

# EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVES AS ACTIVATING INSTITUTIONS OF CREATIVE COLLECTIVE ACTIVITY

## FROM INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION TO FORMAL INSTITUTIONALISATION, THROUGH NON-FORMAL INSTITUTIONALISATION

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# Education matters...

- **A new crucial role:** In today's knowledge society, education is promoted to a key element of economic growth and of innovation intensity, undertaking the task of cultivating people with the necessary skills and attributes for their integration in the world of labour
  - **Reorientation of education, society and the economy:** the cooperative movement is an economic movement that employs education. It is argued, however, that the **cooperative movement is also an educational movement**, a new culture that uses economic action
  - In educational institutions of all levels, educational cooperatives can also be microeconomic communities, that unfold horizons of experience unknown to this moment and innovative learning processes. Within these communities, learners can discover new ways of organising their lives, which are based on **mutual assistance, social and economic equality** and the **strengthening of social solidarity relations**.
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# Aim of educational/school cooperatives in Greece

The specific skills to be cultivated by educational/school cooperatives, among others, can be distinguished in:

- a. *professional* (simulation exercises of professional roles by apprentices, such as: working hours estimate, decision-taking, distributing roles, making purchases and sales, setting up an invoice, inventory of items, etc.).
- b. *social* (abiding by the rules, democratic governance, social conciliation, health information, etc.).
- c. *communicational* and *self-care*

# Educational/school cooperatives in Greece: from the first, local experimentation to the institutionalisation

**1924:** 1<sup>st</sup> appearance of a school cooperative at a school in Gorgomylos of Preveza

**1954:** systematic attempt for the creation of cooperative schools (establishment of the Cooperative Education Agency by PASEGES (Pan-Hellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives))

**School year 1964–65:** 1,291 school cooperatives operated, the majority of which had a life exceeding three years

**L. 1566/1985 :** establishment of school cooperatives in primary and secondary education school units

**1993–94:** less than 200 school cooperatives

**2013:** extension of the implementation of the institution in secondary education (M.D. Ref. No. 56601 /Γ7/2013, GG 1127/B/10–5–2013)

**2016:** extension of the institution to special education and training school units (primary, secondary and special education) (M.D. Ref. No. Δ3/15717/01–02–2016, GG 310/B/2016).

# Meagre results...

- institutionalisation leads to a bureaucratisation of institutions
- ambiguous messages, eventually cause confusion and discourage the implementers of the provisions

# ...Great expectations

We should underline the taking of some promising initiatives, originating from the educational community, for rekindling the interest of teachers.

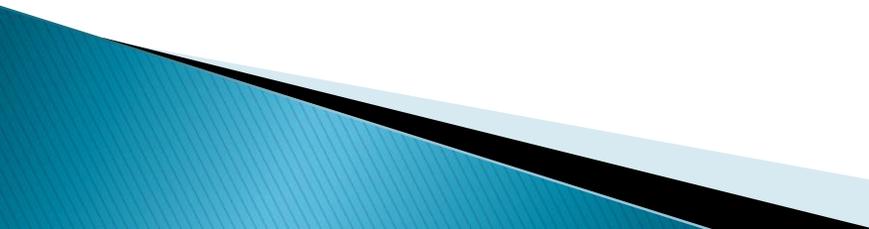
Out of these, we list the most recent:

- a. The one-day conference on the rekindling of the institution of cooperative schools, which successfully took place with the active participation of active primary and secondary education teachers in Agrinio, on 21 February 2018. The initiative for the conference was of the Primary Education Directorate, the Secondary Education Directorate and the School Counsellors' Office of Aitoloakarnania.
- b. The one-day conference, held in Giannitsa on 7 May 2018, during which – in the context of promoting pupil entrepreneurship – the pupils developed topics related with the creation of educational/school cooperatives, virtual businesses and other collective creative initiatives.
- c. The Meeting (18<sup>th</sup>), held on 28/4/2018 by the Network of Freinet Pedagogy Cooperative Schools.

