



School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling

Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century

Edited by

JOHANNES WESTBERG

LUKAS BOSER

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macmillan

School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling

“In this remarkable volume, the editors present thirteen national case studies of the origins and outcomes of school acts that were passed during the construction of public school systems in the long nineteenth century. The chapter authors are leading scholars in the history of education who demonstrate both the distinctive process of school formation in different countries and the parallel processes and shared conceptions that shaped the process. Not only does the book allow us to understand the emergence of mass schooling in comparative context, but it also fosters an understanding that incorporates both the political and social histories of schooling.”

—David F. Labaree, *Professor Emeritus, Stanford University
School of Education, USA*

“A welcome and timely addition to our historical understanding of the interactions between school legislation and the emergence of modern school systems. Methodologically innovative in their use of new social, cultural and economic approaches, the authors of the different case studies challenge the reader to think comparatively and analytically about the acts, concepts and processes that underlay the rise of mass schooling in the West.”

—Rebecca E. Rogers, *Professor in the History of Education,
Université Paris Descartes, France*

Johannes Westberg · Lukas Boser ·
Ingrid Brühwiler
Editors

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ISBN 978-3-030-13569-0 ISBN 978-3-030-13570-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019932933

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Cover illustration: Lyons/Moloney

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Contents

- | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | The History of School Acts | 1 |
| | <i>Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser and Ingrid Brühwiler</i> | |
| 2 | “Das Schulwesen aber ist und bleibt allezeit ein politicum”: The Felbiger General School Ordinance and School Reform in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy | 17 |
| | <i>Martin Viehhauser</i> | |
| 3 | Schooling and the Administrative State: Explaining the Lack of School Acts in Nineteenth-Century Prussia | 41 |
| | <i>Marcelo Caruso and Daniel Töpfer</i> | |
| 4 | E Pluribus Unum: One Swiss School System Based on Many Cantonal School Acts | 67 |
| | <i>Lukas Boser, Michèle Hofmann and Ingrid Brühwiler</i> | |

- 5 **Education in a Nation Divided: The Contribution of School Acts to the Development of Dutch Mass Schooling in the Long Nineteenth Century** 93
Jeroen J. H. Dekker, Hilda T. A. Amsing and Inge J. M. Wichgers
- 6 **Good and Righteous People and Useful Citizens of the State: The Danish 1814 School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling in Denmark** 119
Christian Larsen
- 7 **Citizens in Their Right Place: Nation Building and Mass Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France** 145
Sébastien-Akira Alix
- 8 **School Acts and Elementary Education in Nineteenth-Century Spain** 171
Núria Mallorquí-Ruscalleda
- 9 **Basic Schools in Each and Every Parish: The School Act of 1842 and the Rise of Mass Schooling in Sweden** 195
Johannes Westberg
- 10 **A Struggling Nation Since Its Founding? Liberal Italy and the Cost of Neglecting Primary Education** 223
Gabriele Cappelli
- 11 **From the Top Down? Legislation and Public Initiative in Building a School System in Russia After the Great Reforms: 1855–1914** 253
Ben Eklof
- 12 **The Constitution of 1867, Separate Schooling, and the Roots of Division in Canadian Public Education** 277
Anthony Di Mascio

13	The Elementary Education Act of 1870: Landmark or Transition?	301
	<i>David Mitch</i>	
14	“Hidden” Governance or Counterfactual Case? The US Failure to Pass a National Education Act, 1870–1940	325
	<i>Nancy Beadie</i>	
15	School Legislation, Mass Schooling, and Historiography	349
	<i>Daniel Tröhler</i>	
	Index	373

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List of Figures

Fig. 4.1	Improved test results in Switzerland between 1886 and 1911	83
Fig. 6.1	A sketch of a model primary school 1829 (Denmark)	130
Fig. 8.1	Total number of public complete elementary primary schools by number of inhabitants in 1845–1850 (Spain)	182
Fig. 8.2	Distribution of public complete elementary primary schools in 1845–1850 (Spain)	183
Fig. 9.1	“The attack on city hall.” A portrayal of the Rabulist riots of the summer of 1838 (Sweden)	200
Fig. 9.2	The development of permanent and ambulatory schools in Sweden, 1839–1862	209
Fig. 9.3	School subjects taught from 1861 to 1863 (percentages of schoolchildren) in Sweden	212
Fig. 9.4	School subjects taught in 1865 (number of children) in Sweden	213
Fig. 10.1	The persistence of regional inequality in literacy, Italy	228
Fig. 10.2	Adult literacy rates (age 13+) across Italy’s 69 provinces in 1871	232
Fig. 10.3	Literacy rates (age six to ten) in Italy, as well as in the center-north and south of the country, 1871–1951	240
Fig. 10.4	Literacy rates (age six to ten) in 1951 (<i>x</i> axis) and PISA test scores in math, 2012 (<i>y</i> axis) in Italy	242

List of Tables

Table 8.1	Elementary primary schools in Spain, 1846–1855	180
Table 8.2	Public complete elementary primary education schools in Spain, 1845–1850	181
Table 8.3	Estimated coefficients for the regression model (Spain)	184
Table 10.1	Average years of schooling (age 15–64): Italy compared to other countries	228
Table 10.2	School-age children per school in Italy’s pre-unification states and regions	230
Table 13.1	Numbers of children in average attendance in England and Wales, 1870–1895	315
Table 13.2	Trends in numbers of teachers in England and Wales, 1860–1895	316



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The History of School Acts

Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser and Ingrid Brühwiler

School acts are fundamental to the historiography of schooling. Traditionally, they have been interpreted as milestones or veritable hallmarks in the process aimed at providing education for all. Thus, it is not surprising that, in pertinent studies on the rise of national school systems during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, school acts such as the Prussian *Generallandschulreglement* of 1763, the French Guizot law of 1833,

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_1

the Swiss so-called liberal school acts of the 1830s, the Spanish Moyano law of 1857, and the Italian Casati law of 1859 are considered pivotal to the development of educational system in their respective countries.¹

Studies on the origin, content, and effects of school acts have, however, generally been limited by national orientation, addressing an exclusively national readership.² Consequently, research results on national school acts are often published in the national language, which makes them inaccessible to the broader international audience.³ This strictly national perspective might also explain why an international overview of the school acts that were passed during the nineteenth century is still lacking.

Yet, while school acts are unquestionably integral parts of traditional school policy studies, scholars of education have largely lost interest in this kind of legislative history. Following general trends in history, historians of education—inspired by social, economic, and cultural history—have instead focused on instruction practices, gender discourses, economic determinants, or the transfer and transformation of knowledge in educational institutions. Replaced by new research agendas, the history of school acts has almost fallen into oblivion, being perceived as a topic of an outdated historiography.

However, guided by their interest in social, cultural, and economic history, some researchers have begun to rethink the actual value, the impact, and the ostensible purpose of school acts and have started to analyze them against the backdrop of their social, cultural, and economic contexts.⁴ As Michel Foucault has noted, there are many ways one can relate to a prescriptive system. Thus, besides being parts of an absolute body of law, the varying nineteenth-century school regulations were also general guidelines, declarations of intent, and sometimes even utopian dreams.⁵

By presenting new research on school acts passed in the West during the nineteenth century, we are continuing this line of research while also addressing the desideratum described above. In the chapters comprising this book, several fundamental questions will be examined, including: Why were the school acts passed, and under what social and political circumstances? What was their content? What was their impact and significance? To achieve a comprehensive comparative and

multidisciplinary analysis of school acts and the role they played in the rise of mass schooling, which is a novel contribution to the field under study, this book includes chapters dedicated to 13 national case studies focusing on the manner in which school acts were embedded in their respective cultural, social, political, and economic contexts. In addition to providing analyses of the content, organization and funding of nineteenth-century schooling through the histories of school acts, this volume thus provides an international overview of school acts unique in scope and detail.

A Multidisciplinary Conceptual Framework

Returning to the issue of school acts is not an easy task. There is always the risk of repeating, mirroring, or merely negating existing narratives. This book has therefore been written and edited with a number of considerations in mind.

First, and most importantly, this book is not an attempt to establish a new grand narrative on school acts and nineteenth-century schooling. Although we acknowledge the value of theoretical models linking schooling to state formation processes, world systems, or the global model of the nation-state, we believe that the international history of school acts is best served by adding more facts, further nuances, broader historical context, and new questions to the established historiography of education.⁶ In this respect, this edited book presents the first international analysis of school acts that provides rich insights into both their similarities and their differences. Consequently, this book is an attempt to address the classic issue of school acts by using the insights yielded by human, social, and cultural sciences research carried out in the last decades. In this respect, the analyses presented herein are truly multidisciplinary, since they are informed by recent studies in economic history, education, social history, cultural history, and sociology.

As a consequence, all authors that have contributed to this volume concur that social, economic, political, and religious factors have played varying roles in the history of schooling, and that this has to shape the analysis at hand. In some instances, the narrative of social struggles or

the formation of a nation-state will be more important, while in other cases the narrative of economic development or religious conflicts will be stressed. As will be shown in this book, nineteenth-century schooling was shaped by a wide range of historical processes. Schooling is therefore not a phenomenon that can be reduced to industrialization, social control, the dominant religion, or the process of state formation.

Second, with this book, we intend to develop an analytical framework that may place future comparative research on nineteenth-century school policy on a firm footing. A central element to such a framework is a well-conceived set of analytical concepts. Many of the concepts commonly used in historiography of education such as “school acts,” “school system,” “compulsory education,” “nation,” or “citizen” are not as well delineated as they may seem at first glance, as their meaning and implications differed from country to country and changed over time.⁷ The concepts that we use to examine the history of school acts and schooling must therefore be carefully chosen and well elaborated.

To begin with, we stress the importance of defining the above-mentioned notions of school acts and school systems, and how they are applicable to the historical cases analyzed in this book. In order to compare national school systems, the features of each historical phenomenon under investigation have to be scrutinized and described very carefully. For instance, some of the school acts discussed in the chapters that follow were not laws in the common usage of the word (i.e., laws passed by parliament), but rather law-like regulations or ordinances issued by the King or a ministry. We therefore use the term “school act” in a generic sense, to refer to all kinds of constitutions, laws, regulations, ordinances, statutes, and even draft laws that either had sustainable impact on the development of a national school system or that have been recognized to have had such an impact.

The wider international perspective enabled by this book similarly calls for a considerate use of the notion of “school system.” Generally, nineteenth-century school systems were less systematized than their present-day counterparts, as they varied greatly in form. Some of those systems could be called “organizations,” whereas others were “institutions,” to use a distinction introduced by Reiner Lersch. Lersch defines “organization” as a planned and rational process to perceive certain aims

like selections or qualifications, whereas “institutions” emanate from the social life of a community.⁸ Owing to its ambiguity, it has been our ambition to adopt a clear usage of the term “school system.”

Likewise, the comparative history of school acts indicates that we have to be considerate when using expressions such as “compulsory education” and “compulsory schooling.” As evident from the following chapters, nineteenth-century school systems were marked by several definitions of school age, as well as the number of years that children were supposed to attend school. The Italian Casati Law (1859) stipulated, for example, only two years of compulsory schooling, while the second Ferry Law (1882) mandated compulsory education for all French children between the ages of six and thirteen.

There was also no common understanding of the term “compulsory.” School acts could require all school-aged children to attend school, or could mandate compulsory education but not compulsory schooling (as the Ferry Law of 1882 did). They could also merely allow school boards to implement compulsory school attendance (as was the case with the English Education Act of 1870) or make schools compulsory for school districts to establish, but not for children to attend (which was indeed the demands of the Swedish school act of 1842). The compulsory nature of schooling also varied according to social class. In the Netherlands after the school act of 1878, for example, compulsory schooling was only a reality for the poor who had to send their children to school in return for poor relief. In addition to the wording of the legislation, the compulsory nature of schooling was also conveyed by its implementation. Attendance and absenteeism ratios reveal to what extent compulsory education was enforced, to what extent it had already been instituted, or to what extent it remained a hope or an unfulfilled expectation. The introduction of such differences into the history of school acts—which from a distanced international perspective has been perceived as the continuous enactment of (almost) identical compulsory education acts—is one of the main contributions of this book.

The history of the rise of mass schooling in the “Western” world of the nineteenth century is interwoven with state formation processes, or, in some cases, with nation-building processes. It is therefore

unavoidable that some of the analyses presented in this book extend to the concepts of “state,” “nation,” “nation-state,” and “citizen.” Since the case studies examined in the subsequent chapters cover a broad variety of states, we have to be precise about the concepts used to label the political entities being analyzed. As it turns out, the notions of “nation” and “nation state” might be the most difficult concepts to deal with. Fortunately, there is a vast, and still ongoing, debate on that topic upon which we can draw, ranging from Ernest Renan’s question “What is a nation?” to Benedict Anderson’s “Imagined Communities,” and Oliver Zimmer’s “Contested Nation,” to name but a few.⁹ We are aware of the difficult nature of those notions, which is why we asked the authors to apply them with the necessary caution. Similar consideration should be given when using the term “citizen.” Following Daniel Tröhler, we finally reconciled the difficulties inextricably linked with these complex notions by understanding them as floating signifiers which can have changing meanings in different contexts. To give but one example, a German *Bürger* is not necessarily the same as a French *citoyen*, or an American *citizen*.¹⁰ Yet, if we take these differences into account, we can certainly describe and compare how the citizen was shaped through schooling in all those countries.

National and International Perspectives

Although this book’s focus is on school acts and the development of mass schooling in specific national and regional contexts, its aim is certainly not to celebrate national exceptionalism or to retrieve new national master narratives. Instead, we have encouraged the contributing authors to examine national idiosyncrasies and to highlight certain aspects of the school acts because those idiosyncrasies can tell us how school systems developed under specific historical circumstances. To indicate this, we have encouraged the authors not only to use the English terms that may veil national differences, but to also note the terms in national languages for denoting primary schools. Merely the wealth of such terms (including *common school*, *almueskole*, *Lagere*

School, *scuole primarie*, and *Volksschule*) implies a range of differences that should be included in the analysis.

Furthermore, such national idiosyncrasies can serve as starting points for international comparisons and a more nuanced analysis of the history of schooling in general. Although the difficulties in drafting school acts—due to linguistic, religious, or other conflicts—may be perceived as the result of a historically unique national setting, this volume shows that nineteenth-century educationalists in different countries faced similar challenges. The chapters on Switzerland, Canada, and the Netherlands are good examples of this feature of the nineteenth-century school acts.

In order to facilitate such international and transnational research on the history of schooling, we also encouraged the authors to consider international convergence or entanglement. To do so, we asked them to look for transnational exchanges, such as the transfer of knowledge, borrowing, diffusion, and lending of ideas, whenever possible. The case studies presented in our book reveal that ideas and schemes traveled between countries, and that school systems in various ways influenced each other. The role of the Prussian school system in the development of schooling in England and Sweden and the impact of the Silesian abbot Johann Ignaz von Felbiger on schools in Russia, Switzerland, and the school system of the Habsburg Monarchy are merely two examples highlighted in this book. Therefore, if they are applied in a meaningful way, concepts such as the transfer, lending, and borrowing of knowledge not only help us to understand the historical developments in a single country, but also allow us to reveal the entanglements in the history of schooling in the Western world.

Nation and state formation are, nevertheless, vital topics and have therefore been dedicated sufficient attention in this book. We are, however, well aware of the top-down model that is usually revoked when discussing the rise of mass schooling. As Raymond Grew and Patrick Harrigan once remarked, a school system, like a national anthem or a constitution, “appears to be the direct expression of a national state, which prodded local governments, passed laws, and spent money making education available to all.”¹¹ Despite addressing the theme of school

acts, however, this book does not primarily focus on state intervention. Instead, the chapters of this book clearly show that social, economic, political, and religious factors have had varying impact on the national histories of schooling, and that the state, the local community, and parents have all played important roles in the expansion of schooling.

In sum, this book is not about state intervention, good or bad governance, and it is certainly not about best practice, a concept that has proliferated across the educational policy research in recent years. Instead, by placing school acts in their social, economic, and political context, and by examining the various ways those acts were connected to local, regional, and sometimes even national practices and conceptions of schooling, this book aims to augment the reader's understanding of school history perceived through the complexity, temporality, and contextuality of past events. In other words, the aim of this book is elevating the research on nineteenth-century school acts to the standards of twenty-first-century historiography. This, we believe, is required in order to provide a solid foundation for future comparative analyses.

The School Acts of the "West"

The format of an edited book imposes limitation on the number of chapters, thus mandating careful selection of the case studies. In order to obtain a well-balanced picture of nineteenth-century school acts, we included in this selection not only politically, culturally, and economically eminent nineteenth-century European nation-states, such as England, France, and Germany, but we have also deliberately selected countries that have received less attention in an international context so far.

The inclusion of a variety of case studies allows us to represent a wide range of historical expertise with regard to school acts. The countries discussed in this volume are all located in the northern hemisphere, and they all belong to the so-called Western World, including Russia which, at least for its European part, may be seen as a Western country. The selection of countries spans from west (the USA and Canada) to east (Russia) and from north (Sweden and Denmark) to south (Italy and Spain), including Prussia, the Netherlands, the Habsburg monarchy,

France, Switzerland, and England. In this book, the analyses of these countries' school acts have been presented chronologically, from the Austrian Felbiger school act of 1774 to the Elementary School Act 1870 for England and Wales.

All the countries examined in this book were, or became, sovereign states in the nineteenth century.¹² We have included countries of different sizes, economic structures, financial capacities, and denominational affiliations. We have chosen to analyze countries with a long-standing tradition of (public) school development, as well as those with no such tradition. We discuss cases when school acts had major impacts on school development, when school acts remained rhetorical, and when national school acts were not possible to issue. Finally, we have included monolingual and multilingual countries,¹³ religiously homogeneous and religiously heterogeneous countries, and countries with varying governments, including monarchies, democracies, empires, and nation-states, as well as countries that were subject to changing political systems. Although limited, our selection of case studies thus allows for investigations into school acts in a variety of historical contexts.

To focus on a limited number of countries nevertheless implies certain omissions. It would have been interesting to cover, for example, the colonial experience of nineteenth-century school acts in countries such as Ireland or India, or the post-colonial history of South American countries such as Brazil or Chile. In the latter case, the constitution of 1833, declaring the state's responsibility for public education, and the law of 1842, which established a public education system, would be of particular interest.¹⁴ It would also have been useful to discuss the history of school acts that were passed in tumultuous political situations. These include the school act of 1808 on the organization of elementary schools in towns and villages in the Duchy of Warsaw (created by the Tilsit treaties of 1807), and the regulations for general education (1869) in the late Ottoman Empire that, as a part of a major political and administrative reform movement, mandated that primary schools be established in all villages and towns.¹⁵ Similarly, the remarkable histories of school acts in the Baltic states—informed by Swedish, German, and Russian school systems—certainly deserve to be examined in a wider international context.¹⁶

Not being able to cover all these historical cases is regrettable. In particular, the history of school acts and schooling in the colonial world deserves a comprehensive analysis. However, since the complexity of the colonial experience is well known, this book could not have covered the emergence of colonial and post-colonial school systems and their relation to the colonizing powers in Europe in sufficient depth.¹⁷ What is gained by focusing on the part of the world referred to as “the West,” however, is a clearer and more encompassing analysis of the varying historical experiences that can be found among those countries. As evident from this book, these experiences were far from uniform.

Coherence and Research Questions

The quality of an edited book like this one depends mainly on its coherence. To meet this objective, we have encouraged the authors to relate their analyses to the following main topics.

First, we asked the authors to address the historical background of the school act(s) under investigation. This background may, for example, include a short overview of preexisting school structures, along with the social, economic, political, and religious background of the school act and the reasons for its passing. In this respect, we have encouraged the authors to discuss what problems the school acts were supposed to solve or what new situations they were supposed to create (such as to create a national identity, a sense of belonging to a state, or a sense of morality).

Second, we have encouraged the contributing authors to address the content of the school act in terms of organization and funding of the school system and the content of the instruction intended to be carried out at schools. This may include issues such as social origin and the ages of the children that the school act applied to; the degree to which the school acts made schooling compulsory for children; the school subjects the school acts promoted; the overall purpose of instruction; the administrative and financial role of school districts (communes, municipalities, townships) in the school system and its level of decentralization/

centralization; the requirements imposed on teachers' training; and the structure of teachers' salaries.

Finally, we have asked the authors to address the consequences and outcomes of the school acts. Such a discussion might focus on measurable factors, including changes in school enrollment, absenteeism, literacy rates, days and hours spent in school, and money spent on education. Similarly, the authors may focus on contemporary perceptions of the school acts' impact. In this respect, we have invited them to discuss the kind of human beings that the school acts were intended to create, such as responsible national or local citizens, obedient subjects, devout Christians, or any other desired aspect.

Although these guidelines have encouraged dense examinations of school acts in their complex historical context, they nevertheless imply that some aspects of this history have been given less attention. For example, the gendered dimension of primary schooling certainly requires a further and a more systematic analysis. Even though the gendering of secondary education and the feminization of teaching are well-known phenomena, primary schooling nevertheless requires further attention in this respect. Similarly, the joint history of school acts and minorities in nineteenth-century schooling deserves more attention. This includes, for example, the education of Sami people in Sweden, Polish speakers in German-speaking areas, and Muslims in Russia.¹⁸ Further studies of the borderlands are also required, including eastern Latvia, Schleswig-Holstein, and Alsace-Lorraine.

Acknowledgements First, we would like to thank the authors of this book. This volume would never have been compiled without your expertise, enthusiasm for the topic, and your willingness to spend considerable time and energy on writing, revising, and editing your texts. We also wish to thank Daniel Tröhler for his insightful comments, and his thorough yet always constructive criticism. For financing and hosting a workshop in October 2017, where we had the chance to discuss the book chapters for the first time, we thank the *Sven och Dagmar Saléns Stiftelse*, the Swedish Research Council, and the Department of Education at Uppsala University. This workshop marked a major step in the process of writing this book. It gave us the opportunity not only to discuss the structure and the content of each

chapter, but also to learn more about some general problems and obstacles we had to overcome to produce a coherent and insightful volume. This discussion was continued during a double session at the ESSHC 2018 in Belfast, where additional steps toward the publication of this book were taken. The process of finalizing the manuscript was supported by subsidies from the University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland, and funds from Örebro University, Sweden. We would like to thank those institutions for their support. Finally, we wish to thank our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, Eleanor Christie and Rebecca Wyde. Working with them has been a wonderful experience. From the beginning to the end of this project, we benefitted tremendously from their support.

Notes

1. See, for example, Green, *Education and State Formation*; Criblez, Jenzer, Hofstetter and Magnin, *Schule*; Beltrán Tapia, “Enclosing Literacy?”
2. See, for example, Clay, Lingwall, and Stephens, “Schooling Laws”; Skinningsrud and Skjelmo, “Fra dansk provins til konstitusjonell stat.”
3. See, for example, Petterson, “1842, 1822 eller 1882?”; Diebolt, Jaoul, and San Martino, “Le Mythe De Ferry: Une Analyse Cliométrique”; Skinningsrud and Skjelmo, “Fra dansk provins til konstitusjonell stat: Arbeidet for en norsk skolelovgivning 1814 til 1827”; Westberg, “En politisk illusion?”
4. See, for example, Soysal and Strang, “Construction of the First Mass Education Systems”; Petterson, “1842, 1822 eller 1882?”; Diebolt, Jaoul, and San Martino, “Le Mythe De Ferry”; Clay, Lingwall, and Stephens, “Do Schooling Laws Matter?”; Cappelli, “Escaping from a Human Capital Trap?”; Lindert, *Growing Public*.
5. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, ch. 3.
6. For an introduction to these theoretical perspectives, see, e.g., Green, *Education and State Formation*; Caruso, “World Systems, World Society, World Polity.”
7. See, e.g., Tröhler, Popkewitz, and Labaree, *Schooling and the Making of Citizens*.
8. Lersch, “Schule als Sozialsystem.” See also Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*.

9. See also Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales*; Stukenbrock, *Sprachnationalismus*.
10. Tröhler, "Curriculum history," 285. See also Tröhler, "Curriculum history in Europe". Tröhler, "Internationale Provokationen."
11. Grew and Harrigan, *School, State, and Society*, 3.
12. With the exception of England, which was formally part of Great Britain.
13. In the nineteenth century, however, many of the so-called monolingual nations, such as France or Germany, were in reality multilingual.
14. Freeburger and Hauch, *Education in Chile*, 3.
15. See Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity*, 63–64; Winiarx, "Education in Poland," 115.
16. Kruze et al., *History of Education and Pedagogical Thought in the Baltic Countries up to 1940*.
17. Benavot and Riddle, "The Expansion of Primary Education," 202–3.
18. See, e.g., Elenius, "A Place in the Memory of Nation"; Dowler, *Classroom and Empire*.

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2

“Das Schulwesen aber ist und bleibt allezeit ein politicum”: The Felbiger General School Ordinance and School Reform in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy

Martin Viehhauser

On December 6, 1774, Austrian Empress Maria Theresa signed a school act that made elementary schooling compulsory for all children from age six to twelve in the hereditary lands of the Habsburg Empire. The school act, consisting of 24 paragraphs, became known as *Allgemeine Schulordnung* (General School Ordinance) and was mainly formulated by Johann Ignaz Felbiger (1724–1788), a Catholic abbot from Silesia, a region of mixed Catholic and Protestant creeds that was conquered by Prussia in the mid-eighteenth century.¹ The ordinance’s core concern was first and foremost the literacy of the people. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and, of course, religious education were among the main subjects to be taught, with additional subjects for city schools. However, at the same time—and when observed within the contemporary historical context—the school act was a tool to integrate the diverse dominions of the empire into one political sphere. From the perspective of state-building, which in this chapter will be the main framework for my interpretation of the ordinance, the school act helped to limit

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the political influence of the Catholic Church and to install a political system via the institutionalization of public elementary schooling.

The edict *Allgemeine Schulordnung* was issued toward the end of Maria Theresa's regency (she died in 1780), which was an era of transformation of the Habsburg Empire from *ancient régime* politics to a bureaucratized absolutist government.² Much of the reformatory attempts, including educational reforms, were experiments that followed more or less established models from inside or outside the monarchy. Maria Theresa herself emphatically promoted this process of experimentation, and after her death, her successor and son, Joseph II, pushed forward even more decisively—and often recklessly—his own enlightened agenda. After Joseph's death in 1790, the short two-year regency of his brother Leopold II followed the same values of an enlightened politics. During his tenure as the Duke of Tuscany, Leopold had also sympathized with the idea of a constitutional monarchy—yet back in Vienna, he did not have the time or energy to implement his often-radical ideas.

The transitional period between the *ancient régime* and a modernized monarchy would later be termed Josephinism, which describes a culture of political thought within the general process of state-building that enabled laws, including the law on compulsory schooling. This chapter focuses on the 1774 School Ordinance as a centerpiece of this transformation toward a machinelike state that should work in a uniform way all over the Austrian empire—a *Neues Systema*, as Maria Theresa's minister for governmental reforms, Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz, intended it.³ The need for reform was indisputable. The crisis of the military services, which became evident during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), revealed the structural deficits of the widespread, multiethnic, religiously and linguistically diverse, and geographically partly disconnected Habsburg Empire—an empire that stretched from Transylvania in the east to the Habsburg Netherlands in the west, from Tuscany (present-day Italy) in the south to Bohemia, Galicia, and Lodomeria (present-day Poland/Ukraine) in the north.⁴ Within this conglomerate of territories, the hereditary Austrian estates of the Habsburgs were comparatively small. "Austria" (*Österreich*) was

the name for the geographical region that today roughly encompasses Upper and Lower Austria, with Vienna at its center.⁵

The harmonization of institutional structures and bureaucratic procedures became one of the Habsburgs key concerns after the existential threat of the war. Such efforts were, however, made not only for military reasons but also because institutional practices, legal conceptions, and statuses varied throughout the empire and hindered efficient government. With respect to public elementary education, the uniformity to which the empire aspired, however, did not mean uniformity of language: Elementary instruction was given in vernacular languages, and textbooks were translated into the languages spoken within the monarchy. Instead, the government strived after uniformity in the administration of the school system as well as in pedagogical content and methods.

Another important function of compulsory schooling was to integrate the different parts of the empire into a coherent political sphere. Schooling meant that the political center of the empire established a new channel of communication to its subjects. Compulsory education also directly exposed every subject to the power of the state. Through daily school experiences, the state became "real" for its inhabitants. Schools, like other governmental agencies including post offices, communal magistracies, and local military bases, were thus among the main representatives of an otherwise largely abstract state.⁶

In addition to the experience of war, the state-building process of the Habsburg Monarchy was also dependent on a specific legal prerequisite. As a woman, Maria Theresa could take over the throne only because of the so-called Pragmatic Sanction, a house law issued by her father, Charles VI, in 1713. The Pragmatic Sanction functioned as a constitutional law because it bound the different lands to Habsburg rule, fixed their affiliation to the crown and defined the outline of a political entity ruled by the Habsburg Monarchy.⁷ The Sanction's main objective, however, was to define the legal order of succession to the throne within the Habsburg family and to enable female succession in case of lack of a male heir. Consequently, the Sanction institutionalized the emperor (or the female ruler) as the legal head of the territorial conglomerate, which received its name almost one hundred years later

when Francis II/I declared the Empire of Austria (*Kaisertum Österreich*) in 1804.⁸ The Pragmatic Sanction linked the name “Austria,” the name for the Habsburg’s geographical heartlands, to the monarchy, and the Habsburg dynasty became known as the *Monarchia Austriaca*, the “House of Austria.”

The new quasi-constitutional framework also initiated a slow transition from ruling based upon succession to ruling based upon the power of public government.⁹ By linking the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy to the dynasty, the political entity of the monarchy simultaneously became self-contained and independent. The installation of a modern bureaucratic order marked the transition from *ancient régime* to a state of enlightenment that had the *bonum commune* at the core of its rationale—of course, only within the framework of an absolutist government.¹⁰ Against this backdrop, rather than speaking of the building of an Austrian “nation,” this chapter addresses the question of statehood and the provisions made by defining schooling as mandatory in order to integrate the state’s population.

Reformatory Attempts Prior to 1774

In Maria Theresa’s regency (1740–1780), education became emphatically a matter of political concern, a *politicum*, and thus a secular matter for all time, as the empress famously explained in a decree in 1770.¹¹ The historical context of the Maria Theresian school reforms was complex. As a ruler, Maria Theresa clung far more to the traditional logic of dynastical order and its ceremonious social world at court than to a political agenda of the enlightenment, which marked her attempts to reform education.¹² She continued to perceive the inhabitants of her territories as subjects and not as free citizens, a view that the school act’s provisions consequently promoted. However, the institutionalization of a legally regulated and accountable public school system conditioned the understanding of a public sphere emancipated from the non-transparent principles of imperial dignity and the courtly politics of favor with mutual personal gratitude—elements of a world that Maria Theresa embodied throughout her lifetime. Although she was a woman

of strong Catholic faith, Maria Theresa often entrusted counselors from regions influenced by Protestantism to design institutional reforms, including those of the educational sector. The attempts at social and educational reform of the era should be understood against the background of this sometimes-confusing context.

As explained in the historian James Van Horn Melton's lucid analysis, Maria Theresian institutional reforms basically dealt with the more general problem of controlling a growing population.¹³ Yet, the reforms were triggered by concrete challenges that threatened the dynastical order and even the survival of the monarchy in the 1740s. After her father Charles VI died, the 23-year-old Maria Theresa not only inherited a highly indebted empire but also succeeded to the throne as a woman, to whom European powers immediately declared war—the so-called War of the Austrian Succession. The level of loyalty and vigor among the army, partly a consequence of underfunding, turned out to be low; the empire was vulnerable on every corner, and the loyalty of the nobility to the monarchy was fractured. In the wake of experiencing this existential crisis, Maria Theresa soon *had* to embark on a reform agenda.¹⁴

The initial phase of Maria Theresian institutional modernization started with the appointment of Haugwitz, who elaborated a plan to reform the monarchy's financial system according to a cameralist conception of bureaucratic efficiency. Haugwitz called this model *Neues Systema*, and it was based on a structural change from revenues by quasi-voluntary contribution to an impersonal, much more efficient and accountable mechanism of tax income. According to Haugwitz, "a well-arranged financial administration is the soul of the state."¹⁵ The new system also sought to centralize the power of control of the army and of public administration, transforming the gentry from feudal rulers to subjects of the supreme monarch.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, these reforms suffered from considerable acceptance problems. However, despite inevitable fallbacks and subversive resistance on the local level, these first attempts at institutional reforms set off a dynamic of making the empire more efficient and—maybe even more importantly—centralized. The reforms established a centralized bureaucratic structure, outlined government-run districts for

local public administration, and founded, in 1749, the institution *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus* on top of the administrative hierarchy, which absorbed the competencies of former local chancelleries.¹⁷ This step of building a coherent state was followed by other actions; for instance, the establishment of an official archive in the same year, the *Haus- und Staatsarchiv* that documented the public and monarchic affairs and helped to construct the state's historical narrative. The imperial order to map the territories in the 1770s added to the centralizing attempts to transform the territories into governable and easily taxable structures. Additionally, thorough population censuses provided lists and information about the population and especially about men eligible for military service.¹⁸

The preoccupation with surveys and overviews, abstract numbers, and charts of the territories shaped a conceptual scheme of what a "state" was, and it also set educational reforms rolling, which initially gained momentum in provinces such as Tyrol and Styria. In 1751, for example, a survey in Styria reported on the condition of basic education.¹⁹ Each province executive had to make specifications on the conditions of the school system in cities, market towns, and villages, with remarks on whether *Winkelschulen* had been established.²⁰ This latter information was of particular interest for the state administration because *Winkelschulen*, often located in remote regions, operated without official permissions and therefore were alleged to be places where crypto-protestant education could take root. The reports also included suggestions on how to improve the school system. These and later reports documented problems local schools had to struggle with, such as underfunding, a lack of interest in schooling from local authorities, and irregular rates of school attendance.

The Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763 seemed to lessen enthusiasm for reforming the school system, as the lack of military vigor once again absorbed political attention.²¹ However, the intention to centralize the government of the empire had already emerged during wartime in the foundation of a government agency called *Studienhofkommission* in 1760, responsible for planning and administering secondary schools (so-called *Lateinschulen* or *Gymnasien*) as well as higher education at the universities.²² A couple of years after the war, in 1770, Maria Theresa

now decisively addressed the matter of schooling for the whole population and founded a commission entrusted with elementary schooling (called *deutsche Schulen*—later called *Volksschulen*—since the language of instruction was German, in contrast to the Latin Schools). This crucial commission was responsible for Upper and Lower Austria (the region surrounding the city of Vienna) and was called the Lower-Austrian School Commission (*Niederösterreichische Schulkommission*).²³

Who were the people for whom elementary schooling was intended? As previously mentioned, Maria Theresa embodied traditional forms of courtly politics. She saw herself as the general and first mother of the people.²⁴ However, she very rarely and only in formalized contexts came into contact with the inhabitants of her lands; too many hierarchical levels separated her from her subjects. Those subjects, however, were synonymous with the peasants, the workers, and other representatives of the lower classes.²⁵ Peasants and other workers in the agricultural sector were the majority of the empire's population—approximately 80% made their living on the basis of agriculture in unfree conditions, dependent on manorial lords, supplying compulsory labor, and bound to their lords' favors.²⁶ The peasant's compulsory service for the lords (called *Robot*) was, however, identified as one of the problems for the state by Maria Theresa and her counselors, just like the system of lordship—lords being the rulers of their estates—in general.²⁷ The more unfree the subjects were—that was the insight—the less they could contribute to the state's prosperity with labor productivity, with taxes and contributions, and with healthy soldiers.²⁸

The population grew during the second half of the eighteenth century, and new, more managerial approaches in agriculture and the economy were required. New policies also supported the establishment of proto-industrialist manufacturers, some of which produced textile goods. These manufacturers became an important branch of industry offering employment opportunities and income, especially to families of lower classes, including women and children.²⁹ The increasing impact of the rule of law over public order and the growing efficiency of bureaucracy promoted mercantilist positions in economic policy, which eventually led to the suppression of internal tariffs and to the creation of a customs union.³⁰ In addition to affecting economic development,

all these developments contributed to the creation of a public sphere, in which the General School Ordinance could originate in 1774.

The Enlightenment was also an important condition for this school act. Although Maria Theresa herself did not promote a pronouncedly enlightened agenda—she even perceived the French Enlightenment as a dangerous fashion—she nevertheless saw potential rather than risk in a literate population.³¹ In addition to political and economic reasons, the potential for moral improvement through education fueled her enthusiasm for educational reform. Maria Theresa saw public schooling as a way to improve discipline and morality, especially in the growing population of the lower classes. Being a woman of strong Catholic faith, she also believed in the power of education to strengthen religious formation and distanced herself from the opinion—sometimes held by her clerical counselors—that education led to emancipation from religion. Instead, she believed in the enhancement of the peasant's industriousness and the state's economic well-being, and ultimately in the potential to increase the state's general felicitousness through education.

Felbiger and the General School Ordinance

The reformatory attempts under Maria Theresa's regency set off the dynamic of an increasingly secular, impersonal, and centralized bureaucratic administration of Habsburg territories, thus producing an ever-growing flood of papers, memoranda, and reports.³² The governmental reforms under the lead of Haugwitz and later of Prince Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, chancellor of state, delivered some of the mosaics for this transitional phase, while the reform of elementary education, firmly addressed in the 1770s, accounted for others. The crucial phase of remodeling the school system began with a memorandum for the empress on the condition of elementary schooling, written by Leopold Ernst Firmian, Prince-Bishop of Passau, which proposed to engage secular powers in the matter of schooling. The Lower-Austrian School Commission was thereafter entrusted with developing an applicable reform plan.

Backed by this entrustment, the pedagogue and member of the Lower-Austrian School Commission Joseph Messmer, who himself had written a memorandum on the improvement of the German schools, planned a *Normalschule*. This model institution was founded in 1771 in Vienna, directed by Messmer himself and initially funded by the governmental budget. In subsequent years, the Lower-Austrian School Commission became the main hub for educational reforms, at a time when many of the plans for educational reform were abandoned. The dissolution of the Jesuit Order in 1773 by Pope Clemens IV suddenly changed the situation, opening new opportunities and stimulating action.

The Jesuits and their Society of Jesus had traditionally been a major player in the educational sector—especially in higher education—and their school system had been an important Catholic bulwark during the period of counterreformation. However, the Society eventually lost credit because of political intrigue, fraud, and conspiracy, which led to the annulation of the order. Maria Theresa—being a woman of strict faith—lamented the decision but reacted in a pragmatic fashion, typical of her decision making: “one has to make the best out of it for our holy religion and the state.”³³ Van Horn Melton marks the dissolution of the Jesuits as “a monumental event in the history of Austrian schooling.”³⁴ The vacuum in education that it caused opened a window of opportunity for transforming the school from a matter of *ecclesiasticum* to a matter of *politicum*. The Jesuits’ significant wealth and property, which the monarchy (not the Catholic Church) took over, additionally helped finance this transition of educational matters.

As a reaction to the abolition of the Society of Jesus, Maria Theresa entrusted the *Studienhofkommission* with developing a plan for general educational reform. A prominent member of the commission, Professor Karl Anton von Martini, took the chance of promoting an enlightened agenda. The commission suggested appointing Silesian abbot Johann Ignaz Felbiger, widely known for his methods and system reforms, to develop and implement a new order in elementary education following the overarching principle of uniformity in pedagogical practice throughout the *Monarchia Austriaca* and specifically the German-speaking hereditary lands of the Habsburgs.

Once he arrived in Vienna, Felbiger began to work out a general outline for the elementary school system. After a short time, he presented in 1774 the school act *General School Ordinance for German Normal, Major and Minor Schools in all Imperial and Royal Hereditary Lands* (*Allgemeine Schulordnung für die deutschen Normal-, Haupt- und Trivialschulen in sämtlichen Kaiserl. Königl. Erbländern*). The edict defined the legal basis for compulsory elementary schooling for children of both sexes between the ages of six and twelve, as it recognized “the education of youth of both sexes as the most important basis for the true happiness of nations.”³⁵

With Felbiger as its author, the General School Ordinance was written by a Catholic Augustinian abbot from Zagan, Silesia (today a small city in Poland near Görlitz, Germany). His abbey was located in a religiously diverse region populated by people of Lutheran and Catholic faith, and he had hence delivered schooling in a context of competition with often-innovative Protestant education by Lutheran schools. Against the backdrop of the disastrous state of Catholic schools in Zagan, Felbiger had developed an interest in pedagogy as an important element of strengthening Catholicism.³⁶ He had read educational literature and had been inspired by exemplary schools, especially the *Realschule* in Berlin, founded by Johann Julius Hecker, a former student at Francke’s famous pietistic educational institution in Halle.³⁷

Inspired by German educational literature and Prussian examples, Felbiger wrote a program of regulations for Silesia’s educational system in 1764. This so-called *General-Land-Schul-Reglement* defined fundamentals for teacher training, school attendance, and school inspection, among other features of schooling in Silesia. He thereafter used his 1764 school program as a model when he drafted the Austrian school act of 1774.³⁸ As historian Helmut Engelbrecht notes, after 1774, the new order of schooling in Catholic Austria was consequently based on protestant ideas coming from Prussia.³⁹ This may seem more surprising than it actually was. Some of Felbiger’s new pedagogical methods—such as instruction in groups—were already practiced in some parts of the monarchy, and his ideas soon traveled not only to Bavaria and other German areas but also to Russia and the orthodox areas of Serbia.⁴⁰ In this respect, Felbiger is an excellent example of the circulation of pedagogical ideas in nineteenth-century Europe.

The General School Ordinance of 1774

The General School Ordinance of 1774 was composed of 24 paragraphs that organized the hierarchical structure of the new school system.⁴¹ As the title of the act indicated, it founded three different types of German schools on three different hierarchical levels: (1) the normal school (*Normalschule*), a model institution setting the norms for the other schools within a province and the place for teacher training—the school act determined that teachers had to be instructed and certified at a normal school to be employed⁴²; (2) the major school (*Hauptschule*) as the school form for bigger communities and cities; and (3) the minor school (*Trivialschule*) to be situated in market towns and every other place, wherever a parish was located.

The School Ordinance placed the inspection and administration of the schools in the hands of a school commission responsible for a province. The Lower-Austrian School Commission had already existed since 1770, and other commissions were to be founded later. The provincial administration appointed members of a school commission, normally two or three magistrates, a clerical delegate, and the director of the normal school, which should be established in every place in which a school commission was located. In 1777, Felbiger himself took up the post of a supreme director surveying the local school commission. When he resigned in 1781, these provincial agencies on elementary schooling were incorporated into the *Studienhofkommission*.

Further central aspects of Felbiger's 1774 School Ordinance concerned the contents of schooling. Paragraph 3 defined that all schools had to follow one common way of teaching (*Lehrart*) and a common set of subjects (*Lehrgegenstände*). Paragraph 5 lists the subjects according to school form. The subjects were classified into four sections: (1) religion; (2) reading, writing, and arithmetic; (3) vocational and academic preparation (depending on the school's location); and (4) teacher training. A normal school had to teach the subjects in all four sections, while a major school had to deliver vocational and academic preparation (as the educational path could lead both to a *Gymnasium* and to vocational careers as merchants or craftsmen, for example) in addition to religion,

reading, writing, and arithmetic. The subjects of vocational or academic preparation included German composition, basic Latin, cultural and natural history, and geography. The *Trivialschule* (minor school) had only to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and of course religion, which enjoyed special emphasis. In addition, other subjects that aimed at economic efficiency and moral integrity were also included in the minor schools.

With respect to the common way of teaching, a book on methods and on the pedagogical principles of teaching complemented the School Ordinance. Felbiger considered pedagogical methodology to be the most important element of school reform, and he thus published in 1775 his doctrine on methods of proper instruction in a separate book, the *Book of Methods for Teachers of German Schools* (*Methodenbuch für Lehrer der deutschen Schulen*). This book was published by the in-house printing press of the Lower-Austrian School Commission, and it was translated into all major languages of the monarchy.

In Zagan, Felbiger had already written methodological observations and textbooks in which he promoted the central innovation of his pedagogy, the method of teaching all children simultaneously in a class, especially at the level of elementary schooling. Felbiger called this new method “instruction altogether” (*Zusammenunterrichten*), which consequently created classes of homogenous achievement groups. In accordance with the contemporary Baroque conceptualization of the state, which was idealistically imagined as a well-functioning machine,⁴³ Felbiger created his own pedagogical methods according to the principles of mechanics: “Every pupil of a class must see, think, hear, and do one thing.”⁴⁴

The *Book of Methods* treated pedagogical work in schools as a structured practice. It transmitted the idea of pedagogy as a matter of insight and inner beliefs aiming at the pupil’s conduct (e.g., obedience), while measures such as punishment were nevertheless used for achieving educational objectives. The book was composed of three main parts: the first dealing with pedagogical methodology in general, the second delivering observations on teacher training and instructions for inspectors, and the third presenting ordinances including the 1774 School Ordinance and other regulations.

In addition to the focal method of class instruction, the *Book of Methods* conceived the “method of letters” (*Buchstabenmethode*) as a second new method. According to that method, the teacher wrote the first letter of a word or sentence on the chalkboard while he pronounced the word or sentence that he wanted pupils to memorize. The teacher thus fostered—at least theoretically—the concentration and the senses of a pupil. A third method proposed by Felbiger was the “method of tables” (*Tabellenmethode*). A teacher had to classify a topic by a logical system that connected single parts to the whole. The teacher thus had to use the chalkboard to make relations within a topic easily conceivable to pupils on the basis of sensual perception. The fourth method promoted by Felbiger was called “catechizing” (*Katechisieren*). The teacher had to ask consecutive questions in order to control the pupil’s understanding of the topic. The previous methods all aimed at memorizing, while this fourth method focused on understanding.

In terms of financing, the third paragraph of the 1774 School Ordinance mandated a decentralized funding scheme for the local minor schools, where the local communities (municipality or lordship) were to bear the costs for local minor schools. This school type was considered to benefit the local community foremost, whereas major and normal schools had an impact extending beyond the specific location and therefore were to be financed by a special school fund managed by the provincial school commissions.⁴⁵ The local communities bore the principal responsibility for school funding, but resources from the school fund could also be tapped to help with exceptional and temporary financing of local minor schools. Funding on this level included infrastructure as well. Communities had to deliver venues—schoolhouses or other buildings apt for schooling—that would serve only the purpose of schooling and no other activity.⁴⁶ Paragraph 4 of the school act assigned one schoolroom to a teacher and defined standards for the provision of light and furnishings. Teachers were forbidden to use their apartments as schoolrooms.

Financial matters, of course, turned out to be a major challenge of implementing the School Ordinance. Although the provincial school commissions launched school funds with diverse and often creative sources of income, such as contributions by the lordship, provincial

capitals, and taxes on masquerade balls, the amount of income was—with local variations—rather low.⁴⁷ A significant source of income was the confiscated property of the Jesuits, either in terms of infrastructure (normal schools, for instance, were usually operated in former Jesuit school buildings) or in terms of capital and interest earnings. The three main sources of revenues of the Habsburg school funds (of all lands except the Kingdom of Hungary) in 1781 were ex-Jesuit funds (approximately 30%), interest on capital (approximately 16%), and taxes on masquerade balls (approximately 12%).⁴⁸ Another significant source of income was profits from the selling of textbooks published by normal schools (approximately 7%).

Families were obliged to contribute to the operation of schools through school fees, given weekly to the teacher, but poor households were exempt from these fees and also received textbooks for free.⁴⁹ Other resources to pay the minor-school teachers' salaries were rarely available, and their income depended largely on school fees. Many teachers had to earn their living with secondary employment, such as the office of sacristans.⁵⁰ A year's salary of a minor-school teacher was—depending on region, perks, and school type—between 150 and 300 florins, while the director of a *Normalschule* earned approximately 500 florins, the director of a *Hauptschule* 400 florins, and Felbiger himself obtained 6000 florins as supreme director, which was a rather high salary for a president of a courtly agency. These salaries may be compared with a chaplain's salary of between 300 and 400 florins and the 150 florins of unskilled laborers and servants.⁵¹

This presentation of decentralized school funding following the School Ordinance indicates that funding was often a matter of improvisation. It appears as an antinomy that the ordinance promoted a centralized school system with *uniformity* as a top priority but that school funding was handed to provincial and local offices.⁵²

Significant parts of the 1774 School Ordinance regulated temporal aspects of the school year and teaching time. These aspects—critical for the acceptance of school reform in every pre-modern agricultural society with children's work as a central pillar of economic survival—were oriented toward the seasonal cycle of farming. In the countryside, the school year was split into two terms, summer school and winter school.

In the winter term, from December 1 until the end of March, lessons were to be taught from 8 to 11 a.m.; in the summer term, from the first Sunday after Easter until Michaelmas Day (end of September), from 7 to 11 a.m.; and in both semesters from 2 to 4 p.m.. However, only in rare cases did children attend school frequently throughout the school year. Especially in Alpine regions, three-fourths of the minor schools operated only in the winter term. Engelbrecht indicates that most pupils received schooling only during three to four months of the year.⁵³

According to the School Ordinance, education was compulsory, but schooling was not. Paragraph 12 stipulated that children of all social levels between the ages of six and twelve had to attend school or to be educated privately in their homes.⁵⁴ Girls should, if possible, be taught in separate schools. Major communities should preferably establish a girls' school and sometimes such schools already existed, usually operated by women's orders such as the Ursulines or the Congregation of Jesus.⁵⁵ If there was no possibility for separate girls' schools, as in most cases, girls and boys were at least spatially separated in coeducative classes.⁵⁶ In any case, girls were subjected to a specific curriculum that included sewing and knitting.

Girls also attended school less frequently than boys.⁵⁷ However, school enrollment was a general challenge in the implementation of the School Ordinance, even if the rates rose after a couple of years. The extent of growth, however, depended largely on the school commission's commitment, in addition to funding of course, and differed significantly between regions. According to Wangermann, throughout the monarchy, only an average of less than one-third of all school-aged children attended a public school.⁵⁸ Van Horn Melton reports the following numbers based on published statistics: In Vienna, the number of children between the ages of six and thirteen attending public school increased between 1771 and 1779 from 4665 to 8039 (while approximately 5400 pupils were still taught otherwise, particularly at home, at the beginning of the 1770s). In Lower Austria, school enrollment was only approximately 34% of all school-aged children in 1779 but had improved from an even lower level of 16% in 1771. In the Bohemian provinces, however, two-thirds of all school-aged children were enrolled

in school by 1790, which was one of the highest enrolment rates in the monarchy thanks to an exceptionally dedicated implementation of school reform by individuals such as the supervisor of Bohemian schools in Prague, Ferdinand Kindermann.⁵⁹

The 1774 School Ordinance also defined how the knowledge received in schools should be sustained after the children had left school. Until the age of 20, young people in both the countryside and towns had to attend two-hour courses at schools to refresh their knowledge every Sunday after church service (paragraph 15). These refresher courses were particularly targeted at young male craftsmen (who could only be dispensed on the basis of a certificate by a school inspector). The courses were to be held by the teacher and supervised by the local priest.

Most of the final part of the School Ordinance addressed questions of control and inspection. Lists were the main instrument for controlling school attendance. Children reaching the age for compulsory schooling were listed, and lists had to document the attendance and absence of children; these latter lists were called “catalogues of diligence” (*Fleisskatalog*). Control also took place every half-year on the occasion of bigger exams, at which an official had to be present. Outstanding pupils were to be honored, which should promote ambition and control by positive role modeling.

