definition of a cooperative and cooperative values in their own documentation. Mediston even begins its citizenship policy with the assertion that 'Mediston Academy is a value driven school which is already deeply committed to an international set of values and principles'. Mediston and Sheply make a deliberate connection between their own activity and the international cooperative movement which can be seen as attempting to validate the activity within each school. It also wrongly implies that the stated values have intrinsic worth, that they are both known and widely understood by people outside the activity system. However, phrases like 'value-driven' can be understood in many different ways and need to be interpreted and explicitly explained if this is to have any meaning. This difficulty can be seen in the enactment of cooperative values in each school; they theoretically draw on the same source of cooperativism in ascribing to the ICA's definitions, but their interpretation and enactment are vastly different, leading to a different experience for stakeholders.

6.4ii Deliberate and Informal Enculturation at Mediston and Sheply

Hoebel's process of internalising and becoming enculturated (Hoebels, quoted by Walker, 2007) is reflected at Sheply and Mediston. Enculturation is seen as both a deliberate and an informal activity in Sheply College and Mediston Academy with both systems focusing on how subjects learn to be cooperative and how to participate meaningfully and effectively within wider society. This includes stakeholders learning so-called 'cooperative behaviours' and 'cooperative language' (see Section 2.2) and then being able to enact this learning independently. There are several approaches that represent deliberate enculturation in the two schools: documentation, displays, assemblies and the explicit teaching in subjects like PHSE which the schools consider important to their cooperative ethos. At Sheply I saw specialist lessons focused on

understanding issues of democracy, equality and equity with 11-year-old students who were explicitly taught about these concepts but using simplified language. At Mediston I saw similar lessons on being a 'good citizen' being taught across the age range. The teachers involved were either specialists or stakeholders of senior leadership thereby subtly conveying the message to other stakeholders that these lessons are important. Furthermore, it indicates the role played by school staff in the informal enculturation process whereby subjects learn about the culture. They act as role models demonstrating the behaviours that are sought within the culture. I saw this in staff interactions with pupils such as polite modes of address and even actions like holding doors open. These actions allow members to learn about the culture on a more informal basis through their observations (Ferguson et al, 2016, Schönpflug and Bilz, 2009).

Activity systems are also places of informal enculturation which can be undertaken by any active community member and develops coherence within the system. Some pupils in both schools are involved in modelling the desired cooperative behaviour and attitudes through their formal roles as prefects, head pupils and pupil representatives. Several stakeholders of the Student Parliament at Mediston and the Student Council at Sheply are aware of the formality of their position and the expectation of acting as a role model for other pupils. Several spoke of the importance of 'leaving a legacy' (Paul, 16 at Sheply), ensuring that newer pupils come through to ensure the continuity of established voice groups and young cooperatives. Food and music young cooperatives were clear that if they did not step up to leadership then their group would 'fail'. (Rebka 14 and Mollie, 15 at Mediston). This concept was reinforced by staff views around the importance of pupils' leadership and that young cooperatives fail if staff need to 'take over' (Murphy, Sheply). Similarly, other people who are engaged with each activity

system exert an influence, both formally and informally. Just as teachers' actions convey the culture which is valued, these stakeholders, who choose to engage, provide an example of cooperativeness for others both within the system and the wider community. These deliberate actions allow for systemic growth and stability and can be seen as an expression of cultural apprenticeship as expressed by Esper (2014) and is explored more fully in Section 2.4.

6.4iii Shared language in enculturation

A further contributor to enculturation is the shared language used across two systems which is a representation of the culture which is valued. Sheply and Mediston both draw on the ICA's 1995 statement and are self-identifying as cooperative schools so I expected to find some similarities in language use across them. The ICA's terminology was more widespread at Sheply especially amongst Jameson (headteacher) and his leadership team. Terms like 'equality', 'equity' and 'solidarity' are frequently used in dealings with adult stakeholders (staff, parents, wider community and governors). It is also reflected in the language used at various public facing events such as sixth form options' evening, a community event and staff training. There seems to be a differentiated approach at Sheply whereby more simplified language is used with the younger students where the focus is on 'the ideas in practice' (Ripon, DHT) as this is deemed more important than pupils learning specific 'cooperative' terminology by rote. One example of this is the Shipwreck project in PHSE where pupils learn about democracy through a series of tasks on developing a fair society without using terminology of democracy, equity or solidarity. This deliberate strategy, again reflective of Esper's apprenticeship concept (2014), sees a subtle change whereby older pupils have a greater exposure to the ICA's terminology clearly revealing that the different stakeholders at Sheply have different experiences.

The same terminology is reflected in Mediston's documentary artefacts such as the website and prospectus with assertions that the ICA's 1995 definitions 'underpin every aspect' of the school (Mediston's Citizenship Policy). Yet, in the system, there is a clear sense that this established terminology has been supplanted by a recent simplification into the terms 'kindness and respect' to signify cooperativism. It is these latter terms that now represent that system's current understanding of being a cooperative school in the 21st century. The shift in terminology reflects Mediston's re-evaluation of its sense of cooperativism after a negative Ofsted report led to significant turbulence within the school and a loss of community engagement. The evolving language is integral to the process of renewal at Mediston, leading Burns (DHT) to say 'we are not the same cooperative school now'. The difference is in the way that cooperativism is being presented rather than a shift in the understanding of cooperativism itself. Benning's intention is to clarify and simplify cooperativism for stakeholders and thereby facilitate renewal of the system. Despite external pressures to abandon cooperativism, as explored in Sections 2.8 and 2.11i, the school's leadership instead critically evaluated how it was 'living the cooperative ethos' (Burns). It decided that using the ICA's terminology had created a 'facade' (Burns) and a 'smokescreen' (Benning) which masked problems around academic outcomes and rigour. Essentially, whilst pupils previously 'knew' the ICA's terminology of equity, equality, democracy and solidarity they were not actually 'understood' or acted upon. An example is one tutor who explained that her group knew the words to say - almost learnt by rote but that they were terms without understanding or enactment so had no impact on behaviours or actions. As the new headteacher, Benning, felt that the terminology previously used was too complex and, as staff recognised their cooperative values in his key messages of kindness and respect, these terms have been centrally placed in Mediston's renewed understanding of

cooperativism. Mediston's simplification of cooperativism is meant to make their core ethos more easily understood and to better convey 'what they are trying to achieve' to their community (Benning). This reflects the transformative potential of contradictions and tensions in an activity system as identified by Engeström (2010) and explored previously in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Focusing on learning to be respectful and kind has become the codified expression of the cooperative culture at Mediston, providing a framework that is both easy to understand and act upon. Furthermore, this is supported by documentation written by the senior leadership team and shared across the full range of stakeholders. This seems to bridge the space between formal expressions of cooperative identity and how it is enacted in practical terms.

However, the simplification process is also problematic around cooperative identity. The terms 'kindness and respect' are generic terms which are open to interpretation in many ways. It is possible that many schools will assert that they see these as important yet not interpret them as being linked to a specific cooperative culture. Hence, it raises the question around whether such a shift in terminology loses too much of the system's culture – what it means to be a cooperative school. The issues here are amplified by the lack of clarity in what constitutes a cooperative school beyond self-identification; a generic agreement with cooperation not competition and trying to promote 'cooperative values' within the school (Woodin and Fielding, 2013). Despite the dramatic changes at the school, Mediston still self identifies as a cooperative school and asserts a cooperative culture. There is an acknowledgement that the system has changed but the focus is still on mutual support amongst stakeholders and the importance of

cooperation rather than competition. The simplified language used at Mediston may make cooperativism more accessible, especially to a novice, and theoretically enables all stakeholders to understand and learn the sought behaviours. Meshulam and Apple (2018) contend that for schools to be fully inclusive, they must avoid tokenism and alienation. Simplifying the language used for cooperativism at Mediston can be seen to reduce alienation, avoid tokenism and improve community cohesion both within the school and in the wider community. The changes at Mediston show the potential of cooperative schools to adapt and evolve to meet the needs of their community in the face of rapidly changing society.

6.5 Democratisation

One of the key principles of cooperative education is presented as democracy and the chance to rework the relationship between the school and stakeholders into a more equal partnership. This was explored in my literature review (Sections 2.2 and 2.8) as an unintended consequence of neoliberalism but also as a key aspect of effective cooperation. The ICA's 1995 definitions declare that cooperatives are democratic organisations; controlled by their stakeholders who are actively involved in decision making and where there is a 'one member one, vote approach'.

Woodin (2019) recognised that the definition of cooperative schools was problematic because cooperative schools are, in reality, 'hybrid cooperatives' which are trying to transpose cooperativism onto the established English education system. This is compounded because cooperative schools are not actually owned by their stakeholders (see Section 2.2). Woodin (2019) and Dennis (2018) both recognised that external forces, performativity and accountability measures mean that cooperative schools are

constrained in their desire to be fully democratic and cooperative. This uneasy position is evident at both Sheply and Mediston. Both systems regard the interpretation and enactment of democracy as important but their approach lacks the simplicity and clarity implied by the ICA definition (ICA, 1995). An additional complexity comes from the statutory requirement for state schools to promote British Values, one of which is a basic understanding of different forms of democracy, especially representative democracy (DfE, 2014). Schools are required to actively teach pupils about democracy; their role in democracy and how democracy affects the law in Britain. This means that cooperative schools like Sheply and Mediston have a double impetus - to fulfil their statutory duty under the British Values agenda and to encourage democracy as an essential part of being cooperative. It is therefore unsurprising that the schools' documentation makes explicit reference to democracy as being important but within the confines of the state education system.

Democratisation at Sheply and Mediston

An activity that is visible across both Sheply and Mediston is democratisation where stakeholders are given opportunities to learn to be democratic and understand how democracy works. This reflects Dewey's assertion that schools are a microcosm of democratic society and places that allow people to learn how to participate fully in society (Kira, 2019). This is explored in Section 2.6. Benning and Jameson (headteachers) are clear that the focus on democracy is integral to their cooperative school and facilitates pupils developing their citizenship to participate fully and freely and to contribute to modern democratic society. This approach is reflected in the documentary artefacts of each school whereby they explain what democracy is and why it is important for all stakeholders. Multiple approaches are used including explicit teaching about political democracy through assemblies, the pastoral system and PHSE lessons such as

the 'Shipwrecked' project which I observed at Sheply. Both schools participate in the national Youth Parliament process, encouraging pupils to stand as prospective Youth Members of Parliament (YMP) and facilitating formal voting days each year. Furthermore, time is given to exploring the potential topics for discussion in the annual Have Your Say campaign. These aspects reinforce the importance of engagement in political democracy to pupils. It also emphasises that their opinions matter; are listened to and that they can make a practical difference.

Empowering pupils through student leadership and voice groups is held as important by both headteachers in my research and such groups are well established at Sheply and Mediston. These groups offer pupils, from all years, the chance to engage in formal democratic decision making and thereby influence their school. Ripon (Sheply DHT) emphasised that democracy is 'well embedded' through the voice groups at Sheply whilst Burns (Mediston DHT) stated that voice is about having 'a sense of worth and belonging'. The student voice groups contributed to major decisions in both schools around curriculum change, canteen facilities, uniform and even a new mobile phone policy. Pupils are trained in participating in decision making and are provided with opportunities to give feedback to their tutor group reflecting the importance of representative democracy. Some pupils explain that they 'have a voice' (Elsa, 13 at Sheply), that they feel listened to and that they believe they can 'make a difference' (Molly, 14 at Mediston).

Whilst voice groups support the headteachers' comments that democracy is sought and valued within cooperative schools, there is an inherent problem around voice groups and inclusion. Ruddock and Fielding (2016) stated that some pupils may feel

disenfranchised and distanced from the democracy being enacted within the school. Practically, not all pupils can be in such formal voice groups. Several pupils across both schools made comments about not all voices being equally heard especially as some pupils choose to not be involved in student voice systems or 'don't volunteer' (Maisie, 15). This exposes an underlying problem with voice groups that they might be promoting tokenism as outlined by Meshulam and Apple (2018) in Section 2.6. Pupils need to be presented with genuine opportunities to be involved and to be confident about this, but pupils also have to want to participate and consider the outcomes worth the effort. The existence of voice groups by themselves is meaningless unless pupils have a genuine voice which is listened to, something that Ralls (2019) warned about as this creates an illusion of voice. Democracy is further constrained as adults are in control of the democratic processes in both systems reflecting the concern expressed by Wyness (2006).

Stakeholders' voice groups are a feature of Sheply and Mediston with regular meetings held to engage parents and school staff. These seek to provide opportunities for community stakeholders to raise concerns or issues but equally provide the chance for the school to gather feedback on its plans. Ripon (DHT at Sheply) stated that speaking to as many stakeholders as possible is essential to enact democracy. Both schools put measures in place, such as improved technology and even more socially focused events, to promote engagement of parents and staff. Within both schools these adult stakeholder groups contributed to major whole school decisions around uniform, the school day, and mobile phones. Several parent respondents in my research expressed that they felt that their voice was valued.

Sheply has a student council which follows a traditional model as it is renewed annually with elected representatives from each tutor group and specific feedback time set aside to facilitate discussion within the tutor group. This theoretically allows all students to be involved in the democratic process but practically it depends on the quality of the representatives which is true of representative democracy generally.