# Educational/school cooperatives as schools cultivating fundamental principles and values of the cooperative movement and enhancing responsibility and democracy

- the principle of **voluntary and free participation** and the principle of **“interest in the community”**
- the acquisition of **“organisational learning”** and to practising **“knowledge management”**
- students have the opportunity, through collaborative learning, to enhance their **self-motivation skills**. An essential role to this end is played by preparation and preliminary work through collective activities (such as of the project method, for instance).
- the change of individuals in positions of responsibility and their revocability – qualities linked with the decisive participation in meetings and collective procedures and with the active role of members, depending on their capacity – are crucial for the success of such collaborative ventures. This, therefore, highlights the significance both of **democratisation** and of enhancing the **responsibility of members**, as these are important goals for each cooperative, hence educational/school cooperatives

# Educational/school cooperatives as schools of familiarisation with the social entrepreneurship and economy

- Participating in educational/school cooperatives offers stimuli for the young people who have been deprived of their future prospects
  - The familiarisation of students with alternative forms of economy that encourage collective action, like cooperatives, creates new interests
  - Participation in such educational practices that involve learners in procedures that cause “conversion of knowledge” and of creative ideas, can also cause most of the innovations
  - Pedagogical concepts stemming from the tradition of “Freinet’s pedagogy of inventiveness
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# Findings of a research on the role of collective action in cultivating students' creativity

The empirical research was carried out during the spring semester of the academic year 2013–2014 on students of all schools of the University of Patras and is a case study type

Table 1: Distribution of research participants as to whether they have participated in school projects

Project	Rate (%)
Flexible Zone	19.2
Health Education	25.5
Environmental Education	47.9
Comenius projects	6.2
Total	98.8

Table 2: Correlation of participation in a Flexible Zone project with the students' creativity and their view on its cultivation at University

Participation in Flexible Zone Project	Degree of participation in creative activities	View on the cultivation of creativity within the department they are studying	Participation in activities of the University and of their city of study	Degree of success in problem solving
Pearson Correlation	0.54	-0.57*	0.66*	0.62
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.438	0.013	0.008	0.260
N	50	58	58	45

**Table 3: Correlation of participation in a Health Education projects with the students' creativity and their view on its cultivation at the University**

Participation in Health Education Projects	Degree of participation in creative activities	View on the cultivation of creativity within the department they are studying	Participation in activities of the University and of their city of study	Degree of success in problem solving
Pearson Correlation	0.465*	-0.75	0.484*	0.485
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.171	0.00	0.12
N	75	75	78	71

**Table 4: Correlation of participation in an environmental programme with the students' creativity and their view on its cultivation at the University**

Participation in environmental education projects	Degree of participation in creative activities	View on the cultivation of creativity within the department they are studying	Participation in activities of the University and of their city of study	Degree of success in problem solving
Pearson Correlation	.594*	-.632*	.702*	.607
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.115
N	162	162	162	157

**Table 5: The contribution of projects to the cultivation of creativity**

Participation in Flexible Zone/Health Education/Environmental Projects	Degree of participation in creative activities	View on the cultivation of creativity within the department they are studying	Participation in activities of the University and of their city of study	Problem solving performance
Pearson Correlation	0.79*	-0.66*	0.62*	0.483
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.041	0.023	0.000	0.231
N	287	295	298	273

# CONCLUSIONS

- Creativity connects individuals with the community and, by extension, the society where they live and acts and operates as a vehicle leading to the formation of a culture of sustainability
  - Educational/ school cooperatives , through participation, on one hand, open up opportunities for sharing and using collective knowledge and, on the other hand, focus on the acquisition of social and structural capital
  - cultivating the potential to invent new institutions inspired by the value of the social/solidarity economy and, second, promoting alternative forms of organising and regulating social coexistence – conviviality, mainly seeking to promote collaborative creativity
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