With respect to school inspection, which several paragraphs addressed, school commissions played a major role.⁶⁰ These bodies had to appoint supervisors for each school district (usually an archpriest, as a school district in the countryside usually coincided with the decanate) and inspectors who—in rural areas—would be recruited among clerical and lay personnel. Finally, the School Ordinance opened up the possibility to promote school inspectors who were exemplary in pursuing their work.

Consequences of School Reform

From the perspective of state-building, the General School Ordinance of 1774 set a new standard in the administration and management of the school system. The School Ordinance installed a new hierarchical

system of school inspection and changed bureaucratic procedures, and the conception of how the school system should be managed. The school act fostered a unified public and centrally organized elementary school system both in terms of the bureaucratic functioning of the system and in pedagogical methodology. Teacher training programs, the publication and delivery of teaching materials, including standard references on pedagogical methodology, many of them initially written by Felbiger himself, were homogeneous throughout the empire, which also contributed to the school act's centralizing effect.

However, as Engelbrecht notes, the school reform did not immediately function in the machinelike bureaucratic way that was intended.⁶¹ A glance at day-to-day practices shows that the new school act failed in many ways. Key problems in the attempt to implement compulsory schooling in an effective manner were funding and the lack of interest in schooling on the part of children and their parents, especially in farming communities.⁶² During Maria Theresa's regency, the number of schools was also too small for every boy and girl to obtain schooling.⁶³ A survey in 1781 showed, for instance, that an average of less than a third of all school-aged children attended school, an unacceptable fact for an enlightened monarch.⁶⁴

As a result of this perceived failure of the 1774 School Ordinance, Joseph II intensified attempts to push statewide elementary schooling by numerous decrees during his 10-year regency (1780–1790). His measures included more coercive means, such as penalties for absenteeism and the obligation of each parish or locality, where more than 90 school-aged children lived, to open a school. He also incentivized parents to send their children to school by repealing school fees.⁶⁵

Under Joseph II, and with Gottfried van Swieten as the chairman of the *Studienhofkommission* between 1781 and the reconstitution of the agency in 1791, additional measures were also taken to improve the efficiency of the elementary school system. To create efficient state bureaucrats, the German language became the first language that had to be mastered by each teacher whose mother tongue was not German. Under Joseph II, the schools were also opened for non-Catholic children who did not have to attend religious education.⁶⁶ In the 1780s, physical punishment was prohibited (except in severe cases), with the intent

of making the school system more humane. In terms of pedagogy, Felbiger's methods were abandoned in favor of more Socratic methods, inspired by the enlightened pedagogical movement of Philanthropism, which saw education as a means to foster reasoning and as intended to strengthen understanding rather than memory.⁶⁷ To promote these measures, Joseph II established the post of a governmental inspection authority at the local level, the *Kreisschulkommissär*.

In the late 1790s, the *Studienhofkommission* under the new denomination *Studien-Revisions-Hofkommission* revised the entire elementary school system. This process led—now under the regency of Emperor Francis II/I—to a new school act issued in 1806 that would become the legal framework until the 1850s.⁶⁸ It reinforced the organizational structure of the Josephinian school system, while it withdrew the formerly desired secularization of the school and reassigned the inspection and control of minor and major schools to the authority of the Church. Francis II/I reestablished neo-absolutist forms of government under the influence of the French Revolution—generally perceived as a threat in Vienna due to Napoleonic aggression.⁶⁹ Central inspection and pedagogical competencies in school matters were reassigned to the Catholic Church—the state receded from a struggle that it had fought during the second half of the eighteenth century. However, in terms of state-building, the 1774 General School Ordinance had helped to establish an enduring public sphere and had contributed to the presence of the state on the local level.

Schooling as a Political Concern

Maria Theresa's signing of the General School Ordinance in 1774 was an event that depended on a number of preconditions and contemporary challenges that occurred suddenly or that lurked beneath the surface. One factor was that politics was preoccupied with the political consolidation of the territories and aimed at uniformity. Social and economic developments—the growth of population, enforcement of labor productivity driven by cameralist thought, and new branches of industry apart from agriculture—added further elements, as these

developments contributed to a constant transformation of the social and economic world. In addition, the school reform was also inspired by the discourse of the Enlightenment and the controlling rationality in an increasingly impersonal apparatus of government.

This chapter situates the School Ordinance of 1774 within the processes that transformed the princely state of *ancient régime* government toward a state of laws through an enlightened but still absolutist form of government. The historian Gary Cohen describes this process as the weaving of a web of the state by establishing laws, administrative procedures, communicative channels, and so forth.⁷⁰ The statewide web of the new school system established communicative channels for the centralized government to control even the most remote areas, thanks to a tight organization that included school inspection and uniform pedagogical methods and textbooks. In this respect, the school system also served as a hub for surveying the population.

Hence, the initial challenge for Maria Theresa as a ruler was to establish a public sphere, which she—with respect to education—achieved in the last decade of her regency particularly by wresting competencies in schooling away from the Catholic Church. She defined schooling as a secular political concern for once and for all: “Das Schulwesen aber ist und bleibet allezeit ein *politicum*.”

Notes

1. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 102–18.
2. Judson, *Habsburg*, Chapter 1.
3. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 183.
4. The latter two regions (Galicia and Lodomeria) were annexed in 1772.
5. The name *ostarrichi*, first mentioned in 996 in a deed by Otto III, originally meant the “empire in the east.” For the conceptual history of the notion cf. Klingenstein, “Was bedeuten ‘Österreich’ und ‘Österreichisch’ im 18. Jahrhundert?”
6. Cohen, “Citizenship and Nationality in Late Imperial Austria,” 206. Cf. also Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 13–22.
7. The judicial terminology “Pragmatic Sanction” meant the fundamental law of an empire. Brauneder, *Studien I: Entwicklung des Öffentlichen Rechts*, 89.

8. Francis II/I was the son of Emperor Leopold II, mentioned above. After pronouncing the Austrian Empire, Francis II continued to reign under the name of Francis I—therefore the notation Francis II/I—and abdicated as Emperor of the Roman-German Empire when it finally collapsed in 1806.
9. Judson, *Habsburg*, 41–43.
10. For a general account of the bureaucratization in the era of Josephinism cf. Heindl, *Gehorsame Rebellen*, Chapter I; Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs*, 36–55.
11. Gant, “National-Erziehung,” 98–99.
12. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 349–53.
13. Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism*.
14. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 193–212.
15. As quoted in Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 75. See also Judson, *Habsburg*, 33.
16. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 73–74.
17. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 204.
18. *Ibid.*, 690–99.
19. Donnermair, “Primarschulwesen,” 14.
20. “[...] in was vor einem Zustande das Schulwesen in denen Städten, Märkten und Dörfern deines Kreises sich befinde, auch ob etwan viele Winkelschulen vorhanden sein?” Courtly decree from 29th of January 1751, quoted in Donnermair, “Primarschulwesen,” 14.
21. Donnermair, “Primarschulwesen,” 16.
22. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 84.
23. The commission was incorporated into the *Studienhofkommission* in 1781.
24. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 682.
25. Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 79.
26. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 684.
27. *Ibid.*, 684–88.
28. Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 83.
29. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 702.
30. Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 86–90.
31. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 714–15.
32. *Ibid.*, 243–45.
33. “[...] man muss daraus für unsere heilige Religion und den Staat das Beste machen.” Maria Theresa, quoted in *ibid.*, 607–8.

34. Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism*, 210.
35. "[...] dass die Erziehung der Jugend, beyderley Geschlechts, als die wichtigste Grundlage der wahren Glückseligkeit der Nationen ein genaueres Einsehen allerdings erfordere." [Without Author], *Allgemeine Schulordnung*, 4. The edict prescribed more exactly the obligation to be taught, as private education was accepted and usually practiced in aristocratic and wealthier bourgeois families.
36. Krömer, *Johann Ignaz von Felbiger*, 23–24.
37. For Hecker, see also the chapter on Prussia in this volume.
38. Krömer, *Johann Ignaz von Felbiger*, 37–38.
39. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 103.
40. Ibid., 107; Okenfuss, "Education and Empire," 44–47.
41. For a discussion of *Allgemeine Schulordnung*, see also Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 103–6.
42. The Tyrolean capital Innsbruck already had a kind of a normal school when the school act was issued that experimented with Felbiger's methods. Ibid., 107. The normal school in Vienna, as previously mentioned, was founded in 1771, and other schools were founded in 1775 in the provincial capitals Linz, Klagenfurt, and Graz. Teacher training became successively standardized, not only for beginners but also for experienced teachers via further vocational training.
43. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, 182.
44. "Alle Schüler einer Klasse müssen einerlei sehen, hören, denken und thun." Felbiger, *Methodenbuch*, 4.
45. Helfert, *Die österreichische Volksschule*, 401–02.
46. The communities were, however, rather reluctantly committed. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 115.
47. Ibid., 114.
48. Wangermann, *Aufklärung und staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*, 51–53.
49. One out of four textbooks were provided for free to children from poorer households. Helfert, *Die österreichische Volksschule*, 493.
50. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 114.
51. Helfert, *Die österreichische Volksschule*, 386, 403. Cf. also Sandgruber, "Einkommensentwicklung und Einkommensverteilung," 255.
52. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 114.
53. Ibid., 117.
54. Ibid., 113.

55. In 1780, the following locations in Lower Austria had girls' schools run by women's orders: Vienna (four schools for a total of 836 girls), Krems (108 girls), and St. Pölten (80 pupils). Engelbrecht, *Österreichisches Bildungswesen*, 410–11. Other major communities with girls' schools run by secular women teachers included the cities Hall in Tyrol and Teschen in Silesia. Helfert, *Die österreichische Volksschule*, 407.
56. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 117.
57. Engelbrecht reports numbers in *Trivialschulen*, such as 3753 boys versus 2286 girls in 1780 in Vienna's suburbs or 73 boys versus 22 girls in 1777 in Judenburg, Styria. *Ibid.*, 338.
58. Wangermann, *Aufklärung und staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*, 42.
59. Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism*, 220–21.
60. Stanzel, *Die Schulaufsicht*, 257–74; Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism*, 213–14.
61. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 110.
62. *Ibid.*, 112–15.
63. Judson, *Habsburg*, 93.
64. Wangermann, *Aufklärung und staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*, 42.
65. Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 120.
66. *Ibid.*, 126.
67. *Ibid.*, 127.
68. *Ibid.*, 223–29. The 1806 school act, issued under the regency of Francis II/I, was called *Politische Verfassung der deutschen Schulen in den k. auch k.k. deutschen Erbstaaten*. See *ibid.*, 521–22 (with an extract of the school act and indication of source).
69. Butschek, *Österreichische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 95.
70. Cohen, "Citizenship and Nationality," 223.

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3

Schooling and the Administrative State: Explaining the Lack of School Acts in Nineteenth-Century Prussia

Marcelo Caruso and Daniel Töpper

In national historical narratives about the development of education, school acts appear as legal monuments to a history of progress and even prowess. Major protagonists of the early stages in the establishment of universal school systems drafted them, advocated their adoption and defended them in parliaments. In this powerful narrative, school acts are educational myths of their own dignity. Educational history—particularly related to schools and school systems—has often focused on these national founding moments of legislation and their implications.

Yet an unexpected anomaly looms over these accounts. In the nineteenth century, Prussia stood as one of the leading ‘beacons of the future’ (J. Donald) in the field of universal schooling, yet it did not issue any significant general legislation to establish modern school structures in this century of schools. After the publication of Victor Cousin’s report in the

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early 1830s, Prussia represented the best of educational progress for many politicians and educators, even though some foreign visitors condemned autocratic and monarchic domination. Indeed, in the nineteenth century Prussian elementary schools (*Volksschulen*) made enormous advances with regard to attendance, teacher training, pedagogical differentiation and school governance.¹ Yet the Prussian path of spreading modern universal schooling was very different from that of many other countries, where school acts were quasi foundational in terms of systematization (like in France in 1833, in Spain in 1838, or in Sweden in 1842) or, at least, associated with significant reforms (again, in France in 1882, or in England in 1833 and 1870). In sum, Prussia did not achieve educational progress through government-issued or legislative acts.

How can this disparity between actual educational advancement and the lack of modern legal frames in the era of the ascendance of the national principle be explained? What kind of educational culture was related to the lack of school acts? What kind of educational governance was being consolidated through this absence?

For this discussion, we will sketch the question of the status of modern schooling as a part of the early-modern administrative state following Ian Hunter's insights.² Within a loosely Foucauldian framework, we will situate this theorizing of schooling as an activity within the general question of law and governance in modern times. In a second step, we will reconstruct the pivotal measures taken in Prussia during the eighteenth century, which partly guaranteed an advantage in terms of early educational development. Then, we will focus on the major attempt to introduce a school act in the nineteenth century: the comprehensive draft of an elementary school act of 29 June 1819 written by Johann Wilhelm Süvern, state councillor of the newly founded Ministry of Education, Schooling and Medical Care, and its fate in increasingly reactionary times. In a central fourth section, we will sketch the failed attempts to introduce sound legislation to schools in the second half of the nineteenth century, after Prussia became a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. Finally, we will summarize our findings and discuss them against the background of early educational gains achieved through administrative actions and their significance in setting schooling apart from modern politics.

Law, Governance and Discipline: Premodern Roots of Modern Schooling

In his theoretical work about the ‘nature’ of schooling, the Australian scholar Ian Hunter, largely referencing Prussian and other German material, defined modern schooling as a combination of two logics: the pastoral and the bureaucratic.³ His theorizing on schooling largely overlooks the question of the law. He follows a long tradition of Foucauldian authors who are more concerned with the multiplicity of power forms and to resist the simple reduction of all forms of powers to that related to the sovereign. Certainly, Michel Foucault’s plea in favour of looking at the specific situations of dominance grew from a sceptical view of sovereignty—and of law and juridical systems as its principal institutions—as being the origin of political power. The application of a theory of discipline meant that critical analyses instead focused on the processes behind and beneath the level of the law.

This focus on sovereignty, governance and modernity has occasionally been interpreted as a Foucauldian rejection of the analysis of laws.⁴ Yet—as Mitchell Dean puts it—the question of law is the ‘most revealing aspect of liberalism’ as the leading form of modern governmentality.⁵ Put shortly, Dean’s argument goes that in modern times the law is no longer the main technique of coercion but that it has been changed by the advance of norms and normalizing powers.⁶ This was a central element of the emergence of the welfare state.⁷ François Ewald elaborated on the fact that laws in the nineteenth century increasingly stemmed from the attributes of things and peoples to be governed, and less from sources like general views of the world or of human nature.⁸ It is in this sense that laws take into consideration an account of the objects to be governed and that norms are intrinsically related to laws. In this sense, in modern times laws are an element of a governmentality that combines strict legal aspects with normalizing ones.

In this chapter, we will argue that the widely admired Prussian schools of the nineteenth century, particularly at the elementary level, displayed a culture of regulation in which normalizing aspects were not attached to the law, but remained in the realm of administrative action.

Whereas legal foundations for these schools were established in the eighteenth century and remained unchanged until the early twentieth century, the impressive development of nineteenth-century Prussian schooling relied on the administrative decision of the central, provincial and local authorities. The Prussian success story continued a tradition of normalizing administration—as Hunter put it—and did not emerge out of any educational legislation.⁹

The Foundations of Prussian Schooling

The history of state control over the school system started at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when King Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688–1740) began the construction of a centralized state administration. Though there was not yet an administrative structure for schools, he issued a first succinct decree—a decree means the publication of a law passed by the king or another state authority—advocating, but not administratively imposing, compulsory school attendance in 1717.¹⁰ However, as the following decades would show, this regulation did not bring about solid results. The very fact that this decree was repeatedly recalled in the ensuing time reveals its character as a typical early-modern statement of intent rather than an effective tool of governance.¹¹

Near the end of his reign, Friedrich Wilhelm I made another attempt to influence the educational sphere through legislation. In 1736, not only did he repeat his plea that parents send their children to school¹²; he also issued a more complex school order, the *Principia Regulativa*.¹³ The *Principia* addressed a wider range of aspects concerning the municipal provisions of schooling: the construction of schoolhouses, payment of teachers and regulations to manage school fees. As the central bureaucracy was still too weak to enforce these rules, the new school regulations asked for support from the school patronage rather than forcing strict regulations upon them.¹⁴

By and large, these efforts to encourage local patrons to invest money into elementary education failed. As a result, the king amended the regulation, and established a second power in the field of schools, namely the church consistories.¹⁵ Though patrons were supposed to recruit

the local school teacher, the amendment gave the protestant clergy the power to control local teachers from the moment of their appointment. Furthermore, as the king presided over the provincial consistories and was the highest worldly authority of preachers and bishops, he indirectly controlled the patronage of their church and school activities. With this outreach to church personnel, the crown established an early form of local school administration. Still, as clerical control could not go beyond the act of controlling the teachers, only minor changes occurred. Beyond consistent results, the relevance of those first edicts lies in their general approach to elementary schooling as a question of state rather than in their practical consequences. A documented state interest in schooling, clerical support, financial obligations, and the (abstract) ambition of imposing them onto the whole country became features of an early culture of school regulation at this time.¹⁶

While the *Principia Regulativa* and the decree of 1717 applied only to the original territories of the Kingdom of Prussia, the possibilities of reaching the new acquired and conquered territories through state regulations of schooling emerged with the *General-Landschulreglement* (GLR) in 1763. Though it was only mandatory for all evangelic subjects at first, it was extended to Catholic schools two years later.¹⁷ The GLR included a strong critique of the dominant conditions in rural schools. It further asked the patrons to secure that their subjects only leave school after they were able to read, had started to practice writing and were sufficiently well taught in the Christian religion.¹⁸ Further, there were the first guidelines for the selection of teachers and their bureaucratic tasks.

Although the regulation was mainly intended for rural schools because of the fragmentation of educational patronage, the edict was later extended to towns in Brandenburg and Pomerania, while the GLR for the conquered territory of Silesia, which was largely Catholic, included cities and towns from the start. Some cities and villages additionally required elementary teachers to have visited the normal school established by the pietistic theologian Johann Julius Hecker (1707–1768) in Köpenick near Berlin. Commonly described as a major piece of regulation, the GLR largely remained limited in its results. Yet, through its detailed and complex provisions, it showed the will to extend and regulate Prussian elementary schooling.

One major problem during the implementation of these regulations was the lack of a distinct central bureaucracy in charge of the coordination and control of education in general and of schools in particular. The Prussian state still relied heavily on the support of the Lutheran consistories, institutions of the church administration, which were not as reliable as expected. Further, preachers and pastors were by no means educational experts and heavily emphasized the importance of spiritual tasks over the tasks of schooling.

A first, limited attempt to cope with this situation was the establishment of a central institution with the explicit task of regulating this patchy educational arena in 1787, the *Oberschulkolleg*. The founding instruction of this *Kolleg*, dated 22 February 1787, defined as its main tasks the improvement of all protestant public schools and the collection of information about the school systems of the different Prussian provinces.¹⁹ Although ambitious enlightened plans were associated with this council, it faced almost insurmountable difficulties from the very beginning.²⁰ The *Kolleg* was poorly staffed and had insufficient financial resources, particularly considering the wide scope of its tasks and its supra-regional significance. Moreover, a politically delicate situation resulted from the fact that the functions of the council had partly been old competencies of church consistories, while most of the *Kolleg's* members were churchmen themselves and the *Kolleg* was subordinated to the Minister of Clergy.²¹ So even though the attempt to create a central state institution can be considered an important step towards modernization, in practice it had only minor consequences for the bulk of Prussian schools. Nonetheless, after 1801, the *Kolleg* took the first steps towards a general school act, in particular by initiating the more systematic collection of data about schools throughout the whole country, an effort that was aborted due to the Napoleonic invasion in 1806.²²

The 'pedagogic century' did not end, however, without the issuing of a pivotal regulation in the field of schooling. The sections concerning schools in the famous Prussian Land Law (*Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preussischen Staaten*) of 1794 would bring governmental will to a limited, but consequential climax. Due to the lack of comprehensive school acts in the nineteenth century, these regulations remained the basis for the regulation of Prussian elementary schools for the following

120 years. The Land Law was a hallmark of the moderate form of Enlightenment in Prussia. It was a huge compilation of about 19,000 prescriptions aimed at putting the legal frame of the state on a more rational and systematic footing.²³

The first, particularly famous paragraph of the section about education, constituted one of the main caesuras contained in this document: ‘Schools and universities are state issues.’²⁴ Contradicting custom and early-modern rights, this statement expressed the aspiration of the state to be the dominant factor in education. The intended control included the supervision of teachers, teacher education, and, to some extent, curriculum and instruction, for both public and private schools.²⁵ However, the traditional cooperation between state, churches, local patronage and municipal authorities remained the *modus operandi* for school matters, and this feature of educational governance and structures would remain dominant at least until the middle of the twentieth century.

The eighteenth century was certainly an unusually active time of educational governance. Even the limited effects of many of these regulations did not diminish the increasingly strong will they articulated. Though Prussian developments were certainly not unique, they stood in noticeable contrast to the reticence many other influential European powers—above all, pre-revolutionary France and England—showed on this issue. German traditions of *polizey*—meaning the active role of the state in organizing a ‘well ordered society’—legitimated these interventions. Whereas in other countries school acts in the nineteenth century assumed the character of foundational documents of consistently modern school systems, Prussian developments in the eighteenth century determined that legislative acts of the late absolutist state or of the early constitutional monarchies could only have the character of reformist acts.

Süvern’s Draft for a School Act

After the humiliating defeat of the Prussian army at Jena and Auerstedt in 1806, French troops occupied Prussia. The military defeat induced and accelerated the modernization of the Prussian state, initiating a

reformist period that lasted until approximately 1819 when most of the reformers had lost their positions in the state administration. The reformist period certainly affected a lot of different political, economic and social spheres. The emancipation of peasants, the introduction of economic liberty and the introduction of compulsory military service were some of the most salient reforms.

Yet, the reformers were even more successful in the reorganization of government and administration. Here, an emerging, hierarchically organized, bureaucratic-monarchist structure replaced the former cabinet-absolutistic construction with its loosely defined and partly inconsistent structures. Reformist groups intended to strengthen the state through a general educational reform. Those reformists represented the spirit of the so-called German new humanism inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), who is most often associated with these educational reforms. In December 1808, Humboldt was appointed head of the newly created Section for Education and Public Schooling which remained a subordinated section of the ministry of the interior until 1817. The section was established to bring about a broader reform of the educational sphere in the Prussian states. Though Humboldt's tenure lasted only until June 1810, he has largely been credited with coining the main guidelines for the projected reforms.²⁶

With the vital support of two state councillors, Johann Wilhelm Süvern (1775–1829) and Georg Heinrich Ludwig Nicolovius (1767–1839)—who continued Humboldt's initiatives after his departure—Humboldt authored the main guidelines for expert offices in Berlin, Breslau and Königsberg. These scientific deputations worked as expert councils for the section and continued the work of the abolished *Kolleg*. The main concerns of their work were the creation of a structure for teacher education, the consolidation of state school supervision, the elaboration of curricula and methodical guidelines, the establishment of an examination system and the reduction of the myriad of school types to a few manageable ones.

General and equal universal education was the leading principle of these projects. For these reformers, education was not to be oriented towards an anticipated or fixed profession during adult life. Specific utilitarian aims had to recede in favour of the requirements of a general

education. In this vein, secondary education was intended to be the higher part of a general education. Of course, at a time in which actors related to various types of ‘vocational’ education—above all churches, private schools and craft guilds—were still dominant, those ideas were highly contested. Nevertheless, for the sector of higher education most reform initiatives were successful or at least established core structures that became more elaborate in the following decades.

Although historiography has repeatedly portrayed these general reforms as eminently emancipatory, the reformist group still advocated an educational system structured according to social groups.²⁷ This is obvious when one looks at the way in which elementary and higher education were dealt with as separate entities for most of the reform period. At the level of elementary schools, teachers and experts were sent to Pestalozzi in Switzerland with the purpose of introducing and generalizing his then famous teaching methods in Prussia.²⁸ Drafts for a standard curriculum for the whole monarchy circulated as well. A good example of this was a draft composed chiefly by Bernhard Christoph Ludwig Natorp (1774–1846), a school inspector in the province of Brandenburg, who advanced ideas concerning the main features of elementary schools (see his *Grundriß zur Organisation der Elementarschulen*, 5 December 1812), which ultimately did not succeed.²⁹ It was again Natorp who planned and initiated the expansion and normalization of the teacher seminar structures, which was one aspect of elementary level of education that worked successfully in the following decades.³⁰

Due to differences between the ministers, it had not been a consistent intention to regulate elementary schools by law. The introduction of any drafts had previously been successfully hindered by the Minister of the Interior, Friedrich von Schuckmann (1755–1834). But in 1817, the new independent Ministry of Religion, Education and Medicine was founded, and the King simultaneously installed a commission which was to initiate and decide on a possible new (elementary) school act. Now Süvern—after presenting a first Promemoria in 1817—intensified his preparations for a school act. Yet, when he finally presented his draft for a general school act in 1819, restorative political tendencies in the cabinet had already advanced. These forces sharply rejected any central

regulations and favoured a model of school administration, in which local patrons exerted undiminished authority.

Süvern's draft was not only late, but also more comprehensive and ambitious than the commission and the reformist Minister Karl Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein (1770–1840) had expected.³¹ Following the core idea of schooling as a means to nationalize the population, Süvern's regulations stipulated that the different types of schools would constitute a connected system including elementary and city schools as well as the more classic secondary and humanistic school, the *Gymnasium*.³² Of course, those ideas were highly controversial. Further, Süvern's draft dealt with regulations for compulsory schooling, teacher education, school equipment and school supervision. For the first time, the draft advanced a complex and systematic vision for all educational institutions. But it was its wide scope that, in the end, caused its downfall.

In a setting marked by the ascendance of conservative and restorative forces, the draft was sent to government offices in the central administration. While Minister Altenstein largely agreed with the document, strong opposition came from the Lutheran Church as well as from the newly founded commission that had actually been installed for its assessment. This commission invited Rulemann Friedrich Eylert (1770–1852), a Lutheran Bishop and a close confidante of King Friedrich Wilhelm III, to write a review of the situation in the school system and the eventual need for reform. In his critical report, he favoured a completely different approach to that of the Süvern draft and argued instead for reducing educational regulation. Eylert was a staunch advocate of a school structure tightly related to a still socially segmented society. His views were included in the recommendations of the special commission that also strongly disagreed with Süvern's school act draft. The commission criticized almost all changes implemented in education since 1809 and warned against moral decay and egalitarian tendencies in school and society.³³

In view of this antagonistic position of important actors, Altenstein had to distance himself from the draft and proposed to consult the opinions from the provincial authorities and the Catholic bishops as well.³⁴ Those reactions were diverse but predominantly critical. Both religious denominations coincided in their dissatisfaction with the

proposed education system. Time went on and Altenstein announced in 1823 that further revisions were necessary, implicitly accepting his and Süvern's defeat.³⁵

Different factors led to the failure of the law draft. First, there had been a general shift in the attitude of the government towards educational reform. A delay caused by Schuckmann's obstruction, among other factors, meant that Süvern's draft was only presented in the time of the Carlsbad Decrees (1819), repressive in character and motivated by anti-national, monarchist and anti-liberal positions. Second, the draft included modifications to higher education, whereas important political actors at the time saw no need for further action in this area. Third, it lacked the full support of Altenstein the minister responsible for the reforms.

However, this defeat stands at the beginning of a series of attempts to create more extensive administrative control over the educational sphere. Süvern's draft marked a point in time after which a new political situation—for some a threatening one—became visible: the state intended to modernize and alter the educational structure consolidated under the social conditions of the old Prussian regime. In this constellation, state projects alarmed Church and elites rather than appealing to them. The Prussian state continued to be very active in the field of education and regulated it through the provincial councils of education and largely through casework, issuing situational decisions and launching minor interventions which resulted in slow but constant improvement and growth of schooling.³⁶

Despite the failure to issue a comprehensive law addressing elementary schools and the minor success of importing Pestalozzi's method, it would be wrong to interpret the period of Prussian reforms between 1809 and 1819 as being simply ineffective. Next to the incremental yet quite effective reforms of the old grammar schools, the beginning of a successful story of expanding seminars for the education of elementary teachers stood out. In the long run, this would become a distinctive feature of the much-admired Prussian school policies. Whereas in 1811 only 15 seminars were in operation, in 1840 there were already 46 institutes, regardless of widespread mistrust by powerful traditionalist circles. In 1871, Prussia had a record number of 80 seminars.³⁷ Those

numbers show that, wherever room for local and regional action existed, the development of mass education and the advancement of higher education were able to proceed without the necessity of legislative acts.³⁸

Prussian Parliament and the Liberal-Conservative Divide

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the state administration did not advance any other piece of general regulation. Modern bureaucracy emerged in Prussia without the accompanying process of parliamentary control. The modern structure of ministries was well defined, and specific offices for all central functions of the state were clearly designed, giving the Prussian bureaucracy its aura of efficiency. Furthermore, the Minister of State coordinated all these offices and controlled their access to the king, the only source of legitimate political power.

A similar structure of administration, without the Minister of State, was given to the different Prussian provinces. In 1808, the cities in the state received self-government rights as well.³⁹ The strengthening of provincial administrations was fostered with small modifications in 1825. Provincial councils of education were tasked with coordinating higher school administration, the government of seminars, teacher recruiting and school inspection. In practice, this meant the introduction of a second level of educational actors, who were able to introduce school regulations for their regions in coordination with the central administration.

One such provincial school regulation that started from a regional initiative stands out and must be mentioned here as it nearly managed to create a model for a comprehensive school regulation for all of Prussia. This was the *Schulordnung für die Elementarschulen der Provinz Preußen*, signed by the King and issued on 11 December 1845.⁴⁰ The provincial assembly of Eastern Prussia had been asking since the 1830s for the general regulation of schools. After many attempts and with the support and approval of the central authorities, this school regulation of 1845—a first comprehensive regional school plan—was issued including rules regarding the status of teachers, the length of compulsory

schooling, the composition of local school boards, pedagogical and organizational supervision and the financing of schools.

This school regulation of 1845 was intended to be a model for similar provincial statutes, which soon after were ordered by the central state administration. One year later, all other Provincial School Boards in Prussia were presenting their slightly modified drafts to the central authorities for control and approval. The Education Ministry put them before the eight provincial assemblies for their adoption. This would have been a major step towards a consistent regulation for all Prussian elementary schools. Yet, the upcoming revolutionary political upheavals in 1848 stopped this process.⁴¹

The 1848 revolution substantially changed the discussion about school legislation in many ways. As a result of the uprisings, a different type of legislative process came about. Now the King and his administration and the two chambers of the newly created Diet of Prussia had to accept drafts in order for them to become laws. Yet, this was by no means a fully constitutional monarchy as known from other European countries. When the revolution reached Prussia, the king astutely decided not to let the situation escalate and allowed for the convocation of a Prussian and German national assembly in the city of Frankfurt. The liberal constitutional draft envisioned there, however, would never be adopted. Instead of accepting the one founded in parliament, the king decreed his own constitution for the Prussian state.⁴² This constitution of 1848 surprisingly included many liberal aspects that were inscribed in the draft of the National Assembly.⁴³ Two years later, the 1848 constitution was replaced by a slightly changed version, which mostly annulated symbolic aspects.⁴⁴

This constitution imposed by the king followed a tradition of constitutions granted from above in some middle German states such as Bavaria and Württemberg. The constitution included some of the demands advanced by liberals and early nationalists; it foresaw the regulation of the school system by a school act that was still to be drafted. Further state responsibility and state supervision of the educational sphere were confirmed. In sum, the new constitution was a mixture of late absolutist tradition and modern political projects. Though teachers and teacher associations were banned and persecuted in the aftermath

of the revolution of 1848, many of their central demands were included in the constitution. The widespread claims for free elementary education were integrated into the document, though the schools act to come would have to specify the terms of its concretion, something that never happened. This rather declarative article about a proposed schools act motivated a strong demand for parliamentary discussion in the following decades.

After the election of the Prussian Diet, liberal groups did not wait long to act. As early as 1850 the liberal minister Adalbert von Ladenberg (1798–1855), in office since 1848, introduced the first draft for a new school act. Possible regulations of a proposed law were discussed at teacher conferences in all the provinces and districts. Despite many differences, teachers mainly followed the ideas that they took from Süvern's first draft. They agreed in their demands to make primary education a national state enterprise, raise the teachers' salaries and make teachers part of the school boards. Many results of those independently organized conferences were included in Ladenberg's draft. However, by the time the draft was finalized, most teachers who had participated in the conferences and supported the ideal of a unified national educational system had been forced to leave the country due to a conservative political backlash. No further discussion followed and Ladenberg was soon forced out of office.⁴⁵

Ladenberg's successor Karl Otto von Raumer (1805–1859) made clear from the beginning of his tenure that he had no intention of releasing a general education law in the near future. This strategic change by the central administration stood in overt contradiction to the Prussian constitution, yet it was consistent with the well-established ways of school administration. It allowed for the executive structures at the central and provincial levels to keep their grasp on school policies, including their case-specific approach.

Instead of a school act, the ministry issued the famous 'Prussian Regulations' for elementary schools, teacher preparation institutes and teacher seminars in 1854.⁴⁶ These regulations were also known as Stiehl's Regulation after Ferdinand Stiehl, the official at the Ministry of Education, 1812–1878. This first common curriculum for all schools of the kingdom was, of course, not a law. Laws had to be voted on by the

parliament and then confirmed by the King. In this case, the regulations were an executive order issued by the Ministry of Education.

This executive order for all Lutheran schools of the country, and soon after for all Catholic schools as well, remained highly controversial both in contemporary politics and in the historiography of education. Staunch liberal members of the parliament like Adolph Diesterweg (1790–1866), leader of the early teacher's movement, and Friedrich Harkort (1793–1880), a liberal factory owner, condemned them as a sign of the increasingly reactionary politics of the time, whereas its defenders buttressed their function of ordering and moderation. These regulations showed a remarkable reversal on the question of reform and legislation from the conservative side. Prussian conservatives were particularly adamant about the harmful character of general and 'abstract' regulations in the field of schooling. Rather, they promoted local regulations that would purportedly be more in tune with the life of local communities. Conservatives viewed slow progress not as a problem, but as the more organic and natural course of things. For conservatives, attempts to change everything through legislation, as the liberals wished, were an unnatural path of development.

The conservative backlash notwithstanding, the promised schools act, continuously publicly demanded by liberal politicians, still haunted the government. In 1859, a first draft circulated and in 1861/1862 a revised version, supported by the conservative-liberal Minister August von Bethmann-Hollweg (1795–1877), was discussed inside the government.⁴⁷ However, before the draft could be presented and discussed in parliament, Bethmann-Hollweg was dismissed as member of the cabinet during the Prussian constitutional crisis in 1862. His successor Heinrich von Mühler (1813–1874) presented his own draft in 1869, which did not reach the parliament due to Otto von Bismarck's (1815–1898) opposition.⁴⁸

After German unification, and in a context marked by the *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church, the liberal lawyer Adalbert Falk (1827–1900) was appointed Minister of Education. At this time, educational legislation certainly played a central role in Prussian politics. Falk basically continued the type of regulation his predecessors had maintained and governed education with means that were less high

profile than those of a law. After many consultations, he issued general regulations for public schools, teacher preparation institutions and teacher seminars in October 1872.⁴⁹ These regulations replaced Stiehl's controversial regulations and provided the main regulatory framework for Prussian elementary schools until 1920.

The new code was an eminently liberal document with strong modernizing traits, including the reduction of religious content in the curriculum and permission to establish schools open to children from all religious denominations. Still, liberals knew that this victory over the older Stiehl's regulations could only be consolidated by adopting a real educational law. Falk trusted his undersecretary Franz Förster (1819–1878) to prepare a cautious draft for a comprehensive law for the whole school system, which was presented in 1877.⁵⁰ Yet, the political situation had changed again and the *Kulturkampf*, the biggest asset the liberals had in their political portfolio in Bismarck's view, was slowly ending. The draft was discussed with other ministers, and it was abandoned shortly after the objection of the Minister of Finance, who predicted high additional costs for the state if the proposal was realized.⁵¹ Falk withdraws from office soon after.

With Falk, the last nineteenth-century attempt for comprehensive regulation of the school system had failed. As liberals and conservatives held contradictory views on education, bipartisan cooperation in this field remained rare. For this reason, further legislative acts addressed particular aspects of the school structure rather than general principles of its organization. Falk's successor Gustav von Goßler (1838–1902), for instance, only addressed elementary schools in his failed draft and avoided thorny issues such as school inspection.⁵² His successor, Robert von Zedlitz-Trützschler (1837–1914), presented a new project in 1892, which tried to set the confessional school as the normal school form. Of course, conservative and clerical forces strongly supported this, but when facing huge liberal and social democratic resistance Zedlitz-Trützschler eventually withdrew the project.⁵³ These episodes were widely discussed in the public sphere and may have contributed to the common explanation that the lack of educational legislation in Prussia resulted from political blockade.

Only one draft proved successful after the turn of the century. Minister Konrad von Studt (1838–1921) was able to launch a minor reform to solve the problems of chronically underfunded schools and low teacher's salaries in rural schools, which had led to increased migration of teachers to the cities and caused problems with recruiting teachers for country schools. With the law of 1906, the finances and maintenance of elementary schools were nationally regulated, but still largely locally paid.⁵⁴ This was an important and effective piece of legislation, largely ignored by educational historiography, yet, the success of this law stood in strong contrast to the repeated failure in getting a general law approved that regulated, at least one, level of the educational system.

The Administrative State Home Alone

Educational historiography has been concerned with the question of why there was no effective school legislation in Prussia in the crucial second half of the nineteenth century. Bernd Zymek argues that long-term transformations were more important and more successful than any individual and spectacular piece of legislation.⁵⁵ Jeismann saw legislative shortcomings as a question of legitimation. For the Prussian society of the nineteenth century, mass education was not a state affair, but a societal issue, an issue that was still the responsibility of the churches, the gentry and communities.⁵⁶ For those actors, the lack of a school law was not problematic at all.

We interpret the lack of solid educational legislation in Prussia in this century of mass schooling from a different perspective. Attempts to issue school legislations were not unusual, and this speaks against Jeismann's view of school policy. Over the course of time even conservatives presented their own law projects. The liberal-conservative divide explains many of the developments of the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, equivalent divides had existed in the eighteenth century and in the Prussian reform period after 1806 and important legislation had still come about. Political divisions cannot fully explain the success of early regulations and the legislative failures of the nineteenth century.

We propose to interpret those failures from a point of view in which the act of legislation itself has largely changed its character. The two central regulations of the eighteenth century were more symbolic and not immediately effectual (the GLR from 1763) or mostly codified existing realities (the Prussian land law from 1794). However, in the nineteenth century two things changed. Firstly, after 1806 administrative reform had strengthened both the central state apparatus and, more critically, provincial administrations. In this context, school regulation and laws may have been able to unfold stronger effects than before. Secondly, the meaning of governing by laws changed during the nineteenth century. Almost all legislative initiatives were intended to change the state of things. Contrary to the eighteenth-century acts, which codified and systematized the existent order, these failed projects tried to advance something new such as a secular and modernized curriculum, a stronger connection with secondary schools, or better status for elementary school teachers. The combination of ambitious reform and the perspective of their implementation through an enhanced administrative apparatus changed the meaning of educational laws in the nineteenth century. This shift may have determined repeated failure, no matter whether the proponents were supporters of the late enlightenment, moderates or secular liberals.

It could be argued that contemporary advocates of these failed drafts and educational historians both assigned to school laws too fundamental a meaning so that the question of passing one—in the administration in Süvern's time and later in parliament—became overloaded. This is plausible considering the meaning of law in Prussian society. Yet, the question asked what kinds of rules were required, and laws were often not the first choice of central political actors, but administrative regulations. These proved to bring about incremental progress and could work in a frame that showed their advantages in controlling elementary schools and their actors.

In the century of famous school acts, the Prussian administrative state—including the powerful municipal administrations—was almost home alone in the sense that the administration managed to exclude parliament from educational policy decisions. Here, the huge task of imposing normalizing rules to existent schools and of creating new,

rationalized and normalized ones displayed the particular administrative culture that accompanied the Prussian state well into high modern times. Ian Hunter, when he ignored laws as a constitutive element of the shaping of modern schooling in favour of the more general notion of bureaucracy, may have overstated the Prussian case as central for the emergence of modern schooling. Yet, in doing so, he reflected one of the most intriguing features of Prussian educational development.

Notes

1. For an overview of the statistical developments of the school system, see the book series *Datenhandbuch zur deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*.
2. Hunter, *Rethinking the School*.
3. Ibid.
4. Hunt and Wickham, *Foucault and Law*; Moore, "Law, Normativity," 165–90.
5. Dean, *Governmentality*, 118.
6. See this combination as well in Foucault and Ott, *Verteidigung der Gesellschaft*.
7. Ewald, *Der Vorsorgestaat*.
8. Ewald, "Norms, Discipline and the Law," 138–61; critique in Hunt and Wickham, *Foucault and Law*.
9. See Hunter, *Rethinking the School*.
10. Friedrich Wilhelm I, "Verordnung, daß die Eltern ihre Kinder zur Schule, und die Prediger Catechisationes, halten sollen (September 28, 1717)," 267–68; see also Neugebauer, "Bemerkungen zum preußischen Schuledikt von 1717," 154–76; Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat*, 172.
11. Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 111.
12. Friedrich Wilhelm I, *Erneuertes Edict, daß die Eltern ihre Kinder fleißig zur Schule schicken sollen*; see also Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat*, 173.
13. Friedrich Wilhelm I, "Principia regulativa oder General-Schulenplan," 131–32.
14. Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 45.
15. Printed in von Rönne and Apel, *Das Unterrichts-Wesen des Preußischen Staates. Band 1*, 95–96; see also Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 45–52.

16. Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat*, 173.
17. Printed in Dietrich and Klink, *Geschichte der Volksschule*, 141–55; the addition for Catholic schools *ibid.*, 155–61.
18. *Ibid.*, 141–42.
19. “Instruktion für das Oberschulkollegium vom 22. Febr. 1787,” 619; see also Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat*, 104–20.
20. For a description of the Kolleg’s work, see Fooker, *Die geistliche Schulaufsicht*, 131; Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 491–92.
21. Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat*, 104–20.
22. Schneider, *von Massows Beitrag zur Bildungsreform*; Holtz, Rathgeber, Spenkuch, and Zilch, “Die Politik des Kultusministeriums,” 1–5, 117–23.
23. Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution*. For a printed version of the Landrecht Hattenhauer and Bernert, *Allgemeines Landrecht für die preussischen Staaten*.
24. Paragraph II, line 12; Dietrich and Klink, *Geschichte der Volksschule*, 161; translated by the authors. With this formulation, Prussian authorities extended their reach to all educational institutions.
25. Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 54.
26. Humboldt outlined his pedagogical ideas in two famous memorandums, both printed in Giese, *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte*, 67–73.
27. See, e.g., Lohmann, *Lehrplan und Allgemeinbildung*.
28. See Hinz, *Pestalozzi und Preussen*.
29. Printed in Thiele, *Organisation des Volksschul- und Seminarwesens*, 145–62. Süvern’s draft for elementary schools (*Besondere Instruktion über die Einrichtung der allgemeinen Elementarschulen*, 1813) is based on this work.
30. See Scholz, “Verwaltung und Reform der Elementarschulen Brandenburgs,” 39–52; for the role of the Provincial Governments see Neugebauer, “Kulturstaat als Kulturinterventionsstaat,” 101–32.
31. The draft (*Entwurf vom 27.6.1819*) was printed in Ministerium der Geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten, *Die Gesetzgebung auf dem Gebiete des Unterrichtswesens in Preußen*, 15–74; for more on this draft, see also Jeismann, *Das preussische Gymnasium*, 106–15. Draft and reviews are printed in Giese, *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte*, 90–112.

32. Holtz and Rathgeber, "Zwischen Bildungskonzept und Bildungsweg," 5–55.
33. Giese, *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte*, 109–13.
34. Holtz and Rathgeber, "Zwischen Bildungskonzept und Bildungsweg," 14.
35. *Ibid.*, 14–17.
36. *Ibid.*, 19.
37. For the numbers, see *ibid.*, 38.
38. For this period, see Baumgart, *Zwischen Reform und Reaktion*, 117–27.
39. For an account of the administration changes, see Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution*, 284–336.
40. The school regulation is printed in Heckert, *Handbuch der Schulgesetzgebung Preußens*, 550–60. For an interpretation of the initiative's meaning, see also Jeismann, "Preußische Bildungspolitik," 9–38.
41. Holtz and Rathgeber, "Zwischen Bildungskonzept und Bildungsweg," 38–41.
42. Friedrich Wilhelm IV, [*oktroyierte*] *Verfassungsurkunde für den preussischen Staat*.
43. Verfassungs-Kommission der preussischen verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung, *Entwurf der Verfassungs-Urkunde für den preussischen Staat* ("Charte Waldeck").
44. Friedrich, Wilhelm IV., *Verfassungsurkunde für den Preussischen Staat*.
45. For a description, see Jeismann, "Schulpolitik, Schulverwaltung, Schulgesetzgebung," 115–22. The draft is printed in Ministerium der Geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten, *Gesetzgebung auf dem Gebiete des Unterrichtswesens*, 162–87.
46. Regulations are printed in Krueger, *Stiehl und seine Regulative*.
47. A draft of 'Entwurf eines Unterrichtsgesetzes' (1861/1862) can be found in Ministerium der Geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten, *Die Gesetzgebung auf dem Gebiete des Unterrichtswesens*, 201–24; see also Jeismann, "Schulpolitik, Schulverwaltung, Schulgesetzgebung," 118–19.
48. Printed in Schneider and von Bremen, *Das Volksschulwesen im preussischen Staate*, 375.
49. Printed in Preussischer Minister der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinal-Angelegenheiten and Liese, *Allgemeine Bestimmungen*.
50. See Holtz, Rathgeber, Spenkuch, and Zilch, *Acta Borussia: Das Kultusministerium auf seinen Wirkungsfeldern: Dokumente*, 243–66.
51. *Ibid.*, 256–66.

52. Clausnitzer and Rosin, *Geschichte des Preußischen Unterrichtsgesetzes*, 309–28.
53. See Richter, *Der Kampf um den Schulgesetzentwurf*.
54. Printed in Diekmann and Vorbrodt, *Das Volksschul-Unterhaltungsgesetz*; see also Leschinsky and Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß*, 128–31.
55. Zymek, “Re-Partikularisierung universalistischer Bildungssysteme?” 85–87.
56. Jeismann, “Preußische Bildungspolitik,” 10.

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4

E Pluribus Unum: One Swiss School System Based on Many Cantonal School Acts

Lukas Boser, Michèle Hofmann and Ingrid Brühwiler

Why should the Swiss educational system be discussed in an international volume on school acts and the rise of mass schooling in the long nineteenth century? Switzerland is just a tiny spot on the map of Europe, which by the end of the nineteenth century had barely 3 million inhabitants and about 500,000 children attending primary school (*Primarschule*).¹ Compared to some of the neighboring countries, such as France or Germany—as well as empires of that time, like Britain,

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_4

Austria, or Russia—this is a rather insignificant number of school children. Given that a Swiss school law has never been written, discussing Switzerland as a specific case is even more surprising. A few lines in a single paragraph in a revised federal constitution, adopted by Swiss voters in 1874, provide the only national—i.e., nationwide—school regulations that existed in Switzerland throughout the entire nineteenth century and beyond. Yet, since some of the main characteristics of modern mass schooling, e.g., tuition-free and compulsory education,² were imposed by this revised constitution's paragraph, it is not surprising that it is often mistaken for the starting point of modern mass education in Switzerland.³

In this chapter, however, we intend to put this view into perspective. In doing so, we raise the question of what makes the Swiss case worth presenting to an international audience. We argue that Switzerland is an interesting case because Swiss formal education lacks much of the structural systematization a system of mass schooling is expected to have. Some scholars of education even question whether a Swiss school system exists at all, claiming that there are instead only 26 cantonal school systems. Still, others argue that there is one Swiss school system, albeit comprising of 26 cantonal variations. A close examination of the formal schooling in Switzerland reveals that every canton is given the autonomy to organize primary and most of secondary education. School structures and school legislation are mainly cantonal affairs, not guided by centralized agency or national body of law. However, given that similarities undoubtedly exist between those cantonal school systems, it is important to examine how those similarities came into being, as it is likely that the cantons are not as independent in their decision-making as it might appear at a first glance.

In fact, the creation of Switzerland entailed a national context that forced the cantonal school systems to adapt, which eventually resulted in harmonization and convergence in school matters. As will be shown in this chapter, by the end of the nineteenth century, a “Swiss school system” was in place. It was kind of a macrosystem that consisted of the structurally and legally independent cantonal school systems that gradually converged to common national contexts. In this chapter, we will show how this “Swiss school system” emerged as a complex amalgam

built in a culturally, politically, and linguistically heterogeneous and highly contested environment.⁴ Switzerland was a place where Catholics and Protestants fought over the souls and minds of the people; political, social, and economic changes met conservatism and distrust; new centralistic ideas clashed with century-old federalist principles; and neither a centralized political nor an ecclesiastical authority stood at the helm to steer the nation's course through history.

In the first section of this chapter, we will argue that the idea of providing every Swiss child, irrespective of gender, with formal education has its origins in the Early Modern Age, when denominational schools became involved in the struggle for the children's minds and souls. In the second section, we will discuss a failed, yet still highly influential, attempt to standardize and nationalize mass schooling in Switzerland, undertaken by the government of the Helvetic Republic at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the third section, we will examine cantonal legislative efforts to show how nineteenth-century school acts came into being. These cantonal acts regulated many of the issues that were fundamental for the emergence of modern mass schooling, e.g., general school organization, school buildings, school attendance, school financing, teacher training and choice of teachers, superintendence, and curricular matters. We will illustrate our analysis with examples from the cantons of Zurich, Solothurn, Basle, Berne, Vaud, Schwyz, and Appenzell Outer-Rhodes. None of these cantons is representative for Switzerland as a whole. However, taken together, those cantons represent Switzerland quite well, for they encompass urban, rural, Protestant, Catholic, German-speaking, French-speaking, industrialized, agrarian, wealthy, poor, pre-alpine, and lowland areas. In the fourth section, we will discuss the limited influence the national legislation had on the Swiss school system after 1848. In addition, we will delineate some of the incentives and regulations that actually led to a certain homogenization in Swiss mass schooling in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the fifth and final section, we will summarize the key findings on the establishment of a modern mass school system in Switzerland throughout the nineteenth century.