Mediston has recently introduced a formal Student Parliament rather than a school council. Again, pupils are able to provide feedback on school plans and raise generic issues that concern them through democratic representation. Again, time is set aside for formal and more meaningful feedback in tutor groups so that all pupils have the chance to be involved if they wish to. In contrast to the elected representatives at Sheply, the student MPs at Mediston undergo a formal application process where they develop their own 'manifesto' and are then interviewed by the school's senior team. Whilst everyone that I spoke to is positive about the Student Parliament and the impact that it has on raising student aspirations, I was struck by the lack of democracy in the process itself. The student MPs are not elected by their peers which seems to undermine the potential for democratisation in the Student Parliament as the democracy seems illusory.

Mediston's Student Parliament does reveal the uneasy balance between desiring to act democratically and the need to negotiate external pressures around academic outcomes and reputation. The expectations placed on student leadership mean that Mediston is filtering those whom they feel will be positive role models to other students in terms of behaving cooperatively but also in having high aspirations. This reinforces the sense that voices are not equally valued at Mediston and developing student leadership is placed above democracy for practical reasons.

Gandin and Apple (2018) emphasise the potential gap between what has been said and done. Examples of such contradictions are evident in both Sheply and Mediston as the headteachers consciously select their head student rather than engage in democratic processes. The 'selection not election' approach can be seen to signal that democracy is a limited process even in cooperative schools where there is a professed commitment to democracy. The importance of selecting students who can successfully represent the school in public events is vitally important in promoting and protecting the school's reputation, so it becomes an area of compromise. Democratic aspirations are side-lined, and it can be questioned whether there is full participation or tokenism in operation, as outlined by Meshulam and Apple (2018).

There are two distinct areas to the democratisation undertaken in the two schools in my research. Firstly, students are taught about democracy as an important process which will enable them to participate meaningfully in modern democratic society. They are shown how they can exercise their voice appropriately and effectively through engagement in democratic processes. They also have opportunities to learn that democracy sometimes means that you have to compromise and accept that the opinion of the many outweighs your personal opinion. Ripon (DHT at Sheply) verbalised this as 'You have a chance to be part of the dialogue' emphasising the importance of full participation as democratic engagement as previously explored in Section 2.6.

The second thread of democratisation in the two schools concerns the practical constraints placed on enacting democracy within a state school in England. Traditionally, schools are not democratic places as hierarchical structures, accountability and external pressures limit the opportunities to be truly democratic. In Section 2.2 of my Literature

review there was the sense that cooperative schools were in opposition to neoliberalism and would dramatically change education through the focus on cooperation rather than competition through enacting democracy. Woodin and Fielding (2013) cited that 'They are democratic and encourage all stakeholders to be involved' as a key feature of cooperative schools.

It is evident that Sheply and Mediston have made real efforts to encourage stakeholder participation but fulfilling the first part has proven more contentious with both schools stating that schools generally are not democratic places. Neither school has adopted the ICA's system of 'one member one vote' although Mediston previously had tried this and abandoned it as unworkable within the school context. When asked 'Can a school ever be a democracy?' in interviews, senior leaders in both schools spoke of the role of teachers as professional educationalists who were therefore better equipped to make decisions around education than other stakeholders. Instead, they stated that democracy is about creating opportunities for other stakeholders to be fully involved in the dialogue and creating successful long-term partnerships. This approach reflects the practical need for cooperative schools to compromise around their interpreted and enacted values if they are to be viable as state schools. Dennis (2019) questions whether the compromises that have needed to be made by schools like Sheply and Mediston around their cooperativism might be seen by some as failure of the cooperative schools movement to fulfil its potential for social transformation. In many ways cooperative schools were set up to fail around establishing fully democratic state schools as the prevailing neoliberal system will not allow this to happen (see Sections 2.7ii and 2.8). Instead, what has been achieved is the creation of schools which are more focused on developing cooperation as an effective approach and creating young people who are

able to fully participate in modern democratic society. This is not a failure but is a practical workable compromise in a controlling educational landscape.

6.6 Tensions and Contradictions Within the Activity Systems of Sheply and Mediston

There were several significant contradictions evident within the two activity systems especially regarding school identity / purpose and around manifestations of power which were illuminated using CHAT. Contradictions and tensions are inevitable within activity systems due to both their complexity and culturally situated position (Engeström 2000; 2009). Engeström stated that contradictions and tensions might cause temporary instability, but these are not negative as they allow renewal of the activity system through self-reflection and self-evaluation. The resulting situation would be the evolution and increased interconnectivity of activity systems which can create new knowledge and practice. However, it is possible within CHAT that the tensions provide the possibility rather than a guarantee of renewal.

At the outset of my research, I was aware that the reality of tensions and contradictions within the activity systems would likely be more messy and complex than Engeström's model initially implies (Bakhurst, 2009). I was also aware that this messiness around contradictions would allow me to undertake a deep exploration of Sheply and Mediston as cooperative schools in 21st century England.

6.7 The Tensions Between Cooperative Identity and Performativity

A major tension at both Sheply and Mediston exists between their desire to embrace a cooperative identity whilst being subject to national performativity measures as state funded schools in England. As explored previously in Sections 2.8 and 2.11i, there are

drastic consequences for state schools if they fail to meet the externally set performance targets around student attainment and progress or experience a negative Ofsted report (Wilkins, 2019). The threat of a negative Ofsted report or a poor ranking on educational outcomes thereby exerts power and influence over schools' activity. Both Sheply and Mediston have been in this position within the last seven years; it is this Ofsted experience which has created both tension and opportunity for their expansive growth within Engeström's thinking (see Section 3.3).

Both headteachers spoke of their school being 'value driven' and expressed a general agreement with cooperative values as codified by the ICA, which I had expected from my reading of Davidge (2017) and Dennis (2019), as detailed in Section 2.2. of the Literature Review. The two schools both used the words of the ICA on their website and in their documentation although Mediston is now using kindness and respect to encapsulate their reworked interpretation. which will be explored in the enculturation section of this chapter. Both headteachers expressed a wider commitment to preparing students for their future citizenship and that education needed to be about 'more than results but rather about being ready for life' (Sean Jameson, headteacher of Sheply College). However, maintaining this approach is problematic due to the performative context that both schools have to operate within (see Sections 2.8 and 2.11i).

Engeström's principles state the importance of seeing problems and potentials for growth within the historical context of the system itself. This means that the clash between the schools' cooperative ethos and performativity can be viewed as part of the wider neoliberal educational context with its growing importance of meeting arbitrary external benchmarks (Keddie, 2015; West and Wolfe, 2018; Ralls, 2019). Both head

teachers spoke of the difficult and stressful 'balancing act' between these external measures and enacting their desired cooperativeness. Jameson and Benning are aware that there are times when they have made compromises even if this seemed against their intended outcomes.

Sheply's interpretation of cooperative values emphasised pupils' ability to improve society and 'to make it better for all' - in essence to be an alternative to competition in education. In contrast, for Mediston the focus of cooperativism was more on enabling students to fully participate in society and create a positive future for themselves, echoing the concepts of self-help and self-responsibility (see Section 2.2). The slight shift of focus between these two schools indicates a lack of clarity about whether cooperative schools are attempting to change society by providing a viable alternative to neoliberalism or to enact smaller scale change by providing educational opportunities for their students which might slowly impact on society. There are nuanced differences in the context of the two schools which have led to different approaches as they have rethought their cooperative identity, even in response to their damaging Ofsted inspection. Engeström (2001; 2010) refers to such experiences as a problem but also as an opportunity to rethink the activity system. Sheply mediated the inevitable pressures from their 2013 Ofsted through the lens of their established interpretation of cooperative values which allowed stability and cohesion in the system whilst still allowing for growth. Murphy explained that it took time and effort to get the wider community 'back on board' after the negative Ofsted report but under Jameson's leadership the school's sense of cooperativeness has developed and become more embedded as the activity system has developed.

In contrast, Mediston is still resolving the tensions from its 2019 inspection. It has undergone transformational change as it reworks and reinvents its identity amidst these contradictions. Some staff and parents identified that it seemed that Mediston could not stand against government pressure and that there was a clash between cooperativeness and performativity (Bew, TA). Benning (headteacher, Mediston) admits that she has 'encouraged' her subject leaders to place greater emphasis on students' academic results than she would like to meet performance standards. There has also been a shift away from a cooperative teaching pedagogy to a more instruction-based approach with more regular testing and assessment being used. An extended school day has also been implemented for some students who are failing to meet targets. These changes show the school responding to the pressure exerted by national accountability, especially for a school serving a deprived and impoverished local community, and still struggling with the consequences of a prior negative school inspection which is reducing the school's agency. This reflects Ralls (2019) assertion that performativity has particularly impacted the cooperative sector where the focus is on collaboration and embedding cooperative values, rather than purely academic outcomes.

6.8 The Tensions Created by Power Inequalities

In chapter 3 on theoretical basis, I explored the critique that Engeström's CHAT fails to consider power inequalities within activity systems (Avis, 2009; Bligh and Flood, 2017). Whilst some researchers criticise Engeström for not tackling power as a separate concern (see Section 3.5), he does identify that the collective process involves multiple voices and different interests which inevitably create tensions and contradictions that need to be resolved (Engeström, 2001). I saw the tensions identified by Engeström in my research schools where they were amplified by the presence of power imbalances

and inequalities between the actors but also between the varying internal aspects of the system.

Schools have hierarchical structures with clear inequalities in power which impact on activity and the everyday actions that are undertaken. Headteachers, because of their formal leadership position, wield considerable power in determining the direction and 'vision' of the school and how this is enacted. They are often deemed to be most influential within a school because of their positional power. This can be seen in the activity undertaken at both Sheply and Mediston. Jameson was attracted to the headship at Sheply by its existing cooperative identity and has developed the school's interpretation of cooperative values against external pressures from his position as an expert in cooperative schooling. This has been driven by his personal commitment to cooperativism and using his positional power to engender this commitment and knowledge in other stakeholders. The headteacher's positional power is enacted differently at Mediston due to the prior turbulence at the school and also Benning's inexperience in cooperative education. This inexperience in the cooperative culture meant Benning adopted a more consultative approach to establishing a coherent and reworked cooperative direction for the school. She deliberately drew on experienced cooperative practitioners within the school and her prior experience as a headteacher to explore the existing problems and tensions at Mediston through a more cooperative lens. Her positional power was enhanced through her consultation with 'experts' allowing change and development to Mediston as a cooperative school. In many ways Benning fulfils Esper's role of the novice within the culture (Esper, 2014).

My research revealed that both headteachers' power was constrained by the systems in which they operated, essentially that modern cooperative schools are heavily influenced by operating in the neoliberal context, which was identified by Dennis (2019) and Woodin (2019b). This is explored further in Sections 2.7 and 2.8. Jameson spoke about the importance of a cohesive approach and a shared outcome across Sheply's subjects and stakeholders to add weight to his decision-making. However, he was aware that ultimately the responsibility was his, bringing both responsibility and power. Murphy (DHT) emphasised that the school's leadership team needed to make the 'difficult decisions' and that other stakeholder groups, especially parents, frequently ceded power to them. Their position is described as being 'fairly safe' due to a recent positive Ofsted which provided 'breathing space' from the 'worst of the external pressures' (Jameson).

In contrast, Mediston is still negotiating the consequences of their negative Ofsted report from early 2019. This does mean that Benning's power as headteacher is limited by the need to meet external performativity targets, meaning that power is held externally by Ofsted and the Department for Education. Benning makes decisions within the school based on her positional power, but these decisions need to be filtered through external expectations thereby limiting her actual power. She tries to protect her staff, but several teachers expressed a fear around the ongoing consequences of the Ofsted report. Several staff and parents whom I interviewed recognised her drive and leadership within this context and felt that the school was now better able to 'stand up to the challenge' of Ofsted (RM). Staff in both of these schools feel their activity is influenced by the need to meet performativity measures and that this means that the headteachers' power is practically constrained.

Most definitions of cooperatives focus on the importance of democracy, whereby cooperatives should be 'owned, controlled and run by and for their stakeholders' (ICA, 2020) so one would expect pupils, who are at the heart of cooperative schools, to hold some of the power in the institution. This would contrast with a traditional hierarchical model which would place pupils in the lower tiers reflecting their limited power within the establishment. Boyask (2020) notes that cooperative schools are not owned by their stakeholders: pupils, staff, parents so they are an unusual and imperfect version of a democratic cooperative organisation. Whilst both schools emphasise the importance of student voice and encourage pupils to participate via voice groups and the school council or Parliament, I saw that pupils as a sizeable body of stakeholders actually hold very limited power. They are invited to participate and 'have their say' which seems to be valued and is frequently acted upon, but power firmly remains with adults in the system. At Sheply most pupils whom I spoke to are confident that their opinions are valued by the headteacher and that they can influence actions. At Mediston the recent turmoil in the school and limited opportunity to question students directly due to Covid restrictions made it difficult to determine if pupils felt they held any power. They were confident that they were given opportunities to participate which is an integral part of democracy, as expressed by Dewey (2014). Pupils at both schools spoke about it being 'our school'. My question is whether participation is sufficient to hold power as they can influence activity, but they need to rely on other stakeholders for this right to participate. It could theoretically be withdrawn. In addition, pupils do not have a say in all aspects of the system, and I query whether their voice would be heard as clearly on significant operational issues such as budget or staffing. This reinforces the uneasy position that cooperative schools are not actually cooperatives as pupils, who are at the centre of the school's existence, have limited control of the cooperative.