Struggling for the Children's Minds and Souls

Our story begins during the age of Reformation, when Switzerland was a confederation of sovereign states, the so-called cantons.⁵ At that time, the divide between Catholics and Protestants was so wide that it was the primary cause for war and loathing in Switzerland, while also serving as an incentive to invest greater effort into formal education.⁶ In the first decades of the sixteenth century, the newly Reformed cantons such as Zurich or Berne invested heavily into their local city schools, where future ministers learned to read the Bible and trained to preach their church's creed. It is not surprising that some Catholic cities responded to this educational offensive by ceding their city schools to religious orders such as the Jesuits, who were fighting for the Catholic cause.⁷ However, whereas urban schools thrived in the sixteenth century, most of the rural population received little or no formal education.⁸ On occasion, an itinerant teacher might pass through the village, but apart from that, the main source of knowledge for country dwellers was informal education.⁹

This situation was about to change when the battle for the children's minds and souls expanded beyond the cities into the countryside. Suddenly, schooling was considered almost as important for safeguarding the people's faith as the church itself. Following the council of Trent (1563), Catholics started promoting the importance of religious education for everyone, including the rural population.¹⁰ In return, Protestant cantons enforced their educational efforts on the countryside as well. They passed school acts explicitly designed for setting up schools in villages and hamlets all over their territory. For example, a school act for rural schools was published in 1628 in the canton of Berne. This school act was part of a broader initiative, taken by the Bernese patricians, to secure the population's virtuous and pious behavior in times when the patricians felt that religiosity and morality were at risk.¹¹ In the populous and politically influential Protestant canton of Zurich, one of the cradles of Swiss Reformation, compulsory education was introduced for the rural population around the same time.¹²

Throughout the centuries to come, the Protestant canton leaders specified, renewed, and extended their rural school acts in order to regulate and improve their populace's basic instruction in reading, writing, and—most importantly—religion. In contrast, starting in the late eighteenth century, leaders of the Catholic cantons put an effort into teacher training and adopted the so-called normal method (*Normalmethode*), invented by the Catholic prelate Johann Ignaz Felbiger (1724–1788) of Silesia, that was supposed to improve the rural Catholic population's education.¹³

Recent studies show that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Swiss cantons—Catholic and Protestant alike—had established an impressive number of public schools for their urban and rural population.¹⁴ Those schools, however, were mainly a local cause and this localism left room for varieties and idiosyncrasies to thrive through the curriculum. Literacy rates were high in Switzerland around 1800. In fact, together with those recorded in southwest Germany, they were the highest in Europe. Yet, while almost everybody knew how to read, writing skills were far less widespread. In addition, regional and gender differences were pronounced. In the city of Basel, for instance, almost every boy and girl acquired writing skills, whereas the respective percentages declined to 60 and 20% in rural areas of Bern.¹⁵

School financing was another aspect that differed greatly from parish to parish. Tuition fees usually covered only a small percentage of teachers' incomes. Normally, teachers received an additional salary, partly paid in cash and partly in kind. Teachers' salaries consumed a significant portion of local school budgets, which also had to provide funding for the teachers' housing or subsidizing the rent.¹⁶ Since communal taxes were not a source of revenue during this period, communes and parishes had to contribute to the school budget from their savings and possessions. As a result, wealthier communities could afford higher teachers' salaries and better school houses.

As a matter of principle, the aforementioned school acts and regulations decreed compulsory education, yet school attendance was usually not enforced. Various circumstances, ranging from families' socio-economic needs to weather conditions, often conflicted with the obligation to send the children to school. Most importantly, for many families,

child labor was an important source of revenue. Because most parents did not perceive education as an investment in their children's future, they had no reason to forego the advantages of child labor.¹⁷ Another problem was that in many parts of rural Switzerland paths and roads were almost impassable during bad weather or during winter. As a result, while some children went to school every day, others attended classes only when they did not have to work or when weather conditions did not hinder them from walking to school.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as findings yielded by more recent research show, by the end of the eighteenth century, most children—regardless of their gender—attended some kind of school for at least some time. This resulted in high enrollment rates, which, however, should not be equated with a system for mass education in Switzerland.¹⁹ Such system had yet to come.

A Centralized Swiss State

The first attempt to establish a comprehensive school law for all of Switzerland was a project of the short-lived Helvetic Republic (1798–1803). This centralized “sister republic” (*république sœur*) was established on Swiss territory by the French in spring 1798. In that same year, the newly assigned Helvetic Minister of Sciences and Arts, Philipp Albert Stapfer, drafted the first—and until today only—comprehensive Swiss school law.²⁰

Stapfer drew upon eighteenth-century concepts and discussions on how to educate the citizenry for a modern republic.²¹ While historians cannot concur on by whom exactly Stapfer was influenced the most, he was certainly cognizant of the Swiss as well as the French and German debates on this topic. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the exigency to educate a virtuous republican citizenry was thoroughly discussed in the transnational intellectual community of the *Republique des lettres*. Therefore, there was no shortage of literature for Stapfer to draw upon, which included Franz Urs Balthasar's dreams to “rejuvenate” the Swiss Confederacy, printed in 1758; Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile*, published in 1762; or the plan to set up a national school system for

France formulated in 1792 by the French mathematician and philosopher Condorcet.²²

The Helvetic school system outlined in Stapfer's draft was as simple as it was persuasive. The proposed school system had the shape of a pyramid with primary school (*Bürgerschule*) at its base. Boys and girls were supposed to attend school from age six until they reached full proficiency in the main subjects.²³ Children who refrained from attending primary school were to prove their knowledge in a public exam. It was further stipulated that one school building (or classroom) per 500 inhabitants had to be provided in each region. In addition, primary school, or "citizen's school" (*Bürgerschule*) as Stapfer called it, was envisaged as free of charge, whereby tuition would be covered by state taxes. For rural communities, Stapfer planned six hours of class per day in winter, which declined to four in summer. However, in cities or large communes, school day had to last for six hours throughout the whole year. Shorter school days in summer allowed children living in the countryside to work on their parents' farms.

Stapfer intended to introduce a comprehensive curriculum consisting of reading and writing in the children's mother tongue, arithmetic, elements of French or German as a second language, planimetrics, elements of natural history, physics, geography, and history, arts and crafts, human constitution, hygiene, housekeeping, bookkeeping, elements of the constitution, the law, society, and morals.²⁴ This curriculum was intended to impart the knowledge and the virtues Stapfer considered necessary for a good citizen in a modern republic. Its main purposes were thus: to give the children an idea of what Switzerland as a nation was; to provide them with useful knowledge for everyday life; to train their minds in logical and rational thinking; to enable the future citizens to participate in a larger economic area; to allow them to keep up with scientific and social progress; and finally, to qualify them for advancing within the school system. However, the Helvetic Directorate, in charge of revising Stapfer's draft law, narrowed down this ambitious curriculum to reading and writing in the first language, elements of arithmetic, history, geography, morals, and civics—subjects that the Directorate deemed the teachers able to actually teach.²⁵

The middle-layer in Stapfer's educational pyramid consisted of two types of schools. The so-called industrial school (*Industrieschule*) in which future industry workers and craftsmen were prepared for their professional lives, and the grammar school (*Gymnasium*) that Stapfer envisaged in every canton. Admission to these institutions should have been strictly meritocratic and free of charge. The *Gymnasium* was supposed to be the place where "excellent minds" would be taught to become teachers, lawyers, physicians, engineers, artists, and civil servants.²⁶ The "brightest and most meritorious minds" of every generation would finally move up to the central institute at the apex of the pyramid.²⁷ This unique institution was envisioned as a place of pure science and art where "research has no limitations."²⁸

Yet, however elaborated this draft for a school law might have been, it was never approved by the Helvetic parliament. Only parts of it were passed as independent acts. Yet, even in these cases,²⁹ the authorities failed to enforce those acts because the Helvetic Republic never established itself as a state capable of successful governance. After 1800, the Helvetic Republic entered a period of downfall; it was destabilized by civil war, political turmoil, and several *coups d'état*. Eventually, the Republic came to an end and the 19 once again sovereign cantons united as a confederation (now called Swiss Confederacy) under the guidance of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803.

Although Stapfer's draft was never implemented in practice, it played an important role in the development of educational policy in Switzerland, because, after 1803, it was used as a sort of a blueprint for the cantonal school systems in the making.³⁰

Back to Sovereign Cantons

After the downfall of the Helvetic Republic, the Swiss cantons had to reorganize their legislation, including school policy. The canton of Vaud is an interesting example in this regard.³¹ In 1798, this canton gained its independence from Bernese rule and eventually became a sovereign state after the collapse of the Helvetic Republic in 1803. As a now

sovereign canton, Vaud had to establish its own school policy, and it did so with a school act passed by the cantonal parliament in 1806.

This law of 1806 outlined a school system similar to the one drafted by Stapfer. Primary school comprised the lowest tier of the hierarchy. As it was compulsory, it was simply called “the school.” All children were supposed to attend primary school from age seven until they had received “sufficient” education.³² Parents who failed to send their children to school were to be punished with a fine or even imprisonment.³³ After graduating from primary school, students who strived for higher education could transition to middle school (*collège*). The school system culminated with an academy located in the canton’s capital, the future University of Lausanne. A centralized education council oversaw the whole system, while priests and committees of laymen controlled the local schools on site.

In accordance with the new act, primary school teachers’ salaries had to be paid in part by the communes and in part by the pupils’ parents. However, as primary education was compulsory, to make it accessible to all, the canton subsidized poor communes and parents who could not afford tuition. A primary school curriculum that was more comprehensive than its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century precursors and was the same for every child throughout the whole canton was introduced. Besides reading and religion, the new curriculum also included writing (i.e., orthography) and arithmetic.³⁴

Political changes, such as those in Vaud, were not the only factor that prompted cantons to focus on school policy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, social and economic changes necessitated extended schooling for the whole population—boys and girls alike.³⁵ The rising industrial production demanded skills and knowledge children could not learn at home. New economic ideas, such as free trade, could only be realized by increasing literacy and numeracy among the population. Science and technology produced a steady stream of new useful knowledge people could only profit from if they had some basic formal education. The growing public sphere founded on books, newspapers, and journals depended on a literate readership. Finally, new ideas about personal freedom, equality, and political participation mandated that everybody possess some general knowledge about the state and the rights of

its citizens. Public schools, which were supposed to meet all those needs and demands, began to modify the curricula in order to educate the citizenry to the desired level.

Yet, although public schools faced new social, political, and economic demands, most of the old cantons did not introduce new school acts.³⁶ Instead, the pre-existing legislation was revised or amended with new regulations (e.g., regarding teacher training or textbooks).³⁷ Moreover, leaders of most cantons focused their efforts on primary education and did not establish a coherent school system applicable to the entire cantonal territory. This also meant that, in most cantons, significant differences regarding educational opportunities between urban and rural regions prevailed. While most city dwellers had access to secondary schools, no such institutions existed for the rural population.

In most cantons, school legislation was about to change in the 1830s. Under the influence of the French July Revolution (1830), the rural population in Switzerland rose against the ruling urban elite's traditional social, political, and educational privileges. This emergence of the so-called liberal movement resulted in new democratic cantonal constitutions through which the rural population gained equal political rights and equal opportunities to run for political office. Those new constitutions urged the political stakeholders to make sure that all citizens—city dwellers and rural countrymen alike—received an appropriate education in order to assert their democratic rights and fulfill their civic duties.³⁸ In doing so, most cantonal policy makers drew upon Stapfer's draft to introduce either a four-tier (primary, secondary, and grammar school, followed by university) or a three-tier (primary, secondary, and cantonal school) school system. It is noteworthy that primary school was the first to be introduced, as the cantonal policy makers recognized the importance of primary education purported by Stapfer.³⁹

In the canton of Solothurn, for instance, primary education was declared compulsory for every child in a school act issued in 1832. Boys had to attend primary school between ages seven and 13, followed by further compulsory education until they turned 16. Girls had to attend the same primary school until age ten. Upon graduation, they had to attend special courses including, besides academic topics, needlework and other types of handicraft. The obligation to attend those courses

ended when the girls turned 15. Although this primary education was compulsory, policy makers in Solothurn were highly considerate regarding the fact that most children had to work at home. Therefore, in winter, when agricultural work was less intensive, school was held for 30 hours a week, reducing schooling to only six hours per week in summer, when extensive farm labor demanded for children's help. In addition, during the planting, haymaking, harvesting, and sowing season, children were not supposed to go to school at all.⁴⁰

Solothurn provides just one example for a timetable introduced by the new primary school acts. Other cantons managed school days and school hours in similar manner. Although the resulting schedules usually matched the needs of a mostly agricultural society quite well, they caused problems for children who had to work in early industrial production or cottage industry, as these were not affected by such seasonal dynamics. Textile industry, which was common in the eastern parts of Switzerland, or clock making in the Jura mountains, were often more labor-intensive in winter, thus keeping children away from school in times when most classes were held.⁴¹

The new cantonal school acts also bore a close resemblance with respect to learning content. The curriculum usually encompassed reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and music, elements of history and geography, technical drawing, and sometimes even book keeping. Yet, in some cantons, this curriculum could not be fully introduced because teachers lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to teach all of those subjects.

The first half of the nineteenth century was also marked by efforts to harmonize school financing. Most canton leaders agreed on the principle that the state (i.e., the canton) had to finance school expenditure, or grant financial subsidies to the school districts. However, in some cantons, only the less well-off communities were granted such cantonal subsidies, whereas relatively affluent communes still had to pay for their school in full. The primary school teachers' revenues therefore still differed greatly across both cantons and school districts.

Without a doubt, the school acts of the 1830s marked an important step in the establishment of mass education in Switzerland. However, these acts neither contained radically new ideas nor introduced radically

new principles. Rather, they merely enforced principles that had marked educational policy in Switzerland for a long time. From the onset of the nineteenth century, the main objective of primary schooling in Switzerland had been the same—educating the future citizens. This primarily meant educating pious Christians (Catholic or Protestant), who were productive, capable of asserting their democratic rights, and willing to fulfill their duties toward church, fatherland, and civil society.⁴²

School Legislation and the Fight Against Absenteeism

When the Swiss cantons united as a federal state in 1848, primary schooling remained the responsibility of the cantons. This autonomy was due to the fact that, in times when tensions between Catholics and Protestants were high, both parties still considered schools the battleground for the children's minds and souls. Catholic canton leaders insisted on their religious and educational sovereignty for they feared that a federal school law, written by Protestants (who were in the majority), would undermine the Catholic's religious identity. Therefore, the commission in charge of drafting the Swiss constitution considered education a highly sensitive topic.

It was first in 1874 that the Swiss parliament took a cautious step toward national school legislation.⁴³ In the revised constitution's paragraph—mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—compulsory education, which was supposed to be tuition-free and “sufficient,” was stipulated. This paragraph was rather symbolic, as it stipulated something that most cantons had already established. Yet, it remained unclear on the definition of “sufficient” education, while omitting to delineate the specific measures the federal state could take against failing cantons. Although this constitutional paragraph was obviously not supposed to weaken the cantonal sovereignty in school matters, it gave some people hope that a national school law would eventually be created. In a time of ever-growing nationalism in Europe, such a law was supposed to secure Switzerland's status as a nation state, for it would

guarantee that every Swiss citizen was taught the same curriculum, thus acquiring the same knowledge, skills, morals, and ideologies. However, a referendum held in 1882 crushed the hope for a federal school law, when the Swiss voters made it very clear that they would not accept any kind of federal interventionism regarding public schooling.⁴⁴

Even though the 1874 federal constitutional paragraph was merely symbolic, mass schooling became prevalent throughout Switzerland in the late nineteenth century. In the following sections, we will focus on two phenomena—absenteeism and learning outcomes—in order to analyze this development more thoroughly. As we will show, those phenomena were relevant not only to individual cantons, but to Switzerland as a whole.

In the course of the establishment of mass schooling in Switzerland, absenteeism became a widely debated topic, even though it did not equate to low enrollment rate. Indeed, according to contemporary statistics, 97% of school aged children were enrolled in school by 1882.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, many children missed classes during their compulsory school years. Missing classes was especially problematic due to the introduction of age-group levels in the late nineteenth century. Previously, children of all ages attended the same classes as a part of which they were taught individually or by mutual instruction.⁴⁶ In schools organized by age-group levels, all children in one class were supposed to learn according to the same timetable and the same syllabus. As teaching and learning now followed a clearly defined pace, children who missed classes struggled to keep up with their peers.

To avoid such issues, teachers were reminded to keep track of how many classes their pupils missed. Keeping the register book up to date became a crucial task for Swiss primary school teachers in the nineteenth century. The cantonal school authorities gathered those register books once a year and produced annual statements on pupils' absences. Following the logic that greater attendance equated better education, absenteeism became a marker not only for assessing the cantonal school systems, but also for comparison across systems.

The absenteeism rates in Zurich's primary schools, for instance, declined from an average of 20.7 days per school child and school year in 1839/1840 to 9.1 days in 1899/1900.⁴⁷ In Solothurn, the

absenteeism ratio declined from an average of 18.2 days per primary school child and school year in 1876/1877 to 9.9 days in 1899/1900.⁴⁸ In the canton of Appenzell Outer-Rhodes, absenteeism was almost completely eradicated in 1900 (with an average of a little more than one absent day per primary school child).⁴⁹ At the same time, Berne and Vaud still struggled with high absenteeism rates, but even in these cases the numbers slightly declined (Berne) or were stabilized (Vaud).⁵⁰

The considerable decline in absenteeism rates throughout almost all of Switzerland by the end of the nineteenth century could be attributed to the enforcement of compulsory education in all cantons, in line with the 1874 federal constitutional paragraph. However, this explanation falls short. To fully understand mass schooling in relation to compulsory education and increased school attendance rates in the last decades of the nineteenth century, other contexts must be taken into account, one of which is child labor.

Agricultural child labor had a long tradition and it did not conflict with schooling. As mentioned above, school schedules met the labor needs of the rural communities. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, Switzerland transformed from an agrarian society into an industrial one. As a result, many children started working in the industrial sector. As industrial work was not seasonal in nature, it kept the children from going to school whenever there was work to be done, all year long. Therefore, children who worked in industry had comparatively high absenteeism rates. Still, industrial child labor had additional adverse effects. While working on a farm was considered good for child's health and development, or even educative, working in industry was deemed to jeopardize children's health and morals. To keep children away from factories, champions of child protection linked their cause to the political efforts to enforce compulsory education.⁵¹

State officials were requested to take punitive measures against parents who refrained from sending their children to school. However, it is important to recognize that, besides such punitive measures—which had been well known, yet were mostly ineffective for centuries—and moral or healthcare issues, absenteeism rates declined for yet another reason: Parents began to view education as an investment in their children's and therefore their families' future. Education became an asset,

on which parents placed greater value than the additional family income generated by their children's industrial work.

Standardization Through Testing

Another phenomenon that became decisive for the establishment of mass schooling in the second half of the nineteenth century was a growing interest in learning outcomes. Traditionally, schools were held accountable for their activities. But besides well-established forms to examine schools, such as school visits and school exams, in the course of the nineteenth century, written tests were introduced in Switzerland as yet another form of assessment. Interestingly, such tests were not introduced by pedagogues or school administrators, but by the military. Swiss military officers had learned from French and Prussian experiences that educated men made good soldiers and officers. Therefore, they began to systematically test the conscripts' skills and knowledge.

From early on, the test results were discussed publicly. For example, in 1856, the Swiss Teachers' Journal reported that, according to tests conducted in different Swiss cantons, between 96.5% (Berne) and almost 100% (Solothurn) of young men were able to read.⁵² Although those numbers were reassuring, the tests also revealed that some men were basically illiterate, which the unknown reporter attributed to absenteeism.⁵³ This assertion was not unfounded, as boys who did not go to school had no opportunities to learn what was taught in class. Other explanations for illiteracy could also be offered, however. For instance, some of the young men that took the aforementioned tests might have lost some of their academic skills in the years that had passed between leaving school and entering the military.

Although test results provided some information about the learning outcomes in some cantons, they were not comparable on a national level since the cantons developed, executed, and graded the tests independently. This practice changed in 1875, when the Swiss military was centralized, and a new federal military law paved the way for assessing all conscripts using the same test.⁵⁴ A military officer called Abraham Stocker drafted the first test that was supposed to reveal whether the

young men had the knowledge a soldier was supposed to possess.⁵⁵ This first national test consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, and “fatherland studies” (an amalgam of geography, history, and civics). Since the test was conducted as a part of the recruitment process, it applied to men only. To some extent, the test content mirrored the gender-specific differentiation of the primary school curriculum that took place after the mid-nineteenth century. Girls now focused on needlework and other handicrafts, whereas boys were taught different subjects such as history and geography.⁵⁶

Once all Swiss conscripts completed the test, the Federal Statistical Bureau gathered the answers, evaluated them, and published the test results. The first such report caught considerable attention because it revealed significant differences among cantons. In Zurich, for instance, only 0.5% of the young men (ages 20–21) were unable to read. In Basle, the percentage was 1.4%, in Vaud 1.7%, in Basel-Country 2%, in Appenzell Outer-Rhodes 2.5%, in Berne 3.8%, and in Solothurn 4.5%. The highest percentages of illiterate conscripts were recorded for Catholic areas, such as Appenzell Inner-Rhodes (over 22%), Schwyz (20.6%), and Fribourg (13.7%). Those figures also showed that illiteracy rates did not necessarily correlate with absenteeism. Vaud, despite comparatively high absenteeism rates, had low illiteracy rates, whereas in the canton of Schwyz, where absenteeism rates were significantly lower, over 20% of young men were analphabets.

To conduct the test, the military hired pedagogical experts, who soon realized that they were given the power and autonomy not only to define what “sufficient” knowledge was, but to standardize Swiss primary education as well.⁵⁷ The tests caused a genuine competition among the cantons. Because local decision makers did not want their canton to be ranked poorer than the others, they took measures to improve their primary education. In some cantons, the time children had to spend in school was extended, while preparatory courses were introduced in others. In several cases, new school subjects (such as civics) were added to the curriculum, and new test-related textbooks were introduced in almost all cantons.

According to the available evidence, those measures had remarkable effects. The conscripts’ test results not only significantly improved, but

also converged, as shown in Fig. 4.1. In this chart, upward and downward bars represent the test results achieved in each canton. In 1886, the results were still very heterogeneous, with some cantons performing very well, while others scored rather poorly. This is not surprising, because it took a while for the educational measures taken by the

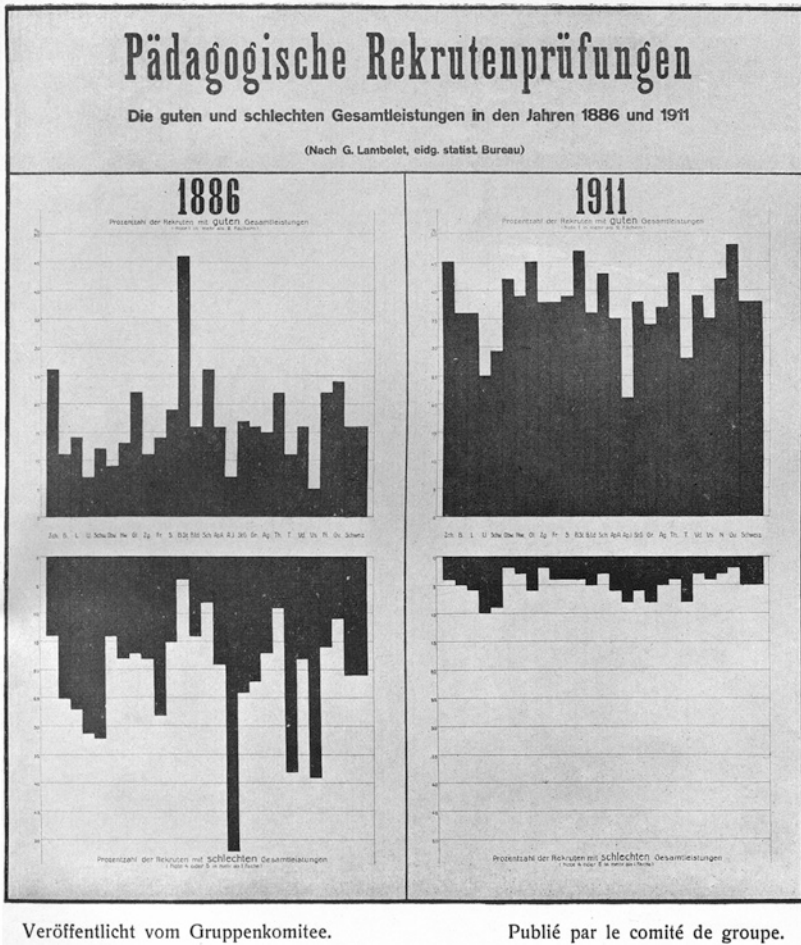


Fig. 4.1 Improved test results in Switzerland between 1886 and 1911. Schrag, *Bericht über die Gruppe 43*. A, s.p.

cantons after 1875 to yield benefits. In 1911, positive effects were clearly visible. Not only had the poor results almost vanished, but were equally positive in almost all cantons, except four.

A Swiss System of Mass Schooling

This chapter has shown that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Switzerland had a system of mass schooling that matched the requirements of a modern Western society. Almost half a million Swiss children attended primary school, equivalent to about a sixth of the entire population. They were all taught some kind of a core curriculum (although it was never labeled as such), which consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, singing, drawing, and religion. In 1877, the nationwide illiteracy rate among young men was only 5.4%, according to the national recruit testing,⁵⁸ and in 1911, very few significant differences regarding learning outcomes between the cantons remained. Every canton had introduced secondary schools, several cantons had established universities, and the federal state had initiated a prestigious polytechnic university in Zurich (known today as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). Those facts, in conjunction with the data presented in this chapter, show that, at the dawn of the twentieth century, Switzerland had a well-established system of mass education.

However, it would be wrong to say that this system was introduced at *one* particular moment in time. Rather, it evolved throughout the course of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, while parts of this system were new, many of its aspects were based on old ideas and long-standing traditions, and even the new elements were not truly original. Most of them were rooted in Stäuffer's draft, or simply borrowed from foreign educational efforts.

It would be equally wrong to say that this Swiss school system resulted from *one* intentional effort to build a uniform educational framework for the nation. Although this school system was not governed by a set of laws, there were certainly a set of economic, societal, and cultural issues that necessitated convergence of the cantonal school systems throughout the nineteenth century. The development of a national

marketplace, for instance, required common means of communication as a shared basis for mutual understanding. People moving from one canton to another called for harmonization of school structures and mutual acceptance of educational certificates. Furthermore, the creation of the Swiss federal state in 1848 opened up an interesting market for textbook authors. Some of the books written for all of Switzerland actually became bestsellers. They not only made their authors famous and considerably wealthy, they also homogenized the learning content.⁵⁹

Conversion in curricular matters was also forced by the ongoing democratization of the political system that demanded educated citizens who were able to take part in public decision-making processes. The belief that one of education's main tasks was to shape a common national identity prompted pedagogues from all over Switzerland to think about how their cantonal school systems could live up to that task.

Finally, the centralization of the military, a most powerful and most influential federal institution, further expedited this conversion. The fact that every young man had to take the same test urged the cantons to introduce the tested subject matter into their primary school curricula. Therefore, the tests conducted by the military introduced a set of common educational standards for all of Switzerland—something no legal regulations had ever been able to achieve.

However, although the cantonal school systems converged, they also retained significant differences on a structural level—such as the differing number of compulsory school years or the non-uniform admittance to upper levels of public education. In addition, the cantonal school legislations kept local idiosyncrasies alive and were thus important symbols of cantonal sovereignty in an increasingly standardized nation.

In sum, Swiss school was—and still is—a complex body of independent cantonal school acts with a strong focus on local, socioeconomic, denominational, linguistic, and cultural conditions and expectations. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in this chapter, the late nineteenth century marked the onset of a Swiss system of mass schooling—a system that is best characterized in Latin, *e pluribus unum!*

Notes

1. Cf. Statistisches Bureau, *Jahrbuch*, 176.
2. By mass schooling, we understand the (successful) effort to urge every child to go to school for a certain period of time, where he/she receives a more or less standardized amount of education. In a mass schooling system, schools are part of a consecutive educational process (currently labeled primary, secondary, and tertiary) and are equally accessible to all children (at least at the primary level). Finally, advancement in this system of mass education has to be based only on the children's individual merits.
3. Cf. Depaepe, *Educationalization*, 30 and 40; Adick, "Global Trends," 175; Bowen, *History*, 460; Soysal and Strang, "Construction," 278.
4. Cf. Zimmer, *Nation*.
5. Between 1513 and 1798, the Old Swiss Confederacy was a complex and heterogeneous amalgam of 13 sovereign states (the so-called cantons), condominiums, subject territories, and allies. For a concise history of Switzerland, see Church and Head, *History*.
6. Protestantism in Switzerland is either predominantly Calvinist (in the western parts of the country) or predominantly Zwinglian (in the eastern parts). Majority of Catholics are Roman Catholics, Christian Catholics are in minority.
7. Cf. Wendland, "Schulhumanismus."
8. For an excellent overview of Early Modern schooling in the German-speaking realm, see Wunder, "Schule halten."
9. Cf. Montandon, "Organisation," 93–94; De Vincenti, *Schule*.
10. Constance (1567), Fribourg (1579 and 1582), and Delsberg (1581). Cf. Mösch, *Volksschule*, 26–34.
11. Boser et al., "Pädagogisierung," 312–15.
12. Ernst, "Die zürcherische Ordnung," 109.
13. Cf. Berner, *Vernunft*, 188–89; Brühwiler, "Lehrerkurse," 58–59.
14. Cf. Brühwiler, *Finanzierung*; Tröhler, *Volksschule*; Tröhler, *Schule*; Ruloff, *Schule*.
15. Cf. Schmidt, "Neue Ergebnisse."
16. Most school buildings belonged to the communes, but in some cantons (in Appenzell Outer-Rhodes for instance) it was the rule for the teacher to own the schoolhouse. Cf. Brühwiler, "Teachers' Salaries," 73; Brühwiler, *Finanzierung*, 169.

17. Cf. Rosenmund, "Volksbildung."
18. In some villages, school was held only in winter, in other places it was held all year long, and on some rare occasions school was held only in summer.
19. Cf. Ruloff, *Schule*.
20. Cf. Bütikofer, *Staat und Wissen*.
21. Whereas some of the Swiss cantons had been city republics that saw themselves in the tradition of Athens, Rome, or Venice, the Helvetic Republic was shaped following the republican model set by the USA in 1776 and France in 1793.
22. Balthasar, *Patriotische Träume eines Eidgenossen*; Rousseau, *Émile*; Condorcet, *Cinq mémoires sur l'instruction publique*.
23. Bütikofer, *Staat und Wissen*, 38.
24. Stapfer, *Entwurf*, 78–79.
25. *Ibid.*, 88–89.
26. *Ibid.*, 72.
27. *Ibid.*, 73.
28. *Ibid.*
29. In 1800, for example, school was decreed compulsory for every child.
30. Cf. Osterwalder, "Bildungsplan."
31. The canton of Vaud is a French speaking, predominantly protestant canton in the western part of Switzerland. Its capital is the city of Lausanne, situated at the shores of Lake Geneva.
32. Grand Conseil, *Loi*, 4.
33. *Ibid.*, 5.
34. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
35. Cf. Bloch, "Schulpflicht."
36. Zurich, for instance, issued a revised school act in 1803, whereas Berne simply re-established a rural school act from 1720.
37. As did, for instance, the canton of Appenzell Outer-Rhodes in 1805. Cf. Hottinger, *Bericht*, 10.
38. Cf. Criblez et al., *Schule*.
39. Cf. Stapfer, *Entwurf*, 68–70.
40. Cartier, "Schulgesetzgebungen," 214–15.
41. Cf. Schmidt, "Bildungsvorsprung," 84.
42. Cf. Brühwiler, "Contested Citizenship."
43. Cf. Criblez, "Bildungsartikel."
44. *Ibid.*, 353–58.

45. Anonymus, "Schulpflichtige," 174.
46. Cf. Jenzer, *Schulklasse*, 351–52.
47. Gebauer, *Absenzen Primarschule Kanton Zürich*; Gebauer, *Lernende*.
48. Ruoss, *Absenzen*.
49. Gebauer, *Absenzen Primarschule Kanton Appenzell-Ausserrhodon*.
50. Cf. Huber, *Jahrbuch*, 169.
51. Cf. Hofmann, "Pädagogisierung."
52. Anonymus, "Rekrutenprüfungen."
53. Ibid.
54. Conscription was—and still is—mandatory for male Swiss citizens.
55. Cf. Lustenberger, *Rekrutenprüfungen*; Boser, "Militärkarrieren."
56. Cf. Kellerhals, *Schüler*.
57. Cf. Crotti, "Rekrutenprüfungen."
58. Statistisches Bureau, *Rekruten-Prüfungen*, 15.
59. Cf. Boser, "Liebe."

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5

Education in a Nation Divided: The Contribution of School Acts to the Development of Dutch Mass Schooling in the Long Nineteenth Century

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During the Enlightenment, according to people who called themselves Patriots, Dutch schooling was incompatible with their longing for one nation in a centralized republic. Elements that later on became characteristic of nineteenth-century schooling, such as special school buildings, teaching diplomas and whole-class teaching, were still missing and there was no overarching school system. While enrolments and probably the quality of schooling increased, so too did the criticisms as a result of changes to educational goals.¹ While schooling in the Dutch Republic was designed to educate children to become good Christians, and for a smaller proportion of the population to become good citizens, the Patriots aimed at inclusive citizenship and saw schooling as

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a tool for the making of the citizens of the new nation. In the words of G.C.C. Vatebender, rector of the Latin School in Gouda, a future carpenter should be educated to become not only a carpenter, but also “a human being”.² School reform was considered necessary³ and the reformers did their best to depict the eighteenth-century school as negatively as possible to contrast it with their own ambitions.⁴

In the first years of the Batavian Republic (1795–1806), philanthropic societies inspired by the Enlightenment dominated the educational debate and prepared blueprints for national school acts, introduced in 1801, 1803 and 1806. However, not everybody agreed with the idea of a nation state inspired by Enlightenment ideals. Orthodox Calvinists and Roman Catholics, two groups who together made up the majority of the population, were against the Enlightenment worldview and did not embrace a national primary school that conflicted with their own religious principles. Initially, the Orthodox Protestants tried to transform the national, moderate Protestant schools into Orthodox ones that would fit their idea of a Protestant nation. When this attempt failed, they changed their strategy, joined forces with their religious opponents, the Roman Catholics, and started a struggle for schools based on their own ideas about nation and government-funded education. This cooperative effort eventually resulted in the unique Dutch education system with public and private schools equally funded by the state.

This chapter focuses on arguments in the main parliamentary discussions about the Dutch primary school acts in the long nineteenth century. The Dutch case is of particular interest, not the least since it sheds light on the challenges of educational policy in a state divided by religious convictions, both between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and between Orthodox and enlightened Protestantism. We address the questions of how, and why, several school acts were issued from 1801 and onwards, and how their content and intentions changed over time. We will also address the question of why, notwithstanding their fundamental differences of opinion, all parties regarded mass schooling as necessary for nation-building. In this chapter, we argue that they were all “believers in the nation”, even though they had different beliefs and interests in the nation and education for citizenship.⁵

Education and Nation-Building: The School Acts of 1801, 1803 and 1806

The School Acts of 1801, 1803 and 1806 were conceived during the birth of a new, centralized state and mirrored a European tendency towards regulating schooling on a national level.⁶ In 1795, the Dutch *ancien régime* ended with the collapse of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands following the Batavian Revolution, which was supported by the Napoleonic army and inspired by the French Revolution. The Dutch Republic was a confederation, with the States General responsible for foreign affairs and the military, but for the rest characterized by regional sovereignty and local autonomy in which political and ruling positions were only open to the Calvinist nobility and burghers. Local interests were often more important than the interests of the Republic. The Batavian Revolution and the supporting Patriots aimed to replace the ruling class by a new one, inspired by the Enlightenment and focusing on political, cultural, social and economic reform.

The new Batavian Republic lasted from 1795 until 1806, a period in which the state's financial situation continued to deteriorate because of the Napoleonic wars. This would become the first major impediment to the ambitious reform plans. Another obstacle was the growing opposition from Orthodox Calvinists who did not agree with Enlightenment-inspired educational reforms and national health policies. Meanwhile, what had been the Napoleonic umbrella turned into a takeover when Louis Napoleon, Napoleon's brother, became king of Holland in 1806 and made it a centralized country along French lines. In 1810, Holland became part of France.⁷

A centralized state is not automatically a nation state. The Dutch "metamorphosis", to quote Van Sas, from a centralized state into a nation state took several decades, and according to Knippenberg and De Pater, it was the result of a combination of infrastructural, economic, political and sociocultural developments, stimulated by the new state through laws and regulations.⁸ The first steps towards unification were the unifying and centralizing of taxes, weights and measures according to the French model, and the abolition of the guild system.⁹

Education was considered essential for making citizens of a state and nation. According to adherents of the Enlightenment, the old schools were an outgrowth of the old regime, with stuffy buildings, disordered and inefficient methods, and arbitrary discipline.¹⁰ They wanted a new school system with a unified spelling and grammar for the nation's language, and with national values prevailing.¹¹

The school acts of the early nineteenth century were part of these efforts. These school acts set out national rules for all elementary schools (*Lagere School*) and, from 1806, these rules were monitored by a national school inspectorate. Among other things, the acts contained provisions about teacher certificates, teacher payment and school buildings.¹² Apart from creating a central school organization, the reformers also wanted to centralize the curriculum and teaching methods. With their emphasis on rational and efficient central control and the ideal of educating the masses to become citizens, these laws revealed their Enlightenment inspiration.¹³

The first act of 1801, issued by the Minister of Education (*Agent van Nationale Opvoeding*) Johannes van der Palm, made a distinction between public and private schools. The act only applied to public schools, run by municipalities that received funds from local or national government or from the church. It covered both schools in the cities and countryside, and schools for the poor, as educating the poor was considered a vital part of creating an enlightened nation state. Unlike the non-Christian—and often anti-Christian—French Enlightenment, the 1801 and 1806 acts stipulated that Dutch schools should be Christian in nature, but not belong to a specific church, in accordance with the constitutional principle of equality. Article Four of the 1801 Act explained how this could be achieved: “Anything that could undermine good moral codes and respect for the Supreme Being has to be carefully avoided in the textbooks and teaching methods; but anything dogmatic that is understood differently by the different religious communities must also be refrained from”.¹⁴ According to the act's supporters, this should guarantee the cooperation of all religious groups.

The first national elementary education act laid the foundation for the establishment of a national school inspectorate and introduced general regulations on buildings, school times, teacher conduct,

punishments and rewards, and teaching methods. In the schools of the *ancien régime*, pupils of different ages and abilities were placed together in one class, but taught individually. According to the Council of Internal Affairs in 1802, the quality of that education was often deplorable. Young farm workers, often barely able to read and write themselves, acted as teachers. While being educated, almost eighty children breathed the fetid air in small rooms with low ceilings; “and we need to *stay silent in shame* at the uncleanliness of those airless rooms with their lack, not only of comfort, but of the *basic necessities*” [italics in original].¹⁵ The new law sought to end this. Instead of individual teaching, whole-class teaching was introduced in age-homogeneous classes. This, the reformers argued, would adapt teaching to the pupils’ needs and abilities and would encourage understanding rather than the “humiliating, stultifying old teaching method” of learning by rote.¹⁶ The classroom would become a child-friendly environment, with corporal punishment banned from 1820 onwards. The act also put an end to uneducated farmers acting as teachers: teachers now had to pass standard national exams.¹⁷

The Education Act of 1801, conceived in a period of economic and financial decline, encountered budgetary problems and resistance from churches, local governments and parents, in particular because of the new curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods.¹⁸ Despite this resistance, an even more far-reaching act was adopted in 1803. All schools were now declared to be public schools and had to satisfy the regulations. However, this stipulation was expensive, and it sparked even more opposition, in particular from local governments, which contested the act and refused to cooperate.

In 1806, with regional sovereignty eventually abolished, a new education act, prepared by the General-Director for Schooling, Adriaan van den Ende, was introduced by the *Wetgevend Lichaam*, the parliament of the Batavian Republic from 1801 to 1806, consisting of 35 members, indirectly elected representatives of the regions. Less ideological and more pragmatic than its two precursors, it emanated a sense of reality by again making a distinction between public and private schools. Private schools, which did not have public financial support, needed state approval and had to follow the regulations of the law, including control

by the new school inspectorate.¹⁹ Public schools, funded by the government, were intended for the masses. The majority of private schools had to be financed by parents and were therefore only attended by children from the upper classes. Some private schools, however, were funded by philanthropic societies, as the Society for the Common Good, founded in 1784, dominating the educational debate around 1800 and establishing private schools for the masses as forerunners of educational reform.²⁰

Nevertheless, this third school act was also based on the Enlightenment notion that all people, notwithstanding differences in social, cultural and religious background, should be educated in general Christian and moral virtues.²¹ As a result, religious education in accordance with specific denominations such as Calvinism, Lutheranism, other Protestant denominations and Roman Catholicism was banned during regular school hours. From now on, denomination-based religious education had to find a place outside the school. The Christian God was not totally absent from the classroom, however: general religious education, in practice moderate Protestantism, was considered crucial for making good citizens.²²

The main idea behind this non-dogmatic education was that it should unite the different Christian groups and so contribute to the dreamed-of nation state guided by a general Christianity rather than specific denominations.²³ By taking Jesus as an example, pupils needed to understand “what mankind is, has to be and can be”.²⁴ Although not formally prohibited, private denominational schools—unlike the schools of the Philanthropic Society for the Common Good—were seldom granted the permission needed to open their doors. Thus, proponents of the new law had no intention of promoting private education if it did not match their ideological ambitions.²⁵

The implementation of the 1806 Act, effective until 1857, was rather successful in terms of increasing teaching quality and contributed to some growth of school attendance with enrolments increasing from c. 60 to 68% of the school-age population.²⁶ Yet regional studies indicate that old and new types of school often coexisted for a long time. Non-dogmatic Christian education was chameleon-like, taking on more or less the flavour of the dominant regional religion.²⁷ As a result, although

most headmasters were still Protestant, in regions with a large Catholic majority, such as the south and part of the eastern Netherlands, sometimes Roman Catholic headmasters were appointed. Moreover, school inspectors were not always successful at preventing Catholic and Orthodox Protestant schools from operating contrary to the idea of general religious education. In the meantime, the number of public schools grew substantially, which contributed to educational reform, as did the already-mentioned private schools for children of the masses funded by the Society for the Common Good.²⁸

Implementing Freedom of Education 1806–57

The Enlightenment-based assumption behind the 1806 Act, that a general Christian education would unite the nation, eventually did not work. The reason for this was that it brought together the Orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics in their struggle against the liberal ideas of nation and citizenship, notwithstanding their internal differences on those issues. The Orthodox Protestants considered the Netherlands a Calvinist nation, and indeed, ruling positions during the *ancien régime* were only open to Calvinists, despite equal numbers of Roman Catholics and Calvinists in the population (each about 40%). It was therefore no surprise that support for liberal ideas on citizenship and education declined as soon as the majority of the population increased their power, which happened during the nineteenth century. This process underwent different stages.

The Orthodox Calvinists took the initiative.²⁹ With the foundation of the Batavian Republic in 1795, they lost their dominant position in society and schooling. A general Christian education, however, was unacceptable to them as they did not share the horizontal anthropological notions of enlightened Protestantism, with its greater focus on human beings than on God; it was incompatible with their faith, which was based on the Bible and the Heidelberg Catechism. According to them, the religion as propagated by King William I and the ideological foundation of public schools was tantamount to superstition, like the Roman Catholic belief in saints.³⁰ Because of these objections,

Orthodox Calvinist parents established illegal schools, which was fiercely criticized by adherents of public schools.

Orthodox Protestants were, however, divided. Some, like Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, were of the opinion that the state and the nation should be based on the Protestant Confession of Faith, with the Heidelberg Catechism as a foundation document.³¹ Others, like J.J.L. van der Bruggen, a future member of the Dutch government and responsible for the School Act of 1857, defended the notion of a state remaining neutral towards all denominations and keeping its distance from religious matters. The former longed for the revival of the Protestant schools from the Dutch Republic, while the latter opted for Protestant schools alongside neutral public schools.³²

For Catholics, the starting situation was different.³³ The Batavian Revolution resulted in civil rights for all denominations, an enormous step forward compared to their position in the Dutch Republic. With still limited power—no dioceses or episcopate and only a few churches—they were initially indebted to the liberals and often supported them politically. However, whereas the general Christian schools were not Protestant enough for the Orthodox Calvinists, they were too Protestant for the Catholics. Although politically loyal to the Dutch state, they were spiritually loyal to the Pope, who resisted all reforms based on Enlightenment ideas. Therefore, from the 1830s onwards, the Catholics also longed for their own schools.³⁴

In the run-up to the constitution of 1840, both the plea for Catholic schools and objections against the non-dogmatic character of public schools became national issues.³⁵ The constitution did not change the requirements regarding education, but the new King William II, who enjoyed a good relationship with Joannes Zwijsen, future Catholic archbishop of Utrecht, set up a commission to investigate Catholic complaints.³⁶ This led to the Royal Decree of 2 January 1842, containing several measurements to meet the objections, such as the possibility to check and dispose of textbooks that contained anti-Catholic texts.³⁷

In 1848, with liberal and sometimes socialist revolutions breaking out all over Europe, the King, anxious about what could happen in his own country, switched within 24 hours “from conservative to liberal” and asked the liberal politician Johan Rudolph Thorbecke to draft a

new constitution. In the constitution, written within a week, Thorbecke stipulated a series of citizen freedoms, among them freedom of education.³⁸ This was a seemingly unexpected gift for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Protestants—unexpected because they saw the liberals as the main supporters of the existing educational regime and seemingly because Thorbecke was a man of liberal principles, who did not want the state to force specific ideological views, including his own, on the population.

According to this new constitution, citizens could set up their own schools with their own ideological background. All teachers were still required to pass an exam and all education, private and public, was under the control of the national school inspectorate. The constitution continued to favour public schools by stipulating their sufficient supply, but it moved away from the early nineteenth-century notion that educational homogeneity was necessary to create citizens for the Dutch nation state.³⁹ With this constitutional guarantee of the freedom of education, Thorbecke followed his liberal principles by placing the primary responsibility for schooling in the hands of local governments and individual citizens.⁴⁰

The constitutional freedom of education was translated into educational legislation in 1857 under the responsibility of the Orthodox Protestant Minister J.J.L. van der Brugghen and approved by parliament. Although an Orthodox Protestant, he shared Thorbecke's view—unlike his grassroots supporters—that the state should remain neutral towards religious groups in order to respect the constitutional freedom of education.⁴¹ He therefore stipulated that public schools should no longer educate children based on any form of neutral Christianity, but should refrain from religious education. From now on, religious education was not the responsibility of the state but only of the church. According to Van der Brugghen, mixed public schools remained “the best means to create unity of public spirit, and unity of religiousness”.⁴² The justification for this state task was nation-building; in the words of the liberal M.H. Godefroi: “the duty to combat intolerance, to promote fraternization of the sons of the same fatherland, to pull down the barriers between religious denominations: that is the interest, the mission, the duty of the State”.⁴³

However, parliamentary opponents of neutral public schools feared “irreligious schools”⁴⁴ and “popular education torn loose from Christianity”.⁴⁵ In their view, this endangered nation-building, since this act “would lay the foundation for a period of irreligiousness and dehumanization of our nation, leading to the decay of the social order”.⁴⁶ However, the idea of neutral schools was not as absolute as it seemed. Also, under the new law a Christian spirit was essential to the upbringing of young people: the assumption that the Dutch nation was a Christian one was not abandoned.⁴⁷

The fundamental issue of freedom of education was resolved. From now on, citizens could set up their own schools in a constitutional way. Yet, as said above, the character of the public school did not change fundamentally, and public schools continued to adapt themselves to regionally dominant religious identities.⁴⁸ Public schools therefore remained an acceptable institution for many parents as long as private schools were not funded by the state and therefore too expensive for parents who were already paying taxes for public schools.⁴⁹

Although state subsidies were also considered for private denominational schools in the initial bill, this remained a bridge too far. Some private school supporters considered state intervention a threat to the freedom of those schools,⁵⁰ while adherents of public schools felt that financial support for private schools was incompatible with the liberal principle of non-intervention in private affairs. Moreover, financial support that made private schools more successful could harm public schools and thus their educational mission of contributing to a nation state.⁵¹ Because many parents continued to find public schools acceptable and private schools received no financial support from the state, few private denominational schools were initially founded.⁵²

This situation changed radically from the 1870s, when a new political debate about education began, this time with Calvinists and Roman Catholics joining forces. Pope Pius IX’s encyclical letter *Quanta Cura* (How much Care?) of 8 December 1864, which was an outright attack against liberalism and secularism, was a game changer for the Dutch Catholics. Following the Pope, they now rejected public education and decided to establish their own schools, supported by the bishops, who were available again from 1853 with the restoration of the ecclesiastical

hierarchy. In the meantime, the Orthodox Protestants found a new leader, Abraham Kuyper, formerly a Calvinist clergyman who increased his group's power across a range of areas, including media, politics and education. These Roman Catholic and Orthodox Protestant ambitions were also triggered by liberal plans to increase state intervention in education.⁵³

Protestants and Roman Catholics Together: The School Act of 1878

Both the Catholics under their episcopal leadership and the Orthodox Protestants led by Kuyper wanted to put a stop to the constitutionally preferential treatment of public schools. To that end, Kuyper founded the first Dutch political party, the Anti-Revolutionary Party in 1878.⁵⁴ He also established the so-called Anti-Education Act League and wrote articles in *De Standaard*, the newspaper he founded. In doing so, he mobilized Orthodox Protestants for the cause of education.⁵⁵ Roman Catholic resistance together with Kuyper's political movement reached a climax in 1878 in reaction to the proposed new education act by the Liberal Minister Kappeyne van de Cappello.

This act of 1878 retained the idea of a neutral public school based on Christian fundamentals, which opponents considered a “watered-down Christianity”.⁵⁶ In the parliamentary debates preceding the act, doubts about its neutrality continued since according to M.C. Bichon van IJsselmonde “there is no education without upbringing; no upbringing without morality; no morality without religion; no religion without faith”.⁵⁷ Thus, school education could not be separated from family education and religion. Members of parliament (MPs) opposed the view held by advocates of public schools that private schools would weaken the unity of the nation, for “to claim that our private schools sow discord is a statement that cannot be proven. The unity that our opponents [liberals] want to impose on the nation by force is an artificial one”.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding this discussion of principle, it seems that the main issue was not the character of public schools themselves but, with freedom of education already attained in 1848, financial support for private schools.