Parents are a further group of stakeholders whose actions expose the tensions surrounding power within Sheply and Mediston. Like pupils, they can participate in the activity system and have their voice heard. At Sheply there are multiple measures in place, including electronic means, to facilitate communication between school and parents across their wide catchment area. At Mediston there are regular communications sent home for parents and essential school events like parents' evenings and options fairs have a clear social aspect to them. For both schools, parental involvement brings additional tension around power as parents can exert an influence via their informal relationships with other parents. Parents can exert neoliberal power through threatening to remove their children from a school which can then influence the actions that are undertaken within a system. Both schools shared their awareness of these tensions and the need to engage parents in the activities undertaken. Sheply stated that 'the community outside the school took time to get onboard again' after their negative Ofsted (Murphy, DHT) and that they had deliberately targeted influential parents to become governors and community representatives or to join the voice groups. This reflects the professionalisation of governance as detailed by Kulz (2020) whereby particular parental groups are valued more highly due to their ability to contribute to the school's operation as a business (see Section 2.8). This is a clear contradiction between the desire to operate cooperatively and the realities of being a state funded school. This shows how the tension around power could influence the activity itself but also how it provides an opportunity for renewal within the system. Likewise, the negative Ofsted report exposed considerable tensions around power in Mediston Academy. Benning explained that even before the most recent Ofsted in 2019 parents were vocal in their criticism of the school with complaints that certain stakeholders such as parents and pupils were marginalised. The school had struggled

with retaining both pupils and staff over a two-year period but saw opportunities to renew stakeholders' engagement as part of the renewal of the activity system after the latest Ofsted.
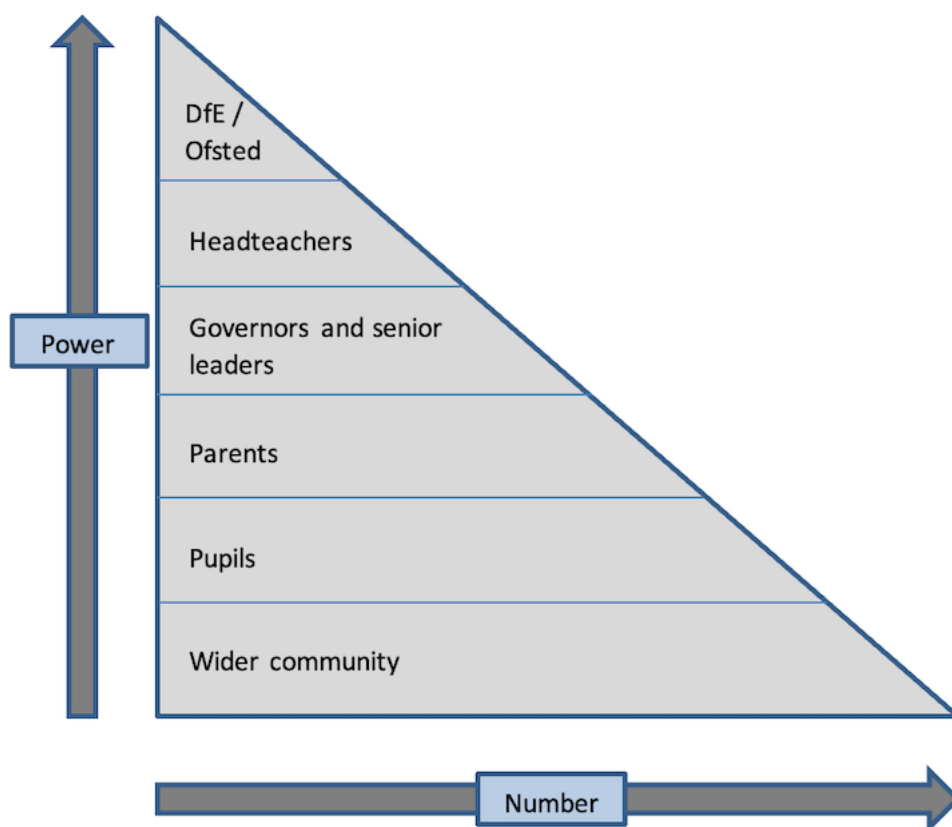
Figure 6.1 Hierarchy of Power seen at Sheply and Mediston

What was evident within both activity systems was that the concept of democracy and equal ownership as outlined by the ICA's definition was not central to their identity as cooperative schools and that the traditional school hierarchy was still in evidence. Both schools attempted to engage parents and pupils as stakeholders, giving them a voice and negotiating the impact of their power. This later process does create tensions but also contributes to their ongoing negotiation and re-negotiation of their identity as cooperative schools within a neoliberal context.

6.9 Conclusion

The academisation of English schools sought to offer greater autonomy, although this has been referred to as illusory freedoms by Boyask (2013). One consequence has been to fragment the relationship between schools and the communities in which they are situated, especially with the establishment of multi-academy trusts. The leadership at Sheply and Mediston have identified community as a key element of their identity and have sought to build strong partnerships with their local community as part of their enactment of their cooperativism. The activity systems in operation show a clear focus on two activities, those of enculturation and democratisation, which support the development of cooperative culture.

Using CHAT as a theoretical framework has illuminated the tensions and contradictions within the two activity systems at the centre of my research. Whilst cooperative schools are frequently described as being democratic establishments, their ability to enact democracy is constrained by resistance from neoliberalism. These tensions result from clashes around power and its unequal distribution within the system. Children are given opportunities to participate democratically but this is subject to the willingness of those who hold power within the activity system. This inequality is unsurprising given that schools are hierarchical institutions, but it reveals the difficulty in opposing the pressures of performativity.

Chapter 7 - CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

The research set out in this thesis examines how two schools, or two activity systems, interpret and enact cooperative values and how these impact on the experience of stakeholders. It offers a deeper understanding of the cooperative schools movement and what it means to be a cooperative school in the 21st century. Sheply Academy and Mediston Academy consist of multiple activity systems (Engeström, 2018) which are culturally and historically situated. Amongst other objects, they are focused on the shared outcome of 'learning to be cooperative'. The initial intention of the Cooperative College in launching the cooperative schools project (Dennis, 2018a) was to create a viable alternative to the neoliberal, capitalist ideology present in the English education system, established by such legislation as the Academies Act (2010). This legislation, which granted schools greater freedom over such things as shaping their curriculum, also allowed some schools to explore the notion of cooperation as their core ideology. The intention of the Cooperative College was to use cooperative values, as defined by the International Co-operative Alliance (1995), to create a democratic approach to schooling with cooperative principles being promoted in opposition to the competition envisaged in the legislation. This research also reflects the ideological struggles that exist in the English system at present.

7.2 Response to Research Questions

My research questions focus on deepening knowledge of what cooperative schools are in practice as opposed how they are represented in theory. My four research questions were:

- What are the cooperative values and how are they interpreted and enacted?

- What does it mean to be a cooperative school?

- How are the values enacted within the activity of a specific cooperative educational environment?

- How does the enactment of these values impact on the experience of stakeholders?

A significant aspect of cooperative schooling is their positioning as community schools which challenges current perceptions of what cooperative schooling is and its place in the English education landscape which has ideological and policy implications.

Cooperative schools do not conform fully to the initial vision set out by the Cooperative College, that they would be fully democratic organisations committed to helping young people become proactive citizens who would contribute to 'building a fairer world' (Cooperative College, 2019). The Cooperative College envisioned a cohesive national network of schools all working together to enact large-scale change in society. In reality, the rapid fall in the number of cooperative schools, from their peak of over 800 to the roughly 460 remaining cooperative schools today, is an indicator of the difficulties of surviving in the prevailing educational climate existing in England today. Those that remain have had to make compromises in order to maintain their cooperative status.

There has been a shift in emphasis away from changing society as a whole to focusing on the importance of the local community. Both Sheply and Mediston view their role in the local community as central to improving the lives of all those who are part of the geographical community. The intention is to achieve a fairer society but on a micro scale.

Essentially, they have recreated their identity as being both cooperative schools but more importantly community schools. This importance of community is shown in the development of the school as a hub, orchestrating community events and sharing their desired outcome: members of the local community 'learning to be cooperative'. Cooperative schools are still concerned with bringing about change and making society fairer, but my research suggests they have realised that this needs to be achieved on a local level first. The two schools, or activity systems, in my research see themselves as community schools, serving the specific needs of their local community and fulfilling some of the functions previously undertaken by the local education authority (LEA). See Appendix A on the organisation of the English education system.

Cooperative schools do not interpret cooperative values, including self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity, in a consistent manner which has led to a variety of interpretations and enactments by individual schools. As the two case studies have shown, this exposes the problem with claiming to be 'value-driven' as values only have meaning once they are imbued with meaning through culture and history. Cooperative values, which are regarded as being at the heart of cooperative education, are therefore in themselves, meaningless until they are given meaning within the activity system. This process of interpretation is undertaken at every level in the activity system. Both Sheply and Mediston asserted that they ascribed to the ICA's definitions, but they interpreted and enacted the values markedly differently. Each activity system's interpretation of the values was affected by the personnel and community within the system, especially in the person of the headteacher.

Despite differences in interpretation and enactment of cooperative values, there were two distinct activities that were in operation in both systems. Enculturation is essentially activity which seeks to affect stakeholders by influencing their behaviour and attitudes. In both Sheply and Mediston, deliberate and conscious enculturation of cooperativism was focused on showing stakeholders that a collaborative and cooperative approach was not only possible but desirable. This reflects Vygotsky's ideas on the social formation of the mind. Enculturation requires that stakeholders are shown, through different forms of social interaction, the importance of working together to improve society. New stakeholders at the school learn through intermental processes. Their understanding of cooperativism is learnt through a range of mediating artefacts including speech with more knowledgeable members of the system. Stakeholders go through an intramental process whereby they are given the necessary framework for thinking cooperatively for themselves. Evidence of enculturation was seen in both schools especially in actions and in mediating artefacts: PHSE; wall displays in classrooms and corridors; newsletters to staff, students and parents; fortnightly bulletins from the headteacher which included articles from cooperative sources and discussions about what cooperative values meant to the school and the community it serves; behaviour of staff towards each other and students; setting of behaviour expectations using agreed cooperative language. All of these actions form a coherent approach to allow enculturation to take place. I had anticipated that some enculturation would be present in each school. However, using CHAT enabled me to see the breadth and depth of enculturation being achieved through the actions of various stakeholders in each school.

The language of enculturation differed within each activity system reflecting the individual identity and local context of each system. At Sheply, different vocabulary was

used for different groups of stakeholders and for different ages whilst at Mediston, a simplified approach to language was used. Terms of 'kindness' and 'respect' became the key words encapsulating cooperative values in a concise and accessible manner which the school's leadership perceived could be understood by both the school community and the local community. Initially, I questioned whether Mediston had moved too far from the core ideals and vocabulary of cooperativism. My research shows this not to be the case as Mediston still holds collaboration and cooperation to be essential, both within the school and the local community. As an activity system, Mediston has gone through a process of change and reworking in response to external pressures which can be seen as an example of expansive learning and system transformation. This process of creating and recreating meaning is an ongoing shared and collaborative process (Ferriera and Schulze, 2014). In practical terms, this means that cooperative schools need to regularly revisit their interpretation and enactment of values to ensure their appropriateness. The cooperative identity at Mediston and Sheply is not static and is the result of ongoing tensions and contradictions within the activity system.

A second activity identified was that of democratisation. Democratisation is the process of educating stakeholders about democracy and enabling them to participate within a modern democratic society. Sheply and Mediston are both committed to ensuring that their stakeholders understand democracy, both through understanding how democracy works and also in learning to be democratic. This activity is rooted in an understanding of the importance of empowering stakeholders to fully realise their rights as citizens and to embrace full participation in society. One aspect of democratisation of critical importance to both schools is the desire to ensure that all stakeholders avoid

disenfranchisement. Society cannot be fair if large groups do not feel that their voice is heard.

Contradictions were evident in the activity of democratisation in both activity systems. External influences affected the degree to which the systems could be democratic. A clear example of this was through the selection of student leaders such as headboy. As much as both headteachers emphasised the importance of democratic participation and student voice, there was a sense that not all voices were equally valued. A system of 'selection not election' was used at both schools to fill senior pupil representative roles. These involve representing the school at a range of high-profile public events where promoting a positive image is essential in a marketised education system. This exemplifies the uneasy balance between the desire to enact democratisation and the realities of needing to construct a highly positive public image. The consequences of not doing so within a neoliberal educational environment can be catastrophic, affecting student recruitment, causing reputational damage and undermining core messages of being a cooperative school.