This 1878 Education Act was, in some ways, a continuation of the School Act of 1857. While the 1857 Act had led to several improvements regarding the curriculum, teacher salaries, teachers' qualifications and the teacher–pupil ratio,⁵⁹ this policy was strengthened with the School Act of 1878. It stipulated new curriculum requirements, such as the inclusion of plain needlework for girls, the need to formulate a lesson plan and new regulations on school size, teacher–pupil ratios and school buildings. And for the first time, a Dutch school act included a chapter on “promoting school attendance”. But compulsory education continued to face practical obstacles, such as the budget and a scarcity of teachers, and arguments of principle. Religious parents perceived compulsory education as a state infringement of their parental authority. Compulsory education was instead a practice applied to the poor, who could be forced to send their children to school in return for poor relief.⁶⁰ The new regulations to enhance the quality of education were expensive and could not be paid for by local government alone. Central government therefore stepped in. State intervention and social policy were slowly adopted by left-wing liberals from about 1870 onwards. From 1878, 30% of the costs of primary education would be covered by state subsidy, with the rest to be paid by local government.⁶¹

The new quality requirements also applied to private religious schools, but without financial support, which made it more difficult for them to stay afloat. According to the liberals, the primacy of public education as laid down in the constitution of 1848 meant that subsidies could only be granted to public schools.⁶² Moreover, the state had to refrain from giving subsidies to private schools “since every financial compensation from the public purse, however small, would turn a private school into a public one”.⁶³

Obviously, that argument did not convince the adherents of private schools. Several MPs pointed out the unfair position of private schools compared to public ones. Sending children to public schools was free because of the state subsidy, but parents who sent their children to private schools had to pay twice over. W.A. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye pointed down to this perceived unfairness: “It is a parody [...] when you lavishly pour millions from the national treasury, collected from all citizens, into public schools, and you do away with tuition, so

that many parents are tempted to not send their children to our schools, where they have to pay”.⁶⁴ The financial support of public schools made fair competition between public and private schools impossible and, according to proponents of private schools, as for example the Catholic A.J.H. Van Baar, it was contrary to the liberal principles of their opponents: “After all, it is a liberal principle *par excellence* that the results, not the means, are what matters. So, compete by providing good education and in a loyal manner, but don’t oppress or kill your competitors!”⁶⁵

In sum, the quality requirements of the school act led to a clash between liberals and religious groups. According to Orthodox Protestants, the liberals changed from defenders of mixed public schools into defenders of “sectarian schools for progressives”.⁶⁶ Positions were now taken, and no compromises were sought. In response to the debate, the Minister of the Interior, Th. Heemskerk, declared in 1877:

The fact that the government feels entitled to complain is not based on egotism or conceit; what hinders it most is that it doesn’t even seem to want to, or feel the need to bring about a revision of the education act in which both the majority [the liberals] and the minority [the confessionals] can reconcile themselves. The majority seems to deny all grievances of the minority, and has no objection to making a completely one-sided law; the minority seems to have chosen the motto: *all* (which is completely unattainable) *or nothing*, preferring the position of passive spectator to joining the debate, as if there is no room for persuasion or conviction.⁶⁷

Kuyper’s Anti-Education Act League was the driving force behind a massive protest in which Orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics united to resist the privileged position of public schools. The movement collected almost half a million signatures for a petition to King William III asking him not to sanction the 1878 Act. Under the constitution, the King could not refuse his signature, but the petition was an important moment in the Dutch struggle for private schools: it marked the beginning of a process of full state funding for private schools.⁶⁸

The Start of State Support for Private Schools: The School Act of 1889

After the 1878 School Act was adopted, the religious groups did not rest, but raised money to found more private schools. Protestants and Catholics joined forces in parliament on several social policy matters, including education. At the same time, the liberal camp became fragmented: right-wing liberals opposed greater state intervention, while left-wing liberals promoted more social policy. Furthermore, a growing number of liberal parliamentarians realized that many people wanted to send their children to schools that reflected their own worldview. Although some liberals held on to the position expressed as “in the neutrality of the public school I defend the neutrality of the State”, others argued that some compensation would make sense.⁶⁹ In the meantime, the balance of power changed in 1887 when suffrage was extended, thereby ending the monopoly held by liberal governments since 1848.

The first step towards subsidizing private education was the adoption of the Education Act of 1889 under a religious parliamentary majority. The public school, intended as “a breeding ground for tolerance”, could only satisfy the adherents of enlightened Christianity and could therefore, according to the Orthodox Protestant Minister E. Mackay, be called a “sect school of the modernists”. It was wrong to allow the state to privilege such a school, aimed at a minority of the population, since the only concern of the state should be to support proper education for all.⁷⁰ By contributing to teacher salaries (a more substantial subsidy was beyond their financial means), the principle of state subsidy for private schools was acknowledged, and so, according to the Catholic H.J.A.M. Schaepman, “with regard to education the Dutch nation would be [...] not a neutral, but [...] a paternally caring nation”.⁷¹ Furthermore, tuition for public school education was made mandatory, except for the poor.⁷²

This first step towards subsidizing private schools provided relief. However, it did not stop tensions among the denominational parties who wanted full funding of education, while the doctrinal liberals continued to oppose any state intervention in private education.⁷³ The liberal spokesman H.J. Smidt feared that this law “takes an axe to the roots

of our neutral public school, and will slowly but surely erode and work loose the cement of our unity, state neutrality towards churches and denominations”.⁷⁴ In the meantime, the educational agenda after 1889 became dominated by another pressing educational issue, the introduction of compulsory education.⁷⁵

The Compulsory Education School Act of 1900

Already in 1857 politicians had discussed the establishment of compulsory education. This would have been a great step forward in achieving the enlightened mission of educating the masses, but it did not happen for several reasons. The liberals argued that the state should abstain from deciding whether children should go to school, while the confessionals feared that such an obligation would benefit public schools and weaken private ones.⁷⁶

However, the introduction of compulsory education elsewhere reduced fears about loss of parental authority and state pedagogy. Examples from abroad, such as the UK and France, showed that compulsory education could become a normal part of social policy, also covering the struggle against child neglect and criminality.⁷⁷ Although the conservative Catholic P.J.F. Vermeulen spoke of “the overstated significance attached to uniform school knowledge, which most will never use and which will be forgotten in a much shorter time than the time needed to learn it”,⁷⁸ many politicians emphasized the need for compulsory education to develop the nation and democracy.⁷⁹

With 50 votes in favour and 49 against, the adoption of the Compulsory Education Act of 1900 in parliament was a close call. Fear of state interference in family matters was not over. Vermeulen fulminated: “If a mother of a poor family was confined to her sickbed and she needed the help of her nimble ten-year-old daughter to take care of her and her younger brothers and sisters, the law demands that priority be given to the school”.⁸⁰ But H. Goeman Borgesius, Liberal Minister of the Interior, argued that the sacrifice of some individual freedom was needed in the interests of society and the nation:

Robinson Crusoe, wandering about his island, was free, with nobody to disturb him in his loneliness. But we, as citizens of a civilized society, are bound by laws and regulations because we belong to an organization where the rights of individuals are restricted because of the rights of others, and where all members of the community have to sacrifice a small part of their freedom, precisely because they are members of the community.⁸¹

Behind the fear of state intervention was the growing discontent about insufficient financial support for private schools. According to its opponents, the act served liberal, not national interests, since it “turns the neutral state into the mass educator of the Dutch nation”, as the Orthodox Protestant A.E. van Kempen put it.⁸² However, the Education Act of 1900 made education mandatory for all children aged 7–13. Although the Netherlands, in practice, had achieved comparatively high levels of school enrolment in public and private schools, rising from ca. 1860 to 1900 from 80 to 90% of the school-age population, the decision of implementing compulsory education was taken comparatively late.⁸³ The main reason why the Netherlands lagged behind several other European countries was the Dutch struggle for full funding of primary education in public and private schools. According to the Liberal MP Th.M. Ketelaar: “Again and again we talked about funding, about neutrality and the like, but the actual practice of schooling was too often neglected”.⁸⁴

The School Act of 1920

State subsidies for private education gradually increased after compulsory education was implemented. Now that Kuyper’s principle of “sphere sovereignty, meaning that his orthodox Protestant group should enjoy as much as possible autonomy”,⁸⁵ funded in a “fine ideal of freedom”,⁸⁶ was a political reality and the power of the denominational parties further increased, the liberals accepted that one school for one nation was no longer realistic. The School Act of 1920 ended the nineteenth-century struggle for financial equality of private and public education.

The act stipulated financial equality between public and private schools as part of the “pacification” laid down in the constitutional revision of 1917. This revision was an exchange deal between liberals and religious parties, between financial equality for private and public schools—a confessional desire—and universal suffrage—a liberal request. From now on, public and private schools could compete with equal weapons.⁸⁷

This decision was an acceptance of the reality of a nation divided, held together by a system of so-called pillarization: a society characterized by unity in religious and political diversity summarized by the four pillars of Dutch society: the Catholic, Orthodox Protestant, socialist and liberal ones. Each pillar did have its own political party—and the Catholic and Protestant pillars also its own church and own schools—apart from youth organizations, newspapers, sport clubs, trade unions and even broadcasting. The elite arranged the balance between national unity and autonomy to each pillar.⁸⁸

The act of 1920, together with the Compulsory Education Act of 1900, laid the foundation for a unique educational system combining compulsory education with parental freedom to choose the school for their children according to their worldview, without needing to consider the financial implications. The 1920 Act responded to an increasing demand. Just after the School Act of 1878 with no subsidy for private schools was implemented, the number of private religious schools started to grow,⁸⁹ and numbers rose still further after the subsidy began in 1889. The consequences were spectacular: the percentage of children attending public schools dropped from 62 in 1910 to 45 in 1930, to 34 in 1950 and 33 in 2000.⁹⁰ This was foreseen by Liberal MP P. Otto, who feared a splintering of education and rising costs: “I admit that it’s the only way. We just are *a nation divided* [italics by the authors], a nation of denominations, a nation of denominational divisions. This can be seen in matters of religion, but also in matters of politics. This requires some sacrifices”.⁹¹

The Making of a Nation by Accepting a Nation Divided

The Dutch school acts resulted in a school system which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, educated almost all, namely 90%, of the school-age population (6–12) to become citizens of a nation state.⁹² It was a story of success, found in many other European countries, but also a story of frustrated ideals. Adherents of Enlightenment ideals long tried to impose a single school system on one concept of the nation. This attempt frustrated religious groups that opposed these ideals—Orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics. While all believed in a Dutch nation, the nation they specifically believed in was coloured according to their opposing world views.

For Orthodox Protestants, the general Christian schools of the liberals, based on moderate Protestantism and aimed at creating a unity of public spirit, were not Protestant enough. They therefore initially tried to roll back the aims and practices of the liberal 1806 school act and to restore the situation of the Dutch Republic when they ruled the country, including its schooling. For the Roman Catholics, the general Christian schools were problematic because they were too Protestant. However, they had to deal with the dilemma of being loyal to the liberals, to whom they owed their civil rights in 1798, and to the Pope, who rejected the enlightened public schools. Their educational dispute, or *schoolstrijd*, was first and foremost about the right to establish their own schools and only then about state financial support, with Catholics and Orthodox Protestants, old ideological opponents, working together.

In several steps, marked by new constitutions in 1848 and 1917 and a series of school acts, liberals had to compromise their ideals. This started with a shift in educational power in the 1848 constitution, which opened the possibility of founding private schools. A political solution then became possible through a shift of political power: a more democratic suffrage system saw liberals losing MPs and the religious groups gaining more. With the 1917 constitution and the 1920 Education Act, this resulted in an acceptance of the reality of a nation

divided, reflected in an ideologically differentiated and pillarized school system of public and private schools, funded by the state.

Notes

1. Frijhoff, "Van onderwijs," 24–25, 27; Frijhoff, "La réforme." On the quality of teachers, see Roosenboom, *De dorpschool*.
2. Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 80, 83–84; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 265; Los, *Opvoeding*.
3. Klock, Mijnhardt, and Koolhaas, *1800*, 271.
4. Buijnsters, 2001, 14–15; Boekholt, *Het ongeregelde verleden*.
5. The quote is from the title of the book edited by Dagnino and Grazi, *Believers of the Nation*.
6. Tröhler, Popkewitz, and Labaree, *Schooling*; Tröhler, "Curriculum History."
7. Knippenberg and De Pater, *De eenwording*, 13; Lenders, *De burger*, 24–32.
8. Knippenberg and De Pater, *De eenwording*, 13; Van Sas, *De metamorfose*, 175–94.
9. Lenders, *De burger*, 31.
10. *Ibid.*, 79.
11. Hulshof, Kwakernaak, and Wilhelm, *Geschiedenis van het talenonderwijs*, 111–12.
12. Lenders, *De burger*, 12. On teacher training, see Van Essen, *Kwekeling*.
13. Lenders, *De burger*, 9, 48.
14. Van Hoorn, "De Nederlandse schoolwetgeving," 87–96.
15. Ter Gouw, *Beknopt historisch overzicht*, 58.
16. *Ibid.*, 66.
17. Lenders, *De burger*, 37–38, 40.
18. *Ibid.*, 40–41; Braster, *Passie*, 18.
19. Lenders, *De burger*, 21, 40–44.
20. *Ibid.*, 41–44; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 270–72; Dekker, "Philanthropie et rééducation".
21. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 136; Lenders, "Van kind," 11.
22. Lenders, *De burger*, 44.
23. Jans, "The Politics," 97–115.
24. Braster, "Het openbaar onderwijs," 128.

25. Ibid., 129.
26. Knippenberg, *Deelname*, 78, Fig. 5.1. Until 1862, the enrolment rates are of the estimated population aged 5–14; after 1862, it is only possible to deliver enrolment rates of the population aged 6–12, for which primary education in the nineteenth century was intended.
27. Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 127.
28. Lenders, *De burger*, 46–47.
29. See Bruin, *Het ontstaan*; Langedijk, *Bibliographie*.
30. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 136; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 277.
31. Toes, *De toets*, 27–60; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 51.
32. Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 128; Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 144.
33. Raeds, “A Prudent Search;” Dagnino, “A Dutch Traditionalism?”
34. Kox, *Kweekplaats*, 41–58; Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 132–34.
35. Dodde, “*Een speurtocht*,” 258; De Haan, “Het onderwijs,” 182–217.
36. Kox, *Kweekplaats*, 51.
37. Exalto, *Van wie*, 45–53; Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 129.
38. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 144.
39. Kruithof, “Toegankelijk,” 1998; Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 144–50; De Haan, “Van staatszorg,” 98; Dekker, “From Imaginations,” 62.
40. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 144.
41. Ibid., 138–39, 212; De Haan, “Van staatszorg,” 96.
42. Proceedings of the Lower House (PLH) [Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer], Preliminary Report Commission Lower House [Voorloopig Verslag der Commissie van Rapporteurs] 1855–1856, 29 April 1856, 717. The PLH form part of the Proceedings of both houses of Parliament [Handelingen van de Eerste en Tweede Kamer van de Staten-Generaal].
43. PLH 1855–1856, 2 May 1856, 40.
44. PLH 1855–1856, 27 February 1856, 610.
45. PLH 1855–1856, 13 March 1856, 9.
46. PLH 1855–1856, 27 February 1856, 610.
47. Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 133; PLH 1855–1856, 30 November 1855, 242.
48. Dodde, “*Een speurtocht*,” 259; De Haan, “Het onderwijs,” 96.
49. Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 134–35.

50. Exalto, *Van wie*.
51. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 213; De Haan, “Het onderwijs,” 96.
52. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 213.
53. *Ibid.*, 214; De Haan, “Het onderwijs,” 97–98.
54. The Roman Catholics followed in 1896 with the *Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij*.
55. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 214.
56. De Jonge, PLH 1877–1878, 19 June 1877, 982.
57. PLH 1877–1878, 18 June 1877, 958.
58. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, PLH 1877–1878, 17 June 1877, 953.
59. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 151.
60. *Ibid.*, 152.
61. *Ibid.*, 152–53; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 297–303.
62. See e.g. explanation by the Minister of the Interior Th. Heemskerck: PLH, Tweede Kamer 1876–1877, 120.9, 30 August 1877; Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 219.
63. PLH, Letter of Explanation Revision Law 13 August 1857 [Memorie van Toelichting], 1877–1878, 130.3, 10.
64. PLH 1877–1878, 17 June 1877, 953.
65. PLH 1877–1878, 18 June 1877, 966–67.
66. De Haan, “Het onderwijs,” 97.
67. PLH, Response to the Preliminary Report [Memorie van Beantwoording] 1876–1877, 120.9, 30 August 1877, 93.
68. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 215–16.
69. *Ibid.*, 219. The quote is from S. van Houten (liberal), PLH 1888–1889, 22 August 1889, 1307–10.
70. Partial Revision Law of Primary Education, 17 August 1878 (Law Gazette 127), 1888–1889, Number 89.10, 10–11.
71. PLH 1888–1889, 22 August 1889, 1317–18.
72. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 219; Partial Revision Law of Primary Education, 17 August 1878 (Law Gazette 127), 1888–1889, number 89.10; 21–22.
73. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 220.
74. PLH 1888–1889, 23 August 1889, 1336.
75. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 221.
76. *Ibid.*, 152.
77. Dekker, *The Will*, 110–11.

78. PLH 1899–1900, 28 February 1900, 1040–41.
79. See, for example the liberal A. Kerdijk, PLH 1899–1900, 2 March 1900, 1073.
80. PLH 1899–1900, 28 February 1900, 1043.
81. PLH 1899–1900, 6 March 1900, 1097.
82. PLH 1899–1900, 28 February 1900, 1048.
83. Knippenberg, *Deelname*, 78, Fig. 5.1.
84. PLH 1899–1900, 27 February 1900, 1021; Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 153–54.
85. Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis*, 221; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 369–77.
86. Minister De Visser. Letter of Response [Memorie van Antwoord], 1919–1920, 86.5, 151.
87. Cf. A.F. de Savornin Lohman. PLH 1919–1920, 14 April 1920, 1817.
88. The classic study on Dutch pillarization is Lijphart, *The Politics*. Cf. Blom, “Pillarisation,” 153. On the Catholic pillar, see Righart, *De katholieke zuil*; Blom, “Education,” 213–16.
89. Mentink, “‘Vergeten’ onderwijsrecht,” 82.
90. Braster, “Het openbaar onderwijs,” 137.
91. PLH 1919–1920, 13 April 1920, 1796; Blom, “Education,” 213–16. Nowadays, the proportion of private to public schools is seventy to thirty per cent.
92. For enrolment figures in the nineteenth century, see Knippenberg, *Deelname*; Dasberg and Jansing, “Het socio-culturele leven in Nederland 1844–1875,” and “Het socio-culturele leven in Nederland 1875–1895/1895–1914.”

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6

Good and Righteous People and Useful Citizens of the State: The Danish 1814 School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling in Denmark

Christian Larsen

By the 1730s, it was already established that all children in the Danish King's realm were, in principle, schoolchildren. In the countryside, where 80% of the population lived, schools were regulated by the 1739 school legislation under the absolute rule of King Christian VI of Denmark–Norway (1730–1746). The 1736 Confirmation Act, celebrating the 200-year anniversary of the Danish Lutheran reformation, demanded that all young people, before receiving the holy bread and wine for the first time, had to go to school and be taught Christianity. The act was inspired by the King's duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and by German states, where confirmation had been practiced for many years. In order to be confirmed, one had to be able to read. Therefore, Christian VI passed a common legislative framework in 1736 demanding basic literacy.

However, as one school law could not be enacted for highly dissimilar parts of the King's realm, several acts were adopted instead, pertaining to Denmark's rural districts, Norway, and the market towns,

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respectively. In the Duchy of Holstein, the King had to issue three school acts due to the difficult political situation; these acts also became the norm for any Duchy of Schleswig school that did not receive a school act on its own. The legislation made it compulsory for all children to attend school and learn Christianity and reading in order to be good Christians and loyal subjects. If the parents paid for additional tuition, the children could also be taught writing and calculating. As prescribed in the acts, the teachers were either clerks or schoolmasters: The clerks had usually studied theology for a few years, while the schoolmasters had no formal training since this was not a requirement for their appointment. Teacher's salary varied considerably across schools. In some schools, the teacher was on a contract, while he received school fees in others, or was in some cases paid by the landowner. From the eighteenth century onwards, school buildings were timbered or brick houses built and paid for by the local community, church or the landowner.¹

In the first part of the nineteenth century, the absolutist state sought to rigorously enforce the principle of all children having right to education. In 1814, the Danish King Frederik VI enacted school legislation in order to regulate the existing organization of mass schooling within the territories under his rule. The legislation was a response to the agrarian reforms aiming to produce more enlightened and more independent peasants, while also striving to improve life chances of the poor and uneducated children residing in urban areas. Owing to the considerable social, geographical and economic differences among the rural areas, the market towns and the capital, and due to the existence of various administrative structures, to achieve those objectives, the King had to issue a set of school acts, setting different standards for each group of subjects and endorsing a decentralized school organization in order to attain some degree of uniformity in educational outcomes. At the time, there was already a long tradition of setting different standards for different groups of subjects in Denmark, and adjusting the legal framework to the local conditions was not uncommon. The poor relief, for instance, was specifically designed for the capital, the market towns, and the rural areas.

The discussions presented in this chapter will trace the long route from the early reforms on noble estates in the 1780s and the ideas of the Great School Commission, influenced by the Enlightenment, to the promulgation and implementation of the more conservative 1814 school acts. After a brief introduction, the connection between agricultural and school reforms will be explored, along with the plans for a new school act that were put in place in the 1780s and 1790s, leading to the 1814 acts. Next, the 1814 acts for rural districts and market towns in the Kingdom of Denmark are analyzed, focusing specifically on the new school administration, schoolhouses, and the teachers. After examining the perceptions of the role of the school that prevailed during the 1830s and 1840s, the consequences of the acts following their implementation in the 1850s are discussed. The chapter will close with a brief overview of the establishment of mass schooling in Denmark between 1780 and 1850.²

Agricultural and School Reforms

In many ways, public primary schooling in Denmark in the 1850s was in the same condition as it had been in the 1780s. This lack of progress was due to the fact that, throughout that period, Danish society was agrarian, and the industrial revolution took hold in Denmark only from around 1860. There were, however, major shifts in the social structure, which also influenced the development of Danish schools. Some of the most significant changes that took place during 1780–1850 were related to the agrarian reforms in the latter part of the eighteenth century. A long-term population growth (by almost 600,000 from 1787 to 1850) and increased demand for food, combined with new knowledge of the means to increase agricultural production, led to agricultural reforms. In the beginning, especially on the noble landlords' estates, agricultural experiments were conducted.³ However, the landlords gradually turned their attention to their peasants' farmland as well. For the reformist landowners, spreading the cultivation reforms to the peasantry was the ultimate goal, but this required greater reforms.⁴

In the eighteenth century, the Danish King ruled over the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, north of Hamburg. The Duchies were important in that way they were the source of ideas that played a great role in the development of Danish society. Leading Danish government officials recruited intellectuals and pedagogues from the Duchies and the northern part of Germany, the majority of whom were German natives with cosmopolitan views. J.B. Basedow—the founder of the Philanthropic movement aimed at educating philanthropic, natural, and rational beings and thereby reforming the society—was in the service of the Danish King from 1753 to 1767, and the first teacher training college was founded in the Duchy of Holstein in 1781.⁵

In the 1780s and 1790s, Danish noble landlords of German descent launched a series of school reforms. Among them, the most prominent were the Finance Minister Count Ernst Heinrich von Schimmelmann, his brother-in-law Count Johann Ludwig Reventlow and his brother Count Christian Ditlev Frederik Reventlow, who was Minister for Agriculture, Forests, Taxes and Revenue at the time. The Reventlow brothers had attended Basedow's lectures in the 1760s and Johann Ludwig Reventlow had read the German landowner Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow's Philanthropic writings. Spurred by these ideas, the Schimmelmann–Reventlow family set new agendas and standards for their estate schools, with the ambitious goal of creating a new, better educated rural community. The landowners were inspired by the German Cameralism, which gave precedence to agriculture as the country's primary profession and emphasized the economic and moral value of labor. Owing to this new initiative, peasants were expected to be motivated to introduce new tools, crops, and cultivation methods, thus increasing production output and revenue. However, if the peasants were to fulfill this new role, it was necessary to provide them with better schooling, as enlightenment of the entire population was believed to transform all individuals to free and productive citizens of the state. Thus, land reforms were directly related to school reforms.⁶

In 1789, the Danish government established the Great School Commission to address the need for new, nationwide school reforms. The leading members of this commission were the Schimmelmann–Reventlows and the more conservative Bishop Nicolai Edinger Balle.⁷

One of the Reventlow brothers, C.D.F. Reventlow, was also a leading member of The Great Agricultural Reform Commission. After a decade of internal disagreements between the Reventlows and Balle, the Commission's proposals, written by C.D.F. Reventlow, were presented to the government in 1799. Reventlow's draft was based on his own estate school order that he had borrowed, in turn, from his brother. In effect, this school order was a translation of Rochow's ideas into the Danish context.⁸

According to Reventlow, the school was to give the children an identity in order for them to fulfill their new role and as citizens of the state. There were three kinds of identities in Denmark-Norway in the eighteenth century, reflecting differing views on the concept of fatherland: a cosmopolitan identity, whereby one's fatherland was the country in which one lived at the present time; a state patriotic identity, based on the notion of the state—regardless of the inhabitants' origin and ethnicity—being the fatherland; and a national patriotic identity, according to which the inhabitants born in the same country that spoke the same language had the same national affiliation.

The government endorsed the state patriotic identity, regarding all inhabitants as Danish subjects of the King, whether Danish, Norwegian, or German by birth or language.⁹ The schools' state patriotic role was inscribed in the preamble to the 1799 draft, which stipulated that the primary aim of schooling was to turn the peasant youths into righteous Christians, as the absolute constitution obliged the King to uphold Lutheran Christianity as the state religion. In addition, schooling was intended to make pupils good citizens and loyal subjects of the King. The preamble thus expressed dominant cultural convictions about the existing social and political order in a Lutheran, absolute monarchy.¹⁰ Therefore, the purpose of schooling was to give children knowledge and skills enabling them to be happy human beings and useful citizens.¹¹

To achieve these aims, all school-aged children were obliged to attend school, except on days when the peasants plowed, sowed grain and harvested. Following the Commission's proposal, teaching was to include reading and religion, writing and simple mathematics. Depending upon the teacher's capability, math instruction would be extended to include

slightly more complex mathematics. Even geography and history, biology, physics/chemistry and land surveying could be included in the curriculum, while freehand drawing and instrumental music were also desirable.¹²

The Duke of Augustenborg—the King’s son-in-law and a leading government member—feared that the execution of the proposals would come at too high a cost for farmers, as parents needed their children to work at the farm or in the house. He also purported that teaching should be limited to topics of practical relevance to agriculture. In the Duke of Augustenborg’s view, education—if too ambitious—would fail due to peasants’ poverty or as a result of conveying redundant knowledge. He argued that, at best, it was a waste of time and money, while potentially resulting in dissatisfaction among peasants. The Duke of Augustenborg feared that the dissatisfaction could escalate to dangerous proportions, as exemplified by the French Revolution, which had been shaking Europe for more than a decade. In this context, many landlords and the clergy saw the agricultural and school reforms as an attempt to liberate a repressed rural population while keeping them within the existing social order.¹³

As a compromise, a provisional (trial) school act for a minor part of the realm was issued in 1806. The final school acts were enacted in 1814, 25 years after the establishment of the Great School Commission. Several key elements of the acts had their roots in the reform period and the 1806 provisional school act.¹⁴ However, the 1814 agenda differed from the optimistic political visions of the 1780s and 1790s. The Enlightenment’s optimism had given way to a more conservative current, influenced by, among other factors, revolutionary France and Denmark’s participation in the Napoleonic wars during 1803–1815. In 1805, the Ministry of Justice, Church and Education had rejected the introduction of teaching history, geography, natural science, natural history and mechanics as separate subjects, stating: “It is to be feared that by going too far in these matters one might remove the peasant from his real occupation.”¹⁵ Other agendas had also emerged over the years, most of which aimed at assisting the poor and uneducated children in urban areas. As a result, the Poor Acts of 1799 and 1803 had made schooling compulsory for children in the care of the poor-law authorities.¹⁶

The 1814 School Acts

In the early nineteenth century, there were considerable differences between schools attended by children of diverse backgrounds and from different geographic areas due to social, economic, and geographical conditions, as well as gender.¹⁷ All children had to be educated, but they were taught using different methods, according to their social position and place of residence. Therefore, instead of a single school act, five school acts were passed in 1814, setting the standards for schools in different parts of the country. The first school act pertained to the Danish rural districts, the second school act governed schooling in the Danish market towns, and the third was specifically designed for Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. The fourth act concerned the Jews within the Danish Kingdom, and the fifth covered the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.¹⁸

The act concerning the Danish rural districts referred only to schools for peasants, the so-called *almueskolen*. The sons and daughters of the clergy, civil servants, wealthy landowners, or manufacturers could not be satisfied with the common standard of education and were expected to attain a higher level. It was also unthinkable for the two groups of children to share the same school and daily life.¹⁹ Similar principles governed schooling in the Danish market towns. There were, however, some differences. In the largest cities, two kinds of schools were implemented, with public schools (*almindelig Borgereskole*) serving the city commoners, and thus corresponding to the rural commoners' schools, while a public school with more advanced education (*Borgerlig Realskole for Drengbørn*) was designated for sons of wealthy city inhabitants. Another important difference was that peasant children had to go to school every other day in order to meet the demands of an agricultural society, while labor schools were to be organized in the market towns to allow children without paid work to be employed outside school hours.

According to the acts, children should attend school from the age of 6 or 7 until their Christian confirmation at the age of 13 or 14. The twin goals of education in the rural districts and in the market towns were to create "good and righteous people in accordance with

the Protestant-Lutheran teachings, as well as provide them with knowledge and skills necessary for them to become useful citizens in the state.”²⁰ The 1799 draft’s references to “common sense” and “happy human beings” were eliminated, as the focus was given to the school’s state patriotic role in bringing up good Christians and loyal subjects. Religious education was seen as crucial for the creation of good subjects and citizens. Christianity was the foundation for the state and for society, and its central role was reflected in the hierarchy of school subjects, thereby expressing the cultural values.²¹ According to the school acts of 1814, religion was the main subject, followed by writing, reading, and arithmetic. History, geography, and other useful skills were not to be taught as individual subjects, but rather as a part of reading and writing instruction. As an innovation, peasant boys were to learn gymnastics, partly to prepare them for their service as conscripts.²²

In Copenhagen’s public schools (*Almue- og Borgerskolevesenet*), children were to be molded into good, enlightened, and hardworking human beings and citizens.²³ Copenhagen’s public schools were to have three classes, in contrast to rural and market town schools with only two classes. However, the third class was not mandatory and school fees were charged.²⁴ Moreover, education was to be segregated by gender, and the boys’ and girls’ curriculum would differ.

The law concerning Jews differed in several respects from the other laws. This act did not directly refer to education or schooling and was more a general definition of the Jewish community’s rights and duties. Nonetheless, it contained elements that made an oath of loyalty and religious examination a duty for all Jewish youths. The religious examination was, in many ways, similar to the ritual of the Christian confirmation, and accordingly required a preparatory education.²⁵

In Schleswig and Holstein, the new act applied to burgher schools in the small towns, market towns, and countryside schools. The act asserted that the education in rural districts should not solely focus on reading, writing, and religion, but should also include imparting necessary and useful skills, especially those appropriate to the children’s future as farmers.²⁶

Not all parts of the Danish king’s realm received new legislation. In 1813, Frederick VI ceded the Kingdom of Norway to the King of

Sweden, and the new act therefore had no effect in Norway.²⁷ Reform of public schooling in the farthest reaches of the Danish king's northern territories of Iceland, the Faroes and Greenland, and tropical colonies in the West Indies, India and Africa, was also not broached: Schools in these places represented a widely different phenomenon to those in the heartlands.²⁸

The Local School Administration

One of the essential innovations of the 1814 legislation was a complete reorganization of schooling and schools. A new decentralized administrative structure was introduced, with local school boards that laid a good foundation for the local implementation of the acts in a period where the state could play only a minor role.²⁹ Located in the capital of Copenhagen—far from the everyday life in the small towns and villages—the state government needed the help and support of the local communities and, in particular, the pastor, as one of the few civil servants in the parish. This structure was, in fact, a form of delegation, with the absolute King lending his authority to the boards at the local level. However, it is important to emphasize that delegation did not result in devolution,³⁰ as the King and the government had the legal right to override local decisions, thereby ensuring centralized school policy.³¹

To implement these ideas in practice, 1021 rural parishes in Denmark were divided into several school districts, and with at least one in each of the 65 market towns. In addition, all school boards were mandated to have representatives of (the socially elevated section of) the population, appointed by the county school board. With the pastor being the permanent chair of the school board, as well as the daily leader of the school, the church's connection to the school was underlined. The responsibility for supervising the public schools was placed in the hands of the county school board, consisting of the county sheriff and the dean, with the latter as the daily manager.³² Proposals for a central state institution for educational matters were rejected, and school matters remained the responsibility of the Ministry for Justice, Church and Education. This particular body controlled the local school boards

through administrative rules, periodical inspections, and yearly reports on the progress of schooling.³³

According to the school acts of 1814, a plan for the public schools was to be established by the school board and approved by the Ministry. The plan was to include information on the school districts' size and the number of schools, the teachers who were to conduct the education and their salaries, as well as the manner in which school expenses were to be paid.³⁴ Production of these plans was compulsory, since the government wanted to gain control over the implementation of the school acts, but the form and content of the plans varied across the school districts. Therefore, each parish gained its own school plan that contributed to the large regional and local variances of the Danish school system.³⁵ The economic foundation for the public schools was tax imposed on the inhabitants' land and assets, along with church collections, voluntary gifts, and school fines. The income was used to finance erection and maintenance of school buildings, purchase school materials, and secure funding for the teacher's salary.³⁶

One of the key tasks given to the newly established school boards was to make sure that the children attended school on a regular basis. The push for compulsory education or the obligation to be taught was introduced by the 1739 school acts.³⁷ The developments that took place in the decades following 1814 reveal that the acts were perceived and enacted by the authorities as demands for compulsory school attendance, or a duty for children of peasants and laborers to attend school. Only parents who could afford a private teacher were allowed to educate their children at home or at a private school, that is, a school operating as the business of an independent teacher.³⁸

Schoolhouses

In addition to organizing schooling, another main task for the school boards was providing the parish with one or more schoolhouses. In many areas in the countryside, for several generations, school buildings had been adequate. These were especially common where the local landowner, or the Crown, had seen it as their duty to secure a roof over

the heads of teachers and schoolchildren. Many schools had also been constructed in the wake of the school acts of 1739.³⁹ Those schoolhouses, as well as buildings occupied by schools in market towns and in Copenhagen, differed widely in quality.⁴⁰

According to the 1814 acts for Denmark, the schoolroom—provided by the school board—was to be spacious, with at least 2.5-meter height from the floor to the beams. The school buildings would also provide the teachers with a “decent room for themselves and family as well as sufficient space for two cows and six sheep, to retain his feed and wood and the procreation from the school’s soils.”⁴¹ If circumstances permitted, the rules stipulated that a small garden be provided for the schoolteacher, where he could grow vegetables and fruits, thereby also being a role model for the countryside farmers.⁴² In market towns, the city council had to provide school facilities to the town’s children.⁴³

The ministry also issued architects’ sketches of so-called model schools that followed the 1814 acts’ guidelines in 1829, as an inspiration for the school boards when building new establishments (Fig. 6.1). The sketches showed how a good, yet inexpensive, countryside school should be built. It was an ordinary rural house consisting of brick or mud walls and a thatched roof. The model school had a main building for the schoolroom, along with the teacher’s rooms and a barn for the teacher’s cows and other animals.⁴⁴ The sketches were inspired by schools built on some Crown estates in the 1790s, again resembling the first Crown estate school buildings from the 1720s. Tradition and borrowing of ideas thus played an important role in the design of these schools.⁴⁵

The Teachers

Although the importance of teachers in implementing the school reform was recognized, the school acts of 1814 did not ensure that they were adequately paid. According to the rural school act, the teacher’s salary in rural districts consisted of six barrels of rye and ten barrels of barley in kind, 25 barrels of barley-worth of money, beech wood or peat, hay and straw for the teacher’s cattle (two cows and six sheep),



Fig. 6.1 A sketch of a model primary school 1829 (Denmark) (Source The Danish Chancellery, 1 Department. Case no. 1829/1864, The Danish National Archives, Copenhagen)

and a piece of land (circa 690 square meters). However, this was merely a guideline for the local authorities, allowing the central authorities to impose a somewhat higher or lower salary according to the local conditions.⁴⁶ In market towns, the school act stipulated that the teacher's salary would be determined by the number of inhabitants, by the municipality's financial status and the living costs in the market town.⁴⁷

The school acts of 1814 were, nevertheless, followed by attempts to improve the quality of teaching force. Prior to the school reforms, no specialized education for teachers existed, even though informal training was on occasion undertaken by an enthusiastic dean or pastor.⁴⁸ The establishment of formal teacher training from the 1780s onwards changed the teachers' role. In 1781, a state seminary opened in the city of Kiel, in the Duchy of Holstein, based on the ideas borrowed from von Rochow.⁴⁹ In the following decades, two different models of teacher training colleges emerged. In Copenhagen, Blaagaard State College opened in 1791, and the private Brahetrolleborg College was established on the island of Funen in 1794.⁵⁰

Like the state seminary in Kiel, these two colleges offered a somewhat longer and more theoretical training. In the early 1800s, eight rectory seminaries were also established by enterprising priests located in the countryside. The training at the rectory colleges was generally shorter and cheaper and took place under the priest's close supervision. In both types of colleges, the focus was on providing the future teachers with the knowledge and specific teaching methods needed to teach Christianity and the basic skills (reading, writing, math), while also imparting new and useful skills for the teachers' future capacity as role models for the peasants, such as agricultural science.⁵¹

As teacher training colleges had been established over two decades, this resulted in the lack of uniformity. The government thus recognized the need for common rules for these institutions, resulting in the 1818 teacher training college statute,⁵² according to which colleges were to train a religious, modest, practical, and thrifty teacher. Moreover, the future teacher should become accustomed to simplicity in everyday life to ensure that his lifestyle suited the living conditions of a teacher in a rural school among (other) peasants. In sum, the three-year general education should enable the teacher to teach, of course, but also to act as a

people's teacher by communicating his knowledge for the benefit of the residents of the school district.⁵³

The Contemporary Perception of the School Acts

In the wake of the 1830 Revolutions, the Danish king set up four advisory assemblies in 1831, with the right to comment on new essential laws, to bring cases for discussion or raise inquiry debates.⁵⁴ Thereby, a political institution was established as a platform for discussing social conditions, including school matters, as the members were the school's "customers."

Within the assemblies, there was no unanimous perception of the school acts, because the assemblies' members had divergent interests. Members from the market towns demanded, for example, creation of secondary schools (*realskoler*) by transforming existing grammar schools to secondary schools. They also advocated for setting up a special department of the public school with fees for middle-class children whose parents preferred more advanced training.⁵⁵ In the larger market towns, emphasis was given to ensuring that pupils, who would be merchants, manufacturers, artisans, etc. would learn more than common people. In addition, argument was made that the 'finer' children should not attend school alongside working-class children.⁵⁶ As a result, changes were made in many market town schools during the 1830s and 1840s: The public schools were divided into those that charged no fees and offered education in basic subjects for the lower classes, and fee-paying schools that offered extended education to the more prosperous children.⁵⁷

In the countryside, the Ministry had to withdraw parts of the 1829 model sketches for school buildings because the assembly members (and taxpayers) criticized the high construction costs, which they believed were caused by the Ministry's rules.⁵⁸ A proposal (probably written by a teacher) for everyday teaching, more teachers, more schoolrooms, and more subjects was also unanimously rejected.⁵⁹ Instead, the farmers demanded more freedom in matters of their children's education. For example, a Jutland assembly member and farmer, who expressed

the views of the peasants, claimed that the rural school act had not been as successful as expected. In his opinion, it would be much better if the parents had the right to teach their own children or hire a private teacher. He was also of view that forced schooling was the cause of many problems, especially in the region of Jutland with great distances between the small villages and farms and the schools. In this part of Denmark, children had to walk long distances to school, which was particularly difficult in winter, and in summer, parents were deprived of their children's help if they were forced to attend school. The Jutland farmer also emphasized that it was important for the children to become accustomed to work at an early age.⁶⁰

In the 1820s and 1830s, some Pietistic-inspired revivals in Jutland questioned the state church and the school's religious education. As a result, the new state-authorized religion book and the religious teaching in the schools were rejected, as they were considered inconsistent with the Bible. Instead, Jutland's Pietists advocated for retaining the old Pietistic textbook. By keeping their children from attending school, they challenged the school's monopoly on religious education. In response, the government decided that the followers of the movement were given the responsibility for their children's religious education and that they were allowed to use the old textbook. In this way, the break with the state became less prominent because the permission was restricted only to religion and the children of Pietist parents had to attend all other subjects in the school.⁶¹

On the main island of Zealand, a religious revival arose in the 1830s and 1840s with schoolteacher Rasmus Sørensen as a leading figure. He challenged the state church's monopoly on teaching Christian doctrines and claimed that everyone should have the right to interpret the Bible and to establish their own congregations. He was also one of the leading figures in the first political peasants' association established in the 1840s.⁶² This decade gave rise to the first teachers' associations, and the first teachers' general meeting was held in 1846.⁶³

In 1849, a free constitution was enacted. In contrast to many other countries, the new Danish constitution did not lead to a new school act.⁶⁴ The Danish constitutional assembly did, however, discuss who was to be in charge of educating the children: the parents, as proposed

by the Liberals, or the state. Members supporting the state view argued that the obligation for peasants and the lower classes to go to school could not be abolished, as the state was compelled to ensure that peasant and working-class children received some form of education. The constitution therefore guaranteed the right to free education for children whose parents could not afford to hire a private teacher.⁶⁵

The Consequences of the School Acts

Several decades passed before the 1814 school acts were implemented, delayed by the Napoleonic Wars, a state bankruptcy in 1813 and an agricultural crisis in the 1820s. The latter economic downturn meant that the compilation of school plans stopped, and it was only from around 1830, when the economic situation improved, that the preparation of plans was revived.⁶⁶ As shown in the preceding discussions, those plans were the government's way of controlling the implementation of the school acts. In the mid-1830s, 16% of all Danish parishes did not have a school plan (either in force or in writing) that implemented the school acts by building new schools, hiring college-educated teachers, etc.⁶⁷

In 1789–1791, there had been around 1700 rural schools (i.e., school buildings). Yet, by the time the 1814 rural school act was implemented, there were 1685 schools in the countryside.⁶⁸ In the middle of the 1850s, 2520 rural schools operated in Denmark, with 835 new schools having been established since 1814. Schoolhouses all over the country began to resemble each other, but local variations persisted, due to local economy and building traditions.⁶⁹ On average, there were 80 children per school on the islands with a larger population, but only 53 pupils in the region of the sparsely populated Jutland.⁷⁰

All children had to go to school and, according to a survey conducted in 1857, 97% of all children aged between 7 and 14 living in rural districts were enrolled in school.⁷¹ A 1867 market town schools survey showed a similar picture. However, the number of children taught privately in the market towns was four times higher than in the rural

districts: On average, around half of the children attended fee-paying schools, private schools, or grammar schools.⁷²

Even though almost all children went to school on a regular basis, the days and hours spent in school varied considerably. First, the number of school days was not consistent throughout Denmark. According to the acts, the length of a school year for children in the junior class was 23 weeks, with either three whole days or six half days of classes per week. Children in the senior class had to attend only 17 weeks—organized as three whole days or six half days per week—as they were to work or help at home.⁷³ However, the local school boards were entitled to make changes. In addition, sowing, harvest and plowing vacations, church holidays, teachers' illness, and poor weather meant that the actual number of school days was lower than stipulated. In 1857, on the islands with rich soils and a shorter route to school, 220–259 school days were recorded. In the poorly soiled Jutland, where longer journeys to school were more common, half the schools operated for fewer than 200 days, and the other half held classes for 200–239 days per year.⁷⁴

In addition, absenteeism was a nationwide problem throughout the nineteenth century. Schooling was frequently met with opposition by parents and masters who prioritized children's and domestic servants' work over regular schooling.⁷⁵ According to a survey conducted in 1857, on average, children were absent from school for 14.7 days a year (seven percent of an entire school year) without a legal reason. Absenteeism was most widespread in the northern parts of Jutland, with 22–27 absent days per child. If children missed school without a legitimate reason, the school board had to impose a fine. However, as the boards comprised of parents' and employers' representatives, there was no clear support for enforcing regular schooling and only half of the boards actually imposed fines.⁷⁶

Absenteeism influenced the literacy rates in Denmark. The school acts' demand for learning to write was gradually met with interest and demand from the population, due to the growing need for literacy in various sectors of society. This included the municipal councils, established 1837–1841, and the new democratic parliament, from 1849, where farmers could take part in governing their local community or state affairs.⁷⁷ Reports on the conscripts' reading and writing abilities

provide a very accurate picture of the state of young men's literacy. A report pertaining to 1859–1860 shows that the majority could read and write to varying degrees. However, nine percent of conscripts could read but not write, and three percent could neither read nor write. According to an 1873 survey, twelve percent of the conscripts could merely read and most of them, apparently, could read printed texts only, while two percent could neither write nor read.⁷⁸

To some extent, individual pupils' reading and writing abilities also depended on the teacher. As the old parish clerks passed away, only college-educated teachers could replace them, and it took almost three decades before the last of the clerks died. In the aftermath of the 1813 state bankruptcy, it was difficult to attract college-educated teachers to poorly paid offices in Jutland, for example.⁷⁹ In 1857, 2.5% of rural teachers on the islands still lacked formal education while this percentage increased to 16% in Jutland,⁸⁰ whereas in market towns, only 0.5% of teachers did not have a formal education.⁸¹

The difference between the islands and Jutland was also reflected in the rural teachers' income,⁸² thus demonstrating the differing economic capabilities of the parishes and reflecting diverse local conditions.⁸³ The school costs varied greatly across regions as well. In a rich county near Copenhagen, the school boards spent 220 shillings per barrel of *hartkorn* (a unit for the value of agricultural land)—a figure significantly higher than the average 124 shillings. Other municipalities could not afford such expenditure, or did not wish to spend that much. In the western part of Jutland, for example, some municipalities used 78 shillings per barrel of *hartkorn* on schooling.⁸⁴ In the market towns, 15–17% of the towns' total public expenditure was designated for funding the public schools, as the physical maintenance of the town's infrastructure comprised the largest part of expenditure.⁸⁵

Good Lutheran Christians and Loyal Subjects

The 1814 legislation was a response to the agrarian reforms aimed at creating a new, more enlightened and more independent peasantry and to assist the poor and uneducated children in urban areas. The aim of

schooling in Denmark was, therefore, to raise Lutheran Christians and loyal subjects with the basic skills needed to fulfill their roles as peasants, craftsmen, or traders. In 1814, the government tried to take the overall responsibility for school organization and for promoting uniformity in the educational sector. Every Danish child had to go to school, and according to the state patriotic aims of the school acts, all children were supposed to be taught the same curriculum in order to be good Christians and loyal subjects, whether living in villages, in small fishing ports or in market towns, and whether Danish or German, for they were all the King's subjects.

However, the government had to accept considerable diversity across schools that arose due to great social, geographical, and economic differences and various administrative structures within the King's realm. Therefore, the King had to pass five school acts, setting different standards for each group of subjects, in order to fulfill the government's wish to regulate schools and create educational uniformity. The differences in those school acts reflected variations in the normative conditions and practice of schooling prior to the state intervention, as observed by Nancy Beadie in reference to the early period of US schooling. Governments thus chose different strategies more likely to work or to be accepted in a local context.⁸⁶ In Denmark, the government adopted five sets of acts that were adjusted to the local context to secure mass schooling for the vast majority of children. Thus, Danish schools were subject to a governmental framework that had to be adhered to locally via a decentralized school organization. However, this decentralized organization did result in nearly as many ways of organizing schooling as there were school boards.

Notes

1. Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Da læreren holdt skole*, 185–273.
2. For an overview of the historiography of the Danish educational history, see Larsen, "A Diversity," 5–7.
3. There is vast literature on the Danish agrarian reforms, with Løgstrup, *Bondens frigørelse*, being the most recent study.

4. Løgstrup, *Bondens frigørelse*, 506–7; Christiansen, *A Manorial World*, 302–9.
5. Markussen, “Oplysning og nyttige kundskaber,” 123.
6. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 69–79; Markussen, “Oplysning og nyttige kundskaber,” 126–28.
7. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 54.
8. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, VIII–X; Markussen, *Til skaberens ære*, 121–35.
9. Glenthøj, *Falles kultur*, 46, 112–19.
10. Tröhler, “Curriculum History,” 284, 290.
11. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 165, 170.
12. *Ibid.*, 167, 170.
13. *Ibid.*, 201–26.
14. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 82–89.
15. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 340.
16. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 128.
17. *Ibid.*, 24–26.
18. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 414–47 (the rural districts), 505–27 (the market towns) and 551–71 (the capital); Det Jødiske Frihedsbrev, §§ 14–20; Erichsen and Sellschopp, *Die allgemeine Schulordnung*, 61–91.
19. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 132–33.
20. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 420, 511.
21. Tröhler, “Curriculum History,” 292.
22. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 420–21, 511–12.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 552–57.
25. Det Jødiske Frihedsbrev, §§ 14–20.
26. Erichsen and Sellschopp, *Die allgemeine Schulordnung*, 73–76.
27. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 145–47.
28. *Ibid.*, 275–89.
29. Nørr, *Prest og administrator*, 36–67; Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 291–303.
30. Brady, “Centralization/Decentralization,” 819.
31. Rodden, “Comparative Federalism and Decentralization,” 486–87.
32. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 423–24, 506.
33. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 303.
34. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 415.
35. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 149–53.

36. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 433–34.
37. Ibid., 419.
38. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 132–35.
39. Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Da læreren holdt skole*, 177–78, 196–97.
40. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 165–75.
41. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 428.
42. Ibid., 399, 428.
43. Ibid., 505.
44. Architects' sketches of a model school, July 1829, The Danish Chancellery, 1 Department. Case no. 1829/1864, Danish National Archives Copenhagen.
45. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 175.
46. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 429–30; Nørr, *Præst og Administrator*, 98–106. For teachers' salaries in the Duchies, see Offen, "Zur wirtschaftlichen Situation," 115–47.
47. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 517.
48. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 91–93.
49. Knoop, *Zur Geschichte*; Kopitzsch, "Anfänge," 43–64.
50. Boisen Schmidt, *Til duelige skoleholderes*; Markussen, "Læreruddannelsens første."
51. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 101–7.
52. Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 589–97.
53. Larsen, "Nedlæggelser og stilstand," 133–36.
54. Jensen, *De danske Stænderforsamlinger*, I, 72–138.
55. Larsen, "Skolen for Livet," 82–97; Jensen, *De danske Stænderforsamlinger*, 448.
56. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 188–92.
57. Overview of schools and teachers in the countryside and in the market towns in 1850 (...) extracted from school reports. The Danish Chancellery, 1 Department. H54-3. Various school reports. Teacher training colleges and school statistics, 1789–1857. Danish National Archives Copenhagen.
58. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 172.
59. Jensen, *De danske Stænderforsamlinger*, I, 449.
60. Ibid., 504–5.
61. Pontoppidan Thyssen, *Vækkelsernes frembrud*, 191–206, 224–37; Enggaard Stidsen, *Hold Fast*, 63–72, 80–82.

62. Banning, *Degnekristne*; Banning, *Vækkelsernes frembrud*.
63. Nørr, *Priest og Administrator*, 214–22.
64. Tröhler, “Curriculum History,” 285–87.
65. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 234.
66. Larsen, *Bidrag til den danske*, 45–46.
67. “Most Humble Report on the State of the Schools in Denmark, Except Copenhagen,” October 20, 1837, The Danish Chancellery, 1 Department. H54-2, Various school reports. Various reports concerning public schools, 1805–37. Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.
68. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 33 (1789–1791). Larsen, “A Diversity,” 14–15.
69. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 169–70.
70. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet paa*, 86–89.
71. *Ibid.*, 82–83.
72. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet i*, 191, 193.
73. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 151. A school day consisted of six hours in the summer and five hours in the winter, resulting in around 670 h per school year (Larsen, *Skolelovene*, 417).
74. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet paa*, 91.
75. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 294–98; Sonne, “Kampen om.”
76. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet paa*, 101–2, 104.
77. Markussen, “Den danske befolknings,” 18.
78. *Ibid.*, 9.
79. Larsen et al., *Da skolen tog form*, 312–13.
80. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet paa*, 111.
81. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet i*, 200.
82. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Om Almueskolevæsenet paa*, 112–13.
83. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Oversigt 1857*, 20–21; Det Statistiske Bureau, *Oversigt 1859*, 102–3.
84. “Explication of the costs for schooling in the parishes in the rural districts in some of the most and least populated counties in Denmark,” 1850, The Danish Chancellery, 1 Department. H54-3, Various school reports. Teacher training colleges and school statistics, 1799–1857. Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.
85. Det Statistiske Bureau, *Oversigt 1857*, 14–15; Det Statistiske Bureau, *Oversigt 1859*, 76–77.
86. Beadie, “Education,” 19.

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7

Citizens in Their Right Place: Nation Building and Mass Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France

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First, the school has nothing to do with the creation of the French nation. The latter dates back to the Revolution of 1789. The French State is older; it formed itself during the Middle Ages and the monarchy progressively strengthened it. But the state is not the nation. The nation formed itself with the French Revolution, which marks the dawn of a new era, as evidenced by the appearance of the term Old Regime, to designate a bygone past ... The school plays no role in this movement for the simple reason that it did not exist as a unified institution ... Before the school built the nation, the nation had built the school. The nation built the school in its image.¹

These words, written by French historian Antoine Prost, aptly summarize the inextricable link between the history of the French nation and the rise of mass schooling in nineteenth-century France. In 1789, French revolutionaries established the French nation when they proclaimed in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* that “the principle of all sovereignty lies primarily in the nation.

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No corporate body, no individual may exercise any authority that does not expressly emanate from it.”² At the time, this meant a radical political change, for it necessitated breaking away from an Old Regime founded on absolute monarchy and establishing a new system grounded in the people and the nation as the source of sovereignty. In that regard, the French Revolution forged a path toward a new society, which was supposed to stand in stark contrast to the one that preceded it.

French revolutionaries indeed changed the essence of the French political order, which was no longer rooted in a divine or transcendent origin but in the people itself. They thus transformed the subjects of the King, Louis XVI, into a community of citizens, holders of imprescriptible natural rights. Correlatively, they founded the project of a public, or national, education for all, designed to enhance the general level of knowledge and understanding—or “reasoning ability”—of the French people. In their perspective, this public or common instruction initiative constituted a *sine qua non* condition to ensure the viability and sustainability of the new political order (democratic and republican after 1792) they strove to establish.

For French revolutionaries, the main goal of public instruction was thus to emancipate citizens from the shackles—of ignorance, superstition, and oppression—noblemen and clergymen imposed on them during the Old Regime. From this moment on, public instruction was not only conceived as a means to train efficiently the country leaders and managers, but also as a public service designed to educate nationally minded citizens imbued with profound love for the principles of the French Revolution. As Talleyrand put it: “The declaration of rights and the constitutional principles will therefore form in the future a new catechism for childhood and will be taught even in the most elementary schools throughout the kingdom.”³ However, from its inception, this urge for a national education was shrouded in ambivalence. Indeed, French revolutionaries inherited eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers’ concerns about mass schooling.

To elucidate this claim, it is worth noting that philosophers such as François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as jurists like Louis-René de Caradeuc de La Chalotais—the author of a 1763 book entitled *Essay on National*

Education—were convinced that masses should not have unlimited access to instruction.⁴ If, on the contrary, French revolutionaries ascribed to the views purported by Denis Diderot, who wrote “it would be as cruel as it is absurd to condemn the lower classes of society to ignorance,”⁵ they were never in favor of a public, or national, system of instruction that would teach “indifferently,” or without discrimination, “basic knowledge in all disciplines” to children of all classes.⁶ Talleyrand argued: “We must consider society as a vast workshop. It is not enough that everyone works there; *all persons must be at their place*, otherwise there is opposition of effort instead of cooperation which increases it.”⁷

Aligning with these perspectives, most revolutionaries, and thus most nineteenth-century French school officials and representatives, distinguished two social classes within society, each having its specific educational needs. On the one hand, the children of the ruling class were deemed to require humanistic or scientific education, while a rudimentary instruction conceived to instill reverence for and obedience to the new political order was presumed sufficient for the children of the common men and women.

In the end, French revolutionaries promoted the idea of a public and national education designed to meet the needs of all Frenchmen. The system of instruction they proposed was meant to be liberated from the tutelage of the Church, as its primary aim would be to train the nation’s free and equal (in rights) citizens.⁸ If the revolutionary period was characterized by a proliferation of seminal ideas and debates about French education, the contrast with its concrete realizations in terms of mass schooling is, at the least, stunning. Indeed, the French Revolution contributed to the weakening and a relative secularization of existing school structures due to anticlerical measures.⁹ Nonetheless, it laid the foundations for the idea of public, or national, instruction, whose identity was intertwined with that of the nation itself.

Drawing upon this legacy, nineteenth-century France became the theater of a concerted effort on the part of elite representatives of the French nation to build through school acts a national education that would foster nationally minded citizens. Thus, in this chapter, the focus is given to the close relationship between the nation-building process in France and the erection of a national school system designed for

educating the masses during the nineteenth century. In studying landmark school acts, such as the 1833 Guizot Law, the 1850 Falloux Law, the 1867 Duruy Law, the 1881 and 1882 Ferry Laws, and the 1886 Goblet Organic Law, as well as their effects, the aim of the discussions that follow is to highlight the inner contradictions of nation building in France and their consequences for the practical realization of the mass schooling initiative.

The Emergence of State Primary Education

From 1789 to the 1833 Guizot Law, most schools designed for the masses operated under very difficult conditions due to many deficiencies, including lack of decent school buildings, as well as inadequate supply of qualified teachers, textbooks, and learning materials. In most municipalities, especially in isolated rural areas, the state had neither the resources nor the means to secure schooling for the children of the people. By contrast, the Church was represented in every French village. As parish priests were knowledgeable and commanded stature and authority, they often taught children the rudiments of learning or convinced the community members to hire a teacher to do so under their authority.

Consequently, in this early period, schooling was subject to local determination—depending on geographical situations—relying heavily on the Church. In that regard, the French Revolution did not actually influence the literacy initiative the Church had started during the Old Regime in rural areas. The literacy rate varied considerably across regions, whereby it was higher in the northern and eastern parts of the country (where approximately 45–85% of men and women signed their marriage certificate) compared to the south and the west (where approximately 15–40% of couples did so).¹⁰

After the turmoil of the Revolution, Napoléon Bonaparte did not modify this state of affairs. Concerned with establishing a strong, centralized state, he instead focused on erecting secondary, or elite, schooling and postponed the work of establishing a state primary education to later decades.¹¹ As a part of this initiative, in 1802, he created the

lycées—elite state-administered boarding schools for bourgeois boys conceived to train future officers and civil servants through a rigorous and academically sound discipline. Aside from these prestigious *lycées*, authorities of most major cities often built and/or maintained *collèges*, i.e., secondary school institutions offering a similar education to that imparted in *lycées*, but taught by less qualified teachers. In 1808, Napoléon organized this network of elite institutions—along with private and religious secondary schools inspired by the same model—as an Imperial University, a sort of “secular guild” under the leadership of a Grand Master. During the nineteenth century, this system of secondary schools constituted the centerpiece of French educational structures. It offered humanistic and scientific education for bourgeois children from the lowest to the highest grades, aiming to prepare them for further studies in law, theology, or medicine, as well as for prestigious higher education institutions, such as the *École Polytechnique* specializing in engineering.¹²

With the Bourbon Restoration came a stronger desire on the part of the French State to regulate and control primary instruction in France. On February 29, 1816, a royal ordinance was passed mandating that local communes make provision for primary instruction by creating and/or maintaining a primary school that would be free for the poor. However, at the time, the French State did not have the material and financial resources to enforce and implement this general principle. Nevertheless, with this ordinance, it contributed to the building of numerous primary schools and thus increased access to education. Indeed, while approximately 865,000 pupils (mostly boys) went to one of the 20,734 existing primary schools in France in 1817, by 1829, 10,000 additional primary schools had been built, serving approximately 1,372,206 pupils.¹³ The state also obliged prospective primary school teachers to present a certificate of ability (*brevet de capacité*) demonstrating that they possessed sufficient knowledge to instruct children, along with a certificate of good behavior (*un certificat de bonne conduite*) from the local mayor and the parish priest, and a written authorization from the rector of the academy in which they desired to teach. During the 1830s, when liberal ideals triumphed, the French State reached a turning point in the history of mass schooling.

The 1833 Guizot Law

The July 1830 Revolution overthrew France's last Bourbon King, Charles X, and established a liberal constitutional monarchy with Louis Philippe as King of the French. The subsequent years, especially the period spanning 1830–1834, were tumultuous in many ways, as they were marked by numerous revolts and insurrections, as well as the rise of republican ideas. To address this situation, the regime in place tended to adopt conservative measures to strengthen its authority. In many respects, the 1833 Guizot Law can be understood as a direct consequence of this context, as well as of a slow maturation since the 1816 royal ordinance mentioned above. François Guizot (1787–1874) was a historian of protestant background. As he was the French minister of public instruction (from October 11, 1832 to February 22, 1836, and from September 6, 1836 to April 15, 1837), he was one of the most influential statesmen during the July Monarchy in France.¹⁴ Imbued with a strong belief in the importance of education for “governing minds”—i.e., for implanting the monarchical and conservative values of the regime in the minds and hearts of the people—he played a key role in the passing of the 1833 law on primary instruction bearing his name, which is widely recognized as one of the most important school acts of nineteenth-century France.¹⁵

In its first article, the Guizot Law defined the content of elementary primary instruction as follows: “Elementary primary instruction necessarily includes moral and religious instruction, reading, writing, the elements of the French language and of calculation, the legal system of weights and measures.”¹⁶ The law further required every commune to create and/or maintain a primary elementary school (*école primaire élémentaire*) as well as provide a minimum income of 200 francs for a teacher. Communes having 6000 inhabitants or more were additionally mandated to create a superior primary school (*école primaire supérieure*) which was to provide a broader education to the pupils deemed fit to attend. Indeed, in addition to the subjects studied in elementary primary schools, superior primary schools offered courses in “the elements of geometry and its usual applications, especially drawing and land

surveying, the notions of physics, chemistry, and natural history fitted for daily uses, the elements of history and geography, and especially the history and geography of France.”¹⁷

Furthermore, departments were required to build and/or maintain a primary normal school (*école normale primaire*) to be attended by prospective primary school teachers. Aside from these public primary institutions, the law made provisions for private initiative, as it stipulated that a private teacher could open a primary school in a commune if he was deemed capable. Endorsing certain provisions of the 1816 royal ordinance, the Guizot Law retained the requirement for primary school teachers to possess a certificate of ability and a certificate of good behavior. According to this new law, private and public primary schools would be distinguished solely by funding, whereby a school that received money from the state, communes, or departments was to be considered a public primary school. In both cases, the law left control to a local surveillance committee composed of the mayor, or his deputy, of the parish priest, and of one or more leading community members.

At the time, Guizot considered this law the true “Charter of primary instruction” in France.¹⁸ In his view, this new state primary instruction’s main aim was to impart enough literacy to ensure the sustainability of the constitutional monarchy. This is aptly surmised in his letter sent to every French primary school teacher in July of 1833:

The law wants all Frenchmen to acquire, if possible, the knowledge indispensable for social life ... it is also for the state itself, and in the public interest; it is because liberty is only secured in a people enlightened enough to listen, in every circumstance, to the voice of reason. Universal primary instruction is from now on one of the guarantees of order and social stability. Just as everything, in the principles of our government, is true and reasonable, developing intelligence, spreading the lights [of knowledge], is ensuring the supremacy and endurance of the constitutional monarchy.¹⁹

The primary school teachers’ “mission” was thus to instill traditional values in the minds of children while teaching them to read and write. This aim was reflected in the order of significance imposed on the school

subjects, which gave precedence to religious instruction, followed by reading, writing, the elements of the French language and of calculation, and finally the legal system of weights and measures. At the time, these school subjects were decisive means to unify the nation through teaching French in every commune and by standardizing the various local systems of weights and measures.²⁰ The Guizot Law also provided the first legal framework for an autonomous school administration.²¹ In that respect, the 1833 Guizot Law was a significant landmark in the history of mass schooling in France. It was, in the words of historian Christian Nique, an “essential link in the French tradition of the Educative-State” that was supposed to produce “good citizen[s] for the country.”²²

The instrumental role the Guizot Law played in the rise of French mass schooling is also reflected in available data. In 1829, 14,000 out of 36,000 French communes did not have a primary school, and this number declined to 5600 in 1837 and further to 3213 ten years later.²³ In 1847, 2.18 million boys and 1.35 million girls attended primary school.²⁴ In interpreting this gender disparity, it is worth noting that the 1833 Guizot Law was primarily aimed at promoting education for boys. In that regard, there was an important time lag between the expansion of education for boys and girls. Thus, even though an ordinance—commonly known as the “Pelet” ordinance—extended the 1833 law’s provisions for boys’ education to girls’ primary instruction in 1836, it was non-binding. Nonetheless, many French girls did go to school at the time, but they were educated in private primary school institutions, usually led by Catholic nuns.²⁵

The Falloux and Duruy Laws

During the French Second Republic (1848–1852) that emerged following the 1848 French Revolution, and the Second Empire (1852–1870), mass schooling was strengthened by the passing of two other important school acts: the 1850 Falloux and 1867 Duruy Laws. In June 1848, Hippolyte Carnot (1801–1888), the French minister of public instruction, introduced a proposal for a law that would impose free and compulsory

primary public schooling. However, the proposed law was never passed by Parliament and was replaced by another law—supported by Carnot’s successor, the count Alfred de Falloux (1811–1886)—which was to become known as the Falloux Law, promulgated on March 15, 1850.

From the moment of its passing, the Falloux Law was highly contested. Republicans questioned and combated it because it contained many provisions that would give the Church and the local authorities control of primary schools. Indeed, it allowed many private religious primary schools to thrive, thereby laying important foundations for a growing opposition between public and private primary schools— or between secular and clerical schools—in the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition, it marked an important setback for superior primary schools, which were suppressed by the law.²⁶ With regard to mass schooling, the Falloux Law nevertheless constituted a decisive step forward because it mandated that all French communes having at least 800 inhabitants build and/or maintain a primary school for girls.

This process was further reinforced by the work of Victor Duruy (1811–1894), a historian who became minister of public instruction in 1863 and held this position until 1869.²⁷ Promulgated on April 10, 1867, the Duruy Law on primary instruction was, in practical terms, an “update of the 1850 [Falloux] Law,” expressing “at the same time new exigencies revealing a quite different approach to the school.”²⁸ Unlike the Falloux Law, Duruy’s project can be understood as an effort to promote the right to free primary instruction for all and to strengthen primary public schools in their competition with private schools. Indeed, the Duruy Law encouraged the development of free public primary schools by allowing French communes to fund these institutions by issuing additional taxes or by requesting funding from the state or the *département* (the administrative entity above *arrondissements*).²⁹ More importantly, the Duruy Law required every commune having 500 inhabitants or more to build and/or maintain a primary school for girls. It also included in the primary curriculum new mandatory school subjects: the elements of French geography and history for all pupils and sewing for girls.

Owing to these important changes, the Falloux and Duruy Laws played an important role in the expansion of mass schooling, especially

for girls. Indeed, while 1.53 million French girls attended primary schools in 1850, this number increased to 2.13 and 2.39 million in 1865 and 1879, respectively.³⁰ Furthermore, in many French communes, primary instruction was increasingly given free of charge, as the percentage of pupils receiving primary instruction in school for free increased from 41% in 1866 to 57 in 1876–1877.³¹ Thus, when the Republicans came to power in 1879 during the Third Republic (1870–1940), almost all school-aged children attended primary school at some point during their childhood. However, in most cases, they were attending these schools from age 8 to age 10 only, and did so irregularly.³²

An additional feature of schooling at the time was its religious bent. Indeed, the learning of the Catholic catechism remained mandatory in all French primary schools and approximately a third of these schools had religious teachers. Religious congregations also headed most private primary schools. This religious emphasis was especially prevalent in the schooling of girls.³³ For Republicans led by Jules Ferry (1832–1893), compulsory schooling and, more importantly, secularization thus remained the key objectives.

The Consolidation of State Primary Education

The school laws that followed during the Third Republic can be understood as the culmination of 1789 French revolutionaries' project aimed at providing free, universal, and national primary school education, independent from the Church. This project constituted a central object of political struggle in nineteenth-century France. Primary schooling was a highly contested topic, with the Church and the state waging war for its control and thus for the influence over the minds and hearts of the French people. Consequently, the Third Republic was a period of fierce battle between the principles of the French monarchy and Old Regime and those of the Revolution of 1789.

In that regard, the first decade of the Third Republic was a period of intense political tensions and conflicts. Those in power lived in constant fear of civil war, especially after the 1871 Paris Commune. The threat of the re-establishment of the monarchy was particularly pronounced

under the MacMahon government (1873–1879) and following the Boulanger crisis (1886–1889). Consequently, hundred years after the French Revolution, when Jules Ferry and his allies came to power, their primary aim was to settle the dispute through definitively untying the knot that existed between the school and the Church.³⁴ To do so, they transformed French primary schooling into a consolidated and coherent institution—a public service designed to produce French citizens for the republic.

“A Free, Compulsory, and Secular Primary School”

Jules Ferry was a lawyer and one of the most influential statesmen in France during the last decades of the nineteenth century. He served as French minister of public instruction almost continuously from 1879 to 1883.³⁵ Although Ferry’s name remains inseparable with the 1881 and 1882 school laws (both of which bear his name), he was nevertheless constantly supported in his work by other prominent French school officials, such as Ferdinand Buisson (1841–1932), Paul Bert (1833–1886), and René Goblet (1828–1905), each of whom played a key role in promoting and achieving the free, compulsory, and secular primary school of the Third Republic.³⁶

This republican conception of primary schooling was the subject of heated debates and disputes with conservative Catholics who vehemently opposed it. In their view, the father’s rights on his children and the duty of obedience to “natural” authorities had to be defended against dangerous republican ideas threatening the very essence of the social and religious order.³⁷ Facing fierce opposition of proportions difficult to imagine today, Republicans divided their school project into consecutive school acts, the first of which—the 1881 Ferry school law—proclaimed a free primary school. It was followed by the 1882 Ferry school law that established a compulsory and secularized primary school, the 1886 Goblet Organic Law demanding a secularized personnel, and finally, the 1889 school law, which transformed local primary school teachers into civil servants paid by the state.

Passed on June 16, 1881, the first Ferry Law introduced free admission for all primary school pupils. In many ways, this was a continuation of the 1867 Duruy Law, as this 1881 Ferry Law mandated that free education be offered in all public primary schools, whereby it would be funded by the communes and the departments (if the latter lacked the resources to do so, the costs were to be covered by the state). Almost a year later, on March 28, 1882, the second Ferry Law was passed, stipulating in article 4 that all French parents are obligated to provide their children (boys and girls) a primary instruction from age six to age thirteen, whether by sending them to a public or private primary school or by giving this instruction at home.

In that regard, this law constituted a major departure from the previous legislation because it changed the definition of the term “obligation.” Indeed, prior to this law, “obligation” pertained to French communes, which had to build and/or maintain a primary school. With this law, the “obligation” was shifted to the parents, who were now mandated to ensure that their children receive instruction (homeschooling was thus a provision aimed at ensuring that all parents can meet the new law’s requirements). At the time, this was an important change. It contributed to an extension of compulsory schooling, which was legally binding. Indeed, articles 12, 13, and 14 of the law outlined means of sanctioning parents who did not comply. Only pupils who passed the “primary studies certificate” (*certificat d’études primaires*)—a national examination created by the 1882 Ferry Law—could leave school earlier, usually at age eleven or twelve.³⁸

However, as historian Eugen Weber pointed out, at the time, “people went to school not because school was offered or imposed, but because it was useful.”³⁹ In that regard, the 1881 and 1882 Ferry school laws accelerated a “centuries-old social evolution,” thus contributing to a more regular school attendance and for a longer period.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, compulsory schooling and school attendance from age six to thirteen were not implemented uniformly across France from the moment of the passing of these Ferry Laws. Indeed, during the Third Republic, primary school attendance remained inextricably linked to local social, economic, and cultural needs. In rural areas, seasonal variations in school attendance remained significant, as many pupils had to work in

the fields when their help was needed. In cities, such as Paris and Lyon, as historians Jérôme Krop and Marianne Thivend have shown, school attendance was less dependent on seasonal variations. Still, compulsory schooling often remained difficult to implement at least until 1914. As Jérôme Krop pointed out, the majority of children not attending primary school in Paris were “close to the compulsory schooling age limit and left school earlier to enter in a more or less informal way the labor market, despite the existing legal prohibition.”⁴¹

Moreover, owing to the drive toward secularization, religious instruction was banned from the primary public school curricula and settings. Under the 1882 Ferry Law, it was replaced by a new “moral and civic instruction,” designed to teach secularized republican moral values and faith.⁴² From then on, religious instruction had to be given outside the school setting. This secularization (*laïcisation*) of the primary school curriculum also implied important changes in the teaching of other school subjects, history in particular, which had to be free from any religious, or sacred, topics.⁴³

Instead, primary schooling during the Third Republic was intended to instill national sentiment and patriotism through the teaching of history, French language, or geography.⁴⁴ Using readers full of patriotic stories—such as *The Tour of France by Two Children* (*Le tour de France par deux enfants*) and Ernest Lavisse’s history textbooks—public primary school teachers—now referred to as *instituteurs* (male) and *institutrices* (female)—progressively embodied the virtually synonymous French Republic and nation in every commune. They were increasingly known as the “Black Hussars of the Republic” (“*les hussards noirs de la République*”).⁴⁵

The 1886 Goblet Organic Law and 1889 Law

The ties between primary school teachers and the French Republic were further strengthened by the passing of the so-called Goblet Organic Law on the organization of primary instruction in France on October 30, 1886.⁴⁶ This law made a decisive contribution to the secularization of primary school teachers in France, with its article 17 specifically

declaring that, in all primary public schools, “instruction shall be given exclusively by a secular personnel.” The following article added that this secularization had to be achieved in primary schools for boys within five years. In primary schools for girls, the secularization process mandated that *institutrices laïques* replace religious female teachers (*institutrices congréganistes*) as they retired. This regulation was partly motivated by the fact that religious male teachers constituted a relatively small percentage of the primary school teaching body. Indeed, it was only in 1879 that the French State made it mandatory for departments to build and/or maintain a normal school for women designed for the training of prospective *institutrices*.⁴⁷ Owing to the 1886 Goblet law, primary instruction eventually became a public service. The transformation process was completed three years later by passing another law on July 19, 1889, that transformed male and female primary teachers into civil servants paid by the French State. This was an important legislative change, since the provisions made by the 1833 Guizot and 1850 Falloux Laws required that primary school teachers be paid by the communes in which they taught (while part of their salary was covered by school fees).

Within a decade, Republicans thus structured a coherent national institution designed for the instruction of the children of the common people, as well as those belonging to the lower middle-class. Consequently, from 1879 to 1889 onward, primary instruction truly became an organized teaching “order” (*un ordre d’enseignement*) which was delivered in a well-structured hierarchical network of schools.

In this regard, the 1886 Goblet Organic Law organized primary instruction in three distinct levels. The first were *écoles maternelles*, namely kindergarten, nursery schools, or infant classes that took in children before age six.⁴⁸ The second were primary elementary schools for children from age six to thirteen. In these schools, the curriculum was divided into five age-graded levels: an infant class (*classe enfantine*) from age six to seven; a two-year elementary course (*cours élémentaire*) from age seven to nine; a two-year middle course (*cours moyen*) from age nine to eleven; and a two-year superior course (*cours supérieur*), from age eleven to thirteen.

In these seven years of primary elementary schooling—which constituted the only schooling the vast majority of French children would ever receive—pupils were supposed to study the subjects outlined in the 1882 Ferry Law:

Moral and civic instruction; reading and writing; [French] language and the elements of French literature; geography, particularly that of France; history, particularly that of France to our days; the common basic notions of law and political economy; the elements of physical and mathematic natural sciences; their use in agriculture, hygiene, industrial arts, manual works and the use of the main trades' tools; elements of drawing, clay-modeling, and music; calisthenics; for the boys, military exercises; for the girls, sewing.⁴⁹

At age 13—or at eleven or twelve, if they passed their *certificat d'études primaires*—most pupils started their working life. The Goblet law, however, also established a third level of primary schooling: superior primary schools, or “complementary courses” (*cours complémentaires*), which were classes of superior primary school level taught in elementary primary school buildings. Geared toward “practical knowledge and usual sciences,” these schools were a form of secondary schooling for children of the common men and women, often leading to lower-class jobs in the administration or in the industry.⁵⁰

In practice, only a small elite group of primary school pupils attended these institutions, which were a stepping stone to what may be described as the higher level of primary instruction, denoted as “the normal schools.” These were state-funded boarding schools with a three-year training program, designed for separate preparation of prospective male and female primary school teachers.

Virtually, all public primary school teachers (male and female) were deeply imbued with republican principles: they not only believed in a secular faith—a kind of secularized religion brought to the fore by Republicans such as Ferdinand Buisson—but they were also deeply convinced of the great potential for prosperity in the Third Republic.⁵¹ They thus played a powerful role in rooting republican ideals in the minds and hearts of the people of their local community.⁵² They did

that by teaching pupils the three Rs in the French language, thus contributing to the nation's progressive linguistic unification. These aims were also achieved by teaching French geography and French history in a way that evoked in pupils love for their national history and their country, and a sense of pride in their place within it. Moreover, teachers were responsible for raising children's (and their parents') awareness of the importance of personal hygiene and cleanliness, while also increasing their standing in the community by often holding the job of mayor's secretary, by helping people read letters they could not decrypt themselves, and by acting as public letter-writers for the community.

In so doing, public primary school teachers gave flesh and consistency to the abstract national-republican ideal of progress through science and citizenship in their local community.⁵³ They impersonated and implanted the republic and the school in the country that remained predominantly rural (at 70%) in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In this new version of France, primary school teachers contributed to the dissemination within the French population of a lovable yet arrogant image of the French nation as "the human rights Nation" and "the lighthouse of the universe." As a pacifist Marianne, the nation was inseparable from the republic itself—a regime the French invented and that, in their view, no other could ever equal.⁵⁴

Mass Schooling, "Segregated Equity," and the French Nation

Although it took hundred years to fully implement this project, in the end, French Third Republic contributed to the installment of the 1789 revolutionary dream of a free, universal, and national primary public schooling. As was shown in the preceding sections, this was a slow, tortuous, and tempestuous process. Landmark educational laws, such as the 1833 Guizot Law, the 1850 Falloux Law, and the 1867 Duruy Law, contributed to the progressive erection of a primary instruction institution designed to meet the educational needs of the state, as well as those of the children of the common Frenchmen and Frenchwomen.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Republicans consolidated the preexisting school structures. They transformed them into a structured and coherent institution—a public service designed to educate and raise French citizens for the republic. This was a turning point in the history not only of French schooling but also of French society. Indeed, the Third Republic's primary school remains to this date a reference point for anyone nostalgic for national coherence in France.⁵⁵

The school system, thus established, played an important role in the definition of the culture and collective identity of French men and women grounded in the values of the Republic. However, when highlighting the tremendous importance of this substantial republican achievement in the history of French schooling and culture, it is essential not to overlook the fact aptly acknowledged by historian Françoise Mayeur in the following passage: “Popular schooling was not created nor conceived by the people. [Mass] schooling was a thoughtful, from the top-down, action that had its roots in a philanthropy inherited from the Enlightenment, but also in the interests of training useful men to society, citizens as much aware of their duties as of their rights.”⁵⁶

These words bring to light the inner tensions that characterized the rise of mass schooling in nineteenth-century France. Indeed, throughout the century, statesmen and school officials strove to establish a primary instruction that would increase the general level of knowledge among the French population. Their goal was also to consolidate a sustainable regime by obtaining acceptance of and reverence for it within the entire French society. In that regard, Third Republic educators were no exception. Even though they certainly made a decisive contribution to the promotion of mass schooling in France, they nonetheless never created a “democratic education” providing equal access for all French boys and girls to a humanistic training and thus increasing their chances of a genuine upward mobility through schooling.

In that regard, the Third Republic school reforms contributed to the strengthening of what historian Bruno Garnier called “segregated equity.”⁵⁷ Indeed, they consolidated a state-, republican-, and nation-minded system of primary instruction designed solely for the children of the people. Alongside this primary system for the masses—which allowed only a limited scope for social promotion—Republicans

strengthened and modernized the secondary system of schools—established by Napoléon in the beginning of the nineteenth century—conceived to train bourgeois and elite children to become the future French upper class.

This fact notwithstanding, Third Republic's primary school remains to this date an important landmark in the history of French schooling. It was indeed the moment during which the idea of French nation became virtually synonymous with the notion of the republic. In that regard, as historian Antoine Prost pointed out, "the republican school's efficiency in building the nation was that of teachers absolutely convinced they were achieving a great task."⁵⁸ Primary schooling, through its teachers, was instrumental in instilling in the French population love for a republican and secular France—with its language, its history, and its geography—in which their place as citizens, men, and women was determined from the beginning.

Notes

1. Prost, "Introduction," 17–18.
2. *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen de 1789*, art. 3.
3. Talleyrand, *Rapport sur l'instruction publique*, 11.
4. See Rousseau, "Lettre III à Milord Édouard"; La Chalotais, *Essai d'éducation nationale*; Green, *Education and State Formation*, 137–46.
5. Diderot, *Plan d'une université*, 418.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Talleyrand, *Rapport sur l'instruction publique*, 7–8.
8. Baczkó, *Une éducation pour la démocratie*.
9. Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity*, 102–20.
10. Furet and Ozouf, *Lire et écrire*, 56, 59–60.
11. Napoléon left the primary education work to the French localities and to various religious congregations. He supported the actions of various religious orders (such as the French Christian Brothers) by allowing them to develop on the French territory in 1808 and by giving them funding for primary instruction.
12. Savoie, *Construction de l'enseignement secondaire*.
13. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 108; Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne*, 8.

14. Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*.
15. Despite the persistence of a “Ferry myth,” which tend to consider Jules Ferry as the main promoter of mass schooling in nineteenth-century France, historians of education have shown the importance of the 1833 Guizot Law in French educational history. See Albertini, *L'école en France*; Chapoulie, *L'École d'État*; Lelièvre, *Histoire des institutions scolaires*; Lelièvre and Nique, *La République n'éduquera plus*; Nique, *Comment l'école devint une affaire d'État*; Nique, *François Guizot*; Prost, *L'enseignement en France*.
16. Heurdiere and Prost, *Les politiques de l'éducation*, 30.
17. *Ibid.*, 31.
18. Quoted in Kahn, “La lettre de Guizot,” 119.
19. *Ibid.*, 119–20.
20. Prost, “Introduction,” 19–20.
21. The 1833 Guizot Law did not stipulate the creation of such a corps, but it was created in its wake in 1835. In 1833, Guizot sent 490 inspectors in every part of France to obtain statistical information on primary schools. Their findings revealed that local surveillance committees designed to control primary school teachers were usually too distant from pedagogical concerns and often played a counterproductive educational role by giving too much power to local authorities. To fill this gap, a February 26, 1835, ordinance introduced departmental primary instruction inspectors in charge of visiting the schools on a regular basis. Two years later, in 1837, a sub-inspector corps was created to assist with this work. See Mayeur, *Histoire générale*, 325–37; Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 92–93.
22. Nique, *François Guizot*, 150, quoted in Kahn, “La lettre de Guizot,” 116.
23. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 97.
24. Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne*, 9.
25. Grew and Harrigan, *School, State, and Society*, 91–146; Chapoulie, *L'École d'État*, 47.
26. *Ibid.*, 54. If the Falloux Law banned superior primary schools, most of these institutions—which were intended to meet the needs of a small elite coming from the people—survived and were often incorporated in secondary school buildings, especially in *collèges*. See Chapoulie, “L'enseignement primaire supérieur,” 413–37.
27. Geslot, *Victor Duruy*.

28. Mayeur, *Histoire générale*, 334; Antoine Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 92–93.
29. This provision, however, was non-binding. Some communes were reluctant to raise taxes in order finance free primary schooling, thus making the parents pay for the teacher's salary as well as the maintenance of school premises and equipment.
30. Lelièvre, *Histoire des institutions scolaires*, 91.
31. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 95.
32. *Ibid.*, 101.
33. As Lelièvre wrote: "In 1879, when Jules Ferry became minister of public instruction, 76 percent of boys from the primary [school system] were enrolled in secular public [schools], [along with] 36 percent of girls; 20 percent of boys were educated by religious congregations (whether in public or private [schools]), [as did] 56 percent of girls." Lelièvre, *Histoire des institutions scolaires*, 91.
34. Ozouf, *L'École, l'Église et la République*.
35. Barral, *Jules Ferry*; Lelièvre, *Jules Ferry*.
36. Loeffel, *Ferdinand Buisson*; Dubois, *Le Dictionnaire de Ferdinand Buisson*; Denis and Kahn, *L'École de la Troisième République*; Kotovtchikhine, *Paul Bert*; Peillon, *Une Religion pour la République*.
37. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, ch. 9.
38. The "*Certificat d'études primaires*" was conceived as the solemn recognition of the completion of primary school teaching. In practice, for a long time, this examination was beyond the reach of most primary school pupils. Consequently, during the 1930s, only half of the students passed this examination. See Cabanel, *La République du certificat d'études*, 53–61.
39. Weber, *Peasants*, 303.
40. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 95, 101.
41. Krop, *La méritocratie républicaine*, 137, 144; Thivend, *L'école républicaine*.
42. Husser, Barthelmé, and Piqué, *Les sources de la morale laïque*.
43. Bruter, "L'enseignement de l'histoire," 90; Crubellier, "De l'histoire sainte," 89–104.
44. Prost, "Introduction," 20–22.
45. The term "*instituteurs*" was used during the Second Empire (1852–1870), especially during the 1860s to designate primary school teachers. But Third Republic school laws formed tighter (almost consubstantial) bonds between primary school teachers and the French Republic itself.

French poet and writer Charles Péguy (1873–1914) coined the expression “*Black hussars of the Republic*” to designate primary school teachers in France during the Third Republic. It referred to the black uniform primary school teachers were wearing while studying in primary normal schools, as well as to a 1793 French revolutionary cavalry regiment. See Ozouf and Ozouf, *La République des instituteurs*; Ozouf, *Nous les maîtres d'école*; Jacquet-Francillon, *Instituteurs avant la République*; Nicolas, *Le grand débat de l'école*; Gavoille, *Du maître d'école à l'instituteur*. On Lavissee's textbooks, see Nora, “Lavissee, instituteur national,” 239–75.

46. At the time of the passing of this law, Goblet was the French minister of public instruction. To this day, his name remains attached to it. See Mayeur, *Histoire générale*, 542.
47. This so-called Paul Bert law was passed on August 9, 1879, and was conceived to address the gap between the legal provisions made for male primary normal schools and those for female students. See Mayeur, *L'éducation des filles*; Quartararo, *Women Teachers*.
48. Luc, *L'invention du jeune enfant au XIXe siècle*; Plaisance, *L'enfant*; Plaisance, *Pauline Kergomard*.
49. Loi du 28 mars 1882 sur l'enseignement primaire obligatoire, art. 1^{er}, *Journal officiel de la République française*, 29 mars 1882.
50. Briand and Chapoulie, *Les collèges du peuple*; Chapoulie, *L'École d'État*, part 2.
51. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 384–85.
52. Chanet, *L'école républicaine*.
53. Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 386.
54. Prost, “Introduction,” 23–24.
55. Loubes, “L'école et les deux corps de la nation,” 93–94.
56. Mayeur, *Histoire générale*, 20.
57. Garnier, *Figures de l'égalité*.
58. Prost, “Introduction,” 25.

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8

School Acts and Elementary Education in Nineteenth-Century Spain

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Nineteenth-century Spain was marked by political, economic, and social transformation generated by the Enlightenment. The end of the *Ancien Régime* and the creation of a liberal state were nurtured by these new Enlightenment ideas that also motivated the introduction of a public primary school system during the nineteenth century.

The link between education and state formation in nineteenth-century Europe and North America has been stressed by Andy Green.¹ Instead of taking a social or economic perspective, Green sought to explain the spread and universalization of education within a political framework. According to Green, mass schooling was mainly determined by the state organization rather than by demand from the population.² Following Green's hypothesis, Manuel De Puelles argued that the Spanish government, established in the first half of the nineteenth century, was politically weak. Consequently, the education system that emerged was unable to enforce schooling for all.³ In fact, according to Agustín Escolano, there was a weak relationship between literacy

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development and national policies in Spain.⁴ For this reason, Gabriel Tortella stated that the main educational problem in nineteenth-century Spain was not the state of legislation but that the school system enacted by the legislation was unable to raise enrollment levels.⁵

To shed new light on the development of schooling in nineteenth-century Spain, this chapter examines the implementation of liberal educational regulations and its impact on schooling in the first half of the nineteenth century. This chapter focuses on the Someruelos Act (July 21, 1838) and the Montesino Regulation (November 26, 1838). These were the first regulations on education that were actually implemented in Spain, and there are valuable sources that enable an evaluation of their impact, such as the *Geographic-Statistic-Historic Dictionary of Spain and of its Overseas Territories, 1845–1850* (also known as the Madoz Dictionary).⁶ These regulations are also of particular interest, since the period in which they were issued was marked by important political changes. The period 1833–1868, known as the Elizabethan age (*Época Isabelina or Reinado de Isabel II*), has been described as the actual starting point of liberalism in Spain.⁷ In a similar vein, José Luis Peset et al. identified 1835 as the beginning of changes to the organization of primary education.⁸

Other authors have considered the 1857 General Act for Public Education (known as the Moyano Act) as the first important law on education in Spain.⁹ However, as Manuel De Puelles and Diego Sevilla stated, the Moyano Act was to a certain extent merely a compilation of changes introduced by previous legislation on education, including the General Regulation for Public Education of 1821 and the Regulation for Public Elementary Primary Schools of 1838.¹⁰ The importance of the Moyano Act (1857) should, however, not be underestimated. Rather than designing a new educational structure, the Moyano Act elevated the current educational structure to the status of law and remained in place until 1970, when the Spanish government enacted the General Law for Education.

Focusing on the effects of the 1838 regulations on the supply of elementary primary education in Spain during the early nineteenth century, this chapter is organized as follows. The next section presents the historical context in which the regulations on education were enacted.

The aim is to delineate the shift from an attempt to build a nation with the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 to the attempt to create a liberal state with the constitution of 1837.¹¹ In this context, a liberal state indicates a state with division of powers between the elected Parliament (*Las Cortes*), which held the legislative power, and the executive power of the Monarchy.¹² The Someruelos Act and the Montesino Regulation describe what the elementary primary education should look like according to the educational regulations of 1838: the subjects taught, the kind of schools, and the teachers' training. Thereafter, I will present an analysis of two samples from the Madoz Dictionary to disentangle whether the educational regulations had an impact on the supply of public elementary primary schooling in Spain. Using these samples, I will present a descriptive analysis of the supply of public primary schools by gender and village size and thereafter a regression analysis to identify the main factors influencing the existence and the number of schools.

Historical Background

The first half of the nineteenth century was politically unstable in Spain, with the end of the *Ancien Régime* in 1808 and the transformation from an absolute monarchy to a modern constitutional monarchy in 1837. The military conflict after the French invasion in 1808 and the numerous government changes that occurred until 1868 (Spain alternately had a radical liberal government, a moderate liberal government, and an absolutist monarchy) hindered the restoration of a modern political system.¹³ Instead, the unstable political situation resulted in a government ruled by moderate liberal politics, even when progressives or radicals were in power; a Catholic Church that maintained some of its influence, both in the government and in the Spanish society; and a Crown with an important arbitrary role in matters of legislation.¹⁴

The Cadiz Constitution of 1812 and the constitution of 1837 led to the creation of a parliamentary monarchy with a liberal government. However, the weakness of the bourgeois class, the power of the Church (very reluctant to lose the power and privileges held in the *Ancien Régime*), and the remarkable role of property in the distribution of

suffrage weakened this new liberal government.¹⁵ The result was reflected in the main conceptualization of the education system. The Cadiz liberals aspired in 1812 to create a national educational system, that is, a system aimed at creating a national identity and reducing French influence during French rule (1808–1813), whereas the Montesino Regulation (1838) moved towards a model based on state education, a system based on individuals living under the same government.¹⁶

The first attempt to introduce a universal education system in Spain was during French rule in 1808–1813. The Bonaparte government created a department, Home Secretary (*Ministerio del Interior*), to oversee civilian affairs, including public education. The aim of this government was to introduce the French education system to Spain. However, Spanish hostility hindered its implementation.¹⁷

The Cadiz Constitution (1812), based on Condorcet's, Quintana's, and Jovellanos's political visions, considered education an essential part of the country's current political changes. According to the Cadiz liberals, education should be the foundation of this new state based on national sovereignty and the separation of powers. For those liberals, only literate individuals could become citizens of a modern state, since citizens had to be literate to know and understand the law and the main state regulations.¹⁸ Furthermore, literacy teaching, the liberals assumed, would help to solve the economic and social problems of the country.¹⁹ The improvement of literacy rates would make economic transactions easier and reduce delinquency and criminality, which were among the liberals' major concerns.

Based on the French constitution of 1795, the Cadiz Constitution (1812) included a section on education.²⁰ Title IX of the constitution consisted of six articles (366–371) that prescribed a complete elementary primary education for boys in all the villages throughout the kingdom. The subjects taught were reading, writing, basic arithmetic rules, and Catholic religion, including civil obligations.²¹ The Cadiz Constitution was, in fact, more a statement of intentions than an actual regulation. Its article 370 empowered the Spanish parliament to regulate public education in the future. However, the restoration of the absolute monarchy in 1814 interrupted public education's development and implementation.²²

The following regulations issued in 1821 and based on the Quintana Report (*Informe Quintana*), furthered the design of a general, and structured educational system in Spain.²³ The Regulation of Public Education (*Reglamento de la Instrucción Pública de 1821*) organized education into three levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary), although it did not indicate the number of academic years for each level.²⁴ The regulation of 1821 continued to defend, as did the constitution of 1812, universal, free, and uniformed public education. However, the 1821 regulation did not specify how education should be funded. The subjects taught in the elementary primary schools (*educación primaria elemental*) remained reading and writing, basic arithmetic, and Catholic religion, including civil obligations.²⁵

In terms of promoting schooling, the regulations of 1821 stated that elementary schools were to be established in each village with more than 100 inhabitants.²⁶ Implementation was, however, difficult due to the political instability of the Spanish government and the lack of public resources. Notable in this respect is the fact that the regulations of 1821 stated that schooling should be free of charge but did not indicate how schooling should be funded.²⁷ Although this provision supported the enrollment of children from poor families, it did not ease the economic difficulties of the elementary schools.

The regulations of 1821 were followed by the Someruelos Act, issued on July 21, 1838, which enabled the government to plan a new system of primary education.²⁸ As a result, on November 26, 1838, under a moderate liberal government, the Regulation for Public Elementary Primary Schools (known as the Montesino Regulation) was passed. It was the first education regulation to be implemented following the establishment of the new constitution of 1837, and it lasted until the Moyano Act of 1857. The content of this regulation will be examined below.

The Someruelos Act and The Montesino Regulation (1838)

The Someruelos Act and its ensuing regulation, the Montesino Regulation, were inspired by the French Guizot Act of 1833 and retained most of the main ideas of the previous Spanish regulations. The Montesino Regulation maintained, for instance, secularism and academic freedom, whereas less emphasis was placed on schooling being compulsory and free of charge.²⁹ Although the regulations of 1838 promoted the idea of schooling for all, it also put limits on this idea. First, it created a segmented school system with elementary primary schools for all and so-called superior primary schools for the bourgeoisie. Second, the regulations limited free access to secondary education. Under the 1821 regulations, all poor students with A grades in primary education could be funded by the village to enroll in secondary education. The regulations of 1838 limited the proportion of students who could have access to this funding: only 10% of all the enrolled primary school students with A grades could be funded.³⁰

The segmentation of this school system was reflected in its funding. The poor only had access to elementary education, financed by the town halls (*ayuntamientos*) with very limited resources, whereas well-to-do citizens were able to attend secondary and tertiary education, mainly funded by the state.³¹ This class division between the bourgeoisie and the poor masses reflected the moderation of Spanish liberals' ideas and the increasing importance of property and wealth. Individuals were not equal. There were first class citizens, who owned property, had the right to vote, and whose children could access secondary or tertiary education, and second class citizens, who had no property, did not have the right to vote, and whose children could only access elementary primary education.

According to the 1838 regulations, all the villages were required to have a public school for boys between 6 and 9 years old (elementary primary education), whereas only those villages that could afford it should have a public school for girls. Since no punishment was established for

villages that did not organize schools, enforcing the implementation of the regulation proved to be difficult.³²

In addition to the divisions of social class and gender, the regulations of 1838 differentiated between a complete and an incomplete curriculum. The complete elementary primary schools were those that taught all the subjects described in the guidelines (i.e., Catholic doctrine and moral principles; reading; writing; arithmetic principles; and Spanish grammar principles, with the possibility of extending to spelling). Unlike the curriculum of the regulations of 1821, the Montesino Regulation did not include civil rights and obligations. If one or more of the subjects mentioned above were missing from a school's syllabus, the school was deemed to be an "incomplete elementary primary school" (*escuela de educación primaria elemental incompleta*). Interestingly, the regulations did not differentiate between the subjects and therefore treated them all as equally important.

In terms of funding, the regulations of 1838 acknowledged that schools could be either private or public. The private schools were those funded by private institutions (religious or otherwise) or by contributions from the parents of the pupils. Parents' contributions could be monetary (school fees or other monetary payments) or non-monetary (housing or food, such as cereals, for the teacher). The public schools were supposed to be funded by the villages, but the regulation did not specify whether the schools should be funded by the ordinary budget of the villages or if a special local tax should be imposed to fund the school. Notwithstanding, in this period, parents' school fees contributed to funding both private and public schools, although these contributions were more important for private schools.³³

Furthermore, the regulations of 1838 established that the education of girls should have the same characteristics as the education of boys whenever possible. However, it was noted that girls' education should not be detrimental to the teaching of female handiwork such as sewing or embroidering.

Finally, the regulations of 1838 also established requirements for primary school teachers. In addition to being Spanish, above the age of 20, and having a certification from the town hall and the town priest attesting good religious and moral behavior, teachers should have a

qualification from a teacher training college (*Escuela Normal*), at least those who wanted to teach in a complete elementary primary school for boys. For female teachers and those teaching in an incomplete elementary primary school, this qualification was not required. In fact, in some cases, the teacher in these incomplete schools had a secondary occupation. Using data from the Madoz Dictionary, Carmen Sarasúa found that in 5.4% of the villages, the teacher had secondary employments, such as being the secretary of the town hall or sacristan.³⁴

The regulations mentioned above were the most fundamental ones of the Someruelos Act and Montesino Regulation. They are, however, not the only ones.³⁵ For instance, although it is not the main focus of this chapter, it is worth highlighting that the Montesino Regulation also encouraged the establishment of public nurseries and schools for illiterate adults.³⁶

Educational Regulations and the Supply of Schools

The *Geographic-Statistic-Historic Dictionary of Spain and of its Overseas Territories 1845–1850* is the source used in this section. This dictionary was written by Pascual Madoz and was published for the first time in 1855.³⁷ It contains some statistics as well as detailed information about the geography and history of all the places (administrative districts, parishes, villages, mountains, rivers, etc.) of the Kingdom of Spain, including information about the educational organization.³⁸ By listing information such as the number of students who attended the schools, their gender, and month of attendance, the so-called Madoz Dictionary mainly presents data on the supply of education, and only in some cases does the dictionary include information about the demand.

The Madoz Dictionary is particularly valuable because the information was collected by more than 1000 local correspondents who visited the areas covered, which they were well acquainted with.³⁹ In contrast, the data for official statistics such as the 1855 Spanish Annual Statistics were merely provided by public officers not acquainted with the sites

included. In fact, Jean-Louis Guereña and Antonio Viñao compared the data from the Madoz Dictionary with the data offered by the official statistics and found that the number of schools and students coincided in both sources in 57% of the cases, whereas in 31% of the cases, the data from the Madoz Dictionary showed a higher number, and in 12% of the cases, the data showed a lower number.⁴⁰ In addition to the method of data compilation, the Madoz Dictionary is of particular interest because the information it contains has rarely been used; therefore, it could be considered as a new source.⁴¹

My investigation of the Madoz Dictionary has three aims. First, I intend to examine the extent to which the new education regulations were realized and the proportion of villages with 500 inhabitants that actually had a primary elementary school. Second, I will address the gender differences in this supply of primary education. Third, I will measure the extent to which the supply of primary education related only to the number of inhabitants or if there were other factors, such as the distance to the capital (both the capital city of the province and Madrid) or the taxable wealth, that affected the supply of primary education for both genders.

I draw two different samples from the dictionary. Sample A includes all the province summaries that give information related to each administrative district of the province: number of inhabitants, number of villages, number of town halls, number of schools by type of school (complete or incomplete) and by the gender of the students (boys, girls, or co-ed), number of students, type of funding (public or private), funding and even the way in which the expenses were paid (payment in cash, in kind, etc.). Sample B is a dataset created using a randomized sample of the villages included in the dictionary.⁴² The latter contains a total of 4578 villages, 667 with no schools at all. In relation to the data from the 1858 Spanish Annual Statistics,⁴³ the data of Sample B represent, on average, 16% of the Spanish villages with schools, although the representation varies by province from 3% to more than 50%. This unbalanced representation of some provinces could indicate two different issues: either that the sample is biased, for example, because the villages are ordered alphabetically, or that in some provinces, there are more villages with similar names. For instance, there are 33 villages

named San Mamed: 18 in Lugo, 9 in La Coruña, 3 in Orense, and 1 each in León, Zamora, and Oviedo. However, it is also possible that some provinces actually had fewer villages with schools than others.

Table 8.1 summarizes the increasing number of complete and incomplete primary schools according to the general statistics in all the Spanish provinces. The data confirm the higher proportions of schools for boys than for girls, which is not surprising given the emphasis on education for boys and de-emphasis of education for girls in the regulations of 1838. Nevertheless, the data depict an increase in the number of schools, complete and incomplete, for both sexes from 1846 to 1855, which could be attributed to the implementation of the Montesino Regulation on education.