The existing literature emphasises the importance of democracy as an aspiration of the cooperative schools movement but, in my research, democracy is shown to be a contested concept: 'Schools are not democratic places' (Murphy, AHT, Sheply). The ICA affirms that democracy in primary cooperatives is defined as 'one member one vote' and that other levels of cooperatives are organised in a democratic manner. The leadership teams in both activity systems recognised the clear conflict between the ICA's definition of democracy and the hierarchical nature of schools. There was a clear sense that democracy within schools can exist but not in the way traditionally envisaged for

cooperatives. Democracy in the two systems was about giving participants a voice and an opportunity to be a part of the dialogue. There were multiple opportunities for various stakeholders to express their views and to participate in different activities of the system. Yet democracy is restrained in the school setting. Whilst stakeholders are able to participate in some key decisions through participation in: surveys, questionnaires, meetings, voice groups, this was always on the understanding that final decisions would be made by senior leadership.

The cooperative schools in my research are not democratically run organisations. They are, however, organisations that adopt some democratic elements in the way they operate, reflecting the restrictions by which state-funded schools are limited. At Sheply and Mediston there is a commitment to ensuring that stakeholders understand and learn about what democracy is both in school and in wider society. The experiences that students have in school help them to understand the importance of their future participation in democratic society. Students are given multiple opportunities to engage in democratic activities such as the Youth Parliament and 'Have Your Say' campaign. Education in democratic processes is regarded as a vital part of being a cooperative school in the 21st century while they cannot be considered as democratic entities themselves.

A further contradiction exists between cooperative schools and the accepted definition of what a cooperative is (ICA, 2021). The current literature shows an awareness that cooperative schools are hybrid cooperatives (Dennis, 2019; Woodin, 2019b) or conditional cooperatives (Boyask, 2020). Sheply and Mediston can be described as 'driven by values' and 'people centred' which are two of the aspects identified by the

ICA (ICA, 2021). Restrictions on the way that state schools are required to operate mean they cannot fulfil the expectations of a cooperative organisation, especially the concepts of autonomy, voluntary participation and joint ownership (ICA, 1995). When considering the range of community present in the activity system, it is clear that not all contribute voluntarily - students cannot be said to be voluntary participants as they are rarely given full choice over which school they attend as the power of those decisions is held mainly by parents. Attendance, by itself, cannot be taken as a voluntary action as there are consequences in the school environment for non-attendance. Cooperative schools cannot be considered to be jointly owned by the participants since they remain state funded institutions, resulting in the government always maintaining a degree of control in how cooperative schools operate. This results in significant limits in the autonomy of schools which is consistently reinforced by performativity measures.

Two distinct areas of tension are apparent in the activity systems in my research. Firstly, a significant tension is evident between the desire to act cooperatively and develop a cooperative identity in each school against the pressures of external performativity. These are represented in elements such as academic outcomes, league tables and Ofsted Inspections. Compromises are being made in both activity systems due to these external pressures and the consequences of failing to meet set targets. These decisions contribute to the notion that while cooperativism is at the core of the activity at Sheply and Mediston, the headteachers' autonomy is illusory and constrained as they still operate within the wider neoliberal education context. The second tension that is evident is the power inequality in each activity system. Schools, even cooperative schools, are hierarchical in their organisation and not all voices are heard equally or wield the same power. The headteacher has more power than many other members of

the community whilst students, who are a sizeable body of stakeholders, actually hold very little power. Always in the background is the unequal influence of community actors like the DfE and Ofsted which create additional tensions in the activity system. These tensions, whilst appearing negative, can offer the opportunity for system renewal and thereby contribute to longer term sustainability.

Community actors also have varying experiences in the activity system. At Sheply, different terminology was used with different groups of stakeholders. Formal cooperative terminology was used with staff and adult participants, whereas younger students in the school were not exposed to terminology at all, rather being taught cooperativism through actions. This demonstrates a deliberately differentiated approach attempting to achieve the same outcome in different ways with different stakeholders. In both activity systems, the key to achieving the cooperative outcomes is to ensure that all stakeholders are able to participate in the multiple activities of the system, albeit in different ways.

7.3 Contribution to knowledge

The importance of this thesis is that it demonstrates that cooperative schools have created an unexpected niche for themselves as community schools having identified this as an increasingly neglected space in education created by academisation and the establishment of Multi-Academy Trusts. Whilst the success of cooperative schools in England continues to be evaluated on the basis of their democratic identity, my research reveals them to be much more focused on being community schools. My two research schools sit at the heart of their local community, fulfilling the important functions of community cohesion and social equality. I contend that this challenges our

understanding of what cooperative schools represent in 2021 and urges a rethink of the importance of these schools in the current neoliberal English education system.

My research establishes a new way of looking at cooperative schools as multifaceted activity systems through the application of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Whilst cooperative schools remain rooted in the cultural and historical foundations of 19th Century consumer cooperatives, they operate within a modern neoliberal educational context with all the pressures and constraints this brings. Considering cooperative schools as activity systems has revealed the importance of activity such as democratisation and enculturation of cooperativism. Furthermore, within Activity Theory, tensions and contradictions can be seen as positive, leading to renewal and reworking of the activity system. Clashes between cooperativism and neoliberalism can be seen as challenging and ultimately transformational which is evident in the activity system at Mediston Academy.

7.4 Policy Implications

My research was undertaken in the current educational environment in England which has a focus on the individual and measurable outcomes. These measures reflect neoliberal political discourse around education where audit and accountability are powerful in determining what is valued. Cooperative education sits very uneasily within this context. Although it was initially presented as being in opposition to neoliberalism and as an alternative to marketisation of education, it has struggled to fulfil this expectation. Difficulties were inherent in trying to oppose a system which you relied on for your existence - cooperative schools owe their very existence to neoliberalism and the illusory freedoms this established. Cooperative schools are not exempt from

mechanisms of competition that neoliberalism has brought to the education sector. Multi-Academy Trusts in the north of England, sponsored by the Cooperative, have brought in strong branding and marketing in order to compete with other schools in their geographical areas. This has been a necessity to allow them to attract students and reflect their common cooperative identity within a crowded educational landscape. This was also evident in my two research schools but more evident at Mediston which is an inner-city school. As one of 16 schools within the city of Cowley, Mediston has embraced some principles of product branding and marketisation to compete with other schools. This is an example of the compromises that cooperative schools have had to make in their desire to enact cooperativism in the current educational landscape.

The neoliberal agenda in England has led to a climate where schools are judged predominantly on numerical data, providing an easy way to compare schools. Policy has focused on measurable numerical outcomes (GCSE/A Level results) but this only tells part of the story of a child's education. The increase in performativity measures since the launch of the first modern cooperative schools emphasises the conflict between cooperative education and the prevailing neoliberal discourse. Indeed, it can be argued that examination results in themselves are a poor indicator of the quality of education within a country. Cooperative schools represent a desire to support the development of the whole child and the contribution they can make to their community. This is where the approach to education I saw at both Sheply and Mediston comes into its own. The schools themselves place great emphasis on ensuring that young people achieve both academically and in their capacity to contribute fully to their local community and, ultimately, society in general. Applying Activity Theory revealed that, in the two activity

systems, there is a focus on both the collective and the individual, and education is seen as a social activity which has the power to build stronger local communities.

The stability in the number of cooperative schools demonstrates that there remains a strong appetite for schools that focus on the education of the whole child and building stronger communities, albeit at a local level. Cooperative schools have adapted to fill the spaces left by the neoliberal agenda relating to education in the community. Academisation and the creation of Multi-Academy Trusts have instigated a fracture within some communities wherein communities no longer feel they have a connection to the geographically local school. I would argue that cooperative schools were disadvantaged at the outset because their ideology was directly at odds with marketisation and they needed to make compromises in order to fit in with current education policy. 'The cooperative values enhance what would be a good school anyway.' (Teacher, Sheply). This conveys the idea that Sheply is a good school without its cooperative ethos. The staff believe that cooperativism makes the school better than good, a strong faith in the power of cooperation as an educational philosophy. This does not mean that the schools adhere fully to what might have been expected of cooperative schools as set out by the Cooperative College. Rather, these schools have adopted a hybrid approach of their own design to being cooperative schools.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

My research has focused on two specific cases or activity systems using second generation CHAT, so the data generated relates to these two cases. I think it is important to undertake further research, looking at a wider range of cooperative schools as activity systems to explore the significance and importance of the link between cooperativism

and community, to see if they converge on a similar object. Further research into the unintended consequences of academies and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) on local communities is vital given that 80% of academies are now part of MATs which erodes local accountability The fact that there remains a place in the current educational landscape for cooperative schools clearly demonstrates the need to bridge the gap between objective and measurable educational outcomes and local desire for schools to address the wider needs of young people and society itself. My research has shown the importance of the headteacher's role (in the division of labour) developing cooperative values and principles within a school. This would merit further research around the specific aspects of cooperative leadership and how such leadership is developed to sustain cooperative schools and provide stability in the sector. Initially, I had intended to use third generation CHAT to explore the interconnections between the two activity systems which were in the same geographical area but found that the systems operated in isolation from one another. Given that CSnet is now operational as an umbrella organisation, and both schools are members, it would be interesting to deepen the research using third generation CHAT to analyse the connections between the two systems. Further research using third generation CHAT could also be undertaken into the varying, and sometimes conflicting, activity systems that operate within the schools and the ways in which these activity systems interact. Such interactions and the contradictions evident can lead to longer term system renewals.

7.6 Evaluation of Research

I approached my research from the perspective of constructionism with a clear understanding that meaning and knowledge are social constructs. Knowledge only exists when we imbue it with meaning. In evaluating my research, I recognise that I have

utilised this as a coherent approach through my epistemological position and methodology to explore cooperative schools as specific phenomena.

I was mindful that the process of research relies on the interpretation of the researcher to capture the views and experiences of participants which is 'an opportunity rather than a problem' (Finlay, 2002a: 277). Researcher reflexivity is vital for ensuring that research is as trustworthy and transparent as possible. It has been necessary for me to acknowledge how my own lens and context has affected my research (Finlay, 2002a; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). I recognise that it has been impossible for me to be objective given my prior experiences working in the cooperative education sector and my general world view. Being reflexive has been an integral and inescapable part of my research at every stage of the process from the initial design to the writing of the thesis. I have consistently returned to the three central reflexive questions of: what I did, how I did it and why I did it which were identified by Tuval-Mashiach (2017) to ensure that my research was as trustworthy and transparent as possible.

I followed steps outlined by Malaurent and Avison (2017) to ensure quality in reflexive research which included using multiple sources of evidence, feedback to participants and discussion of findings with my supervisors. The application of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory allowed me to focus on generating data from across the activity system and to deliberately draw on a wide variety of stakeholders to explore different, and potentially contradictory, perspectives within the activity system. This, in turn, exposed tensions and contradictions which revealed potential for renewal and transformation of cooperative schools to take place.

7.7 Final Thoughts

Undertaking doctoral study has been immensely challenging from both an academic and a personal point of view. It has meant looking critically and reflexively at both my personal viewpoint and my professional practice, prompting me to re-evaluate cooperative schools in England and consider what they are trying to achieve. It has challenged my views on education and specifically provoked deeper thought on the role of education in society. I have needed to re-examine my own subjectivity in terms of political ideology and its impact on schooling. It has left me convinced that there is an important debate to be had within society around the function and purpose of schools in the 21st Century.

References

Abella, I. (2018) 'Analysing Pacific Teachers' Pedagogy inside New Zealand Classrooms - A Case Study Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT Perspective)', *Waikato Journal of Education*, 23(1), pp. 58-69. DOI: 10.15663/wje.v23i1.538

Apple, M. (2004) 'Creating Difference: Neo-Liberalism, Neo-Conservatism and the Politics of Educational Reform', Educational Policy, 18(1), pp. 12-44.

Apple, M. (2018) *The Struggle for Democracy in Education.* London: Routledge.

Arnold, P. (2013) 'Making Co-operative Ideas Work', *Forum: For Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education*, 55(2), pp. 245-254. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2013.55.2.245

Atkins, E. and Wallace, S. (2012) *Qualitative Research in Education.* London: SAGE.

Atkinson, P. (2005) 'Qualitative Research - Unity and Diversity', *Forum, Qualitative Social Research*, 6(3).

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A. and Delamont, S. (2001) 'A Debate About Our Canon', *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 1(1), pp. 5-21. doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100101

Atkinson, P. and Delamont, S. (2006) 'In the roiling smoke: qualitative inquiry and contested fields', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(6), pp. 747-755. DOI: 10.1080/09518390600975974

Audsley, J. and Cook, P. (2014) 'Cooperative Schools: A Democratic Alternative?' *Forum*, 54(2), pp. 323-325. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2012.54.2.323

Avis, J. (2009) 'Transformation or Transformism: Engeström's Version of Activity Theory', *Education Review*, 6(2), pp. 151-162. DOI: 10.1080/00131910902844754

Baker, S. (2013) 'Co-operatives in Education' *Hansard: House of Commons debates*, 23rd October, 569, 109WH. Available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2013-10-23/debates/13102351000002/Co-OperativesInEducation (Accessed: 2nd January 2020).

Bakhurst, D. (2009) 'Reflections on Activity Theory', *Educational Review*, 61(2), pp. 197-210. DOI: 10.1080/00131910902846916

Ball, S. J. (2007) *Education PLC: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education.* London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2013) *Education, Justice and Democracy: The Struggle over Ignorance and Opportunity.* London: Centre for Labour and Social Studies.