Table 8.2 summarizes the main data related to public complete primary schools for the second sample (randomized Sample B) in 1845–1850. This table shows the poor representation of schools for girls in general and especially in villages with fewer than 2000 inhabitants. In fact, there is only one public complete elementary primary school for girls among the villages with 500 inhabitants or less. The data reveal that in villages with 500 inhabitants or less, girls could only obtain access to this kind of education in 40% of the villages, namely villages in which there was a co-ed school. Nevertheless, as Sarasúa demonstrated, girls attending co-ed schools were more likely to be literate than those attending schools for girls due to the gender differences in the subjects taught in the school when girls and boys were segregated.⁴⁴

Table 8.2 reveals several interesting findings. First, more than half of the public complete elementary primary schools targeted boys exclusively in 1845–1850. Of those, approximately half were concentrated in

Table 8.1 Elementary primary schools in Spain, 1846–1855

	Boys		Girls	
	Complete	Incomplete	Complete	Incomplete
1846	3468	2234	937	382
1850	–	–	898	1140
1855	5771	7172	1816	1319

Source Gómez Moreno, *Liberalismo y educación primaria en España (1838–1857)*, 15 and 18

Table 8.2 Public complete elementary primary education schools in Spain, 1845–1850

Inhabitants	Boys		Girls		Co-ed		Total	
	Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%
100 or under	179	9.7	1	1.0	116	12.9	296	10.4
101–500	868	46.8	10	9.5	575	63.8	1453	50.8
501–1000	338	18.2	18	17.1	136	15.1	492	17.2
1001–2000	269	14.5	29	27.6	51	5.7	349	12.2
2001–3000	85	4.6	21	20.0	15	1.7	121	4.2
3001–4000	43	2.3	6	5.7	4	0.4	53	1.9
4001–5000	32	1.7	9	8.6	1	0.1	42	1.5
5001–10,000	39	2.1	11	10.5	3	0.3	53	1.9
Total	1853	100	105	100	901	100	2859	100

Note Sample B

Source Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y de sus posesiones de ultramar 1845–1850*

villages numbering between 100 and 500 inhabitants. The co-ed schools followed the same distribution whereas, most schools for girls were concentrated in villages numbering between 1000 and 2000 inhabitants.

According to the data presented in Table 8.2, the supply of public complete elementary schooling, especially for girls, was related to the number of inhabitants in the village. These data support the assumption that the regulations of 1838 had an impact on the Spanish school system, since the data show that larger villages (with more than 100 inhabitants) complied with the regulations and actually provided schools with complete primary education.

Figure 8.1 depicts the supply of public complete elementary schools by village. The figure shows the relationship between the number of this type of school, regardless of student gender, and the number of inhabitants in the village. Those villages with fewer than 1000 inhabitants had only one school, whereas those with a maximum of 3 schools were more densely populated. Despite these general patterns, it is also worth highlighting the sizable number of villages that had only one or two schools; even though, they were densely populated (the number of outliers in the first box accounts for schools situated in highly populated villages).

Figure 8.2 accounts for the gender segregation of the educational organizations. Villages with 1000–3000 inhabitants were more likely to have at least one public complete elementary primary school for boys

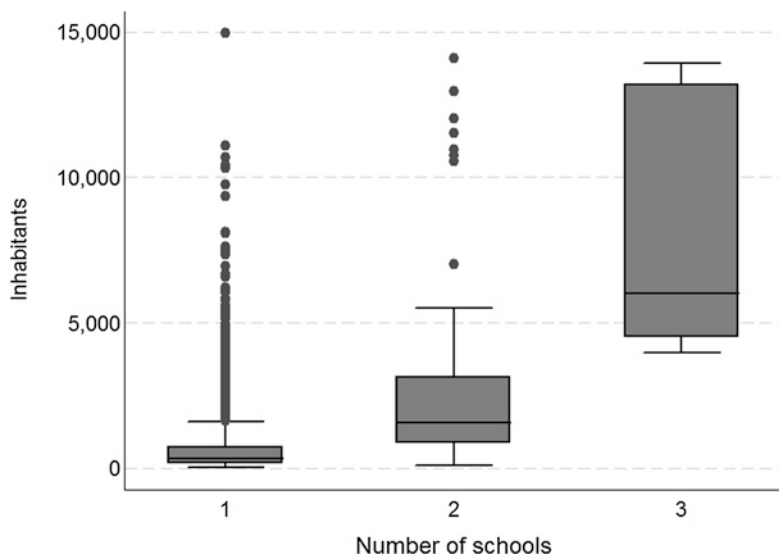


Fig. 8.1 Total number of public complete elementary primary schools by number of inhabitants in 1845–1850 (Spain) (Note Data from Sample B. Villages with more than 15,000 inhabitants have been excluded to avoid extreme outliers. Source Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y de sus posesiones de ultramar 1845–1850*)

and one for girls, whereas those with only schools for boys or co-ed schools were the least densely populated (fewer than 1000 inhabitants, approximately). In the data from Sample B, there is only one case of a village with a public complete elementary primary school for girls and a co-ed school, and only one case of a village with a school for boys and a school for both sexes. In both cases, the number of inhabitants in the town was higher than 4000. Figure 8.2 also shows the higher population density of villages with only a public school for girls and villages with a public complete elementary primary school for boys and one for girls.

To analyze the effect that some factors have on the number of schools, I ran a linear regression model using Sample A obtained from the Madoz Dictionary. Table 8.3 depicts the estimated coefficients for this linear regression model estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS).

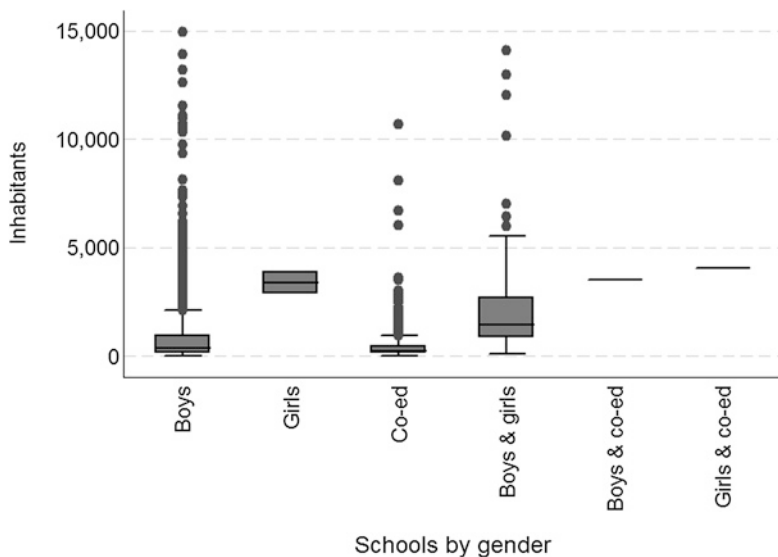


Fig. 8.2 Distribution of public complete elementary primary schools in 1845–1850 (Spain) (Note Data from Sample B. Villages with more than 15,000 inhabitants have been excluded to avoid extreme outliers. Source Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y de sus posesiones de ultramar 1845–1850*)

I ran the regression model three times: once including only the complete elementary primary education schools (complete); a second time using the number of incomplete elementary primary schools as a dependent variable (incomplete); and a third time including complete and incomplete elementary primary schools (all schools).

The factors used as independent variables were the number of inhabitants, the taxable wealth, the distance to the capital in kilometers (one variable for the distance to Madrid and another variable for the distance to the capital city of the province), the province, and the type of school (girls, boys, or co-ed). I also considered dividing Spain into zones. Following Francisco Beltrán Tapia and Julio Martínez-Galarraga, I estimated the model twice: once including a dummy variable distinguishing the regions belonging to the Kingdom of Aragon from those belonging to the Kingdom of Castile, and a second time including a dummy variable that divided the regions between those from the North

Table 8.3 Estimated coefficients for the regression model (Spain)

	Complete schools		Incomplete schools		All schools	
Inhabitants (hundreds)	0.0154 (0.0027)	***	0.0206 (0.0077)	**	0.0238 (0.0067)	***
Taxable wealth (millions)	0.1785 (0.0616)	**	-0.4258 (0.2443)	n.s.	-0.0013 (0.1554)	n.s.
Province capital-city (distance)	-0.1306 (0.0448)	**	0.0435 (0.1134)	n.s.	-0.0700 (0.1106)	n.s.
Madrid (distance)	-0.0150 (0.0318)	n.s.	0.0152 (0.0724)	n.s.	-0.0030 (0.0778)	n.s.
Constant	11.3286 (4.0865)	***	-5.2116 (10.2751)	n.s.	19.6534 (4.5442)	*
Province	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Type of school	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Probability	0.0000		0.0000		0.0000	
R^2	0.5342		0.6645		0.5076	
Adj. R^2	0.5010		0.6325		0.4753	
Number of observations	573		426		617	

Notes Data from sample A. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. not significant. Standard errors in parenthesis and italics

Source Madoz, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España y de sus posesiones de ultramar 1845–1850*

and those from the South.⁴⁵ The objective was to account for the possible differences between those regions created by previous legislation and therefore the existence of differences in the education supply before the introduction of the new regulations in 1838. However, in both cases, the introduction of this new covariant did not change the estimated values. Consequently, I did not consider it. In addition, the covariant province already accounts for regional differences.

The three specifications of the model (*Complete*, *Incomplete*, and *All schools*) are statistically highly significant ($p = 0.000$), although the number of observations is relatively low (573, 426, and 617, respectively). *Complete* is the only specification in which most of the estimated coefficients are statistically significant. As for the other two specifications, *Incomplete* and *All schools*, only the estimated coefficients for the

number of inhabitants are statistically highly significant; therefore, the results for the rest of the covariants should be considered with caution.

As expected, the number of inhabitants had a positive effect on the number of schools in these three aspects. However, the effect was very low (between 1 and 2%). For the complete specification, *taxable wealth* and the *distance to Madrid* and *the distance to the capital city of the province* also influenced the number of schools. The sign of the estimated coefficients is positive in the former case and negative in the latter. As expected, the richer the administrative district, the higher the number of schools. In contrast, the longer the distance from the administrative district to Madrid and to the capital city of the province, the lower the number of complete elementary primary schools in the administrative district. This latter result can be explained by the fact that, as Antonio Viñao stated, urbanization was positively related to schooling and literacy since literacy and numeracy skills were more relevant to urban life.⁴⁶

The estimated values of the regression model confirm that there was a positive relationship between the number of inhabitants and the number of schools following the reforms of the 1830s. This fact could be interpreted as an indication of the impact that the Someruelos Act and the regulations of 1838 had on the number of public primary elementary schools, either complete or incomplete. However, this result should be considered cautiously. Despite being highly statistically significant, the estimated value for the number of inhabitants variable is quite low (between 1 and 2%). In addition, the data used for the regression model (Sample A) come from the summaries of the administrative districts and therefore might hide some disparities within the administrative districts.

Public Elementary Schools After 1838

To demonstrate that an education regulation or act actually has an impact on the education system is not an easy task. The challenges of such an analysis are related to the time gap between the moment that the regulation is enacted and when it is finally applied and the time gap between its application and when the effects of this application appear

in the system. The task becomes even more complicated when examining historical developments, since historical statistics are often scarce, unreliable and difficult to come by.

This chapter has attempted to clarify whether the new liberal regulations on education enacted in the first half of the nineteenth century in Spain promoted the growth of public primary schools in Spanish villages. To this end, this chapter has presented the education regulations and their objectives from the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 to the Montesino Regulation of 1838, when Spain was transforming from an absolute monarchy to a parliamentary monarchy. This change did not entail a smooth transition. On the contrary, during this period, the government alternated from being run by moderate or progressive liberals to the return of the absolute monarchy. Consequently, there were important changes to the different constitutions established (i.e., 1812 and 1837) and to the legislation on education.

The chapter examines the main contributions of education regulations to the organization of elementary primary education. It addresses how the first liberals stood for a national and free-access primary education and funding for secondary education for poor students with A grades in primary education. Later regulations created an educational system segmented according to class and property ownership: elementary primary education for the masses, and secondary and tertiary education for well-to-do citizens.

This chapter has used the Madoz Dictionary of 1845–1850 to analyze the influence of school acts on the organization of elementary primary education. Using two different datasets from this source (Sample A, which includes information from each administrative district, and Sample B, based on a randomized sample), the chapter focuses on the complete elementary primary schools, although a regression model is also run for incomplete schools and for all schools (complete and incomplete altogether). In both cases, only public schools were included in the samples. These public schools were mainly funded by the villages, and in some cases, either the locals or the parents of the pupils were the ones who actually paid all or part of the cost.

A descriptive analysis using Sample B shows the poor representation of schools for girls in general, but especially in villages with fewer than

2000 inhabitants and a higher representation of schools for girls than co-ed schools in villages with more than 2000 inhabitants.

Sample A is used to run a linear regression model to evaluate the correlation between the number of schools (complete, incomplete, and all schools) and the number of inhabitants, the taxable wealth, the distance from the administrative district to Madrid and to the capital city of the province, the type of school (boys, girls, and co-ed), and the area. According to the results, the higher the number of inhabitants, the higher the number of schools (complete, incomplete, and all schools), although the influence of number of inhabitants is quite low (between 1 and 2%). For the complete schools, the taxable wealth also has a positive correlation with the number of schools, whereas the distance to the capital of the province has a negative correlation.

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated that there was a relationship between the number of inhabitants and the number of public primary schools, especially for all-girl schools, indicating that the 1838 regulations had an impact on the creation of schools, at least in villages that were more densely populated.

Notes

1. Green, *Education and State Formation*.
2. *Ibid.*, 308.
3. De Puelles, *Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809–1857). Un Sistema educativo nacional frustrado*, 37–62.
4. Escolano, “Claudio Moyano y la ley de Instrucción Pública de 1857,” 63–82.
5. Tortella, “Sweden and Spain—Different Path Towards Modernity?” 18–30.
6. There was also an education regulation in 1842, but it only affected secondary and tertiary education.
7. Real, “The System Set Spanish Education in the Nineteenth Century: Law Education and Political Thought,” 69–94.
8. Peset et al., *Ciencias y enseñanza en la revolución burguesa*.
9. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.

10. De Puelles, “Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809–1857),” 37–62; Sevilla, “La Ley Moyano y el desarrollo de la educación en España,” 110–24.
11. De Puelles, “Reflexiones sobre la formación del estado liberal y la construcción del sistema educativo liberal (1834–1857),” 37–62
12. The right to vote for parliament was, however, restricted. Around 250,000 citizens could vote. Fontana, *Historia de España, Vol. 6, La época del Liberalismo*, 163.
13. The lack of a bourgeoisie social conscience was the main reason for the slow implementation of liberal ideas in Spain.
14. The first liberal government, the Cadiz Court of 1810, was radical. However, this radicalism moderated as time went by. Until 1868, the Crown, which represented the nation, was empowered to dissolve the Parliament and to appoint the government. De Puelles, *Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809–1857). Un Sistema educativo nacional frustrado*.
15. The bourgeois constituted less than 5% of the population. Sevilla, “La Ley Moyano y el desarrollo de la educación en España,” 115.
16. De Puelles, *Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809–1857). Un Sistema educativo nacional frustrado*.
17. Ibid.
18. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.
19. Real, “The System Set Spanish Education in the Nineteenth Century: Law Education and Political Thought.”
20. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.
21. Ministerio de Educación, *Historia de la Educación en España. Tomo I: Del Despotismo Ilustrado a las Cortes de Cádiz*.
22. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.
23. A transcription of the Quintana Report can be found in Ministerio de Educación *Historia de la Educación en España. Tomo I: Del Despotismo Ilustrado a las Cortes de Cádiz*, 377–417.
24. Ministerio de Educación, *Historia de la Educación en España. Tomo II: De las Cortes de Cádiz a la Revolución de 1868*.
25. Ibid.
26. The regulation also established that (1) the regional government would decide on how to proceed when the villages had fewer than 100 inhabitants, and (2) there should be a school when a village had more than

- 500 inhabitants (Ministerio de Educación, *Historia de la Educación en España. Tomo II: De las Cortes de Cádiz a la Revolución de 1868*).
27. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.
 28. Known as the Someruelos Act.
 29. Gómez Moreno, *Liberalismo y educación primaria en España (1838–1857)*.
 30. De Puelles, *Estado y educación en la España liberal (1809–1857). Un Sistema educativo nacional frustrado*.
 31. Álvarez de Morales, “Los precedentes de la Ley Moyano,” 5–13.
 32. Gómez Moreno, *Liberalismo y educación primaria en España (1838–1857)*.
 33. Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX.”
 34. *Ibid.*, 575.
 35. The complete text of the Someruelos Act and of the Montesino Regulation can be found in Ministerio de Educación, *Historia de la Educación en España. Tomo II: De la Cortes de Cádiz a la Revolución de 1868*.
 36. Gómez Moreno, *Liberalismo y educación primaria en España (1838–1857)*.
 37. In 1989, a new edition of this dictionary was published in Madrid. This is the edition used to create the dataset used in this chapter. This edition contains 16 books of approximately 1000 pages each. A very detailed description of this dictionary, its sources and the main data included in it can be found in Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX,” 553–55.
 38. The Spanish name of this section in the Madoz Dictionary is “Instrucción pública,” which refers to different types of education/training related to the population. Thus, it contains information about public and private education (number of schools, type of school (primary (complete or incomplete), secondary, etc.), number and gender of the students, etc.).
 39. Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX.”
 40. Guereña and Viñao, *Estadística escolar, proceso de escolarización y sistema educativo nacional en España (1750–1850)*, 191–92.
 41. Some authors, such as Guereña and Viñao, *Estadística escolar, proceso de escolarización y sistema educativo nacional en España (1750–1850)*,

- have used the summaries of the “Instrucción pública” from the Madoz Dictionary but not the information included for each village. Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX,” did use a sample of the information included for each village. This latter sample is part of the Sample B used in this chapter.
42. The dataset contains all the places with schools described in the dictionary from 1 to 4 and from 13 to 16 (this sample was already used in Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX,” to analyze the gender differences in access to schooling, paying special attention to the kind of funding and the curriculum or content of education). It also contains all the cities that are not provincial capitals.
 43. “Anuario Estadístico de España 1858.”
 44. Sarasúa, “El acceso de niñas y niños a los recursos educativos en la España rural del siglo XIX.”
 45. Beltrán Tapia and Martínez-Galarraga, “Land Access Inequality and Education in Pre-Industrial Spain.”
 46. Viñao, “The History of Literacy in Spain: Evolution, Trats, and Questions,” 588.

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9

Basic Schools in Each and Every Parish: The School Act of 1842 and the Rise of Mass Schooling in Sweden

Johannes Westberg

Resulting from a complicated political process initiated by a royal proposition on February 1, 1840, the Swedish school act of 1842 was issued on June 18, 1842, and signed by King Karl XIV Johan.¹ This school act was subject to recurrent criticism, continuously revised by circulars and regulations, and was modified by two additional school acts in 1882 and 1897. Nevertheless, the school act of 1842 created the main structure for Sweden's primary school system (*folkskoleväsende*) that lasted through the nineteenth century and achieved high enrollment levels at the end of the century.

Since the school act of 1842 was the main piece of primary school legislation of nineteenth-century Sweden, this chapter will focus on this act and its preconditions, content, and consequences. It will show that the school act was the result of a lengthy political debate on popular

This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council under Grant 2016-05230.

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_9

education, describe the school system that the school act designed, and discuss the effects of the act using both existing research on the topic and primary sources.

Household Instruction and the Rise of Mass Schooling

Prior to the school act, popular education in Sweden was organized through a system of household instruction (*hemundervisning*) based on the Church Law of 1686. In keeping with Martin Luther's perception of society, this law gave the head of the household the responsibility for educating children and servants. Instruction was largely performed by household members, with a focus on reading and catechetical knowledge. The main role of the clergy was to verify and register the level of knowledge via examinations held in the parishioners' homes. Although imposed from above by the Protestant Kingdom of Sweden, the reading campaign enacted through household instruction also served the individual need for literacy and catechism and matched the existing traditions of family prayer and village reading. Since a basic reading ability and understanding of the Bible was required to be confirmed, take communion and be married, there were certainly reasons for individuals to master these skills.²

The system of household instruction was a success: Estimates indicate that the Swedish population reached universal reading ability by 1800. Nevertheless, there was a critical educational debate in the eighteenth century that targeted this system of popular education. According to critics, household instruction overly focused on simple mechanical reading ability, neglecting subjects such as writing, arithmetic, and history. There was also criticism of parents' inability or unwillingness to guarantee the level of knowledge that was expected.³

Steps were consequently taken to complement household instruction with schooling. In 1723, a royal decision stated that parents unable to tend to their children's educational needs were required to ensure that their children were educated by someone else. If the parents were too poor to see to this, the parishes were obliged to fund the children's

education. In 1762, a royal resolution stated that parishes should provide their parishioners with a teacher when deemed necessary. In 1768, a circular required the county administration (*länsstyrelsen*) to investigate how school buildings could be built in each parish.⁴ In addition, public proposals for educational reform were formulated. In a memorial intended for the parliament of 1738, Professor Andreas Rydelius argued that each parish should have a school building. In 1742, the cathedral chapter of Lund filed a report that included a proposal for school regulation requiring parents to send their children to schoolmasters. In 1798, the *Pro Fide et Christianismo* Society proposed a school ordinance for parish schools.⁵

Although further investigations are required to estimate the impact of these proposals and the attempts to promote the establishment of schools, the number of city and parish schools increased during the second half of the eighteenth century. In addition to pressures from above, this was also a matter of popular demand. There are indications that the importance of literacy increased among farmers due to the administrative demands of the enclosure movement and the increasing commercialization of farming.⁶ Consequently, schools were established in the countryside, funded and organized by noblemen and parishioners. Nils Torpson's investigation, published in 1888, found that there were 165 permanent schools in Sweden in 1768. Of these, 75 were funded by donations from wealthy individuals, and 90 were initiated and run by parishioners. A significant number of these early schools were established in the diocese of Lund, in the southernmost part of Sweden. This was partly due to influence from Denmark, where popular education in the eighteenth century depended on schools, rather than home instruction. In 1812, 106 primary school teachers were listed in the diocese of Lund.⁷

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the number of primary schools continued to increase. This trend was mainly the result of local initiatives by parishioners or wealthy individuals, but the expansion of schooling was also supported by the Society for the Promotion of Monitorial Education (*Sällskapet för växelundervisningens befrämjande*), founded in 1822. At that time, the society listed 35 monitorial

schools, which rose to approximately 400 in 1839.⁸ Overall, the number of primary schools increased to approximately 1500 by 1839.⁹

This growth of schooling during the early nineteenth century was accompanied by a political debate on the Swedish educational system that drew on both the criticism of the state of popular education mentioned above and discontent with the organization of secondary education.¹⁰ The political issue of education was also affected by contemporary political changes. As a result of prolonged dissatisfaction with the Swedish political system and the unfortunate Finnish War of 1808–1809, resulting in the loss of Finland, King Gustav IV Adolf was forced to abdicate. Following these events, Sweden adopted a new constitution in 1809. Influenced by Montesquieu's political theory, this constitution divided the political power between the king (as the executive branch of government) and the parliament (*Ständsriksdagen*), which was a diet comprising four estates (peasants, burghers, clergy, and nobility).¹¹

As Daniel Tröhler noted, new constitutions tend to result in new school laws.¹² In Sweden, the constitution of 1809 was followed by an educational debate. At the 1809 parliament, just a couple of weeks after the adoption of the constitution, Gustaf Abraham Silverstolpe argued that Sweden needed an educational system that suited the new constitution, protected the nation's newfound freedoms, and provided peasants (who held one-fourth of the political power in parliament) with a proper education. Similar arguments, which should not be misinterpreted as early arguments for comprehensive schools targeting all social classes, recurred in the following parliaments of the 1810s and early 1820s. A more general civic education of the population was presented as vital, not only to the new political system, but also to support Sweden's economic and cultural development.¹³

However, a school act was delayed until 1842 for several reasons. In part, this was caused by the inherent tensions between the estates of the parliament. At the parliament of 1823, for example, the clergy perceived the arguments for educational reforms merely as a critique of how they organized popular education.¹⁴ Another issue that caused delays was funding. At the parliament of 1840–1841, the nobility, the clergy, and the burghers approved a solution that placed the cost

of the proposed primary school system on local communities, and consequently primarily on the shoulders of the landholding peasants. However, the wealthy farmers of the peasant estate questioned why they were asked to fund not only their own children's education but also those of the increasing landless population. Taking aim at the clergy and the nobility, the farmers of the peasant estate instead argued that the school system should be funded by the central government through cuts in the ecclesiastical and military budgets.¹⁵

Since Sweden was undecidedly Protestant (until 1860, the law required Swedish citizens to be members of the Swedish church), religious conflicts were not an important issue in the nineteenth-century national school politics: Only in the local implementation of the school act, disputes arose with, for example, members of Baptist congregations. Instead, the main ideological disagreement was between so-called liberals and conservatives, and their different views of society, religion, and education. The conservatives promoted a restrictive view of popular education, arguing that catechism and reading instruction were all that the population needed, while the liberal wing favored a more extensive popular education. From their point of view, introducing a primary school system was a mechanism to create virtuous national citizens. In this respect, disseminating religious knowledge and reading skills was not enough. For example, farmers required a broad education to develop the agrarian industry, prepare for positions at the municipal level, and discuss political issues on a national level. To free the population from superstition and ignorance, and promote the economic, political, and social development of the Swedish nation, a more extensive education was necessary.¹⁶

The school act of 1842 can also be understood in the context of the social and political conditions of the first decades of the nineteenth century. Because of the agrarian revolution, social differentiation in Swedish society was increasing. In 1750–1850, the population of farmers increased by 10%, while the landless population more than quadrupled.¹⁷ The Swedish economy also developed somewhat unevenly. There were indications of increased social differentiation in the 1830s, including a somewhat declining living standard for the broader strata and a perception of economic crisis when the 1837 harvest was weak and the

winter of 1837–1838 was unusually difficult.¹⁸ The popular political culture in the first half of the nineteenth century also evoked riots and violent unrest. There were 20 riots from 1825 to 1844, including the Rabulist riots (*Crusenstolpe-kravallerna*) in Stockholm during the summer of 1838 (Fig. 9.1).¹⁹

Against this background, popular education became part of the debate on the social question (*sociala frågan*), that is, the debate on the problems of society that included fears of social unrest and political revolt.²⁰ In this context, mass education was perceived as a way of controlling and disciplining the growing underclass of landless agricultural workers, tenant farmers, and squatters. In addition, revolutionary sentiments in Europe created fears among the upper classes that Swedish



Fig. 9.1 “The attack on city hall.” A portrayal of the Rabulist riots of the summer of 1838 (Sweden), probably by Ferdinand Tollin (1807–1860 or 1865) (Source Kungliga Biblioteket, kb-19728009)

society could be turned on its head. Together with the introduction of solitary-confinement penitentiaries, poor relief, and Bible societies, primary schools were perceived as a social strategy to prevent crime, and curb immorality and potential rebellion, and instead foster a subservient and disciplined population. Arguing for the establishment of a primary school system, Swedish commentators referenced the US elite, and their belief in schooling as a safeguard against the raw masses.²¹ In this context, Lars Petterson described the school act of 1842 as a response to a moral panic and a fear of the dreaded underclass.²²

The Creation of a Decentralized School System

The juridical discourse commonly makes a distinction between laws (made jointly by parliament and the government/head of state), and decrees and ordinances that the government/head of state can institute independently of the parliament. However, the Swedish Instrument of Government (1809) did not clearly distinguish between laws, statutes, and regulations. Instead, the term *regulations* (*författning*) was interpreted as synonymous with *laws* (*lag*). According to the Instrument, the Swedish king had the right to issue statutes and regulations on administrative and economic matters that, in effect, were laws which required general compliance.²³

The Swedish school act of 1842 was a *Kunglig stadga*; that is, a royal statute or by-law issued by King Karl XIV Johan on June 18, 1842. In line with the Instrument of Government, this act was the result of a lengthy political process. On February 1, 1840, the king submitted a proposition to the four estates of the parliament. This proposition was first subject to comments by one of the parliament committees and then debated in the individual estates and parliamentary committees to reconcile differing opinions. As a result, the parliament submitted a revised proposal to the king on June 14, 1841, which he then remitted to the dioceses and counties for statements. On those grounds, he issued the *Gracious Royal Statute on Popular Education in the Realm* (*Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Stadga angående folk-undervisningen i Riket*) on June 18, 1842, countersigned by Professor of Ethics and Politics Samuel

Grubbe, the acting head of the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Ecklesiastikdepartementet*).²⁴

The school act of 1842 was clearly inspired by an international educational debate and foreign examples. In the parliamentary debate of 1840–1841, Bishop C.A. Agardh argued that the school act should create a school system similar to that of Prussia and Saxony. The school organization of Württemberg was also a reference point when drafting the Swedish school act. The French philosopher and educationalist Victor Cousin's reports on schooling in Germany played a vital role in this respect. The Swedish school act was also influenced by its counterparts in Denmark (1814) and Norway (1827), and the knowledge gained from the organization of monitorial schools abroad.²⁵

The school act of 1842 defined a decentralized national school system, based on the 2308 parishes of Sweden. The first paragraph presented the main layout of the system. It stated that at least one, preferably permanent school (*folkskola*) should be established in each urban and rural parish within five years. The school act allowed impoverished or sparsely inhabited parishes to organize a school that was shared by two or more parishes or establish an ambulatory school that traveled between villages. These ambulatory schools became a main feature of the Swedish school system. As late as 1900, 22% of all primary schools were ambulatory.²⁶

Starting in the 1850s, other types of schools were introduced, including those for the youngest school-aged children, remote areas, and higher primary schools intended for an advanced level of education for the laboring classes. While the former school types—the so-called *småskolorna* and *mindre folkskolorna* in the terminology of the renewed school act of 1882—gained great popularity, the higher primary schools remained insignificant. Similarly, the organization of urban schools developed over time. Unlike the school acts of Denmark (1814), the Swedish school act of 1842 issued no specific regulations for urban schools. To address the challenges of Sweden's largest cities, specific school organizations were later implemented in Göteborg (1857), Stockholm (1861), and later in Malmö and Norrköping.²⁷

To organize these schools, each parish (or sometimes more than one parish) constituted a school district (*skol-district*, spelled *skoldistrikt*

in later school acts) managed by a school board (*skol-styrelse*, later termed *skolråd*). The school board, which comprised between five and 12 individuals according to the regulations of 1862, was led by the parish vicar or a priest acting in his place. The issue of teachers as members of the school board remained subject to debate throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Some argued that such representation would be illegal, due to teachers being salaried by the school district. Eventually, teachers were formally given the right to meet with the school board once per year to discuss school matters through a school act amendment in 1892, later included in the revised version of the school act of 1897.²⁸

The school act of 1842 stated that the school board was responsible for the schools in the school district. The school board should inspect schools and issue local regulations regarding instruction methods, disciplinary measures, and other school management and organization issues.²⁹ The school board was placed under the governance of the parish meeting (*sockenstämma*), at which all taxable inhabitants of the parish had a vote. The parish meeting, led by the parish vicar, appointed and dismissed school board members, teachers and sextons, and was responsible for the school buildings and teachers' housing. The parish meeting also audited the school board's account books and had the final say in issues regarding school expenditures.³⁰ As a result of this organization, the school act placed Swedish schools in the hands of the local community and more specifically in the hands of the influential strata of the community.³¹

In line with this decentralized organization, funding the Swedish school system was mainly the responsibility of the school districts. The school act of 1842 stated that the school districts were responsible for obtaining and maintaining premises for primary schools, and remunerating teachers. The school act suggested three sources of revenue for the school districts: A *per capita* tax, a general tax, and school fees. The latter was probably never an important revenue source and was abolished in 1883.³² A parish could also apply for funding from the central government, but only if it was too poor to fund teachers' salaries.³³

As a result of this legislation, the Swedish school system remained decentralized in economic terms throughout the nineteenth century, even though state subsidies increased over time. Nevertheless, from

1865 to 1900, the central government contributed only 30% to the school districts' revenues, on average. However, after the state subsidy reform of 1913, state subsidies became the major source of funding for Swedish school districts.³⁴

Fittingly for a largely rural society, the school funding system delineated by the school act of 1842 was based on both monetary and non-monetary items. The minimum wage consisted of 53 *riksdaler banco*, eight barrels of grains (at least half of which would be delivered in rye), decent housing, necessary fuel, a summer's grazing and winter fodder for a cow, and a land plot, if possible. Partly because the minimum salary set by the school act was clearly restricted, teachers commonly had various secondary occupations, in both the laborer and skilled sectors. In 1847, 27% of all primary school teachers also worked as priests or sextons. By 1896, 57% of rural teachers employed in *folkskolor* also earned revenues from secondary occupations.³⁵

The school act stated that the funding of new school buildings should be based on the regulations for church buildings if no other arrangements were made.³⁶ The regulations for church buildings are found in the Book of Building, included in the Civil Code of 1734 (*1734 års lag*). According to these regulations, building materials and transportation would be taxed according to land ownership, and work would be taxed according to households. This meant that landowning farmers would fund new schools by providing money or building materials, and that all inhabitants (both landowners and landless) would provide either labor or the funds to cover labor.³⁷

Although the school act of 1842 largely placed the organizational and financial responsibilities of the school system in the hands of local school districts, the districts could not act entirely on their own. In addition to being governed by the regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the school districts were under the supervision of the bishop and cathedral chapters. Certain disagreements were resolved by the administrative board of each county (*länsstyrelsen*) or the district court (*häradsrätten*). Each year, the school districts were also required to present the cathedral chapter with a report on the state of their schools. Every third year, those reports were compiled and sent to the king.³⁸

Over time, the central government's grip on the Swedish school tightened in some respects. In 1861, the first state school inspectors were installed, and school standards (*normalplaner*) were issued in 1878, 1889, 1897, and 1900. Those standards were a set of recommendations for a number of school types and curricula. To increase the quality of school buildings, Royal Building Plans (*normalritningar*) were issued in 1865 and 1878.³⁹ Nevertheless, the power of the Swedish school system primarily remained in the hands of the school districts, in line with the formulations of the school act.

The Content of Noncompulsory Schooling

As the term *folkskola* suggests, the primary schools regulated by the school act of 1842 targeted *das Volk*, or *the people*. In this context, this was not a school intended for all Swedish people, but rather for the lower classes of society, the common people, or the working classes. In this respect, terms such as *lower* also carried a moral aspect. The term *the people* indicated not only the majority of the population and its poorer strata, but also an inferior and potentially dangerous class of society sometimes described in derogatory terms, such as *raw*, *lazy*, *drunken*, and *uneducated*.⁴⁰

Although the school act of 1842 stated that establishing schools was compulsory for parishes, the act did not make schooling compulsory for all school-aged children. Instead, the school act merely confirmed previous regulations stating that a basic education was compulsory, while schooling was not. The school act admittedly noted that all children should enroll in school, but specifically exempted children educated at home, and middle- and upper-middle-class children attending grammar schools (*läroverk*). In the former respect, the school act noted that home instruction would remain important in some areas. The school act also stated that children unable to attend school due to long, or seasonally impassable, routes to school were allowed to attend school only once or twice a week once they acquired the ability to read.⁴¹

In line with the school act's focus on the school districts' responsibility to establish schools, rather than on children's responsibility to attend

school, the school act did not further define what schooling meant in terms of years or school days. The school act noted that children should start school by age 9 at the latest, but it did not define the age at which schooling should end or a standard number of school years. In fact, school age was first defined as from ages 7 to 14 in the revised school act of 1882.⁴² In practice, the most fitting definition of school-aged children in the early years of the school act was probably children from the ages of 7 to 13.⁴³ The school year was also not defined by the act, even though the proposals that led to the school act suggested school years consisting of at least six or eight months.⁴⁴ The school act was also vague with regard to gender. The act assumed that both boys and girls would attend school, and did not suggest separate schools. However, it stated that the school boards were responsible for implementing necessary differences between boys' and girls' education.⁴⁵

Although the teaching profession in Sweden became feminized during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the teachers defined by the school act were men.⁴⁶ The school act stated that teachers were required to have a degree from one of the teachers' colleges, to be established by each of Sweden's 12 cathedral chapters, or the normal school of the Society for the Promotion of Monitorial Education in Stockholm. The school act did not define the courses taught at these colleges but noted the level of knowledge required for a teacher. In addition to having a personality characterized by piety and moral conduct, teachers were required to have a complete mastery of reading and writing skills, and full knowledge of catechism, biblical history, natural history (*naturlära*), geography, and arithmetic. The teachers were also expected to be familiar with the methods of monitorial education and teaching gymnastics and psalm songs.⁴⁷ A week at the Stockholm Teachers' College in 1848 (comprising 38 hours of class) consequently included 14 h of prayer and Bible studies, catechism, and Bible history. Five hours were spent on the Swedish language, four hours on singing instruction, three hours on geography and history, and two hours on arithmetic.⁴⁸

The content of teachers' instruction was related to conservative and liberal perceptions of education. On the one hand, the school act allowed a minimum curriculum for children who could not receive the

complete primary school course, due to either poverty or lack of talent. This minimum amount of knowledge included instruction in reading, religious knowledge (catechism and biblical history), church singing (with the exception of those entirely lacking singing talent), writing, and arithmetic. The full curriculum also included geography, history, geometry, linear drawing, natural history, and physical education.⁴⁹

The Swedish historiography of schooling has debated on how these two curricula should be understood. In addition to being interpreted as an outcome of the tension between conservative and liberal views of popular education, the school act has also been interpreted in terms of social control: The school act allowed for a basic education deemed appropriate for the knowledge that the people of the lower classes required.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the possibility of teaching a more comprehensive curriculum has been interpreted as an attempt to foster competent modern citizens.⁵¹ A third line of interpretation has acknowledged that the school act was promoted by landowning farmers, who favored a broader curriculum.⁵² These perceptions of the school act will be discussed below when the consequences of the school act are examined.

One School Act, Varying Consequences

The role of the school act of 1842 has been interpreted in various ways. In accordance with earlier traditions of educational history that emphasized political history, legislation and the efforts of great men, the school act has been described as a significant event that lay the foundation for compulsory schooling.⁵³ Shifting the focus from politics to the broader social and cultural context, researchers have reduced the significance of the school act noting that the school act did not introduce literacy to the Swedish population, as the population already was able to read long before the school act. Without engaging in any encompassing studies of the school act's impact, researchers also noted that the act did not introduce schools, as half of the parishes already ran schools prior to the school act.⁵⁴ On the basis of such observations, Petterson noted that the school act was merely a "belated official recognition and legitimization of an already existing practice."⁵⁵

These varying perceptions of the school act highlight the importance of carefully defining exactly which consequences are under discussion. In studying the two decades after the school act of 1842, it is evident that the school act played different roles and had various implications. In terms of reception, the school act was far from a total success and faced significant criticism. During the parliament of 1844–1845, members testified to widespread popular resistance to schooling, and one of the members of the peasant estate even submitted a motion to repeal the school act, as requested by his electoral district.⁵⁶ Some parishes in the dioceses of Växjö, Kalmar, and Gothenburg also demonstratively refused to obey the school act.⁵⁷ The resistance against or indifference to schooling can also be observed at the local school district level, where school representatives lamented that only a few children attended school, or questioned the low attendance in periods of potato harvests.⁵⁸

Despite these mixed reactions, the school act was followed by a marked expansion of the school system. The number of teachers increased from approximately 1500 in 1839 to 2785 in 1847 and 3458 in 1850. Within a decade, the number of teachers more than doubled. Because schools during this period usually only had one teacher, the number of schools probably increased accordingly.⁵⁹ This development meant that schools were established, not only in the previous strongholds such as Scania, but all over Sweden. When the five-year time limit expired in 1847, 188 schools had yet to be established, according to a report. In 1850, almost all parishes adhered to the requirements of the school act. In 1853, only a few parishes in Dalecarlia, the diocese of Gothenburg, and approximately 40 parishes in northern Sweden lacked a school system that fit the requirements of the school act of 1842.⁶⁰

The impact of the school act is perhaps most evident from a regional perspective. Prior to 1842, primary schools were only found in some parts of the country. In 1839, almost half of Sweden's permanent schools (47%) were located in the diocese of Lund, where only nine percent of the parishes lacked schools. In Stockholm city, all the parishes ran schools. However, schools were much less common in other areas. In the diocese of Skara, 88% of the 236 parishes lacked schools. In the diocese of Härnösand, 83% of the parishes lacked schools, and

81% of the parishes in the diocese of Gothenburg also did not have schools. In total, 53% of all parishes lacked schools.⁶¹

As a consequence of the uneven distribution of schools prior to 1842, the impact of the school act varied. For regions that already had plenty of schools, their development following the school act of 1842 was less conspicuous. However, the impact of the school act was more obvious in the regions that lacked schools, which is also indicated by available statistical compilations from 1839 to 1862.⁶² Despite the shortcomings of such a periodization, a comparison shows striking regional variations in the number of permanent and ambulatory schools.

As Fig. 9.2 shows, both the diocese of Lund and the city of Stockholm were characterized by striking continuity. In 1839–1862, the number of schools increased from 40 to 44 in Stockholm and from

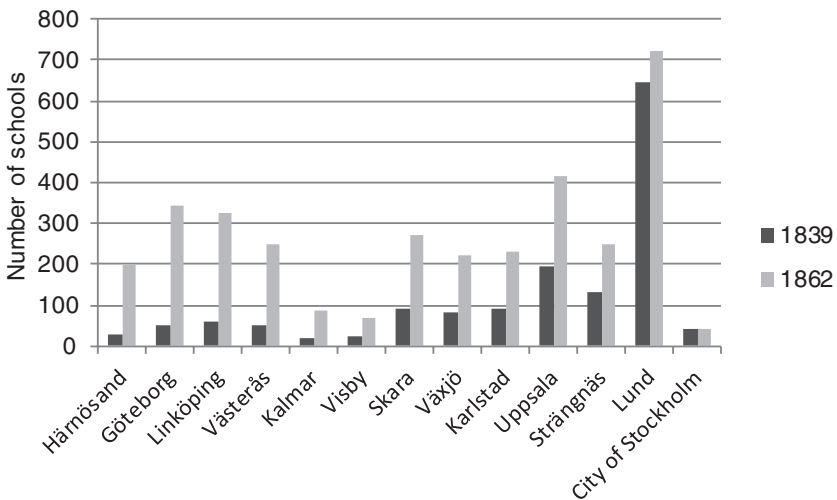


Fig. 9.2 The development of permanent and ambulatory schools in Sweden, 1839–1862 (Source “Kungl. Maj:ts Nådiga Proposition, No. 7” (1840–1841): Bilaga [1]; Statistisk sammanställning 1865, H3abe:1, Statistiska avdelningen, ED, RA; Paulsson, *Historik öfver folkundervisningen i Sverige från äldsta till närvarande tid*, 434. Note The data on ambulatory schools in 1839 is based on the number of ambulatory teachers. Regarding the city of Stockholm, the data from 1862 pertains to 1865. Please note that only *folkskolor* (“egentliga skolor”) are included in this figure)

647 to 721 in Lund diocese. In other areas, the growth was much more rapid. In the 161 parishes of the diocese of Härnösand, the number of permanent and ambulatory schools increased more than sevenfold from 28 to 201. Growth was also remarkable in Göteborg, Linköping, Västerås, and Kalmar, which had between four and six times as many schools in 1862, as in 1839.

There is, however, an important distinction between schools and school attendance. Although the school act of 1842 meant that all parishes had established schools by the 1850s, this did not imply that all children had to attend school. However, this is not unexpected, as the school act made schools compulsory, but not schooling. The exact enrollment levels are obviously difficult to determine in a system that initially did not record the age of schoolchildren. Consequently, enrollment levels varied depending on if official statistics on the enrollment of children between the ages of 7 and 14 are used, or if school-aged children are defined as being between 7 and 13 years of age. The latter is likely a more accurate definition of school-aged children in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶³

Regardless of the method of measurement, enrollment did not reach the same levels as the percentages of parishes with schools. In 1847, 51% of school-aged children between 7 and 14 years of age were enrolled in primary schools. In 1868, this figure was 77%, if so-called junior primary schools (*småskolor*) are included.⁶⁴ If the school age is delimited to ages 7–13, the enrollment levels increase to 57% in 1847 and 83% in 1868.⁶⁵ The initially low enrollment levels had many different causes. State school inspectors' reports noted long distances, parental negligence, "natural idiosyncrasies," caring for younger siblings, and herding as reasons why children stayed home from school.⁶⁶ Studies have also shown that absence was clearly correlated with schoolchildren's distance to school, and to a lesser extent with social class.⁶⁷

Although the school act of 1842 probably provided an important stimulus to the growth of mass schooling, neither the school act nor the Swedish central government should be perceived as the prime mover of mass schooling in Sweden. A thorough explanation of the expansion of this decentralized school system may instead include several factors promoting schooling at the local level, where schools were largely funded

and organized. These include strong support for a basic education among various strata of society, teachers' livelihood diversification, and the financial and organizational powers of the Swedish parishes.⁶⁸ With their medieval origins and responsibilities for maintaining churches and remunerating the clergy, the parishes had both legitimacy and the ability to organize school districts and raise the necessary resources to fund schooling. In this context, the Swedish school districts' ability to tax their inhabitants both in monies and in kind, and to use the credit market for investments in school buildings, was particularly important. Rather than being merely a part of a state formation process, the expansion of the Swedish primary school system may instead be the result of the economic, organizational, and political formation of the Swedish parishes.⁶⁹

A Limited and Basic Education

Although the school act of 1842 was followed by increases in enrollment and the number of schools, schoolchildren only received a limited education. In 1868, the average actual school year was only 34 weeks, consisting of 89 school days. The attendance of enrolled children was estimated at 43%. Public statistics indicate that 36% of the schoolchildren at permanent primary schools attended school less than 60 days per year in 1868. In the region of Medelpad (Härnösand diocese), the number of school weeks varied between 20 and 31 in 1865.⁷⁰

The content of schoolchildren's education was consequently limited, with a strong focus on reading and arithmetic. During the first 20 years of the school act, schoolchildren mainly received a minimum education that included reading, catechesis, biblical history, writing, and arithmetic. In 1847, only an estimated 6% of the children were given education above this minimum, which only rose to 7% in 1859.⁷¹ Figure 9.3 shows the percentage of schoolchildren taught in various school subjects in the early 1860s. In addition to reading, most children were taught the catechesis (88%), followed by writing (72%), biblical history (52%) and math (49%), according to school inspectors' reports.

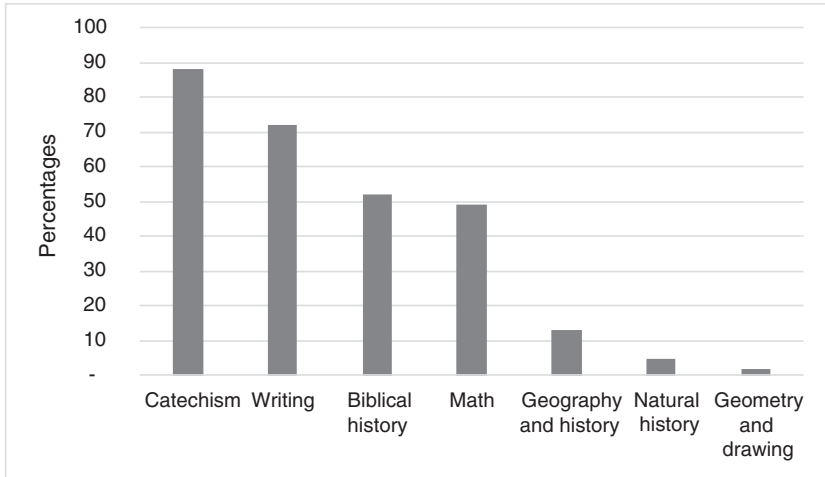


Fig. 9.3 School subjects taught from 1861 to 1863 (percentages of schoolchildren) in Sweden (Source Johansson, *Kunskapskraven i den framväxande folkskolan*, 154. Note The percentages are based on the 137,438 children present for school inspections from 1861 to 1863. There were approximately 600,000 schoolchildren during this period. Reading instruction, which was a self-evident element of schooling, was not included in this investigation)

Comparatively, few children received education in subjects such as geography, history, natural history, and geometry.⁷²

To remedy this focus on reading and catechesis, the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs issued an ordinance in 1864 urging schools to teach biblical history prior to catechism, to introduce writing and arithmetic early on, and not postpone the other subjects.⁷³ As Figure 9.4 shows, unpublished statistics from 1865 nevertheless indicate that the curriculum remained rather narrow. Apart from reading, the main subjects taught in Swedish primary school were writing, biblical history, and catechism.

Unsurprisingly, the output of schooling, in terms of knowledge levels, was varied and often limited. According to a school inspector, the knowledge children actually received was difficult to determine because no final exam was required, and most children left school at an arbitrarily chosen date.⁷⁴ In 1865, no more than one-tenth of the

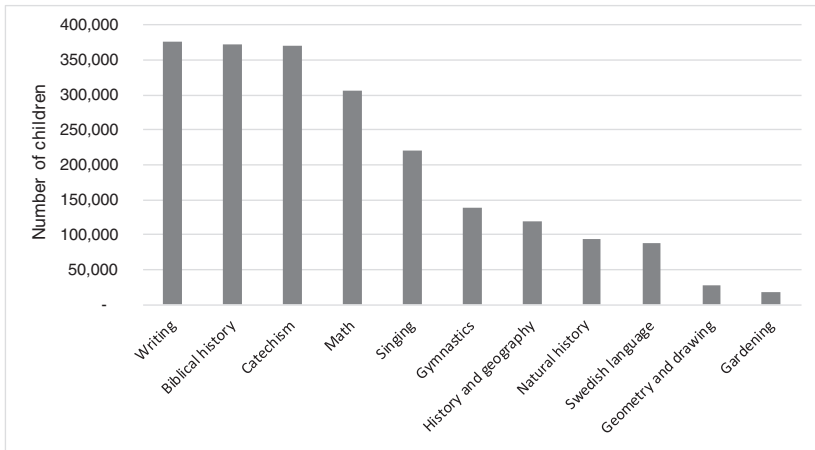


Fig. 9.4 School subjects taught in 1865 (number of children) in Sweden (Source Statistiskt sammandrag 1865, Stat. Avd., H3bb:1, ED, RA. Reading instruction was not included in this investigation. Note The subject of Swedish language included grammar, writing after dictation, and composing letters or short stories)

schoolchildren concluded their schooling with an examination.⁷⁵ There are, however, reasons to believe that the output was limited, and that the school act of 1842 even may have caused a decrease in knowledge levels in the short run since it replaced the comparatively well-functioning system of household instruction.⁷⁶ There also seems to have been differences pertaining to social class. Schoolchildren from the more prosperous strata of the rural population were more successful in church examinations (*husförhör*) than children from lower strata.⁷⁷

The consequences of schooling on literacy during the second half of the century are nevertheless evident. The Swedish population was already literate by 1800, due to the system of home instruction, yet schooling made the Swedish population also able to write by 1900. By 1905, 95% of convicts could both read and write, and 69% of military recruits had writing skills deemed acceptable, and 30% of the recruits were even categorized as “good” in this respect.⁷⁸

Although this limited education may be interpreted as a result of a conservative vision of schooling, or the ruling classes’ interest in upholding the social order in a protestant nation state, it was also a

result of local communities' interest in a basic schooling that neither demanded too much resources from the parish, nor was too time-consuming for their children. State school inspectors frequently reported that parents preferred that their children not learn anything other than reading and the catechism; lamented that parents placed particular emphasis on memorizing the catechism; complained that parents took children away from school once they had learned the catechism; and expressed indifference to, or even dislike of, any teaching beyond reading and the catechism. Parents also considered writing and math to be not particularly important, and banned girls from attending physical education classes because they considered such classes to be indecent.⁷⁹ In this respect, the narrow curricula in the primary schools, following the school act of 1842, were also the result of parental demand. While created to promote the interests of a protestant nation state, the school act was made possible by the organizational and fiscal strength of the local school districts and implemented in a fashion that promoted the interests of parents and the local community.