Ball, S. J. (2017) *The Education Debate.* 3rd edn. Bristol: Policy Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt1t893tk

Ball, S. J. and Bowe, R. (1992) 'Subject departments and the implementation of the National Curriculum policy: An Overview of the Issue', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 24(2), pp. 97-115. DOI: 10.1080/0022027920240201

Belcher, D. (2017) 'Moral leadership in an Age of Accountability', *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 11(2), pp. 60-62. DOI: 10.1002/jls.21528

Benn, M. (2012) *School Wars.* London: Verso.

Benn, M. and Downs, J. (2016) *The Truth About Our Schools: Exposing the Myths, Exploring the Evidence.* London: Routledge.

Benn, M., Fielding, M. and Moss, P. (2019) 'For a New Public Education in a New Public School' (editorial), *FORUM,* 61(2), pp. 147-155. DOI: 10.15730/forum.2019.61.2.147

BERA (British Educational Research Association). (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. 3rd edn. London: BERA.

BERA (British Educational Research Association). (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. 4th edn. London: BERA.

Berger, R. (2015) 'Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), pp. 219–234. doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Bernstein, B. (1996) *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research and Critique.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Biesta, G. (2007) 'Education and the Democratic Person: Towards a Political Understanding of Democratic Education', *Teachers College Record*, 109(3), pp. 740-769.

Biesta, G. (2011) *Learning Democracy in School and Society*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Blair, T. (1998) *The Third Way; New Politics for the New Century*. London: Fabian Society.

Bligh, B. and Flood, M. (2017) 'Activity Theory in Empirical Higher Education Research: Choices, Uses and values', *Tertiary Education and Management*, 23(2), pp. 125-152. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1284258

Bogdan R.G. and Biklen S.K. (1992) *Qualitative Research for Education.* 2nd edn. Boston MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bonner, A. (1961) *British Co-operation: the History, Principles and Organisation of the British Co-operative Movement.* Manchester: Co-operative Union.

Bottomley, M. (2019) 'Curriculum Design under the new Ofsted Regime', *SecEd*, 2019(11), pp.12-13. DOI: 10.12968/sece.2019.11.12

Bowen, G. (2009) 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', *Qualitative Research Journal* 9(2), pp. 27-40.

Boyask, R. (2013) 'Theorising the Democratic Potential of privatised Schools Through the Case of Free Schools', *Critical Perspectives on Communication, Culture and Policy Studies*, 32(1), pp. 11 -26.

Boyask, R. (2014) *New relations Between local authorities and schools.* England: BELMAS.

Boyask, R. (2020) *Pluralist publics in market driven education: towards more democracy in educational reform.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Breakwell, G.M., Hammond, S., Fife-Shaw, C., and Smith, J. (2006) *Research Methods in Psychology.* 3rd edn. London: SAGE.

Bridges, D. and McLaughlin, T. (1994) *Education and the Marketplace.* London: Falmer Press. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-11778-8

Brighouse, T. (2019) 'Some Factors Affecting What We Mean Public', *FORUM: for Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education*, 61(2), pp. 165-174. DOI: 10.15730/forum.2019.61.2.165

Brown, W. (2017) *Undoing the Demos - Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution.* New York: New Futures.

Burawoy, M. (1998) 'The Extended Case Method', *Sociological Theory,* 16(1), pp. 4-33. DOI: 10.1111/0735-2751.00040

Burgess S., Greaves E. & Vignoles, A (2019): 'School choice in England: evidence from national administrative data', *Oxford Review of Education 45(5)*, pp. 690-710. DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2019.1604332

Clift, C., Hatchard, J. and Gore, J. (2018) *How Do We Belong? Researcher Positionality Within Qualitative Inquiry*. Bath: University of Bath.

Coates, M. (2010) *Shaping a New Educational Landscape*. London: Continuum Publishing.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education.* 8th edn. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315456539

Cole, M. (1986) 'Cross Cultural Research in the Socio-historical Tradition', First International Congress on Activity Theory: West Berlin, 3-5 October 1986.

Cooley, A. (2013) 'Qualitative Research in Education: The Origin, Debates and Politics of Creating Knowledge', *Educational Studies*, 49(3), pp. 247-262. DOI: 10.1080/00131946.2013.783834

Co-op Academies Trust (2019) *Annual Reports 2012 – 2018*. Available at: https://www.coopacademies.co.uk/annual-reports/ (Accessed: 12th November 2019).

Co-op Academies Trust (2019) website https://www.coopacademies.co.uk (Accessed: 12th November 2019).

Coop- The International Cooperative Alliance (2020*) Cooperative identity, values and principles*. Available at: https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity (Accessed: 12th November 2020).

Cooperative College (2010) *Schools Cooperative Society - Cooperative Schools: Stronger Together*. Manchester: Cooperative College.

Cooperative College (2012a) *The Co-operative Identity Mark for Co-operative Schools.* Manchester: Cooperative College

Cooperative College (2012b) *The Co-operative Identity Mark Handbook A Quality Assessment Framework for Co-operative Schools.* Manchester: Cooperative College

Cooperative College (2013) *We expect to see a more diverse cooperative schools sector emerging.* Available at: https://www.co-op.ac.uk (Accessed: September 2013).

Cooperative College (2019) *Who we are > About us.* Available at: https://www.co-op.ac.uk/Pages/Category/about-us (Accessed: 18th April 2019).

Courtney, S. (2015) 'Mapping School Types in England', *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(6), pp. 799-818.

Craig, K. (2017) 'Analog Tools in Digital History Classrooms: An Activity Theory Case Study of Learning Opportunities in Digital Humanities', *International Journal for the scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 11(1). DOI: 10.20429/ijsotl.2017.110107

Crotty, M. (2011) *The Foundations of Social Research Meaning and Perspectives in the Research Process.* 2nd edn. London: SAGE.

CSnet (Cooperative Schools Network) (2021) *Welcome*. Available at: https://csnetwork.coop/ (Accessed: 1st February 2021).

Curtis, P., and Lipsett, A. (2007) 'Academies' success may be short-lived, says report', *Education Guardian*, 18th October 2007, Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2007/oct/18/schools.newschools (Accessed: 15th December 2021).

Daniels, H., Lauder, H. and Porter, J. (2009) *Knowledge, Values and Educational Policy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, A. (2015) 'Growing social innovation: the case of co-operative trust schools in England', in Hagen, H., Hytinkoski, P. and Klén, T . (eds.) *Customizing a patchwork quilt: consolidating co-operative studies within the university world*. Helsinki: Ruralia Institute, University of Helsinki, pp. 79-90.

Davidge, G. (2013) 'Some "get it" more than others: cultivating a co-operative ethos in uncertain times', *Forum*, 55(2), pp. 255-268. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2013.55.2.255

Davidge, G. (2017) *Rethinking Education Through Critical Psychology: Cooperative Schools, Social Justice and Voice*. London: Routledge.

Davidge, G., Facer, K. and Schostak, J. (2015) 'Co-operatives, democracy and education: a critical reflection', in Woodin, T. (ed.) *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values: Contemporary Issues in Education*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315778013-5

DCSF. (2009) *Co-operative Schools – Making the Difference.* Nottingham: Crown Publications.

Dennis, J. (2018) 'Imagining Powerful Co-operative Schools: Theorising Dynamic Co-operation with Spinoza', *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 50(9), pp. 849-857. DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2017.1382350

Dennis, J. (2019) 'The Logic of the Marketplace and the Ethic of a Cooperative: A Case Study of a Co-operative School', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(11), pp. 1196-1207. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1629160

Dewey, J. (2016) *Democracy and Education.* London: Simon and Brown.

DFE. (2014) *Guidance on Promoting British Values in Schools*. London: HMSO.

DFE. (2019) *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics - January 2019.* Nottingham: Crown Publications.

DFE (2021) *Types of School*. www.gov.uk/types-of-school (Accessed: Jan 2021).

Dryer, C. (2017) 'Values', *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 12(3) p. 180. DOI: 10.1016/j.teln.2017.03.011

Edwards, A. (2014) *Cultural-Historical Activity Theory*. British Educational Research Association. Available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/cultural-historical-activity-theory-chat (Accessed: 29th November 2018).

Elliot, A. (2012) *Twenty Years Inspecting English Schools (1992-2012).* London: Rise Review.

Engeström, Y. (1987) *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research.* Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit.

Engeström, Y. (1999) 'Innovative Learning in Work Teams: Analysing Cycles of Knowledge Creation in Practice', in Engeström et al *Perspectives on Activity Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 377-406.

Engeström, Y. (2000) 'Activity theory as a framework for analyzing and redesigning work', *Ergonomics,* 43(7), pp. 960-974. DOI: 10.1080/001401300409143

Engeström, Y. (2001) 'Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization', *Journal of Education and Work,* 14(1), pp. 133-156.

Engeström, Y. (2010) 'Activity Theory and Learning at Work', in Malloch, M., Cairns, L., Evans, K., O'Connor, B. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Workplace Learning.* London: SAGE.

Engeström, Y. (2018) 'Expansive Learning: Towards an activity theoretical reconceptualization', in Illeris, K. (ed.) *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists...In Their Own Words.* 2nd edn. Oxon:

Taylor and Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781315147277

Engeström, Y. Miettinen, R and Punamaki, R (eds.) (1999) *Perspectives on Activity Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812774

Er, M., Kay, R and Lawrence, E. (2010) 'Information Systems and Activity Theory: A Case Study of Doctors and Mobile Knowledge Work', *7th International Conference on Information Technology: New Generations*, 2010-04:603-607. DOI: 10.1109/ITNG.2010.153

Esper, S. (2014) *Designing Learning Experiences that Enculturate Novices.* San Diego: University of San Diego.

Exley, S. and Ball, S.J. (2014) 'Neo-Liberalism and English Education', in Turner, D. and Yolcu, H. (eds.) *Neo-Liberal Education Reforms: A Critical Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 9–49.

Facer, K. Thorpe, J. and Shaw, L (2011) *Co-operative and Schools: An Old Idea for New Times?* The BERA Conference September 6th 2011, London. doi.org/10.2304/power.2012.4.3.327

Fairbairn, K. (1994) 'The Meaning of Rochdale, the Rochdale Pioneers and the Cooperative Principles'. Saskatoon: Sask, Canada. Centre for Cooperatives University of Saskatchewan Occasional Paper Series 94.02 DOI:10.22004/AG.ECON.31778

Feinberg, W. (2016) *What is a Public Education and Why We Need it.* Lanham MD: Lexington Books.

Ferguson, G., Costigan, C., Clarke, C. and Ge, J. (2016) 'Introducing Enculturation: Learning Your Heritage Culture from Afar', *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(3), pp. 166-171. doi-org.plymouth.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/cdep.12181

Ferriera, C. and Schulze, S. (2014) 'Teachers' Experience of the Implementation of Values in Schools: "Mind the Gap" ', *South African Journal of Education*, 34(1), pp. 1-13. DOI: 10.15700/201412120939

Fielding, M. and Moss, P. (2011) *Radical Education and the Common School – A Democratic Alternative.* Oxford: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780203837405

Finlay, L. (2002a) 'Negotiating the Swamp: the Opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice', *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), pp. 209-230. DOI: 10.1177/146879410200200205

Finlay, L. (2002b) 'Outing' the Researcher: The Provenance, Process and Practice of Reflexivity', *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), pp. 531 – 545.

Finlay, L. (2003) 'The Reflexive Journey: Mapping Multiple Routes', in Finlay, L. and Gough, B. (eds.). *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Finlay, L. (2017) 'Championing Reflexivities', *Qualitative Pyschology*, 4(2), pp.120 -125. DOI: 10.1037/qup0000075

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) 'Five Misunderstandings About Case Study Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), pp. 219-24. DOI: 10.1177/1077800405284363

Folkes, L. (2018) 'Being the Intrusive "Double Outsider" Inside Welsh Family Homes: Insights from Researcher Positionality', in Clift, C., Hatchard, J. and Gore, J. (2018) *How Do We Belong? Researcher Positionality Within Qualitative Inquiry*. Bath: University of Bath.

Francis, B. and Mills, M. (2012) 'Schools as damaging organisations: instigating a dialogue concerning alternative models of schooling', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society,* 20(2), pp. 251-271. DOI: 10.1080/14681366.2012.688765

Freeman, R. E. (1984) *Strategic management: A Stakeholder Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University press.   DOI: 10.1017/CB0978113192675

Friedman, K. (2007) 'Behavioral Artifacts: What is an Artifact? Or Who Does it?', *IUS Scholar Works Journals*, *1(1), pp. 7-11. doi.org/10.1080/17493460600610764*

Gandin, L. and Apple, M. (2018) 'Can Critical Democracy Last? Porto Alegre and the Struggle over Thick Democracy in Education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(5), pp.621-639. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2012.710017

Garner, R. (2011) 'Experts: UK Has Too Many Types of School', *The Independent*, Friday 9th September 2011

Gibbs, A. (2017) 'Focus Groups and Group Interviews', in Coe, R., Waring, M., Hedges, L. and Arthur, J. (eds.) *Methods and Methodologies in Education Research*. London: SAGE.

Giddens, A. (1998). *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gijselinckx, C. (2009) *Co-operative Stakeholders. Who counts in Co-operatives and why?*. Catholic University of Leuven: HIVA.