Notes

1. Warne, *Om tillkomsten av vår första folkskolestadga*, 165.
2. Johansson, "History of Literacy in Sweden," 29–43; Lindmark, "Swedish History of Literacy," 100–4.
3. Lindmark, "Swedish History of Literacy," 102; Lindmark, "Hemundervisning och läskunnighet," 68–70.
4. Rodhe and Warne, *Svenska folkskolans historia I*, 361, 389; Lindmark, "Hemundervisning och läskunnighet," 72.
5. Rodhe and Warne, *Svenska folkskolans historia I*, 307, 319, 494–96.
6. Nilsson, Pettersson, and Svensson, "Agrarian Transition and Literacy: The Case of Nineteenth Century Sweden," 76–96.
7. Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 222; Klose, *Folkundervisningens finansiering*, 96. See also Larsen's chapter on the Danish school laws of 1814.
8. Larsson, *En lycklig mechanism*, 33, 36.
9. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, 139.
10. Lindmark, ed., *1812 års uppfostringskommittés enkät*, iii.

11. Rönström, "Forskardebatten kring 1809 års regeringsform," 450–51.
12. Tröhler, "Curriculum History or the Educational Construction of Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century," 285–87.
13. Thunander, *Fattigskola - medborgarskola*, 92–110.
14. Wennås, "Ideér och intressen," 47.
15. Westberg, "Freedom for All! Injustice for None!" 223–27. See also Linge, *Hur den svenska folkskolan kom till*, 14.
16. See, e.g., Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 215; Linge, *Hur den svenska folkskolan kom till*, 12–13. See also Edgren, "Nationen mot korporationen," 69–88.
17. Magnusson, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia*, 211.
18. Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 217; Schön, *En modern svensk ekonomisk historia*, 69–73.
19. Olofsson, "Upploppskulturer," tab. 2; Berglund, "Soldater och stadsbor i förindustriellt gatuväld," 25.
20. Petersson, "*Den farliga underklassen*," 26–27.
21. Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 216–18; Lundgren, *Den isolerade medborgaren: Liberalt styre och uppkomsten av det sociala vid 1800-talets mitt*, 9–12, 31–33; Petterson, *Frihet, jämlikhet, egendom och Bentham*, 313; Rappe, "Från katekes till social fostran," 12.
22. Petterson, *Frihet, jämlikhet, egendom och Bentham*, 187.
23. Lagerroth, "Lagstiftningsmakten i 1809 års Rf," 234–36; Rönström, "Forskardebatten kring 1809 års regeringsform," 450.
24. Warne, *Om tillkomsten av vår första folkskolestadga*, 165.
25. Sjöstrand, *Pedagogikens historia III*:2, 127; Aquilonius, *Folkskolans historia II*, 319; Warne, *Om tillkomsten av vår första folkskolestadga*, 132; Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 2.
26. SFS 1842:19 §1; BiSOS P (1900), tab. 2.
27. Aquilonius, *Folkskolans historia II*, 44–54; Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 30–42; SFS 1858:31.
28. SFS 1842:19 § 2; SFS 1862:15 § 23; SFS 1897:108 § 8; Sörensen, *Svenska folkskolans historia III*, 42–43.
29. SFS 1842:19 § 2–3.
30. SFS 1843:27. See also Nydahl, *I fyrkens tid*, 16–17.
31. Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende*, 135–43. The political and economic culture of this school organization is investigated in Westberg, "A Conflicted Political Will to Levy Local Taxes," and Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, chs. 2–3.

32. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, 116.
33. SFS 1842:19 § 3–4.
34. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, 147–48.
35. SFS 1842:19 § 6; Aquilonius, *Svenska folkskolans historia II*, 419; Westberg, “How Did Teachers Make a Living?,” 36.
36. SFS 1842:19 § 3–4.
37. Byggingabalken, 26 kapitlet 1§, in Backman, *Ny lag-samling. H. 1*; SFS 1842:19 § 3; Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 131.
38. Tegborg, *Folkskolans sekularisering 1895–1909*, 18–19; Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 28–29; Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende*, 138.
39. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, 14–15.
40. Petterson, *Frihet, jämlikhet, egendom och Bentham*, 20–21; SAOB “Folk.”
41. SFS 1842 § 8–9.
42. SFS 1842:19 § 8; SFS 1882:8 § 35.
43. Johansson, *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, 145.
44. Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 65.
45. SFS 1842:19 § 7.
46. Regarding feminization of the teaching profession, see Florin, “Social Closure as a Professional Strategy,” 17–26.
47. SFS 1842:19 § 6.
48. Sörensen, *Växelundervisningsällskapetets normalskola och folkskoleseminariet i Stockholm*, 49.
49. SFS 1842:19 § 5, 7.
50. See, e.g., Isling, *Det pedagogiska arvet*, 584.
51. Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 236.
52. Lindmark, “Kunskapskraven i den framväxande folkskolan,” 108; Thunander, *Fattigskola - medborgarskola*, 237.
53. Klose, *Folkundervisningens finansiering*, 223; Wallin, “Att forma en skolform,” 375; Richardson, *Ett folk börjar skolan*, 7.
54. Johansson, *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, 242–44; Petterson, “1842, 1822 eller 1882?” 22.
55. Petterson, “1842, 1822 eller 1882?” 27.
56. Aquilonius, *Svenska folkskolans historia II*, 332; Christensen, “Radikalism som strategi,” 737.
57. Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 7.

58. Parish minutes, December 7, 1851, K1:3, Timrå ka, HLA; Parish minutes, August 8, 1853, K1:6, Tuna ka, HLA.
59. *Berättelse om hwad i Riket och dess Styrelse sig tilldragit sedan sista Riksdag 1856–1858*, 85. See also Paulsson, *Historik öfver folkundervisningen*, 432.
60. Wallner, *Folkskolans organisation och förvaltning*, 7–13.
61. Kungl. Maj:ts Nådiga Proposition, no. 7 (1840–1841), Appendix.
62. Although data were continuously collected by the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the ministry could not afford to make statistical compilations from 1840 to 1861.
63. Johansson, *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, 145.
64. BiSOS P (1868), 22–23; *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, app. 11:2.
65. Johansson, *The History of Literacy in Sweden*, app. 1.
66. See, e.g., *Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Upsala Erkestift åren 1861–1863: Gestrikland och Helsingland*, 18.
67. Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society*, 233–34; Uppgifter angående folkundervisningen i Medelpad 1865, H3abd:1, ED, RA.
68. Westberg, “How Did Teachers Make a Living?”; Andersson and Berger, “Elites and the Expansion of Education”; Westberg, “A Conflicted Political Will.”
69. Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende*, ch. 5, 9; Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*, ch. 4–7.
70. Ljungberg and Nilsson, “Human Capital and Economic Growth,” 80; Uppgifter ang. Folkundervisningen inom [...] Medelpads kontrakt för år 1865, Stat. avd., H3abd:1, ED, RA; BiSOS P (1868), 22–23.
71. Aquilonius, *Svenska folkskolans historia II*, 419.
72. Johansson, “Kunskapskraven i den framväxande folkskolan,” 153–55.
73. ”Royal Circular of April 22, 1864,” in *Folkskolestadgan med flera författningar rörande folkundervisningen*, 26; BiSOS P (1868), xiv.
74. *Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Upsala Erkestift åren 1861–1863: Upland*, 5.
75. *Statistiskt sammandrag 1865*, H3bb:1, ED, RA.
76. Johansson, *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, 243–44.
77. Johansson, *En studie med kvantitativa metoder av folkundervisningen i Bygdeå*, 207.

78. Johansson, *The History of Literacy in Sweden*, 60, 89, 91.
79. Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Upsala Erkestift åren 1861–1863: Upland, 4, 6; Berättelse om folkskolorna inom Linköpings stift åren 1861–1863, 22, 27; Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Skara Stift åren 1861–1863, 47; Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Strengnäs stift åren 1861–1863, 88; Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Westerås stift åren 1861–1863, 23; Berättelse om Folkskolorna inom Skara stift åren 1869–1871, 35.

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10

A Struggling Nation Since Its Founding? Liberal Italy and the Cost of Neglecting Primary Education

Gabriele Cappelli

The main thesis of this chapter is that Italy's first unified school system—built in 1859 while the Kingdom of Sardinia (Sardinia-Piedmont) was establishing control over the other regions of the country—struggled to improve educational standards before the First World War. The slow diffusion of literacy certainly affected social control and the building of a national identity, two important goals of national education systems; yet, this chapter addresses the short- and long-term economic consequences of the public choices made in the second half of the nineteenth century. Two main themes are addressed, which can be linked through the word “persistence.” First, compared to other Western countries in the mid-nineteenth century, Italy was an economy poorly endowed with human capital, and this disadvantage did not fade over time. Second, the newborn Kingdom of Italy was

I gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness, project HAR2016-76814-C2-1-P (AEI/ FEDER UE), and from the Swedish Research Council, grant no. 2016-05230.

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characterized by a remarkable regional divide in education inherited from the pre-unification states, which persisted in the long run, compared to other countries, for example, France.¹

First, this chapter presents arguments that justify the importance of a long-term analysis of human-capital accumulation and schooling in Italy. The stark present-day comparative disadvantage of Italy in terms of the quality of education, together with remarkable regional school inequalities within the country, calls for a better understanding of the historical roots of these two issues. Second, the chapter examines the steps undertaken by Italy's first Liberal governments, from the building of a unified education system based on decentralized primary schooling (Casati Law, 1859) to growing state intervention in the first decade of the twentieth century (Daneo-Credaro Law, 1911). The focus is on the analysis of major school acts—defined as legislation introduced by the parliament that interacted with social values and economic and political factors in determining educational outcomes. The Casati Law, which set forth the unified national school system, is presented, together with information on the state of primary schools (*scuole primarie* or *elementari*) across the country that is elaborated from contemporary inquiries and historical data. This evidence, based on primary sources, ongoing research, and published studies, is used to argue that Italy's primary education system was—to use the words of the economic historian Vera Zamagni—a failure.²

The impact of growing centralization concerning primary schooling is also assessed, based on new evidence stemming from historical data and a new statistical analysis of the spread of schooling and literacy from 1861 to the mid-twentieth century. Centralization—that is, increased state funding and the reform of the administration and management of schools at the local level—fostered the spread of literacy in all provinces, particularly helping the most disadvantaged areas of the country.

Finally, the chapter addresses the continuum between the Daneo-Credaro Reform of 1911 and the Gentile Reform of 1923. This latter legislation, introduced during the early days of the Fascist regime, was linked to the will to establish more elitist secondary schools; however, since it did not affect the funding and management of primary schools to a significant extent, the positive impact of the 1911 reform continued unabated, at least until the end of the 1920s. Later, the growth in literacy rates slowed, partly because of approaching the 100-percent

upper bound but also due to the growing fascistization of primary schooling and the impact of the Second World War. The progress attained during the period of 1911–1931, it is argued, would not be enough to break Italy's human-capital trap, with dire consequences for the sustainability of the country's pattern of growth into the twenty-first century.

Economic Growth and Human Capital in Italy

A vital concept for the narrative of this chapter is human capital, which is a crucial determinant of economic growth. From a macroeconomic perspective, human capital can be defined as the abilities and skills that the labor force possesses; the term is based on the notion that people invest in education and that such an investment represents a resource that leads to increased productivity. Although the importance of human capital as a factor of income growth has increased since the Second World War because of the roles of the immaterial economy and information and communication technologies (ICTs), Adam Smith had already claimed that a worker's education, as well as the skills acquired through experience, constitutes a form of capital, which is a valuable resource.³

The role of human capital has been examined by a wide range of empirical studies. In a groundbreaking study, Robert Solow estimated in the 1950s the extent to which rising labor and capital had contributed to US economic growth in the first half of the twentieth century. He found that there was a large gap between the growth of inputs and the rise in value added. Most economists who wrote about economic growth after him linked Solow's "residual" mainly to technology and human capital.⁴ Both factors were perceived as improving the productivity of capital and labor, thus acting as multipliers with respect to inputs into production. Since Solow's results, most of the empirical research on the determinants of economic growth across countries has found that human capital is crucial to sustaining the growth of national income in the long run.⁵

One might note that human capital and education (or schooling) are not synonyms: skills can be acquired on the job or through personal experience, without the need to attend formal education. However, in a world based on literacy and numeracy for all types of transactions and interactions, formal education has gained a prominent place in the formation of human capital.

Given the significance attributed to human capital in economic growth, it is not surprising that development economics and public economics have attempted to shed more light on the determinants of education. Many recent analyses within development economics have focused on policies to foster learning and to improve the quality of education, which is increasing human capital via better schooling.⁶ Education is provided within school systems, which can be defined as complex sets of material and immaterial factors and norms that are responsible for the diffusion of schooling. School systems are made of supply-side factors, including funds spent on education, laws and norms regulating the provision of schooling, schoolhouses, didactic materials and teachers. Supply-side features interact with demand-side aspects—those influencing the demand for education by various groups within society—which include demographic features, the functioning of the labor market and the sectoral structure of the economy. Therefore, school systems and their functioning include organizations as actors, as well as institutions, as norms that regulate their actions within the system.⁷

Historically, education policy has mainly considered supply-side factors, by affecting the norms and rules that regulate national school systems. For example, one issue that has been debated extensively in the last decades is whether school autonomy—that is, the level of decentralization in the system—provides more benefits than centralized education. Mark Bray defined “horizontal decentralization” as the delegation or devolution of power to local bodies, such as regions, provinces and departments, or municipalities. With delegation, the central government still has a say in education since it is basically only lending power to local authorities; with devolution, power is formally and fully held by local bodies, while the role of the center is limited to acquiring and processing information about the way that the system works—or does not.⁸

In this chapter, these categories are used as a framework to shed light on the history of Italy's school system in the long nineteenth century.

Because of the importance of human capital to economic growth and development, the aim of today's national education systems is to promote the development of advanced literacy and numeracy, as well as skills that can be applied to real-world problems. The aim of school systems in the nineteenth century was, however, mainly another goal. Central governments across European countries were concerned with building a national identity and maintaining social peace more than prompting technological change and increasing productivity⁹—particularly Italy, which experienced harsh revolts in the southern regions following the unification of the country in the 1860s.¹⁰ Indeed, as barely a culturally unified nation, Italy's regional pre-unification states—the main ones toward the south were the Papal States and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which included the whole continental south plus Sicily—were rapidly phagocytized into the Kingdom of Sardinia's political system. The mild national sentiment growing among the intellectual elite nevertheless struggled to establish roots in civil society, consisting of landless citizens who were seldom literate.¹¹ In this very unstable social and political setting, to make people imagine an Italian nation became crucial for the unified country's first right-wing governments.¹²

The main aim of Italy's state education, established in 1859 through the Casati Law, was thus to spread the common language of the nation, to foster people's ability to read and write and keep the population far from the streets and under control within the new institutional framework of the kingdom, a tendency strengthened by the curricula introduced in 1867.¹³ Despite this aim, I argue that the country's ruling class failed to prompt either the use of a common language or the rapid diffusion of literacy, although I focus particularly on the second issue. This failure certainly had an impact on the idea of Italy as a cultural nation, an issue that seems to have persisted to the present day. This failure also implied what, from an economic perspective, could be described as the main cost of the country's Liberal education policy: the incapacity of the Italian economy to follow the trajectory of the Second Industrial Revolution, the frontier technologies (electricity, chemistry, steel, the

combustion engine) of which were heavily based on the availability of rather skilled entrepreneurs, engineers and white-collar workers.¹⁴

Such policy shortcomings, discussed more in detail below, caused a persistence of Italy’s comparative delay and large regional divides in primary education, which were already very much tangible in the second half of the nineteenth century (Table 10.1). Figure 10.1 shows that youth literacy at the beginning of the twentieth century was strongly correlated with the literacy of school-age children in 1951.¹⁵ Indeed, the regions that fared better in the postwar years are the same that lead today’s rankings in standardized test scores, which aim to capture the

Table 10.1 Average years of schooling (age 15–64): Italy compared to other countries

Year	Germany	Italy	Japan	Spain	US
1870	5.3	0.9	1.7	2.4	5.6
1910	6.9	3.1	3.7	4.9	7.5
1950	8.5	4.7	7.7	5.2	9.6

Source Nuvolari and Vasta, “The Ghost in the Attic?”

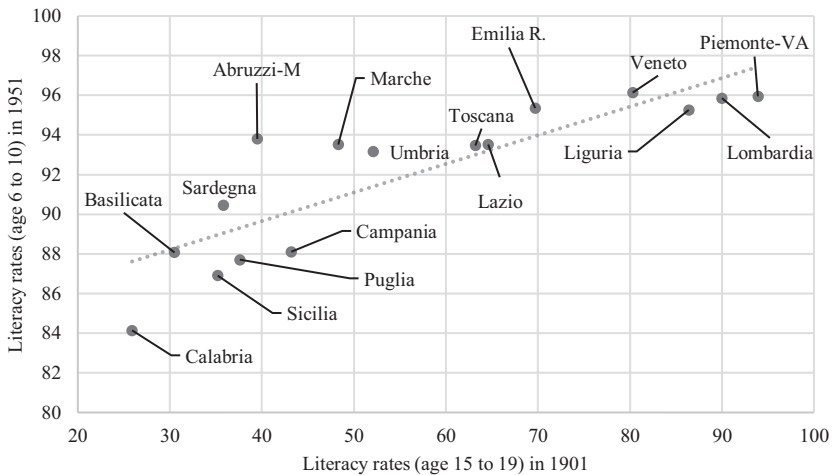


Fig. 10.1 The persistence of regional inequality in literacy, Italy. The graph shows literacy rates (age 15–19) in 1901 (x axis), compared to literacy among children aged six to ten in 1951 (y axis). Source Bozzano and Cappelli, “Schooling Worth Getting?”

quality of education and the real capabilities possessed by secondary-school students.

Many economists and economic historians have claimed that this educational delay and the large regional inequalities in human capital have hampered the country's development up to the present day.¹⁶ Given the country's specialization in low-tech sectors and the competition coming from the low cost of labor within the globalized economy, for example, in China and India, Italy is likely to continue growing at a very slow pace, like it has done over the last three decades since the rise of manufacturing in Asia and the growth of openness in international markets. Even if we assume that the cost of labor in Asia will converge rapidly toward that of European countries—thus eliminating the advantage of the former, which does not seem very likely in the short run—other world regions (e.g., Africa) will likely benefit from inexpensive labor for years to come, meaning that Italy will not be able to compete on global markets by relying on traditional, low-value-added and low-technology sectors.¹⁷

Some authors have been more optimistic about the results achieved by the Italian economy in the long term, particularly given the gloomy premises at the time of its unification.¹⁸ However, a recent line of research has suggested that Italians might have become “wealthy by accident” because the technological paradigm and international context of the 1950s and 1960s suited a country characterized by a very low cost of labor (wages), which was ready to join new international institutions and was able to accumulate physical capital at a remarkable pace—even if it was lacking human capital. As these authors argued, such development was not sustainable in the long run, particularly after the rise of the Third Industrial Revolution of the ICTs.¹⁹

Given the importance of human capital to explain the trajectory of development of Italy's economy, this chapter explores the role that early school acts played in the diffusion of mass education. The main argument presented is that the policy choices in the Liberal Age (1859–1922) cast a long shadow on the country's future, as they hampered more rapid human-capital accumulation and regional convergence in schooling and literacy, partly because of the incapacity of policy makers to rapidly affect the functioning of the education system after the

Second World War. Despite the constitutional norms of the republic in force since 1948, which stated that access to education should be universal, schooling continued to be regulated by the Gentile Reform (1923), characterized by strong barriers to entry to secondary education for most social classes.

The Diffusion of Mass Education Across Italian Pre-unification States

This section relies on work produced on education policy in the pre-unification Italian states, which is both quantitative and qualitative.²⁰ School-age children per school varied enormously across pre-unification states (Table 10.2), due to very different school policies.

Primary schooling had been essentially public and compulsory since 1848 in Piedmont, the most developed area of the Kingdom of Sardinia, including Piedmont and Liguria in the northwest, and the island of Sardinia.²¹ Primary schools were to be funded and managed

Table 10.2 School-age children per school in Italy's pre-unification states and regions

Polity	Year recorded	Children per school
Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont and Sardinia)	1850	92
Lombardy	1841	61
Venetia	1841	136
Duchy of Parma and Piacenza	1833	154
Duchy of Lucca	1834	71
Grand Duchy of Tuscany	1841	78
Papal States	1858	102
Kingdom of the Two Sicilies	1834–1838	312
Sicily	1844	417

Notes The figure for the Papal States is based on the provinces of Ferrara, Forlì, Ravenna, Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Pesaro, Urbino, Perugia and Rome (excluding the city), including the district of Imola. The ratio for the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies considers only state schools. The index for Sicily is based on the province of Catania only. *Source* Vigo, *Istruzione e sviluppo*, Table 4

by the municipalities, while the role played by the Church in the provision of basic education would be reduced but not rejected. Each provincial capital would have its own Board of Primary Education (*Consiglio dell'istruzione elementare*) to monitor the development of the system. The regions of Lombardy and Venetia, long within the Austrian sphere, had also introduced a lightly regulated school system based on funding and management by city councils. On the eve of Italy's unification, fewer provinces were making such progress. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany was to introduce an organic program of reforms, whereas in Giacomo Cives' words, the Papal States and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies remained "immobile" in this respect.²² Remarkable disparities in the way that mass education was organized, funded, and supplied across the pre-unification states before the mid-nineteenth century translated into large regional inequalities in adult literacy in 1871 (Fig. 10.2).

The Casati Law, 1859: Decentralized Primary Schooling

The Casati Law (1859) basically extended the type of school system that had been established in the Kingdom of Sardinia to the rest of Italy. The norms stemming from the bill would leave a footprint on the country's education system until it was reformed by Gentile in 1923, already into the Fascist era. The Casati Law established a school system clearly stratified by social class. Compulsory schooling lasted for only two years (from age six to eight) and was to be supplied by the municipalities free of any cost to the citizens "according to their resources and their inhabitants' need," as stated by the law. This statement rendered enforcement difficult: The sanctions formulated in the norms could not be applied since there was no provision in the penal law concerning compulsory attendance of primary schools.

Two additional years of second-grade primary education (*scuola primaria superiore*) were to be offered in more urbanized municipalities, that is, those with more than 4000 inhabitants or those that had already built and opened a secondary school. Private schooling—supplied

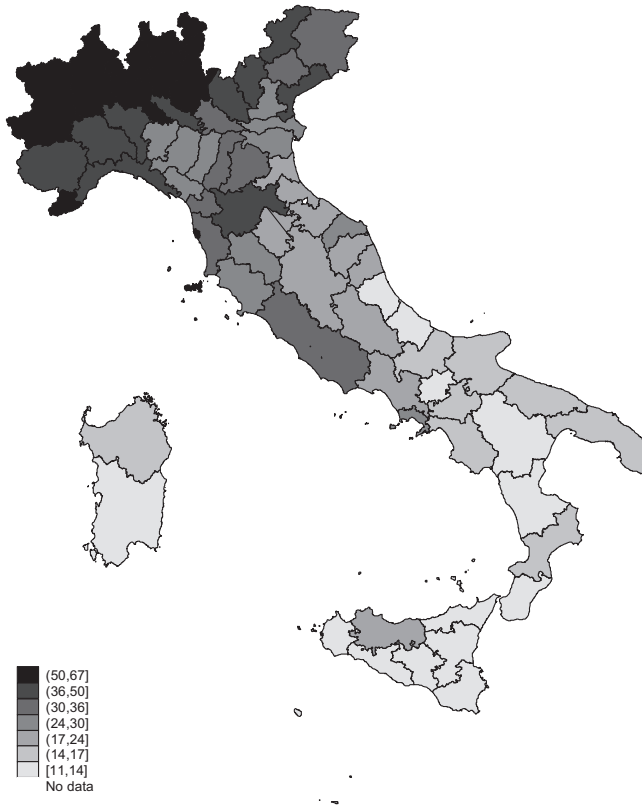


Fig. 10.2 Adult literacy rates (age 13+) across Italy's 69 provinces in 1871. *Note* Map drawn at historical borders, using the file provided by SISTAT, *Sistema Informativo STorico delle Amministrazioni Territoriali* (<http://sistat.istat.it/sistat/gestioneDate.do>). *Source* Cappelli, "One Size That Didn't Fit All?"; Bozzano and Cappelli, "Schooling Worth Getting?"

through the initiative of private citizens, by parents within the household, and by the Church—was set to play an important role under the Casati Law, but its importance would decline rapidly before the turn of the century. No explicit mention of educational gender inequality was included in the text of the Casati Law. The legislation did not encourage separate schools for girls; however, at the same time, the law did not aim to promote female education.

Once they complied with their obligation to enroll in and attend primary schools, the pupils and their families faced a choice. On the one hand, on paper, they could choose to continue to classic high schools (*ginnasio*, followed by *liceo*), a compulsory step to gain access to universities. The other choice was toward more vocational studies—in technical schools lasting for three years, followed by three further years of technical formation.²³ Clearly, most of the population would hardly enroll in secondary schooling tout court and even fewer through schools that made Latin and other classic subjects central to their curricula to prepare for university. Finally, the Casati Law stated that 18 normal schools would be established across the country to train future primary-school teachers.

The organization of the education system under the Casati Law should be understood within the administrative framework of the Rattazzi Law (1859), which established a very centralized system of government, under which the state controlled local authorities tightly. All norms applied to the school system; that is, the curricula and goals were established by the Ministry of Public Education. The government did not rely on school districts, although the so-called Provincial School Boards—henceforth PSB—were introduced to reduce information asymmetries between the central government and the city councils in the management of primary schooling. Despite its role on paper, the PSB was under the direct control of the prefect of the province, with little decision-making power left to the board members. Furthermore, the latter were seldom elected from local people with actual experience in the management of schools. As a result, the PSB hardly promoted the development of primary education, let alone safeguarded the rights and standard of living of local teachers—particularly those working in rural areas.

Although the Ministry of Public Education had an important say in matters related to content and planning, the management and funding of primary schools were decentralized, being responsibility of the municipalities. The central government funded the operational costs of secondary schools, but all schoolhouses were still built and maintained by local authorities.

Although the composition of the PSB can explain the slow development of schooling at the local level, it still does not tell us why Italy's governments neglected mass education in the first place. One reason why secondary education was funded at the expense of primary schooling was linked to the right-wing aim of training a new bourgeois elite, while operating under a very constrained state budget following the unification of the country. Furthermore, the political elite of the north, which dictated the initial policies of the kingdom, was affected by a serious cognitive deficit concerning the social and economic conditions of the rest of the country—particularly the south.²⁴

The role of Italy's financial constraints after unification should not be overstated. Using data provided by Coccia and Della Torre, combined with estimates of GDP published by the Bank of Italy and Italy's National Bureau of Statistics (Istat), I have estimated how much the Ministry of Public Education spent for each child enrolled in secondary schools, compared to what was allocated to every pupil in primary education. These calculations show that Italy's central government spent 54 euros at 2010 prices per pupil in secondary schools in 1871, while the figure in the same year was 0.54 euros for those enrolled in primary education—only one *hundredth* of the former amount.²⁵ Therefore, while the state budget certainly played some role, Italy's ruling class neglected the importance of mass education exactly when it was becoming most relevant, both in social and economic terms.²⁶

A monumental inquiry, published at the beginning of the 1870s and written in the previous few years, showed how the development of mass schooling in Italy was slow and very diverse across regions of the country. The Documents on Primary Education in the Kingdom of Italy (*Documenti sulla istruzione elementare nel Regno d'Italia*) depicted a harsh picture of the state of Italian schooling.²⁷ Across most regions, education was still seen as a cost, rather than an investment. The city councils did not want to increase taxation to fund public schools or to raise teachers' wages. Families were skeptical about education because the opportunity cost of sending children to school was very high in a country where approximately 70% of the population still worked in agriculture. This trend was even more relevant in the southern

provinces, where public education had been nonexistent before the unification, and the gender gap was impressive and very persistent.²⁸

This state of education was evident in a letter of the Minister of Public Education to the Provincial School Board of Capitanata (province of Foggia), commenting the results of the statistics collected within the framework of the inquiry. The minister acknowledged some rapid progress since pupils enrolled in primary education in Capitanata had increased from 4329 in 1863 to 8188 in 1866, indicating that the enrollment rate almost doubled in three years—assuming a linear growth trend within the age group six to ten years old between 1861 and 1871. However, this progress hid vast problems. Most of the pupils did not attend classes regularly, and the reports emphasized that a couple of years of weak and often ineffective schooling did not lead to any improvements in the children's literacy or numeracy. One factor hampering the increase in literacy despite education was the teachers' incapacity. Most of them did not have any legal certificate, and they often had very little training, particularly among women. One exception was teachers who were priests and nuns: Some literature on the identity of primary-school teachers has underscored the important role that they played in Italy's education system, even in secular schools.²⁹

The letter of the Minister to the Provincial School Board of Capitanata ended with mention of the way that most city councils reacted to the instructions provided by the Ministry in Florence (the capital at that time). The inspector in charge of the report wrote that "words are minted often but are rarely followed by action" and illustrated this thesis with the mayor of Carpino, a small municipality in the district of San Severo.³⁰ Once urged to improve the state of the municipality's primary schools in 1865, the mayor promised that he would arrange renovations, and on January 20, 1865, he claimed that the schools had been improved to the extent that they had become enviable. When the inspector visited the schools of Carpino, however, he found in the boy's schools "nothing but a couple of wrecked desks and dirty tables, while the girls' schools did not even have that, and pupils were squeezed in the room like sheep."³¹ Such reports were far from uncommon. In fact, most of the inquiries throughout the 1880s and 1890s,

and even after the turn of the twentieth century, emphasized similar issues.³²

The historiography of the development of Italy's primary school system has offered some explanations of the slow diffusion of literacy and schooling. Some of these explanations have been based on research in economic history, using quantitative evidence to offer such hypotheses to test. Within this field, two major lines of inquiry have been followed. First, a long tradition has blamed the Casati Law. Such a decentralized system of management and funding could not translate into rapid human capital accumulation in a country like Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. Widespread poverty meant that most municipalities, particularly in the poorer south, could not fund primary education sufficiently.

Furthermore, poverty, work performed mostly within agriculture, and very low wages implied a very high opportunity cost of schooling. Child labor was still very common in the whole country in the late nineteenth century: The share of children aged 10–14 who were working was approximately 80% among boys and 50% among girls in 1881, per estimates by Cinnirella, Toniolo, and Vecchi.³³ Foregoing income to go to school offered few advantages for most Italians at that time; hence, families had a negative incentive to send children to compulsory schools.

A second line of research has stressed social and institutional factors, particularly to explain why literacy in the southern provinces did not grow sufficiently rapidly to prompt convergence toward the rates experienced by the northwest. Some authors have argued that vast landholdings (the *latifondo*) in many areas, especially within the south, resulted in a concentration of political power in the hands of a restricted elite, which came to control decision-making within the city councils.³⁴ Since the electoral franchise was linked to the possession of wealth—particularly to taxes paid on it—high inequality in the distribution of land limited political voice and hence reduced the pressure on city councils to fund public goods through high tax rates for the wealthiest. Although data on inequality across regions of the country in the nineteenth century remain very scant, data on access to electoral franchise partly confirm that this mechanism was at work. Recent quantitative evidence has showed

that both channels—limited political voice and poor fiscal capacity—mattered for the diffusion of primary education, although both eventually boil down to economic disparities that could have been compensated for by more state intervention.³⁵

Slow Developments Until the Twentieth Century

Although the challenges facing schooling after the Casati Law of 1859 were well known, the state of the primary-school system remained largely unaltered until the end of the nineteenth century. New legislation during the late 1870s and at the beginning of the twentieth century attempted to amend the Casati system; however, interventions remained very limited, and so did the amount of funds with which the central government started to subsidize primary schooling.

First, the Coppino Law (1877) strengthened the norms on school attendance, increased the minimum duration of compulsory schooling from two to three years, and established that the municipalities could apply to receive funding from the state. The extent of state intervention remained, however, insignificant compared to that of other primary-school systems in European countries. Expenditure by Italy's central government to fund primary schooling was equal to 1.3% of total municipal expenditure to fund mass education in 1869–1870, whereas in France, the same figure had already reached 30% in the same year.³⁶ Most importantly, intervention by the French government was strongest in areas where the diffusion of primary schooling was most limited, in contrast to the structure of government intervention in Italy.³⁷ Nevertheless, in 1908–1909, the estimated amount of state subsidies and mortgages to fund primary schools remained at approximately 1.8% of total municipal expenditures on primary education, allocated mainly to the comparatively resource-rich regions of the north.³⁸

Other inquiries followed the Coppino Law, but the story did not change. Both the reports written by Bonazia and by Torraca in 1878 and 1897, respectively, rendered harsh verdicts on the state of things. Slowly, more politicians gave in to the idea that the central government

should increase funding and take control of schools, the very idea of a shift toward more centralized primary education. The Nasi Law (1903) took away some of the municipalities' discretionary power in hiring and firing teachers (they were not civil servants), thus improving their status and situation. The Orlando Law (1904) increased the teachers' wages for the first time since the 1880s, a premium paid for entirely by the state. The so-called *corso popolare* was also introduced for the first time: it consisted of two additional grades beyond the four years (including the second-grade primary) set forth by the Casati Law in 1859. The aim was that of providing an opportunity for poor children to attend schools beyond the lowest grades yet at the same time to avoid growing pressure on secondary schools. This solution would be later strengthened by the Gentile Reform under the Fascist regime. School infrastructures and buildings were also improved in the south from 1904 onward, following the Special Laws for the Development of the South of Italy—new legislation aiming to foster state intervention in depressed regions.

However, it was only with the approval of the Daneo-Credaro Reform that the state truly undertook a sharp shift to primary-school centralization. Passed in 1911, the new law established that all municipalities—except for the district and provincial capitals, that is, approximately 3% of all Italian municipalities—would change to centralized primary education, which meant that basic schooling would not be managed and funded by the municipalities any longer. The Provincial School Boards were to play a much more important role in the new school system, making them a real intermediate body between the municipalities and the Ministry of Public Education. The composition of the PSBs was revised, with more elected participants from the teachers and more members nominated by the Minister of Public Education, thus enhancing the autonomy of the PSB with respect to the prefect and, equally important, strengthening the control of the central authority on local schooling. The main responsibilities of the board were the process of hiring and firing teachers, deliberating on matters relative to the progress of primary education, and the management of the funding for the municipalities within their jurisdiction.

The Daneo-Credaro Reform was also a fundamental shift in the structure of school finance. For the first time in its history, Italy's

primary-school system introduced a redistributive mechanism to improve the allocation of resources to the system, especially across regions. Each municipality that had shifted to centralized primary schooling should have transferred an amount equal to its previous year's budget for education to the Treasury, which in turn would redistribute the funds to the PSBs.³⁹

The Daneo-Credaro Reform represented a sharp break with the past, but it was heavily criticized, even by those who had sponsored it. For example, the philosopher Antonio Labriola argued that the central government did not know or represent the demands and constraints of each region or province so that state intervention would eventually end up being toothless. In contrast, Gaetano Salvemini claimed that the additional funding allocated to education by the central government would not be enough to foster the spread of mass education, particularly in the south. Since a large share of the new funds was destined to improve teachers' wages and since most of the teachers were in the north of the country, the regions that were most in need would eventually receive less than others, proportionally.

The problems in the implementation of the Daneo-Credaro law are well known and have been discussed within the historiography. De Fort argued that, shortly after the reform had been passed, the convergence toward the idea of more direct state intervention in matters related to primary schooling faded, and politicians started to examine a decentralized system—in which private education was to play a relevant role—with some nostalgia.⁴⁰ The Great War and the following difficult years contributed to vanishing support for what had been an important reform of the education system.

What is less known is the actual impact that the Daneo-Credaro Reform had on literacy rates and schooling. New data compiled by Bozzano and Cappelli concerning literacy in the age group six to ten years old (primary-school age) show that regional divergence was steady until 1911, despite interventions aimed to limit it in the first decade of the twentieth century. However, starting in 1911, strong regional *convergence* can be observed, together with an acceleration in the spread of literacy among primary-school-age children everywhere, which lasted until the end of the 1920s (Fig. 10.3).⁴¹

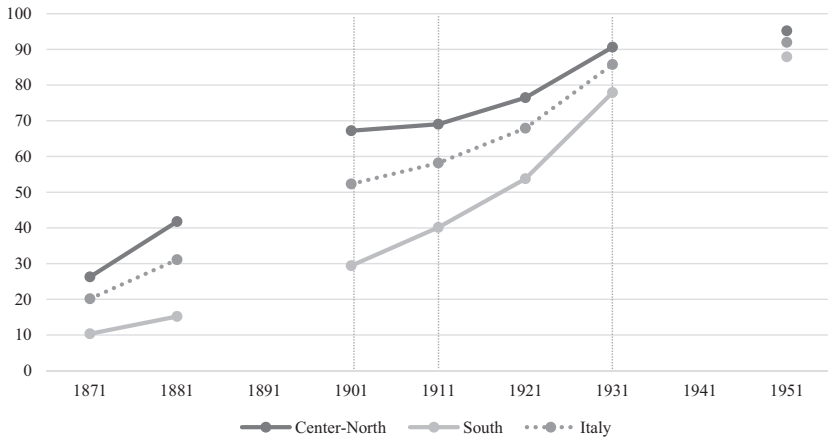


Fig. 10.3 Literacy rates (age six to ten) in Italy, as well as in the center-north and south of the country, 1871–1951 (Source Bozzano and Cappelli, “Schooling Worth Getting?”)

The features of the Daneo-Credaro Reform presented above certainly improved the pace of human-capital accumulation. Beyond the analysis of trends in literacy, Cappelli and Vasta relied on a quasi-natural experiment to test whether there was a significant relationship between the shift to centralized schooling and more rapid improvement of adult literacy rates across Italy’s municipalities in 1911–1931. They found that municipalities affected by the reform were provided with a large premium on the growth of literacy equal to c. 0.40 additional percentage points, compared to very similar municipalities that maintained school autonomy. This effect is large, considering that the mean annual growth rate of literacy was 2.15% between 1911 and 1921. It is worth noting that these results could represent conservative estimates. Because adult literacy was used in their analysis, the impact would probably be larger had the literacy of school-age children been considered.⁴²

Despite the mechanisms underscored above, the large gender gap that characterized primary education before 1911—together with gender inequality not improving much in the south in the second half of the nineteenth century—indicates that the Daneo-Credaro Reform might have increased female enrollment and attendance rates considerably.⁴³

Although this channel seems reasonable to have been at work at the time, more research is still needed on this specific issue.

Another issue that is worth exploring in greater depth is the surprising continuum between the end of the Liberal Age (1911–1921) and the first phase of the Fascist period (1921–1931). Indeed, the figure above shows that the Gentile Reform, defined by Mussolini as “the most Fascist of all reforms” for its strong elitist and supposedly rationalizing stance, changed little about the acceleration of the growth of human capital prompted by state centralization.⁴⁴ A first explanation concerns the actual administration of primary education beyond propaganda or the organization of curricula. Gentile did not reform the funding or management of primary education. If anything, he kept unchanged or strengthened the role played by the central government so that primary schooling spread unabated. However, between 1931 and 1951, the trend of growth shown by Fig. 10.3 flattened remarkably, perhaps beyond what can be explained by literacy rates reaching their upper boundary. More research is needed on this issue, but even assuming a flat trend between 1941 and 1951 because of the Second World War, the performance of Italy’s primary-education system in the 1930s does not seem in line with that of the previous two decades, perhaps because of growing intervention by the regime to render its propaganda more effective and pervasive—which has been called the “fascistization” of schools and society at large.

In summary, the impact of the Daneo-Credaro Reform lasted for 20 years at most. Later, human-capital accumulation likely slowed, together with a fallback in regional convergence. The delay with which the bill was passed since the first proposals of centralization in the late-nineteenth century, together with the retreat and the return to a more elitist view of education and the excessive interference of the Fascist regime with primary schooling, contributed to jeopardizing the progress made by the Kingdom of Italy in terms of mass education and literacy. As Fig. 10.4 clearly shows, this reversal cast a long shadow on the education system and the country’s growth capabilities and prospects. Literacy rates in 1951 are highly correlated with PISA test scores today, in turn capturing the quality of education and human capital, among the most important factors of modern economic growth.⁴⁵

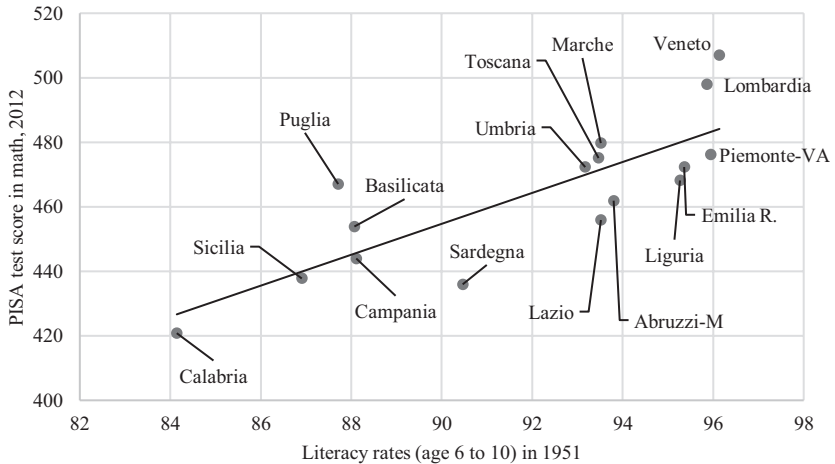


Fig. 10.4 Literacy rates (age six to ten) in 1951 (x axis) and PISA test scores in math, 2012 (y axis) in Italy (*Sources* Bozzano and Cappelli, "Schooling Worth Getting?"; Cappelli, "Capitale umano e crescita economica"; Hanushek and Woessmann, "Do Better Schools Lead to More Growth?")

The Casati Law: Casting a Long Shadow

This chapter argues that Italy's education policy since the nineteenth century has cast a long shadow on current developments, particularly linked to the potential for sustained economic growth. Italy's first right-wing governments sought to keep populations in the annexed territory of the southern regions under control, while at the same time attempting to prompt the rise of a new bourgeois elite. Schooling was a crucial means to achieve such goals. However, policy makers oriented the state's effort toward secondary education, while primary schooling was neglected. The Casati Law of 1859, which regulated the country's first unified school system, set forth that secondary schools were state funded, while primary schools had to be managed and funded by the municipalities across the country.

Around 1871, the central government's commitment to mass education was negligible, and state funds were granted to secondary schools. A back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that state school

expenditures per pupil in primary schooling were one hundredth those characterizing secondary education. Furthermore, because of limited fiscal capacity and electoral franchise, which hampered the voices of those who would support public investments in mass education, schooling and literacy spread very slowly across the country. In 1911, the government shifted toward centralized primary schooling with the Daneo-Credaro Reform.

Although the implementation of the Daneo-Credaro Reform of 1911 was long and problematic, recent quantitative evidence has suggested that its impact was positive and remarkable. Literacy rates grew at a faster pace nationally while they converged across regions between 1911 and 1921. This trend continued well into the 1920s, despite the change in regulation brought about by the Gentile Reform (1923). This reform further limited access to secondary education by most of the population, yet the administrative structure of the primary-school system was initially left almost untouched, so that a favorable continuum was established between the Liberal Age and the early Fascist regime.

The positive trends in education prompted by the 1911 reform seem to have been negatively affected by the growing fascistization of primary schooling that took place a few years later, which was necessary to tighten control over the population and assure the effectiveness of the propaganda. This need, combined with effective state intervention being limited to only slightly more than 10 years, made the legacy of decentralized mass schooling strong and lasting. The relative economic decline that Italy is experiencing today, well into the Third Industrial Revolution of computers and ICTs and on the eve of a possible fourth one, can be explained to a large extent by the history of human-capital development and schooling, which is linked to similar themes, such as the long-term weakness of the National Innovation System, that is, the lack of domestically driven technological progress.

Notes

1. Diebolt, Jaoul, and San Martino, "Le mythe de Ferry. Une analyse cliométrique"; Cappelli, "One Size That Didn't Fit All?"

2. Zamagni, "Istruzione e sviluppo economico 1861–1913."
3. Smith, "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations."
4. Goldin, "Human Capital."
5. Lucas, "On the Mechanics of Economic Development"; Romer, "Endogenous Technological Change"; Hanushek and Woessmann, "Education and Economic Growth"; Hanushek and Woessmann, "Do Better Schools Lead to More Growth?"; Galor, Moav, and Vollrath, "Inequality in Landownership, the Emergence of Human-Capital Promoting Institutions, and the Great Divergence"; Baten and Juif, "A Story of Large Landowners and Math Skills."
6. Faguet, "Does Decentralization Increase Government Responsiveness to Local Needs?"; King and Oezler, "What's Decentralization Got to Do with Learning? School Autonomy and Student Performance"; Bloom, "Measuring Global Educational Progress"; Faguet and Sánchez, "Decentralization's Effects on Educational Outcomes in Bolivia and Colombia"; Glewwe, *Education Policy in Developing Countries*; Galiani and Perez-Truglia, "School Management in Developing Countries"; Pradhan et al., "Improving Educational Quality Through Enhancing Community Participation"; Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer, "School Governance, Teacher Incentives, and Pupil–Teacher Ratios."
7. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*; Hodgson, "What Are Institutions?"; Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*.
8. Bray, "Centralization Versus Decentralization in Educational Administration."
9. Tröhler, "Curriculum History in Europe."
10. Cives, "La scuola elementare e popolare," 62–66; De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall'Unità alla caduta del fascismo*, 21–36.
11. Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat; Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates*; Spencer, "Rethinking Cultural and Political Nationalism." Triandafyllidou, "Italy: Nation, Formation, the Southern Question and Europe." Census figures for 1871 show that the average adult illiteracy rate reached 75% nationally and was equal to 87% in the south. Note that adult illiteracy, in 1871, was based on figures from people older than 13 years old.
12. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

13. Cives, “La scuola elementare e popolare,” 63–64. The curricula introduced in 1867 limited the use of dialects and the power of local school councils. The adoption of a common language (Italian) aimed to reinforce the construction of a cultural nation.
14. Gentile, *La grande Italia*. Di Martino and Vasta, eds., *Ricchi per caso. La parabola dello sviluppo economico italiano*.
15. Cappelli, “Capitale umano e crescita economica: l’evoluzione del sistema educativo italiano.”
16. Bertola and Sestito, “Human Capital”; Di Martino and Vasta, *Ricchi per caso. La parabola dello sviluppo economico italiano*.
17. Austin, “Is Africa Too Late for ‘Late Development?’”; Frankema, “Labour-Intensive Industrialization in Global History.”
18. Cohen and Federico, *The Growth of the Italian Economy, 1820–1960*.
19. Cappelli et al., “Conclusioni. Il futuro economico dell’Italia in prospettiva storica: le policy oggi.”
20. Vigo, *Istruzione e sviluppo economico in Italia nel secolo XIX*. Cives, “La scuola elementare e popolare”; De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall’Unità alla caduta del fascismo*.
21. Throughout the chapter, the term “public” is used to refer to schooling linked to all levels of the country’s administration—municipalities, provinces and the state. The term “compulsory” refers to the provision of the school laws stating that all children in a specific age group should enroll and attend primary schools.
22. Cives, “La scuola elementare e popolare,” 55–59.
23. Completing secondary education through a technical school did not grant access to the university.
24. Di Martino, Paolo, and Michelangelo Vasta. “Istituzioni e performance economica in Italia: un’analisi di lungo periodo.”
25. Coccia and Della Torre, “La ricostruzione dei consumi pubblici nel campo dell’istruzione nell’Italia liberale: 1861–1913.”
26. Cappelli, “Capitale umano e crescita economica: l’evoluzione del sistema educativo italiano.”
27. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Documenti sulla istruzione elementare nel Regno d’Italia*.
28. Bertocchi and Bozzano, “Women, Medieval Commerce, and the Education Gender Gap”; Ciccarelli and Weisdorf, “Pioneering into the Past.”
29. Bonadimani, *La figura del maestro elementare nel romanzo di scuola in Italia dal 1860 al 1920. Ricostruzione del profilo sociale e culturale del*

maestro italiano attraverso la letteratura e le riviste pedagogiche nel sessantennio liberale.

30. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, *Documenti sulla istruzione elementare nel Regno d'Italia*, 39.
31. Ibid.
32. Cappelli, "Escaping from a Human Capital Trap? Italy's Regions and the Move to Centralized Primary Schooling, 1861–1936."
33. Cinnirella, Toniolo, and Vecchi, "Child Labour."
34. A'Hearn and Vecchi, "Education."
35. Felice and Vasta, "Passive Modernization? The New Human Development Index and Its Components in Italy's Regions."
36. See the statistical data attached to *Documenti sulla istruzione elementare nel Regno d'Italia*.
37. Data from French primary sources were kindly provided by Charlotte Le Chapelain; see Claude Diebolt, Charlotte Le Chapelain, and Audrey-Rose Menard, "Industrialization as a Deskilling Process? Steam Engines and Human Capital in XIXth Century France," Working Papers of BETA (Bureau d'Economie Théorique et Appliquée, UDS, Strasbourg, 2017).
38. Since only data on total funds granted for the periods of 1878–1908 (mortgages) and 1901–1908 (subsidies) were reported in the Corradini inquiry (1910–1912), the annual figure has been estimated by dividing the total amount granted by the number of years in each period.
39. Cappelli, "Capitale umano e crescita economica: l'evoluzione del sistema educativo italiano."
40. De Fort, *La scuola elementare dall'Unità alla caduta del fascismo*.
41. Bozzano and Cappelli, "Schooling Worth Getting? School Efficiency and Human-Capital Accumulation in Italy's Provinces, 1861–1911."
42. Cappelli and Vasta, "Can School Centralization Foster Human Capital Accumulation? Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Italy's Liberal Age."
43. Ciccarelli and Weisdorf, "Pioneering into the Past."
44. Spadafora, *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola*, 355.
45. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris. The test is elaborated by experts in education from OECD member countries, and it aims to test to what extent high-school students (approximately 15 years old) can apply their capabilities and skills to real-world problems. The test is translated into each country's language and focuses on reading, math and science,

for a representative sample of the population of students concerned. The country average result is compared to the OECD mean, which is set equal to 500. Most country average scores range between 400 and 600. A total of 71 countries participated in the 2015 wave.

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11

From the Top Down? Legislation and Public Initiative in Building a School System in Russia After the Great Reforms: 1855–1914

Ben Eklof

From a global perspective the spread of mass education might best be examined by focusing on the period 1870–1945—an interval that resulted in an enormous aggrandizement of the reach of the state in many regions of the world.¹ For the Russian Empire and subsequently the Soviet Union, the period was one of extraordinary upheaval. Those familiar with the turmoil and tragedy of those decades might well believe that the launching of mass education as a state project was but a footnote to the larger dramas of war, collapse, revolutions and rebuilding a great empire. Yet, education, urbanization and industrialization were the three pillars of modernization that under Stalin turned the Soviet Union into a superpower by the end of World War II. Sadly, the pursuit of universal literacy, which the country's educated elite and many statesmen in the pre-revolutionary and early Soviet periods

This book chapter was prepared within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) and supported within the framework of a subsidy by the Russian Academic Excellence Project '5–100'.

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_11

treated as an emancipatory project concluded with the installation of one of the most vicious dictatorships of the twentieth century—in which schools played an integral role.

Yet Karl Marx's dictum about the "illusion of politics" is still relevant for the history of education, especially in the case of Russia, whose history in general has been presented as if the state were the primal mover, and state intervention correspondingly the source both for the expansion of mass education and the re-ordering of society in general.² Without entirely discounting that narrative, a focus on the period 1864–1905 brings to the fore an alternative story. Previous studies have demonstrated the substantial contribution Russian peasants themselves made to the expansion of schooling in the countryside.³ Instead, this essay highlights the prominent role of a nascent civil society in the shaping of education—the professional classes and public activists working through recently created local and elected institutions of self-government, the *zemstvos*.