Glatter, R. (2010) 'Changing Organizational Structures: Will we Never Learn?', *Educational Review*, 23(1), pp. 15-24.

Glatter R. (2012) 'Persistent Preoccupations: The Rise and Rise of School Autonomy and Accountability in England', *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 40(5), pp. 559-575. doi.org/10.1177/1741143212451171

Gobby, B., Keddie, A. and Blackmore, J. (2018) 'Professionalism and competing responsibilities: moderating competitive performativity in school autonomy reform', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 50(3), pp. 159-173. DOI: 10.1080/00220620.2017.1399864

Gorard, S. (2013) *Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches to Social Sciences.* London: SAGE.

Gorard, S. (2014) 'The Link Between Academies in England, Pupil Outcomes and Local Patterns of Social Economic Segregation', *Research Papers in Education,* 29(3), pp. 268 – 284. DOI: 10.1080/02671522.2014.885726

Gordon, M. (2016) 'Why Should Scholars Keep Coming Back to John Dewey?', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 48(10), pp. 1077-1091. DOI:10.1080/00131857.2016.1150800

Gove, M. (2013) *Ofqual Policy Steer Letter: Reforming Key Stage 4 Qualifications.* Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/529404/2013-02-07-letter-from-michael-gove-reform-of-ks4-qualifications.pdf Ofqual, 6th February 2013 (Accessed: 11th March 2020)

Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. and Fitzgerald, R. (2013). *Ethical Research Involving Children* Florence: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti.

Guillemin, M. and Gillam, L. (2004) 'Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research', *Qualitative Inquiry,* 10(2), pp. 261–280.

Gunter, H. (2018) *The Politics of Public Education: Reform Ideas and Issues.* Bristol: Policy Press. doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7h0v0j

Gurney, P. (1996) *Corporate Culture and the politics of consumption in England 1870-1939.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hall, R. (2019) 'On Platforms for Cooperative Knowledge Production', in Woodin, T. and Shaw, L. (eds.) *Learning for a Cooperative World: Education, Social Change and the Co-operative College.* London: UCL Press.

Halstead, J. (1996) 'Introduction: Values and Values Education in Schools', in Halstead, J. and Taylor, M. *Values in Education and Education in Values.* London: Falmer Press. doi.org/10.4324/9780203973554

Hammersley, M. (2007) 'The issue of quality in qualitative research', *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 30(3), pp. 287-305. DOI: 10.1080/17437270701614782

Hammersley, M. (2013) *What is Qualitative Research?.* London: Bloomsbury.

Hasan, H. & Kazlauskas, A. (2014) 'Activity Theory: who is doing what, why and how', in Hasan, H (ed.) *Being Practical with Theory: A Window into Business Research*. Wollongong, Australia: THEORI, pp. 9-14.

Heath, J. (2018) 'Reflections on Researcher Positionality When Using Multiple Techniques of Qualitative Data Collection to Facilitate Participation in Research Focusing on a Sensitive Subject', in Clift, C., Hatchard, J. and Gore, J. (eds.) *How Do We Belong? Researcher Positionality Within Qualitative Inquiry*. Bath: University of Bath.

Heilbronn, R. (2016) 'Freedoms and Perils: Academy Schools in England', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50(3), pp. 306-318. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9752.12188

Hergenhahn, B. and Henley, T. (2008) *An Introduction to the History of Psychology*. London: Cengage Learning Distribution.

Higham, R. and Earley, P. (2013) 'School Autonomy and Government Control: school Leaders' Views on a Changing Policy Landscape in England', *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 41(6), pp. 710 – 717. DOI: 10.1177/1741143213494191

Howard, E. and Khan, A. (2019) *GCSE reform in schools: the impact of GCSE reforms on students' preparedness for A level Maths and English Literature.* Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk//34700/1/GCSE_reform_in_schools_-_FINAL196556.pdf London: Ofqual. (Accessed: 15th February 2020).

Howe, E. (2020) *The Enculturation of Traditional Schools: The Significance to World Culture* Toronto: University of Toronto. Available at: https://escotet.org/in-focus/open-forum/the-enculturation-of-traditional-schools-the-significance-to-world-culture/ (Accessed: 12th July 2020).

Hyden, L.C. and Bulow, P.H. (2003) 'Who's Talking: Drawing conclusions from Focus Groups – Some Methodological Considerations', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(5), pp. 305 – 321. DOI: 10.1080/13645570210124865

Hytten, K. (2009) 'Deweyan democracy in a globalized world', *Educational Theory,* 59(4), pp. 395–408. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-5446.2009.00327.x

ICA (International Cooperative Alliance) (2020) Available at: https://www.ica.coop/en (Accessed: 12th November 2020).

Illeris, K. (2018) *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists…In their own words*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315147277

Ingram, N. and Abrahams, J. (2016) 'Stepping outside of oneself: How a cleft-habitus can lead to greater reflexivity through occupying "The Third Space" ', in: Thatcher, J., Ingram, N., Burke, C., and Abrahams, J (eds.), *Bourdieu: The next generation. The development of Bourdieu's intellectual heritage in contemporary UK sociology.* London: Routledge, pp. 140-156.

Isaacs, T. (2014) 'Curriculum and assessment reform gone wrong: the perfect storm of GCSE English' *Curriculum Journal*, 25:1, 130-147 doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2013.876366

Kain, D. and Wardle, E. (2014) *'Activity Theory: An Introduction for the Writing Classroom'* Dayton, OH: University of Dayton.

Kamii, C. (1979) 'Piaget's Theory. Behaviorism and Other Theories of Education', *The Journal of Education*, 161(1), pp. 13-33.

Kaptelinin, V. (1996). 'Activity Theory: Implications for Human Computer Interaction', in Nardi, B. (ed.), *Context and Consciousness: Activity Theory and Human-Computer Interaction.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 103-116.

Kaptelinin, V. and Nardi, B. (2006) 'Activity Theory in a Nutshell', in Kaptelinin, V. and Nardi, B. *Acting with Technology: Activity Theory and Interaction Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.29-72. doi.org/10.5210/fm.v12i4.1772

Keddie, A. (2013) 'Thriving amid the performative demands of the contemporary audit culture: a matter of school context', *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(6), pp. 750–766. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2013.768706

Keddie, A. (2015) 'School Autonomy, Accountability and Collaboration: A Critical Review', *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 47(1), pp. 1-17. DOI: 10.1080/00220620.2015.974146

Kira, N. (2019) Dewey's Democratic Conception in Education and Democratic Schooling: Lessons from the United States for Japan in a Time of Democracy in Crisis Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook No. 13, March, 2019. pp. 55-66 doi.org/10.7571/esjkyoiku.13.55

Kulz, C. (2020) 'Everyday Erosions: Neoliberal Political Rationality, democratic decline and the Multi-Academy Trust', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(1), pp. 66-81.

Langemeyer, I., & Roth, W.-M. (2006) 'Is Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Threatened to Fall Short of its Own Principles and Possibilities as a Dialectical Social Science?', *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, *8*(2), pp. 20-42.

Langness, L. (1975). 'Margaret Mead and the Study of Socialisation', *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*, 3(2), pp. 97-112.

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Lektorsky, V. (1999). 'Activity theory in a new era', in Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R. and Punamäki, R. (eds.) *Perspectives on Activity Theory (Learning in Doing: Social, Cognitive and Computational Perspectives)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-69. doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812774.006

Leont'ev, A. N. (1978) *Activity, Consciousness, and Personality.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall,.

LG Inform (2021) Available at: www.lginform.gov.uk (Accessed: 21st October 2021).

Lichtman, M. (2013) *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide.* London: SAGE.

Lincoln, Y. and Guba E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Lisiak, A. & Krzyżowski, L. (2018) 'With a little help from my colleagues: Notes on emotional support in a qualitative longitudinal research project', in Loughran, T. and Mannay, D. (eds.) *Emotion and the researcher*. Bingley: Emerald publishing.

Lupton, R. (2005) 'Social Justice and School Improvement: Improving the quality of schooling in the poorest neighbourhoods', *British Educational Research Journal*, 31(5), pp. 589-604. doi.org/10.1080/01411920500240759

Lupton, R. (2011) ' "No change there then!" (?): the onward march of school markets and competition', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 43(4), pp. 309-323. doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2011.606894

Lupton, D. (ed.) (2020) *Doing fieldwork in a pandemic*. Available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6P0NvMgVuiHZCl8/edit?ts=5e88ae0a# (Accessed: 12th February 2021).

Macpherson, I. (2000) 'The Windshield is Crowded: Anticipating the Twenty First Century' in Macpherson I (2007) *One Path to Cooperative Studies: A selection of papers and presentations* Victoria, BC University of Victoria

Maisuria, A. (2014) 'The Neo-liberalisation Policy Agenda and Its Consequences for Education in England: A Focus on Resistance Now and Possibilities for the Future', *Policy Futures in Education*, 12(2), pp. 286-296. doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2014.12.2.286

Malaurent, J and Avison, D. (2017) 'Reflexivity: A third essential 'R' to enhance interpretive field studies', *Information and Management*, 54(7), pp. 920-933.

Male, T. (2021) School Autonomy in England – the impact on democracy Proceedings of the Educational Leadership for Public Accountability. The Institute for Educational Administration and Leadership – Jamaica (IEAL-J)

Marfleet, A. (1996) 'School Mission Statements and Parental perception', in Halstead, M and Taylor, M. (eds.) *Values in Education and education in Values.* London: Falmer Press. doi.org/10.4324/9780203973554

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (2011) *Designing Qualitative Research.* 5th edn. London: SAGE.

Martin, D. and Peim, N. (2009) 'Critical Perspectives on Activity Theory', *Educational Review*, 61(2), pp. 131-138. DOI: 10.1080/00131910902844689

McCulloch, G. (2011) 'Historical and Documentary Research in Education', in Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (eds.) *Research Methods in Education.* 8th edn. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315456539

McGowan, W. (2020) ' "If you didn't laugh, you'd cry": Emotional labour, reflexivity and ethics-as-practice in a qualitative fieldwork context', *Methodological innovations*, 13(2).

Merriam, S. (1998) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Meshulam, A. and Apple, M. (2018) 'The Contradictions of a Critically Democratic School', in Apple, M. *The Struggle for Democracy in Education.* London: Routledge.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis.* 2nd edn. London: SAGE.

Mills, M. (2015) 'The Tyranny of no Alternative: Co-operating in a Competitive Marketplace', *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 19(11), pp. 1172-1189. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2015.1044204

Mills, M. and Hextall, I. (2019): 'The Co-operative Schools Movement in England: Who, Where and Why', *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 23(11), pp. 1116-1133. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1629162

Naicker, V. and Bayat, A. (2016) 'Towards a Learner-centred Approach: Interactive Online Peer Assessment', *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 26(5).

Neary, M., Valenzuela-Fuentes, K. and Winn, J. (2017) 'Co-operative Leadership and Higher Education: four case studies'. Cooperative Education and Research Conference, Manchester, 2017. Available at: http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/id/eprint/26917/1/LFHE%20Coop%20Ed%20Conf%202017%20Presentation.pptx

Newby, P. (2014) *Research Methods for Education.* 2nd edn. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315758763

Nisbet, J. and Watt, J. (1984) 'Case Study', in Bell, J., Bush, T., Fox, A., Goodey, J and Goulding, S (eds.) *Conducting Small Scale Investigations in Educational Management.* London: Harper and Row, pp. 79-92.

NSPCC (2018, updated 2020) *Research with children: ethics, safety and avoiding harm online.* Available at: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/research-with-children-ethics-safety-avoiding-harm (Accessed: 12th September 2020).

Packer, A. (2011) 'Through Personal Values to Cooperative Leadership', *Journal of Cooperative Studies,* 44(3), pp. 49-55.

Page, D. (2017) 'The surveillance of teachers and the simulation of teaching', *Journal of Education Policy*, 32(1), pp. 1–13. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2016.1209566

Palys, T. S. and Atchinson, C. (2014) *Research Decisions: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* 5th edn. Toronto: Nelson. doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2021.1909088

Parsons, T. (1951) *The Social System*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Perryman, J., Maguire, M., Braun, A. and Ball, S. (2017) 'Surveillance, Governmentality and moving the goalposts: The Influence of Ofsted on the Work of Schools in a Post Panoptic Era', *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 66(2), pp. 145-163. DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2017.1372560

Phillipi, J. and Lauderdale, J. (2017) 'A Guide to Field Notes for Qualitative Research: Context and Conversation', *Qualitative Health Research,* 28(3), pp. 381-388. DOI: 10.1177/1049732317697102

Philpott, C. (2014) *Theories of Professional Learning: A Critical Guide for Teachers.* Northwich: Critical Publishing.

Piaget, J. (1964) 'Development and Learning' in Ripple, R. and Rockcastle, V. (eds.) *Piaget Rediscovered*. New York: Cornell University.

Plattner, M. (2020) 'Democracy Embattled', *Journal of Democracy*, 31(1), pp. 5-10. DOI: 10.1353/jod.2020.0000

Ploettner, J. and Tresseras, E. (2016) 'An Interview with Yrjo Engeström and Annalisa Sannino on Activity Theory', *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 2016 9(4), pp.87-98. DOI:10.5565/rev/jtl3.709

Plowden, B. et al (1967) *Children and their Primary Schools.* A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). London: HMSO.

Postholm, M. B. (2015) 'Methodologies in Cultural–Historical Activity Theory: The example of school-based Development', *Educational Research,* 57(1), pp. 43-58. DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2014.983723

Powney, J. and Watts, M. (1987) *Interviewing in Educational Research*. London: Routledge. Doi.org/10.4324/9780429503740

Pratt, N. (2016) 'Neoliberalism and the (internal) marketisation of primary school assessment in England', *British Educational Research Journal,* 42(5), pp. 890-905. DOI: 10.1002/berf.3233

Punch K. (2005) *An Introduction to Social Research* 2ⁿᵈ edn. London: SAGE. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.01026_8.x

Ralls, D. (2019) 'Reimagining Educational Policy: Cooperative Schools and the Social Solidarity Alternative', in Woodin, T. and Shaw, L. (eds.) *Learning for a Cooperative World: Education, Social Change and the Co-operative College.* London: UCL Press.

Richards, C. (2018a) 'Ofsted Inspection as Existential Threat', *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education*, 60(1), pp. 129-132. DOI: 10.15730/forum.2018.60.1.129

Richards, C. (2018b) 'Remembering Plowden', *Forum for Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education*, 60(2), pp. 255-258. DOI: 10.15730/forum.2018.60.2.255

Roberts, J. (2019) 'Ofsted praises the wrong schools', *TES*, 1ˢᵗ August 2019.

Robertson, I. (2008) *An Introduction to Activity Theory.* Available at: https://us-vision.net/detail/an-introduction-to-activity-theory-4oG0ZvkhzCY.html (Accessed: 21ˢᵗ October 2018).

Ross, C. (2019) 'The Nature, Purpose and Place of Cooperative Education in New Times: Learning to know, do, be and live together', in Woodin, T. and Shaw, L. (eds.) *Learning for a Cooperative World: Education, Social Change and the Co-operative College.* London: UCL Press.

Roth, W. M. (2004) 'Activity Theory and Education: An Introduction', *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 11(1), pp. 1-8. DOI: 10.1207/s15327884mca1101_1

Roth, W. M. (2007) 'Emotion at Work: A Contribution to Third Generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory', *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 14(1), pp. 40-63. DOI: 10.1080/10749030701307705

Roth, W. M. and Lee, Y. (2007) 'Vygotsky's Neglected Legacy: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory', *Review of Educational Research*, 77(2), pp. 186-232. DOI: 10.3102/0034654306298273

Roth, W. M. and Lee, Y. (2009) 'Pedagogy: An Introduction', *Pedagogies in International Journal*, 5(1), pp. 1-5. DOI: 10.1080/15544800903406258

Ruddock, J. and Fielding, M. (2006) 'Student Voice and the Peril of Popularity', *Educational Review*, 58(2), pp. 219-231. DOI: 10.1080/00131910600584207

Russell, D. R. (1997) 'Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis', *Journal of Written Communication,* 14(4), pp. 504-554. doi.org/10.1177/0741088397014004004

Russell, D. R. (2002) 'Looking beyond the interface: Activity theory and distributed learning', in Lea, M. and Nicholl, K. (eds.) *Distributed learning: Social and cultural approaches to practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 64-82.

Savin-Badin, M. and Major, C. (2013) *Qualitative Research: The Essential Guide to theory and practice.* London: Routledge Kegan Paul.

Schönpflug, U., & Bilz, L. (2009) 'The transmission process: Mechanisms and contexts', in Schönpflug, U. (ed.) *Cultural transmission: Psychological, developmental, social, and methodological aspects.* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 212– 239.

Scott, P. (1990) *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity.

Shaffer, D. R. (2009). *Social and Personality Development*. CA: Wadsworth. DOI:10.1146/annurev.ps.41.020190.002131

Shaw, L. (2015) 'A Turning Point: Mapping Cooperative Education in the UK', in Woodin, T. (ed.) *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values: Contemporary Issues in Education*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315778013-12

Sibieta, L. (2016) *Can Grammar Schools Improve Social Mobility?*. Available at: https://ifs.org.uk/publications/8469 (Accessed: 21ˢᵗ October 2016).

Siemenska, R. (2004) 'Values', *Current Sociology*, 52(3), pp. 429-458.

Simkins, T. (2015) 'School Restructuring in England: New School Configurations and New Challenges', *Management in Education*, 29(1), pp. 4-8. DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2014.962501

Simkins, T., Coldron, J., Crawford, M. and Jones, S. (2015) 'Emerging Local schooling landscapes: the role of the local authority', *School Leadership and Management*, 35(1), pp. 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2014.962501

Somekh, B. and Nissen, M. (2011) 'Historical Activity theory and Action Research: An introduction', *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 18(2), pp. 93- 97. DOI: 10.1080/10749039.2010.523102

Spinuzzi, C. and Guile, D. (2019). 'Fourth-generation activity theory: An integrative literature review and implications for professional communication'. IEEE International Professional Communication Conference, July 2019, pp. 37–45. DOI: 10.1109/ProComm.2019.00012

Stake, R. (1985) 'Case Study' in Nisbet, J., Megarry, J. and Nisbet, S. (eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 1985 – Research Policy and Practice.* London: Routledge

Swaffield, S. and Major, L. (2019) 'Inclusive educational leadership to establish a co-operative school cluster trust? Exploring perspectives and making links with leadership for learning', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(11), pp. 1149-1163. doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1629164

Thomas, G. (2016) *How to Do Your Case Study.* London: SAGE.

Thoresen, L. and Ohlen, J. (2015). 'Lived observations: Linking the researcher's personal experiences to knowledge development', *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(11), pp. 1589–1598. DOI: 10.1177/1049732315573011

Thorpe, J. (2013) 'Co-operative Schools: A Quiet Revolution', *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 46(2), pp. 6-9.

Todd, N. (2013) 'The Wallsend Owenites' *Forum for Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education*, 55(2), pp. 279-292. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2013.55.2.279

Tolich, M. (2009) 'The Principle of caveat emptor confidentiality and informed consent as endemic ethical dilemma in Focus Group Research', *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 6(1), pp. 99-108. doi.org/10.1007/s11673-008-9124-3

Tomlinson, S. (2010) *Education in a Post Welfare Society.* 2nd edn. Oxford: OUP. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.373_6.x

Tuval-Mashiach, R. (2017) 'Raising the curtain: The importance of transparency in qualitative research, *Qualitative Psychology, 4*(2), pp. 126–138. DOI: 10.1037/qup0000062

Ungoed-Thomas, J. (1996) 'Vision, Values and Virtues' in Halsted, J. (ed.) *Values in Education and Education in Values*. London: Falmer Press.

University of Plymouth (2018) *Research Ethics Policy*. Available at: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-ethics-policy (Accessed: 15th August 2018).

Usher, R. (1996) 'Neglected Epistemological Assumptions' in Scott, D and Usher, R. *Understanding Educational Research.* London: Routledge. doi.org/10.4324/9780203131923

Vernon, K. (2011) 'Values and Vocation: Educating the Co-operative Workforce, 1918-1939', in Webster, A., Brown, A., Stewart, D., Walton, J. and Shaw, L. (eds.) *The Hidden Alternative: Co-operative values past, present and future.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Vernon, K. (2013) 'Co-operative Education and the State c.1895-1935', *FORUM*, 55(2), pp. 293-308. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2013.55.2.293

Verschuren, P. (2003) 'Case Study as Research Strategy: Some Ambiguities and Opportunities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(2), pp. 121-139. DOI: 10.1080/13645570110106154

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978), *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Walford, G. (2005) 'Research Guidelines and Anonymity', *International Journal of Research & Method in Education,* 28(1), pp. 83-93. DOI: 10.1080/01406720500036786

Walker, R. (2007) *Music Education: Cultural Values, Social Changes and innovation*. IL: Charles Thomas.

Waller, V., Farquharson, K. and Dempsey, D. (2016) *Qualitative Social Research – Contemporary Methods for the Digital Age*. London: SAGE.

Warmington, P. (2008) 'From 'activity' to 'labour': commodification, labour- power and contradiction in Engeström's activity theory', *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, *10*(2), pp. 4–19. https://doi.org/10.7146/ocps.v10i2.1972

Wertsch, J. V. (1985) *Vygotsky and The Social Formation of the Mind.* London: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (1995) 'The Need for Action in Sociocultural Research', in Wertsch J. V., del Rio, P. and Alverez, A. *Sociocultural Studies of the Mind.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174299

West, A. and Bailey, E. (2013) 'The Development of the Academies Programme: "Privatising" School-Based Education in England 1986-2013', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 61(2), pp. 137-159. DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2013.789480

West, A. and Wolfe, D. (2018) 'Academies, Autonomy, Equality and Democratic Accountability; Reforming the Fragmented Publicly Funded School System in England', *London Review of Education*, 17(1), pp. 70-86. DOI: 10.18546/LRE.17.1.06

West, A. and Wolfe, D. (2021) 'Reforming the school-based education system in England: A common framework, rule book and a new structure for schools', *Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education,* 63(1), pp. 20-28.

Whittlemore, R., Chase, S., and Mandle, C. (2001) 'Validity in Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Health Research,* 11(5), pp. 22-37. DOI: 10.1177/104973201129119299

Wilkins, A. (2012) 'Public Battles and Private Takeovers: Academies and the Politics of Governance', *Journal of Pedagog*y, 3(1), pp. 11-29. DOI: 10.2478/v10159-012-0001-0

Wilkins, A. (2017) 'Rescaling the local: multi-academy trusts, private monopoly and statecraft in England', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 49(2), pp. 171-185. DOI: 10.1080/00220620.2017.1284769

Wilkins, A. (2018) 'The Processual life of Neoliberalism: Permutations of Value Systems and Normative Commitments in a Cooperative Trust Setting', *International Journal of Inclusive Education: Evaluating co-operative schools: values, democracy and leadership*, 23(11), pp.1180-1195. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1629158

Wilkins, A. (2019) 'Whither Democracy? The Rise of Epistocracy and Monopoly in School Governance', in Riddle, S. and Apple, W. (eds.) *Re-imagining Education for Democracy.* Abingdon: Routledge. 142-145

Williams, B. (2021): 'The "New Right" and its legacy for British conservatism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*. DOI: 10.1080/13569317.2021.1979139

Wilson, M. (2012) 'The Rise and Rise of Co-op Schools', *The Ecologist: The Journal for the Post-Industrial Age,* 6th August 2012, Available at: https://theecologist.org/2012/aug/06/rise-and-rise-co-op-schools (Accessed: 4th August 2019).

Wilson, M. (2013) 'Inspiring the Next Generation of Cooperators Through Education', *Coop News*, 30th December 2013, Available at: https://www.thenews.coop/40361/sector/retail/inspiring-next-generation-co-operators-through-education (Accessed: 4th August 2019).

Wilson, M. (2014) 'Cooperative Schools: a Quiet Revolution?', *Journal of Socialist Education Association*, 19(2), pp. 12-13.

Woodin, T (2011) 'Co-operative education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: context, identity and learning', in Webster, T., Brown, A., Stewart, D., Walton, J. K. and Shaw, L. (eds.) *The hidden alternative: co-operative values, past, present and future*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 78-95.

Woodin, T. (2012) 'Co-operative schools: building communities in the twenty first century', *Forum,* 54(2), pp. 327-339. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2012.54.2.327

Woodin, T. (2015a). 'An Introduction to Co-operative Education in the Past and Present', in Woodin, T. (ed.) *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values: Contemporary Issues in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-13. DOI: 10.4324/9781315778013-1

Woodin, T. (2015b) ed. *Co-operation, Learning and Co-operative Values: Contemporary Issues in Education*. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315778013

Woodin, T. (2017a) 'Co-operation, Leadership and Learning: Fred Hall and the Co-operative College before 1939', in Hall, R. and Winn, J. (eds.) *Mass Intellectuality and Democratic Leadership in Higher Education*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 27–40.

Woodin, T. (2017b). 'Co-operative Education, Neoliberalism and Historical Perspectives', in Rudd, T. and Goodson, I. (eds.) *Negotiating Neoliberalism: Developing Alternative Educational Visions*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 117-128.

Woodin, T. (2019a) 'Co-operative schools: democratic values, networks and leadership', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(11), pp. 1164-1179. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1617359

Woodin, T. (2019b) 'Evaluating co-operative schools: values, democracy and leadership', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(11), pp. 1095-1102. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2019.1629165

Woodin, T. and Fielding, M. (2013). 'Co-operative Education for a New Age', *Forum*, 55(2), pp. 179–184. DOI: 10.2304/forum.2013.55.2.179

Woodin, T. and Shaw, L. (2019) *Learning for a Cooperative World: Education, Social Change and the Co-operative College.* London: UCL Press.

Wright, R. and Powell, B. (2006) 'Investigative Interviewers' Perceptions of Their Difficulty adhering to Open Ended Questions with Child Witnesses', *International journal of Police Science and Management*, 8(4), pp. 316-325.

Wyness, M. (2006) 'Children, young people and civic participation: regulation and local diversity', *Educational Review,* 58(2), pp. 209-218. DOI: 10.1080/00131910600584173

Yandell, J. (2009) 'Lighthouses or Follies? Academies and New Labour's Version of History', *Changing English*, 16(2), pp. 125-135. DOI: 10.1080/13586840902863111

Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research Design and Methods.* 4th edn. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.

Yin, R.K. (2018) *Case Study Research Design and Methods* 6th edn. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.

Young, M. (2007) *Bringing Knowledge Back In: From Social Constructivism to Social Realism in the Sociology of Education.* London: Routledge.

APPENDIX A – A Summary of the English Education System

<u>Overview:</u>

In England, full time education is compulsory from the age of 5 to 16. At 16, young people are required by law to either remain in full-time education or an accepted form of training such as an apprenticeship. Children are entitled to a free place at a state school. State schools are either funded directly from the central government or receive their funding through the local authority of the area that they are situated in. There are also fee-paying schools, known as independent schools, which are directly funded by parents (DfE, 2021).

Accountability:

Public education in England has a strong emphasis on accountability and performativity. Current education policy perceives a link between complex economics and social expectations (Ball, 2017). State funded schools are held accountable by a rigorous inspection regime overseen by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) which conduct a variety of inspections and quality assurance activities on schools. There are significant consequences for schools deemed to be performing below expectations; this includes more regular inspection, enforced academisation and ultimately closure. Academic outcomes are one of the measures used to judge schools and are also used by government to inform education policy.

Academic Outcomes at Secondary Level:

Students sit national public exams called GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) at the age of 16 (end of Year 11). Those who remain in education on an academic pathway, sit GCE A levels (General Certificate Education Advanced Level) at the age of 18 (end of Year 13). There are also other qualifications which are more vocational in nature such as Cambridge Technical Awards. These exams are set by national exam boards and overseen by Ofqual which takes responsibility for maintaining standards in examinations.

Types of School:

There are multiple types of public school in England, representing diversity (Courtney, 2015) but also

fragmentation (Wilkins, 2012; 2017). Public schools in England fall broadly into 11 categories (Courtney,

2015) including the following types of schooling:

Type of School	Funding	Special characteristics
Local community schools (LEA schools)	Funded through the local authority with money devolved through central government.	These are maintained by the local authority (government) in the area which they are situated in. The LEA technically employs the staff and has responsibility for standards and support of the school.
Academies	Funded directly from central government	These schools theoretically have greater freedoms in issues like curriculum as they do not need to follow the prescribed National Curriculum. They operate outside LEA control and employ their staff directly. They can also cluster together in Multiple Academies Trusts (MATs).
Faith Schools (Often Voluntary Aided status)	Often partially funded by religious groups or religious affiliations	Faith schools need to follow the national curriculum but can choose what they teach in Religious Education. They can also set their own entry requirement because of their faith status. Currently, the majority of faith schools are Church of England or Catholic schools. These can be academies too.
Free Schools	Funded directly from central government	These have greater freedoms in their organisation. They can be set up by any individual or organisation subject to meeting government set criteria and to meet a perceived need in the area.
City Technical Colleges (CTC)	Funded directly from central government	These were established in the 1980s. These are in urban areas and have a focus on the teaching of technology.
University Technical Schools (UTC)	Funded directly from central government	These are in urban areas and have a focus on the teaching of Maths and Sciences. Many have active links with further / higher education establishments and local businesses.
Grammar Schools	Varies	In some areas of England there are still grammar schools. These are selective schools where students pass an entrance exam to attend. They can be LEA schools or academies.
Special Schools	Varies	These are schools which can be funded via LEA or centrally. They provide an education for children with a special educational need or disability.

References:

Ball, S. J. (2017) *The Education Debate,* Bristol: Policy Press. 3rd edition DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt1t893tk

Courtney, S (2015) 'Mapping School Types in England'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 41:6, 799-8181

DfE, (2021) *Types of Schools* available at: https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school

Wilkins, A. (2012) 'Public Battles and Private Takeovers: Academies and the Politics of Governance'. *Journal of Pedagogy* Vol 3 Issue 1: 11-29) DOI: 10.2478/v10159-012-0001-0

Wilkins, A. (2017) 'Rescaling the local: multi-academy trusts, private monopoly and statecraft in England.' *Journal of Educational Administration and History.* 49:2, 171-185, DOI: 10.1080/00220620.2017.1284769

APPENDIX B – Questions for Headteachers
The background of the school:

1. Tell me about your school and what makes it special?

2. How long has it been a cooperative school? Can you explain its journey?

The interpretation and enactment of cooperative values:

3. Which of the cooperative values do you feel are most important for you as a school? Why?

4. How do you try to implement these values in the day-to-day life of the school?

5. How would I see that it is a cooperative school as I am on tour of the school? What will the students say about Sheply School?

6. The website includes a clear definition of how the cooperative values are interpreted at Sheply. Where did these definitions come from? Whose perspective?

7. How do you develop students' understanding of cooperative values and what being cooperative means?

Stakeholders and Voice:

8. Who do you see as the stakeholders here? How do they have their voices heard?

9. In what ways have you implemented feedback from your stakeholders? What impact would you say that their voices have had on the school?

Looking outwards:

10. Have you developed links with other cooperative schools? How? Why?

11. Is community important to Sheply?

12. Do you think that external organisations are open minded towards your 'cooperative ethos'?

APPENDIX C – Headteacher consent letter

Dear HEADTEACHER,

I am a doctoral researcher with the University of Plymouth undertaking research into cooperative schools around how cooperative values are interpreted and enacted within schools. I am specifically interested in how this process is experienced by stakeholders and contributes to a school's cooperative ethos. I have previously undertaken research with the Southwest Cooperative Schools group to further develop knowledge and understanding of cooperative pedagogy and practice.

I am looking for schools who feel able to commit to a 6-month timescale and who feel that the depth of this research might enable them to explore their own co-operative identity. The research will also contribute to the wider understanding of cooperative education in England. The intention is that participation by stakeholders and schools in the research project will be an interesting and rewarding experience. Obviously, measures will be taken to protect students and schools involved including the following steps:

- All participants and their contributions remain confidential
- No participant or individual cooperative school will be identifiable in the final research
- The name and regional location of the schools will be anonymised to minimise the chances of the school being identified.
- Participants have the right to withdraw during the data generation phase of the research
- Participants have the 'right of reply' and may re-hear their interview at any point, if so desired
- Data is being generated solely for the purposes of this research project and any linked publications

I would be grateful if you could consider whether your school is able to participate in this research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further details or to discuss the project further.

Tracey Anne Downes
tracey.downes@plymouth.ac.uk
EdD Programme, Plymouth University

Name……………………………………………………

I am/ am not willing to take part in the research project as described in the letter above and in the Participant Information Sheet. I understand my answers will be used as part of a research project undertaken by Tracey Downes and that the findings will be used in an academic thesis and possibly used in future journal articles.

I understand that I will remain anonymous, will not be identifiable in the written report and that I have the right to withdraw from the research during the data collection phase.

I consent to my responses being recorded, kept anonymously and used as part of a written report.

Signed..

Date...

Participant Information Sheet

Cooperative Schools: Learning to be cooperative in a changing educational landscape

My name is Tracey Downes and I am conducting this research into cooperative schools as a doctoral student at the University of Plymouth (United Kingdom).

What is the study about?
The purpose of this study is to explore cooperative schools and how they interpret cooperativism to create the individual school identity and ethos. I am particularly interested in how this feels to the stakeholders and how different cooperative values are interpreted and enacted in secondary schools.

Why have I been approached?
You have been approached because the study requires information from cooperative schools and those who work and study in a cooperative school to understand more about how values are interpreted and how being in a cooperative school is experienced.

Do I have to take part?
No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part – there is no pressure upon you to agree to participate although it is hoped that you will find the process interesting and informative if you do participate. Once the project is underway it is still possible to withdraw at the data generation phase although after this point data will have been collated and unfortunately it will be impossible to withdraw individual data strands at this point.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?
If you decide that you would like to take part, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences in the school and about your understanding of cooperation. The questions can be provided in advance and you can also decline to answer any individual question without penalty or needing to explain. You may also be asked to complete an additional task such as designing a prospectus or leading a tour if you are happy to do so.

Will my data be Identifiable?
Steps will be taken to protect your identity. Notes from interviews including direct quotations might be used but they will be anonymised to protect your identity. The data collected for this study will be stored securely and only the researcher conducting this study will have access to this data:

- Original audio recordings of interviews will be deleted once the project has been submitted for publication/examined
- Hard copies of question responses, interview notes and observation notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office for security.
- Any files on the computer will be encrypted (that is no-one other than the researcher will be able to access them) and the computer itself is password protected.
- At the end of the research, hard copies of materials will be kept securely in a locked cabinet for five years. At the end of this period, they will be destroyed.
- The transcript of your interview(s) will be made anonymous by removing any identifying information, including your name, from the copy.
- Anonymised direct quotations from your interview may be used in the reports or publications from the research. A pseudonym will be used and your name will not appear.
- All your personal data will be confidential and will be kept separately from your interview responses.
- The name and regional location of the school will be anonymised to minimise the chance of the school being identified.

Please note that there are some limits to confidentiality: if what is said in the interview makes me think that you, or someone else, is at significant risk of harm, I will have to break confidentiality and speak to a member of staff about this. If possible, I will tell you if I have to do this.

What will happen to the results?
The results will be summarised, collated and reported in an academic thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal. There will be a verbal participants' debriefing once the data generation phase of the project has been completed to provide generic feedback on the findings of the project.

Are there any risks?
There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. However, if you experience any distress or anxiety through participation you are encouraged to inform the researcher.

Are there any benefits to taking part?
You may find participating interesting and it may enable you to achieve a deeper understanding of cooperative schools and cooperative values.

Where can I obtain further information about the study if I need it?
If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher:
Tracey Downes contactable by email at tracey.downes@plymouth.ac.uk

| Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. |

APPENDIX E – Copy of Consent Form Signed by Participants

Name……………………………………………………

I am / am not willing to take part in the research project as described in the Participant Information Sheet. I understand my answers will be used as part of a doctoral research project undertaken by Tracey Downes and that the findings will be used in an academic thesis and possibly used in future journal articles.

I understand that I will remain anonymous and that I will not be identifiable in the written report. I have the right to withdraw from the research during the data collection phase without needing to give a reason.

I consent to my responses being recorded, kept anonymously and used as part of a written report.

Signed..

Date..

APPENDIX F – Document Analysis Sheet, Sheply College

Appendix F - Document Analysis Sheet (Sheply College)

Details of Document:

Title of Document	
Type of Document?	
Regularity?	
Who created it?	
Who is the target audience?	
What is the purpose of the document?	
How is the document used?	

Key terms / Categories for Analysis of Document:

Key Term / Category	Details
Democracy	
Equality / Equity	
Solidarity	
Self Help	
Self-Responsibility	
Social Responsibility	
Caring for Others	
Honesty and Openness	
Politics	
Community	

APPENDIX G – LIST OF MAIN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

<u>Questions / Areas (staff group interview general)</u>

The background of the school

1. Tell me about your school and what makes it special?

The interpretation and enactment of cooperative values

2. Which of the cooperative values do you feel are most important for you as a school? Why?

3. How do you try to implement these values in your day to day work?

4. If I went on a tour of the college, what evidence might I see that it is a cooperative school?

5. As a teacher, how do you develop students' understanding of cooperative values and what being cooperative means?

Stakeholders and Voice

6. As an important stakeholder, how do you feel your voice is heard in school?

7. Can you give an example of a time when your feedback has been acted upon?

Looking outwards

8. I have been told that community is very important at Sheply College. How do you develop students' awareness of the importance of community in your day to day work?

<u>Student (KS3 / KS4) Questions / Areas</u>

The background on the school

1. Tell me about your school and what makes it special?

2. What makes you proud of being a student at Sheply College?

3. How would you explain what Sheply College represents / stands for?

The interpretation and enactment of cooperative values

4. Sheply is a cooperative school. What does that description mean in everyday terms for you as students?

5. When walking around the school where and how would I see that it is a cooperative school?

6. Is it important that people in school behave in a cooperative manner?

Stakeholders and Voice

7. Do you feel that you are listened to? In what ways?

8. Can you give me any examples of where students' voices have resulted in changes within the school?

Looking forwards

9. What aspects of cooperation do you think will be useful in the future and beyond your time at Sheply?

Student (KS5) Questions / Areas

The background on the school

1. Tell me about your school and what makes it special?

2. What makes you proud of being a student at Sheply College?

3. How would you explain what Sheply College represents / stands for?

The interpretation and enactment of cooperative values

4. Sheply is a cooperative school. What does that description mean in everyday terms for you as students?

5. When walking around the school where and how would I see that it is a cooperative school?

6. Is it important to you that people in school behave in a cooperative manner?

7. How do you encourage younger students to develop their understanding of cooperative values and behaviours? To make the most of opportunities that they have at Sheply College.

Stakeholders and Voice

8. Do you feel that you are listened to? In what ways?

9. Can you give me any examples of where students' voices have resulted in changes within the school?

Looking forwards

10. What aspects of cooperation do you think will be useful in the future and beyond your time at Sheply College?