By examining the landmark 1864 Education Statute and the subsequent half century, primarily addressing schooling in European Russia, this chapter also challenges a conventional periodization of educational expansion in Russia. Rather than occurring in the Stalinist era, we learn that European Russia largely 'learned to read' before the revolution of 1917, and that it was during this period that universal literacy and schooling were put on the agenda and pursued with great effort. It was in this earlier period as well that a distinctive Russian *classroom culture* emerged, one that has persisted despite radical and frequent shifts in the political order.⁴

The Era of the Great Reforms

Until the mid-nineteenth century the tsarist autocracy was slow to engage with the question of popular education. The establishment of the Ministry of Education (literally Ministry of Enlightenment: MNP) in 1803 was soon followed by the 1804 Statute of Education which allowed for the opening of elementary schools (*prikhodskie shkoly*) in each district of European Russia.⁵ Theoretically there were to be no

barriers to progressing from elementary schools to gymnasia and then to a university (the so-called “ladder” system), but no funding was forthcoming and precious little was achieved. In 1828 the rungs in the ladder were removed, and district schools created by new legislation provided only for a terminal elementary education for urban commoners. From then until the era of the Great Reforms in the 1860s, the MNP did little to promote popular education. Other ministries did establish a number of schools, primarily to recruit and train scribes and secretaries for the lowest branches of their administration. In particular, the Ministry of State Domains under Count Kiselev, and the Orthodox Church, promoted schooling. As a result, when Alexander II came to the throne in 1855, only 1000 of the roughly 30,000 schools were administered by the MNP. This set a precedent and provided fuel for inter-ministerial conflict which was to mark the second half of the century as the MNP sought to establish a monopoly over the administration, even as it sought to avoid funding, of schooling.⁶

Defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–1856 ushered in a period of self-questioning accompanied by avid public discussion (Russia’s first *glasnost*, often compared with the perestroika era under Gorbachev more than a century later) and examination of every institution: serfdom, the military, finances, the court system, and education at all levels. Once Alexander II proclaimed publicly that serfdom must be abolished emancipation was inevitable even if it took five years of intense deliberations within government councils before the terms of such an emancipation could be settled upon. To a large extent those terms were influenced by the financial crisis and budget deficits brought on by the Crimean War. Originally there was hope that the peasants could be freed with generous allotments of land and without incurring debts; instead the nobles would be compensated by the state for their loss of land and labor power. Because of the empty state coffers, however, the peasants ended up required to purchase the land they were to receive through loans from the state to be paid back over with interest over fifty years. The same budget crisis was soon to affect deliberations about what shape a law on education would take and who would finance the schools. In fact, the issue of financing remained central in school matters for the next half century; empty coffers did much to shape the

trajectory of school expansion and control over what happened inside schools once built.

After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 the landed nobility no longer felt obliged to look after the serfs' welfare or to provide them an education—obligations they in any case previously had fulfilled indifferently. Nor was the state prepared to step in. Despite the rapid expansion of the state bureaucracy over the course of the nineteenth century, its reach into the countryside—not to mention Siberia or the borderlands—remained minimal until the close of the century.⁷ This vacuum in the countryside was now to be filled by newly established *zemstvos* (1864), whose delegates, representing all classes of the population, were to build hospitals, roads, schools, and provide agricultural aid at the local level, drawing upon property taxes they were now empowered to levy. The reforms of local government also included the establishment of elected municipal *dumas* in the towns. There were aspirations to turn these self-governing institutions at the local level into the building blocks of a parliamentary system, but the autocracy would have none of that, and thus severely curtailed the powers of the *zemstvos*.

Thus it was up to the state to take the initiative in education, and for the *zemstvos* to *implement* any measures taken. When considering the progressive measures launched in education at the time, the name of Aleksandr Golovnin, who was MNP from 1861 to 1866 is most often cited. Golovnin was forty years old when first appointed, and set about replacing the gerontocracy at the top of his ministry with a cohort of officials of the same age or younger who were part of a younger generation of so called “enlightened bureaucrats” well versed in European institutions and practices and devoted to the interests of the state rather than to the landed nobility who had up until the mid-century dominated the Russian civil service.⁸

A comprehensive internal restructuring unfolded over several years and involved, in 1863, a new set of regulations significantly redistributing the functions of the central branches of the ministry and decentralizing its decision making, giving ample powers to the curators of its eight large educational regions (*okruža*), each encompassing several provinces themselves the size of Ireland or larger (two districts alone covered a territory as large as Europe).

During this period Golovnin sought to bring all schools—secondary and primary—under the jurisdiction of the MNP. Over the next decade, seeking ways to cut expenditures in a time of budget crisis, most of the other departments and ministries hosting networks of primary schools were more than willing to go along with this program. The MNP, itself under budget strictures, then changed its tune and argued that only the administration of schools, and not the funding, should come under its domain.

The MNP nevertheless worked relentlessly to incorporate schools under its purview, beginning with the Ministry of State Domains in 1869, but then reaching out to the borderlands, which meant the Baltic region in 1873 and 1887; the Tatar, Kirghiz and Bashkir schools of the Volga region in 1874; the schools of the German Mennonite colonists in 1881; all non-Orthodox schools in the provinces of the former Poland (1887); and those of the Caucasus (1892).⁹ In the process, the language of instruction and the teaching of the Orthodox catechism became intractable issues that the autocracy was to struggle with for the remainder of its time in power. These issues only exacerbated the prolonged struggle between secularists and the MNP on the one hand, and the Holy Synod on the other hand for financial underwriting of their schools. Regrettably the issue of the borderlands—something central to historians of Russia today—must be left to the side in this short chapter, but the rivalry between Holy Synod and MNP was key to the collapse of the Duma Bill of 1908 to which we return below.¹⁰

Still, while a cohort of “enlightened civil servants” played a significant role in launching reforms, it was the *interplay* of public and official opinion mediated by the periodical press in this era of ‘glasnost’ that defined the era’s significance for education. Of enormous importance was the remaking of the MNP house journal which, under the direction of Konstantin Ushinsky—the founder of Russian pedagogy—was to become the voice of progressive pedagogy in the country. Reform also received a huge boost from a landmark essay published in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War in *Morskoi Sbornik* (the journal under the Naval Ministry and Grand Duke Konstantin titled “Life’s Urgent Questions”).¹¹ The author was the noted surgeon N.I. Pirogov, who argued for a meritocracy, and called for a humane approach to

teaching, including abolishing corporal punishment. The then Minister of Education was so impressed by the article that he appointed Pirogov as curator for one of Russia's most important educational districts, where he set about enacting his views through a series of progressive regulations and articles which were read avidly by the public. Indeed, schooling was one of the main political issues of the era. Although the "woman question," the "peasant question," the "Polish question" were all fraught topics at the time, a volume of the periodical press was seldom published without attention to the schools. In this public discourse the focus concentrated upon how education could meet the needs of the individual, not the state.

The Statute of 1864

So, what legislation ensued? The 1864 Statute was the outcome of more than eight years of deliberation involving state and society, but with a gradually narrowing circle of participants producing increasingly conservative iterations of the bill, finally approved by the State Council (until 1906, an advisory board of senior officials) and signed by the Emperor in a version little resembling its earliest drafts. As early as 1856 Alexander II himself had instructed the newly re-assembled MNP Learned Committee to develop proposals for the reform of primary and secondary schools. But it was only in 1860 that the first draft was produced and was widely circulated.

The public response in newspapers and journals to the draft was so expansive that the Learned Committee was forced to go back to the drawing board and make significant changes. Then, early in 1862, Minister Golovnin sent a revised version to the powerful regional educational curators (there were seven such regions for the entire country at the time) with instructions to solicit comment from universities and the pedagogical committees of provincial gymnasia. Translations were made into English, German and French and sent abroad for comments. The 1862 draft along with commentary from Russian sources, was published that year in six volumes, as were the commentaries from foreign sources in a separate volume the following year. All of this, along with the

minister's own conclusions, were sent to the State Council, which then revised the draft, and produced the version which became law on June 14, 1864. With some exceptions for Muslim, Jewish and Protestant schools, this law was to be followed to the letter across the empire.

Compared with the early drafts, the revisions of the law were significant. The process by which the progressive core of the statute of 1864 was deleted from previous drafts has been thoroughly studied by Soviet era scholars.¹² In a nutshell, between 1860 and 1864 the goals of Russian education were redefined. While the 1862 draft had set as the goal of the school “the moral and cognitive development of children so that every child could learn of his rights and how to fulfil his obligations rationally” the final version aimed at “imbuing religious and moral foundations and disseminating elementary knowledge of a useful sort.”¹³ Autonomous pedagogical councils with autonomy to determine content and schedule as well as select textbooks were eliminated. All expenditures for building and maintaining schools and providing teachers with a salary were to be assumed by peasant communes and local government. Fees were to be made optional rather than eliminated entirely.

The statute of 1864 included a more restrictive curriculum compared to previous drafts. All mention of *nagliadnoe obuchenie* (visual education) and explanatory reading, the cornerstones of progressive pedagogy in Russia at the time and later, was eliminated. Instead, the official content was reduced to Bible study, Russian language, reading in secular and canonical literature, writing and the four functions of arithmetic. Local priests were now instructed to carefully observe that the tone and practice of teaching followed religious lines, and to report to the school boards if not so. The language of instruction was to be Russian (educators had argued that minority children be taught in their own language for the first two years while also learning Russian). A major theme of the 1862 draft—the elimination of barriers to secondary education—was also dropped.

As with other reforms at the time, a closer look at the process that resulted in the statute of 1864 reveals a picture of shared optimism and progressive aspirations buffeted and gradually whittled down by a budgetary crisis in the aftermath of the Crimean War, and a conservative

reaction in defense of privilege and status against the ambitions of liberal reformers. Disturbances by radical university students and especially the violent Polish rebellion against Russian rule in the borderlands in 1863–1864 further contributed to the steps backward. In some ways, both the process and the outcome of the 1864 Statute also resembled that of the 1804 legislation: at that earlier time a statutory framework had been established enabling the creation of a primary school system funded by society but administered by the state. For the most part, the law of 1804 had remained a dead letter because at the time this pre-modern state had little ability to intervene in local affairs or to implement whatever it legislated. But in the case of the 1864 Statute, the progressive ideas stemming from the contribution made by society in the early years of ‘glasnost’ under Alexander II—while gutted from the statute itself—persisted in societal circles, and re-emerged to shape the essential features of the *zemstvo* school in subsequent years within the framework of that legislation. To that story we now turn.

The Evolution of Schooling 1864–1894

Disappointment was widespread with the 1864 Statute, especially with the lack of provision for funding, the removal of rungs on the ladder to secondary and higher education for commoners, the strictures on the language of instruction, and elimination of a role for the wider public in affecting the content of education. Further distress was created by the establishment of an inspectorate in 1869 and instructions governing their work (1871), as well as a plethora of regulations that followed in subsequent decades. A revised Statute (1874) put further restrictions upon public input in popular education. The *zemstvo* was to keep hands off of pedagogy and the content of education, and to busy itself exclusively with providing for the material side of education (in Russian, *khoziaistvo*).

The lawmakers’ intention was to promote the building of schools by local society while retaining central control over what was taught and how. Instructions (1871) gave the Learned Committee the authority to evaluate all textbooks and readers to be used in the classroom, placing

them in three categories: recommended, permitted, and forbidden.¹⁴ Recently opened teacher training seminaries (1864) were strictly regulated (1870), severely limiting the opportunities of non-governmental institutions such as the *zemstvo* in this sphere. During Dmitry Tolstoy's time (1866–1880) as Minister of National Education, forty-four *state-run* teachers' seminaries were established.¹⁵

As historians have often noted, the heavy regulatory hand of the autocracy played a significant role in turning education into a major issue of contestation between state and society, thereby creating a generation of radical public activists who saw a democratized and locally controlled classroom as the key to transforming society. In reality, however, the realm of schooling was much less controlled by the central government and much less rigid in content, textbooks, or classroom ambience than might be concluded by looking only at the prescriptive literature emanating from St. Petersburg or the critical literature and exposés written by specialists of an oppositionist bent. Moreover, for those schools under the control of the MNP, funding constraints prevented the government from hiring sufficient numbers of inspectors. Up until the turn of the century, *uezdy* (districts)¹⁶ had only one inspector who was charged with visiting up to 120 schools, often separated by considerable distance and dismal roads during the long Russian winter. Schools were rarely visited more than once a year, and many schools saw an inspector less than that, and then for a period of only two to three hours.¹⁷ As late as 1911, when the inspectorate had expanded, each official was entrusted with an average of almost ninety schools.

Local school boards also sometimes offered a venue for public input into the workings of the schools, especially when it came to the hiring and firing of teachers. Initially, the drafts of the 1864 Statute had included provision for elected pedagogical councils to run each school, but this notion was squashed, and the MNP's intention was clearly to establish a tight linkage running from the minister through the curator, director to the inspector. But resistance from the other ministries curbed these aspirations, and instead school boards were set up at the district and provincial level chaired by the local marshal of the nobility. These school boards included the church parish school inspector and MNP inspectors, a representative of the Ministry of Interior and

any other branch of the bureaucracy sponsoring schools in the district, as well as two representatives of the local *zemstvo*. Most school boards met only twice a year for roughly a week and have largely been ignored or dismissed by historians as rubber stamping autocratic policies. But research in the archives of the huge Kazan' educational region by this author suggests that on occasion such school boards could be independent actors in the unpredictable alliances of local politics. They might be riven with conflict, or together stand up against the hierarchy of the MNP or Holy Synod, sometimes defending the *zemstvo*, which itself was often in a fraught relationship with these two institutions and the gubernatorial administration.

Most of all it was the *zemstvos*, those elected institutions of local self-government established initially in 34 provinces in European Russia—by 1915 their number had reached 43—that took advantage of loose and ill-defined regulation to play a public role in schooling. After an early flurry of constitutional aspirations, *zemstvos* had settled down to the humbler tasks of providing social and medical services. Dominated in most areas by the local nobility, and hemmed in by autocratic restrictions, the *zemstsy* (delegates) were often reluctant to tax themselves. The delegates nevertheless found money to support primary schools and even women's gymnasia which provided a supply of teachers for primary schools.

The strategy that the *zemstvos* usually adopted was to concentrate on villages which had already themselves organized and funded some sort of instruction for their children (*vol'nye shkoly*). The *zemstvo* would provide supplemental grants and expertise to peasant communities that were themselves willing to take responsibility for providing land, a building as well as night lodgings for pupils in the far north (where harsh winters often prohibited lengthy walks to school), a salary and lodgings for the teacher, fuel for the winter, and often a garden. For that reason, the progress achieved might better be credited to the peasantry itself, who largely footed the bill. Peasants increasingly recognized the urgency of acquiring literacy and numeracy in a rapidly changing and precarious world in which knowing how to read signs and documents and utilize conventional measurements was key to survival.¹⁸

Rather than by funding it was in defining the design of the primary school and shaping the contours of classroom practice that the *zemstvo*, interpreting the term *khoziaistvo* very loosely, was most important—for the providing for and controlling of schooling were difficult to separate as realms of schooling.¹⁹ A central figure in designing the school was Baron N. Korf, a graduate of the elite Alexandrov lyceé who participated as an elected delegate to the Ekaterinoslav provincial *zemstvo*, and a member of the district school board. Korf set about mobilizing the local peasants in his district to set up over a hundred schools in a five-year period (1867–1872). Through his activities and writings, he created the prototype of the *zemstvo* school, with one teacher presiding over three sections; a school day including two three-hour classes separated by a two-hour break and recess. The course of instruction included not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also Russian grammar, history, and geography. The textbook he used was Ushinsky's *Rodnoe Slovo* and its accompanying reader *Nash Drug*—works not favoured by the textbook censors in the MNP.

Korf also authored the all-embracing *Handbook* (1870) which offered a comprehensive guide to classroom practices and got published in twenty-five editions. In it was also a chapter on buildings, where he insisted that three conditions make instructions successful: adequate light, warmth and space.²⁰ Natural light was a main key because candles were too expensive for village budgets. Adequate space was necessary to allow movement about the classroom on winter days and to avoid cramped seating, and thereby reduce the spread of contagious disease—a problem everywhere in Europe when schools first brought children from different families together into one room for extended periods. Proper heating was crucial; otherwise pupils would remain in their outer garments all day long: “Imagine the stench in the classroom when children are sitting about in their sheepskin coats.”²¹ Korf also included a model school design for a building to accommodate 75 pupils. It is unlikely that schools in more than a few areas resembled this model because until the 1890s most schools were housed in rented or renovated buildings. Yet his basic categories—warmth, space, and light—remained the main indicators by which the quality of school facilities was measured until 1914.

Until 1908 the government itself had no official regulations or codes governing school buildings and virtually no means to supervise rural schools, whether church or *zemstvo*-run.²² By contrast, as early as 1870, the *zemstvos* themselves began to draw up health codes, based primarily upon the recommendations of the Second Congress of Moscow Doctors (1877). Subsequent congresses refined the basic guidelines as well as producing new blueprints for multi-complex schools, two-class schools, schools of brick, stone and wood, schools in warm and cold climates, and schools in rich and poor districts.

When the great spurt of school construction, spearheaded by provincial *zemstvos*, began in the 1890s, these regulations were codified and adopted by the Moscow *zemstvo* assembly (1895), and then published as *Model Plans for School Buildings* (1898). Approved by the Pirogov Medical Society, the booklet rapidly went through several editions and influenced school design everywhere in Russia.²³ While the absence of central government guidelines and supervision over building plans and health codes ensured a good deal of regional variety in Russia, the popularity of the Moscow plans as well as testimony of school experts at the time allow us to conclude that a large number of schools built after 1900 resembled the structures designed for the Moscow *zemstvo*.

Thus, in matters of spatial arrangements and hygiene it was society rather than the state that defined the environment. Concern for the well-ordered and productive classroom also produced a large cohort of educators whose names are still familiar to teachers in Russia today and whose influence on the daily life of the school was enormous, including Nikolai Bunakov, Vasilii Vodovozov, Nikolai Tikhomirov and others. Literacy societies formed in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Khar'kov and elsewhere added to this mix, as did the more than fifty pedagogical journals in print by that time.

Official control over the textbooks in use was often spotty—the will was there, but the means were lacking.²⁴ Even the Model Curriculum published in 1897—a deliberate attempt to impose more state control over what was taught—allowed enough room for explanatory readings in history, geography and literature to diverge from the straight and narrow. More important were the encyclopaedic manuals published for local educators. One such manual, written by A.A. Anastasiev, a notable

director of schools in Viatka province, was first published at the turn of the century, and went through ten editions before 1914. It was such educators, and their handbooks, texts and readers, which guided teachers in their daily practices. Inspectors, as well as moderately progressive educators, were the most likely to be involved in summer refresher courses for rural teachers, which provided a rare opportunity for the latter to mingle with peers, and learn from experts how better to cope with the challenges they encountered in the villages.

The turn-of-the-century Russian pedagogy was, in the dual capital cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, polarised between conservative and progressive proponents locked in conflict over language, religion, and control of the schools. But outside the capital cities, at summer teacher training courses, among school inspectors and directors as well as *zemstvo* employees; that is, at the level of practice, a consensus emerged about how schools should be run at the turn of the century. This consensus encompassed what teachers should teach and how, what kind of disciplinary measures were appropriate, and what results could be expected from the three- to four-year school.

This mainstream pedagogy was distinct in that it emphasised a tightly structured schedule (teachers were responsible for two to three classrooms simultaneously), textbook learning, much rote learning combined with memorisation, classroom recitations, oral calculations, as well as ‘explanatory readings,’ and visual education (*nagliadnoe obuchenie*).²⁵ This pedagogy also stressed the “concentric approach”, which meant that instruction should begin with the near and tangible, moving gradually outwards (geographically and conceptually) to the more distant and abstract, but always grounded in the senses, the tangible and the nearby. Mainstream pedagogy supported the unchallenged authority of the teacher, yet also banished corporal punishment from the schools, and promoted a benevolent view of the intrinsic goodness of the child.²⁶

Thus, the result of the school system following the statute of 1864 was co-operation rather than conflict between teachers, *zemstvo* educators, and local inspectors (Anastasiev was, after all, himself a local official).²⁷ As a consequence, what can be called a “distinct culture of Russian pedagogy,” emerged, quite untouched by the conflict over education which raged at the national level. These characteristics may well

explain the marked success achieved by Russian schools; this classroom culture persisted well into the Soviet period, leaving traces even today. Slowly but steadily too, specially-built *zemstvo* schools began to dot the landscape. Above all, once again it was the inability of a “peasant government” to *fund* education, whether by paying for the building of schools or employing inspectors to supervise those schools which had been established, which provided an opportunity for societal initiative.

The Sea Change of the 1890s

Still, it would take a change of mind set in the 1890s, a more concerted effort, and a combination of forces—popular, *zemstvo* and state—to create the surge that transformed Russian education and by 1914 brought European Russia within just more than a decade of offering universally accessible primary education. Before the 1890s, the strategy of relying upon peasant initiative alone had led to only uneven growth in the number of schools which could not keep pace with rapid population growth. The first studies made in the early 1880s had seemingly demonstrated that the scale of the effort required to make schooling universally accessible was simply out of reach for the time being. As fears arose of a looming agrarian crisis and arrears in collecting taxes from the peasantry mounted, many *zemstvos* concluded in the 1880s that the school model provided by Korf was not viable. Attempts were made instead to set up “literacy schools” offering but one or two years of instruction, or to turn over all responsibility for schooling to the Holy Synod, which was the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church. In competition with the MNP, the Holy Synod had been pushing one to two-year literacy schools or providing full-fledged, but poorly funded parish schools.

In the 1890s, the lethargy and doubt were superseded by the conviction that Russia’s fate depended upon achieving universal elementary education as soon as possible.²⁸ This belief became so widespread in the nineties that enrolment rates and per capita expenditures on schooling came to be regarded by the educated public as the measurements of both a country’s strength and level of civilization. The campaign that ensued involved the literacy committees, the burgeoning periodical

press, professional societies, and *zemstvos* which were rapidly mobilizing politically in the aftermath of a terrible famine in the Volga region that had carried away a quarter of a million people and convinced many that the fate of the country could not be left to the autocracy. Particularly important was the rise of professional organizations, including those of *zemstvo* employees (doctors, teachers, statisticians, agronomists), who felt their ability to serve the population was hindered by government suspicion of their political disloyalty. As opposition grew among the educated classes, a generation of gifted and energetic radical activists in Moscow and St. Petersburg succeeded in making the democratization of education a central point in their program for the transformation of Russia.

In 1894, V.P. Vakhterov, inspector of schools in Moscow and member of the Moscow *zemstvo* commission on education—later a renowned educational theorist whose works have been republished in the post-Soviet era—gave a speech to the Moscow Literacy Society in which he called for the immediate implementation of universal primary education (*vseobuch*). Vakhterov argued that the creators of the 1864 Statute had borrowed the worst aspects of foreign school systems from the West: tight control over curriculum and reliance exclusively upon local funding. He claimed that earlier estimates of the scale of the effort needed to achieve universal education had been overstated by those earlier studies, which had miscalculated the size of the school-age population.²⁹ He argued that both the sums of money and number of schools needed were actually within reach, especially if the education of girls was given only secondary attention—he believed education should be compulsory, but for boys alone. His speech was printed in thousands of copies and later published in *Russkaia mysʹ*, and the outpouring of commentary on it was enormous. Critics challenged many of his assumptions as well as his strategy, but as the prominent academic A.I. Chuprov later remembered, Vakhterov had managed to focus in the society at large “a belief in the attainability of universal education [...] and to infuse its advocates with burning energy.”³⁰

Indeed, a turning point in society was reached between 1894 and 1897. In that three-year interval, twenty four of the thirty-four provincial *zemstvo* assemblies discussed how to achieve universal primary

education; seventeen actually undertook systematic studies of the current state of education in their location and twenty set up special loan and grant funds to build schools. The leader in this effort was the Moscow provincial *zemstvo*, which had carried out detailed cadastral and household surveys in the previous decade, and now used these studies to design and begin implementing a plan for establishing schools within a three-kilometre radius of every household in the province. Other *zemstvos* drew upon the principles and terms of the Moscow plan for their own purposes; its imprint is also visible in the plans drawn up by the MNP when it finally set out to achieve universally accessible enrolment.

Accompanying these endeavours was the establishment—despite sporadic harassment by local governors or representatives of the MNP—of permanent school commissions and bureaus in virtually all of the *zemstvo* provinces by 1908. By the turn of the century, after having appropriated responsibility for school matters from more lethargic local-level counterparts [*uezd*], most provincial-level *zemstvos* had assumed responsibility for school construction, supplements to teachers' salaries, stocking school libraries and, in some cases, sponsoring school lunches as well as night lodgings (especially in the northern regions). By now, the principle of a free, universally *accessible* education was widely accepted in educational circles. However, the *compulsory* education proposed by Vakhterov was rejected as unfeasible (financially) or even undesirable given the long history of arbitrary autocratic rule.

After 1905

Perhaps the most important societal forum for educators after 1905 was the League of Education, established by former members of the Moscow Literacy Committee, which had been taken over by the government a decade earlier. The League created a network of local organizations promoting educational goals, but its most important contribution was the drafting of a proposal to thoroughly reform existing school legislation and to make education universally accessible. The proposal formed the core of the progressive platform in education

after 1905,³¹ and was submitted to the Second *Duma* and circulated throughout Russia for discussion.³² The famous *zemstvo* congress of provincial directors of executive boards of November, 1904 calling for limits to autocracy, popular representation and the rule of law, included education among its eleven political demands. After the turmoil of 1905–1907, public pressure in the sphere of education soon picked up once again. An All-*Zemstvo* Congress on Education was held in Moscow in 1911. Other events included the All-Russia Library Congress (June 1911) which devoted much time to school libraries; an All-Russia Congress on Public Education (December–January 1913–1914), a Congress on Extramural Education and another on Educational Statistics in 1913—all were thoroughly covered by the press, well attended and the focus of much public attention.

Thus, as a new generation of professionals found employment in the *zemstvo*, a cadre of school doctors, hygienists, statisticians, extra-mural educators, architects and curriculum specialists coalesced to provide much needed expertise about schooling, book warehouses and distribution points, and by the turn of the century an impressive culture of expertise on schooling was readily available. The contours of Russian pedagogy and the look and feel of the classroom evolved in this period within the very loose and pliant framework of the 1864 Statute and largely within the ideological constellation that had been framed during the brief period of state encouragement of public discourse during the Great Reforms.

Yet it would take another decade, a massive investment of funds on the part of the state itself, legislation by the new parliament established in the aftermath of the bloody 1905 Revolution, and a concerted effort to launch a campaign which by the eve of World War I put European Russia within a decade of achieving the goal of fully accessible, if not compulsory education. The *Duma* School Bill of 1908, unlike the 1864 School Statute, remains largely neglected by historians and cannot be examined here, for it was taken up in a context in which the relationship between Russian workers and peasants, educated society and the state had shifted in fundamental ways. In short, the *comprehensive* School Bill first submitted in 1908 was never passed. Issues of class, religion and ethnicity which plagued the *Duma* (the lower house

of the Russian Parliament) from its onset (surfacing in the Western *zemstvo* Bill and a failed bill to reform local government) also doomed its passage. The *Duma* and the State Council (now after 1906 the upper parliamentary branch) could never agree upon whether or not all classes in all schools should be taught exclusively in Russian or whether indigenous minority populations should be given the right for instruction in their native language for the first two years. The *Duma* also voted to exclude the church parish schools of the Holy Synod from the proposed comprehensive school network—something the upper house vociferously rejected. That bill was reintroduced in 1912, but efforts to reconcile the *Duma* and State Council failed again.

Still, a separate if linked bill submitted by the MNP for school construction (the Peter the Great Fund) provided the funding for a massive drive to build schools within local networks planned and organized by the *zemstvo*. In the interval since 1864 a pre-modern autocracy had evolved into a newly interventionist state³³ buoyed by a rapidly expanding economy which had made Russia the world's fifth largest industrial power. Consequently, unprecedented sums of money now poured into school construction. The results in education were obvious in enrolment statistics by 1914.³⁴ Studies have shown that in contrast to a persistent mythology of “educational failure” in Imperial Russia, approximately three-quarters of the school-age population in European Russia were actually receiving between two and three years of elementary education on the eve of World War I. The stated goal of achieving universal enrolment of children age 8–11 by 1922 was not unrealistic.³⁵

Even more striking—but this is the topic of another essay—other studies suggested that even in this short time they were mastering both basic literacy and numeracy (the skills of reading, writing and carrying out simple mathematical computations) and retaining these skills years later.³⁶ Were these striking results achieved largely because of that distinctive Russian pedagogy—highly structured but also child-centred—described above? An intriguing thought in the context of global literacy studies.

In summary, a nascent civil society, educational activists and a boisterously emerging professional class with oppositionist inclinations took advantage of the limited reach of a traditional Russian state to

establish the culture of the school (both material and pedagogical). But it also took massive state funding to fully achieve the goal of *massification* after the turn of the century—even if that expansion took place in accordance with plans drawn up by *zemstvos* and those very professionals. Consequently, it can be concluded that the progress achieved was noteworthy, and it was a result of a joint effort by state and society all the more remarkable given the overall tensions and conflicts prevalent in Imperial Russia at the time and the incompetence of the Romanov dynasty. The Russian experience supports the thesis that *both* state and society contribute to mass education. From a global perspective, Russia was not alone in this; as one scholar writing of educational expansion in twentieth century Mexico put it: “[N]ew research suggest[s] that the process of building and governing schooling from the bottom up itself contributed to state formation, rather than the other way around.” In Russia, as in Mexico, schools appeared as “enacting [but also] contesting state forms.”³⁷

Notes

1. Brockliss and Sheldon, *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building*.
2. Winkler, “Rulers and Ruled.”
3. See, e.g., Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*.
4. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*; Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*. The argument for the creation of a distinctive Russian classroom culture can be found in Eklof, “*Laska i Poriadok*.” References to a copious literature in Russian as well as to archival sources in Russia can be found in these books and articles.
5. This chapter deals primarily with European Russia. While recent scholars have convincingly argued that like gender, empire is a category embedded in virtually any aspect of Russian life. Moreover, issues of language, ethnicity and religion were central to educational discourses too. One can also argue that when examining the spread of mass education across Europe, scholars tend to treat the colonies of each European state as a separate topic, as we do here with Russia’s colonized but contiguous borderlands.

6. Dal'man, *Razvitie sistemy upravleniia narodnym obrazovaniem v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka.*
7. Roger Bartlett has pointed out the similarities between Russian governance and the "fiscal state" of early modern Europe, designed to extract maximum resources from the peasantry for military purposes, though, "less well endowed with fiscal techniques than the states of Western Europe." Bartlett concludes that the rural sociologist Gered Spittler is more precise in labelling the "resource mobilizing" state whose reach was severely limited by "peasant village autarchy" as a "peasant state." (Bartlett, *A History of Russia*, 93, 102–10.) Indeed, in the localities its presence was barely noted; given the huge size of the country, and its relatively small bureaucracy (as a ratio of civil servants to population, not to mention territory) scholars have sometimes talk of Imperial Russia being "undergoverned."
8. W. Bruce Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform.*
9. Dal'man, *Razvitie sistemy upravleniia narodnym obrazovaniem v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*, 34–35. MNP attempts to assert control over Muslim medrese and mektebe ran into opposition from the Ministry of Interior in 1888 which argued that in light of the "scale" and "importance" of the question, the need to observe "caution" and proceed "gradually," as well as inadequacy of resources, the question should be shelved. From my own research in the Volga region, however, I have discovered that MNP inspectors visited such schools and reported regularly on conditions there.
10. Despite effort by the MNP to monopolize control over elementary education, fifty years after the promulgation of the 1864 Statute, N.V. Chekhov counted more than thirty types of primary schools in the Russian empire. Yet the vast majority of these schools resembled in structure and content those managed by the MNP. See Chekhov, *Tipy russkoi shkoly v ikh istoricheskom razvitii.*
11. "Voprosy zhizni," *Morskoi sbornik*, July 1856, no. 9, pp. 559–597.
12. Konstantinov and Struminskii, *Ocherki po istorii nachal'nogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*; Smirnov, *Reforma nachal'noi i srednei shkoly v 60-ikh godakh XIX.*
13. Konstantinov and Struminskii, 127–31.
14. Smirnov, *Reforma*, 152–53.
15. *Ibid.*, 152–57.

16. At the turn of the twentieth century administrative districts, of which provinces in European Russia generally had 10–12, were intended to have a population of approximately 200,000 each. Educational districts, or regions, (*okruga*) on the other hand, incorporated up to ten provinces, each of which was often the size of a European country.
17. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 120–54; Zviagintsev, *Inspektsiia narodnykh uchilishch*; Seregny, “Power and Discourse in Russian Elementary Education.”
18. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*.
19. For a thorough discussion of the topic of models of peasant education in public discourse in the period from the Great Reforms to World War I, see Romanov, *Nachal'noe obrazovanie russkogo krest'ianstva v poslednei chetverti XIX-nachale XX vekov: ofitsial'naia politika I obshchestvennyye modeli*, 97–209.
20. *Ibid.*, 31.
21. Korf, *Russkaia nachal'naia shkola: Rukovodstvo dlia zemskikh glasnykh i uchitelei sel'skoi shkoly*, 31.
22. See Charnoluskii, *Zemstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, vol. I, 11, 77–80; Kapterev, *Novye dvizheniia v oblasti narodnogo obrazovaniia i srednei shkoly*, 145–46; Verigin, *V pomoshch' uchashchim v nachal'nykh narodnykh uchilishchakh*, 182.
23. Eklof, “Kindertermpel or Shack?” 117–43.
24. The catalogue of approved textbooks produced by the Learned Committee was usually very much out of date and the books used in the classroom or found in school libraries were often not on the list, or had actually been rejected for use (for reasons including “political unreliability of the author”). Budgets were so tight that the *zemstvo* sponsoring schools could plausibly claim that they had no option but to continue using such books (or put the inspector in the unenviable situation of carrying out his job and leaving teachers with no textbooks at all for the classroom)—this was not unusual.
25. A more detailed argument for the existence of a distinctive Russian classroom culture can be found in Eklof, “Laska i Poriadok.” See also Dneprov, *Ocherki istorii russkoi shkoly*, 173–312.
26. The emphasis upon a structured environment stemmed from the rigours of one teacher being responsible simultaneously for two to three groups of students, while the benevolent view of childhood, especially

- peasant childhood, had deep roots in nineteenth-century Russian culture. See Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood*.
27. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 120–54.
 28. *Ibid.*, 98.
 29. In Europe the school-age was commonly set as 8–14; Vakhterov and others argued instead that it should be set at 8–11. E.G. West has argued that a similar error misled English educators earlier in the century. See West, “The Interpretation of Early Nineteenth-Century Education Statistics.”
 30. Cited in Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 110–14 for a summary of Vakhterov’s calculations.
 31. *Liga obrazovaniia, Proekt shkol’nago zakona: s pilozheniem primernago ischisleniia stoimosti vvedeniia vseobshchago obrazovaniia v Rossii*. St. Peterburg, 1908.
 32. Kairov et al., *Pedagogicheskaia entsiklopediia*, 627; Piskunov, *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodnov SSSR. Vtoraia polovina XIX*, 357. The history of the League of Education remains to be written.
 33. Winkler, “Rulers and Ruled, 1700–1917.”
 34. For a study of the implementation of the funding program, see Chekini on “nachal’noe narodnoe obrazovanie” found in Brokgauz-Efron, *Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, vol. 28, 129–49. By comparison, see Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*.
 35. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 283–314; Working independently of Eklof, Jeffrey Brooks arrived at the same figures, which differ radically from the estimates which had previously widely circulated.
 36. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 389–418.
 37. Rockwell and Roldán Vera, “State Governance and Civil Society in Education.”

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12

The Constitution of 1867, Separate Schooling, and the Roots of Division in Canadian Public Education

Anthony Di Mascio

In 1867, three British North American colonies—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Province of Canada (itself the two former colonies of Upper Canada and Lower Canada)—entered Confederation. They would become the four founding provinces of Canada, which, during the ensuing decades, would grow to the present union of ten provinces and three territories. Prior to 1867, each colony operated independently with no formal ties to each other but rather to the imperial government in Britain. The British North America Act (which was later renamed the Constitution Act, 1867) created the conditions for political, economic, and social interdependence. The act outlined various powers that the two levels of government—provincial and federal—divided among each other in the new nation. Section 93 placed public education under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

The decision to place education in the hands of the provinces underlines its importance to the former colonies. Indeed, it was a significant compromise advocates of stronger federal powers had to concede

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_12

in order to make the unification of Canada possible. Each colony had already developed extensive educational legislation, including school acts and related laws and policies, and schooling was fundamentally tied into the culture and identity of the societies those colonies had formed. Simply put, education was too important a power for the former colonies to lose. The colonial school acts were thus essentially untouched at the time of union, and the new provinces were left to operate independent provincial school systems. In fact, central to the compromise that made Confederation possible was the inclusion of specific provisions into section 93 ensuring that union would not disrupt the structure of public education as it had developed in the colonies. Most importantly, section 93 granted the constitutional guarantee to Protestant and Catholic minorities that had already been operating public schools in their colony at the time of union to maintain separate public schools.

The provision for separate schooling in section 93, while a crucial compromise in the constitution, was also a reaffirmation of the unique framework within which colonial schooling developed in Canada. As in, for example, England, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, the rise of mass schooling in nineteenth-century colonial Canada faced the challenges of a population divided, in this case both denominationally and linguistically in a French Catholic and an English Protestant population.

The pattern of colonial common school promotion in the nineteenth century was consequently marked by historical forces of resistance to a single best system of education for the entire population. Both Catholic and Protestant minorities, wherever they found themselves in nineteenth-century British North America, were determined to resist any effort, real or perceived, at assimilation into the cultural majority. Thus, the nineteenth-century common school acts that emerged, in the three colonies that would form the Confederation of Canada in 1867, were consistently marked with clauses, provisions, or accompanying policies and practices that made accommodations for the separate education of the religious minority. That tradition of separate education was carried into the Canadian Constitution of 1867, via section 93, and has theretofore framed Canada's divided system of mass public schooling.

Despite the importance of education to the constitutional decisions that led to Confederation, relatively little focus has been given to the making of section 93 by educational historians.¹ Indeed, with few exceptions not many scholars have written the history of education in nineteenth-century Canada from a pan-Canadian perspective at all. One early attempt at a Canadian educational synthesis was C.E. Philip's *The Development of Education in Canada*. Philips examined the origins of schooling in all of the provinces, but his amassed volume was essentially an encyclopedia of educational developments in each particular province. Revisionist scholars made a second attempt at a pan-Canadian educational history in their 1970 volume, *Canadian Education: A History*.² Like Philip's 1957 work, however, this new Canadian synthesis was essentially the sum of collective provincial histories rather than a single national narrative. The volume does stand out, however, in the extent of attention it gives to section 93 and the Confederation debates in several of its essays. Indeed, the importance of education to nation building in Canada and how section 93 featured prominently in several national crises in the years after 1867 is taken into serious consideration. In many ways, this book laid the foundation upon which future educational histories of Canada could build.

The explosion of research on the history of education in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, however, did not translate into any real increase in efforts at a national educational narrative. Certain edited volumes considered patterns of educational development throughout the country but remained collections of separate essays.³ George S. Tomkins addressed the development of "the Canadian Curriculum" in his seminal study *A Common Countenance*. Tomkins' narrative was less fragmented by provincial histories than previous attempts at national narratives. Nevertheless, Tomkins could not avoid the duality of a central theme in Canadian history: the French and English (or Catholic and Protestant) divide. English Canadians, in Tomkins' assessment, have followed a curriculum since schooling's origins that emphasizes Canada's place within the British Empire while at the same time battling against American cultural influences. For French Canadians, however, the battle has been against English Canada itself, with its very

survival tied into the ways it could shape its curricula to propagate a culture of its own and reject the dominant English Canadian culture.

Focusing on policy, Ronald A. Manzer developed a distinct Canadian educational narrative in *Public Schools and Political Ideas*. Through an analysis of historical developments in each province, Manzer argues that schooling in Canada has been dominated by philosophies of political, economic, and ethical liberalism. While liberalism faced resistance in nineteenth-century Canada, specifically from the Catholic Church, it ultimately triumphed, he argues, and now dominates educational policy ideas in Canada. Manzer was also forced to address the distinct organizational, legal, administrative, and social milieu surrounding school development in each separate province. Quebec and Newfoundland, for example, do not fit neatly into his liberal narrative as they historically held onto conservative values, rooted in religion, which shaped not only the experience of schooling but also the policy framework within which it was developed.

Paul Axelrod's *The Promise of Schooling* also built a national narrative of the origins of schooling in Canada. Unlike earlier national narratives, Axelrod's study emphasizes the similarities of educational developments in English and French Canada. Indeed, despite the historical divide, he argues that French and English Canada were more similar than different in their views on schooling. "For all their cultural and linguistic differences," he suggests, "English and French colonists in the late eighteenth century shared these traits: their fate on the North American continent had been determined by war, and they lived in a world in which religion and schooling were deeply entwined."⁴

Writing a single narrative of the origins of schooling in nineteenth-century Canada is a complex endeavor. The present study does not purport to offer that singularity. What follows is an attempt to examine the development of schooling in a way that binds educational developments in the separate colonies that would come together to make Canada in the nineteenth century. The link is sustained, this study suggests, through Canada's constitution of 1867. More specifically, the study considers the division of constitutional powers in that act, which prescribed education as the responsibility of the provinces with the conditions and exceptions in section 93.

This crucial nation building decision to reject a single educational system has shaped public schooling in modern Canada. Understanding this nineteenth-century educational clause in Canada's constitution might help us better understand both the history of education in Canada and the challenges to educational reform that exist in our present day. In order to more fully understand the making of section 93, a brief sketch of educational developments in pre-Confederation Canada is first necessary. Of particular importance in this period was the degree to which legislators in each colony made efforts to provide for separate systems of schooling for Catholic or Protestant minorities, an idea that would ultimately be entrenched in the Canadian constitution.

Early School Developments in the Canadian Colonies

Efforts at educational legislation were made early in the colonies that would form Canada. The first educational act in Nova Scotia was passed in 1766 by the colonial legislature providing for the establishment of grammar schools.⁵ In 1811, the colony passed a new school act, and, although this act fell short of creating a common school system in the colony, it provided financial incentives for setting up common schools.⁶ New Brunswick's first attempt at educational legislation came in 1793 via an annual appropriations bill that included a provision to aid and assist the education of youth in each parish of the colony, but it was ultimately rejected by the Legislative Council.⁷ By 1802, the legislature could no longer ignore public demand and in that year the Parish School Act was passed. While not a common school act, the main thrust of the act was to secure funds for distribution among the parishes of the province for educational purposes.⁸

Similar developments took place in Upper Canada and Lower Canada, which were the two British colonies that would form the Province of Canada in 1841. In Upper Canada, its colonial legislature passed a grammar school act in 1807 and public demand led to the passing of a common school act in 1816.⁹ Lower Canada's pattern

of school development differed slightly, as its predominantly French Catholic population initially resisted efforts by its colonial government to establish schools, but by the 1830s a series of school acts had been passed with moderate success at making elementary schooling universally accessible.¹⁰

While the movement for common schooling came early to the Canadian colonies, the watershed that would leave a lasting legacy on the character of public schooling in Canada did not come until mid-nineteenth century. In the 1830s, political agitations in Upper Canada and Lower Canada led to calls for “responsible government” and a series of rebellions in both colonies broke out from 1837 to 1838. In what was an effort to both create stability and impose its control, the British government sent John George Lambton, first Earl of Durham, across the Atlantic to inquire and report on the situation in May 1838. Durham’s stay in Lower Canada was brief, but his report, submitted in February 1839, has plagued Canadian history since. “I expected to find a contest between a government and a people,” he reported, “I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.”¹¹ The challenge, as he saw it, was to end that war by assimilating the French Catholic population through a union of Upper Canada and Lower Canada. Key to cultivating loyalty, Durham’s report emphasized, was the creation of a single, unified school system in which the children, “accustomed to fight nation against nation,” would be brought together.¹² In 1840, the Union of Canada Act was passed by the imperial government and was proclaimed on 10 February 1841. After fifty years apart, the two colonies were now required to function as one.

Daniel Tröhler has argued that the construction of European countries in the long nineteenth century almost immediately triggered the need to create new school laws designed to organize the actual implementation of the constitutionally created citizens. Making loyal citizens, he argues, required the two-pronged initiative of constitution plus school law.¹³ Indeed, such was the plan in the newly constructed Province of Canada as well. Examined through Tröhler’s theoretical framework, the Province of Canada may be unique in that the struggle for school legislation ultimately resulted in the making of a two-nation state, as a single school system in the wake of unification proved too

difficult to administer. This conceptual two-nation state would eventually be brought into Confederation.

One of the first tasks the new government of the United Province of Canada took up in 1841 was indeed the creation of a single common school act.¹⁴ One superintendent of education for both provinces, appointed by the Governor, was to oversee the entire system. The superintendent's primary responsibilities were to organize the educational finances of the colony, examine the condition of the schools, and report on the state of education throughout the colony. Durham's plans for a single school system for both French and English proved problematic, however, and legislators remained astutely aware of the cultural divide that continued to exist in Canada between French and English, or Catholic and Protestant. A significant compromise was thus made by way of Article XI of the act, which allowed for religious minorities to establish dissentient schools. Both Protestant and Catholic minorities in Canada East (formerly Lower Canada) and Canada West (formerly Upper Canada) were given the right to withdraw their children from the local common school and establish a separate school of their own.

Nevertheless, a single school act, even with built-in compromises, proved problematic in the newly created state. The government of the United Province quickly acknowledged that the challenge of running a school system in both Canada East and Canada West was more complex and problematic than they had anticipated. The two provinces had distinct systems of education which had developed historically and could not easily be synthesized. Thus, by an Act of 1843 Canada West received its own school legislation which divided educational governance between the two provinces and essentially created two school systems, one for Canada East and one for Canada West.¹⁵ Each would have their own superintendent of education moving forward. The provision for dissentient schools in Article XI of the 1841 Act was carried into the new Act for Canada West. Articles LV and LVI of the 1843 Act provided for the separate schooling of Catholic children, affirming that the idea of separate schooling was cemented into the educational foundations of the new province. In 1845 and 1846, school acts for the former Lower Canada were drawn up as well.¹⁶

Thus, the division of school systems between the two colonies, one predominately English and Protestant, the other French and Catholic, was formalized. As such, legislators nullified the nationalizing efforts of unification by allowing for a dual school system which created the pre-conditions for a two-nation state. In other words, rather than creating a school act that could be used to reinforce a single national identity in the newly created Province of Canada, provisions for separate schooling reaffirmed the existing national divisions between French Catholic and English Protestant colonists.

Nevertheless, these early acts helped in the broader educational aim of bringing schooling to the masses in the two sections of the province, a process that had begun through both government efforts and popular demand before the union period. Figures compiled by C.E. Philips suggest that in Canada East and Canada West, enrollment in publicly funded schools rose from 60,000 and 65,000 in 1841 to over 181,000 and 344,000, respectively, by the time of Confederation.¹⁷ School attendance rose in the same period as well. In Canada West, records from the superintendent of education show that in the period from 1844 to 1867 there was an over fifty percent increase in school attendance.¹⁸ Not all schools were the same, however, and the division of mass schooling along religious lines remained a contentious issue that would shape the making of educational legislation in this critical mid-nineteenth-century period.

School Acts and the Issue of Separate Schooling

In Canada East, education continued after 1846 to be developed along denominational lines operating and functioning separately. Religious education was a defining feature of the experience of schooling in that part of the United Province. Minor amendments were made in the School Act of 1849, which gave more powers to the Catholic clergy but also additional powers to the Superintendent of Education, who created examination boards for prospective teachers.¹⁹ In the School Act of 1851, a system of school inspection was established.²⁰ By the 1850s, the basic administrative framework of public schooling for Quebec had essentially been built.

Two further school acts were passed in 1856 by the provincial legislature for Canada East. A *Journal of Education* for Canada East was instituted, and provisions for the establishment and management of a pension fund for teachers were made. The most significant administrative change was the creation of the Council of Public Instruction for Lower Canada. It consisted of fourteen members, ten Catholic and four Protestant, and would be chaired by the Superintendent of Education. This council would now have oversight of the common schools, and for the examination of schools and teachers.²¹ Provisions for normal schools were also made in 1856.²² As with all educational matters in Canada East, the training of teachers would be divided strictly along denominational lines. Three normal schools were opened before Confederation, the Jacques-Cartier Normal School in Montreal and the Laval Normal School in Quebec City to train teachers for the Catholic schools, while the McGill Normal School in Montreal would be responsible for the Protestant schools.

In Canada West, educational reform would be dominated by the ideas of Egerton Ryerson after he was appointed its Superintendent of Education in 1844. Ryerson had been an early advocate of free, universal mass schooling, and several school acts were passed within the first six years of his appointment that would lay the framework for such a system.²³ Perhaps one of the greatest disappointments of Ryerson's time in office was the unfulfilled belief that separate schools for Catholics and Protestants would, in time, fade. In fact, the Catholic fervor for separate schooling only grew in intensity under Ryerson's tenure.

The height of the separate school controversy in Canada West came in the 1850s when Catholic leaders pressed hard upon Catholics in the province to reject the common schools and make use of their legal right to establish separate schools. Ryerson, determined to establish a free, universal school system, was seemingly caught off guard by Catholic agitation. Prior to the 1850s, his real adversary in this regard had been the Anglican Bishop John Strachan, who was adamant about the creation of a separate national school system for the Church of England. Before the 1850s, the number of Catholic schools in the province had actually been declining.²⁴ The Catholic Church's rejection of nationalism under Pope Pius IX after the revolutions of 1848, along with the

arrival of the ultramontane Bishop Armand de Charbonnel to Toronto in 1850, however, initiated what one religious historian has dubbed the “War of Total Separation” of Catholics from common schooling in Canada West.²⁵

Significant gains were nevertheless made under the influence of Charbonnel. The Separate School Act of 1853 provided a major incentive for Catholic parents to establish separate schools by relieving them of their tax requirements for the common schools. Moreover, separate schools could now take a share of the provincial grant for schools, although they were not given a share of the municipal grant. Finally, separate school trustees were empowered to collect their own rates or fees.²⁶ Another major gain occurred in the Separate School Act of 1855 which further loosened restrictions on Catholics to establish separate schools.²⁷ The Separate School Act of 1863 allowed for separate schools to receive a share of the municipal grant for schools. In essence, the act allowed for the complete separation of Catholic schools from the common school system without any real financial consequences to the schools or their supporters. Provisions were made in the act of that year, however, to ensure that the separate schools remained under some sort of central control. They were required to adhere to the provincial curriculum, use approved textbooks, employ provincially approved teachers, and accept inspection by provincial authorities.²⁸

The separate school question grew in intensity in the Maritime colonies as well during this period. Catholics in Nova Scotia had historically resisted the notion of a single common school system, albeit to no avail. By the 1840s, however, with the threat of compulsory taxation for schooling, Catholics began agitating in the legislature for funds to support separate schooling. In 1856, an attempt was made to pass a new school act with compulsory taxation to support free schools. Premier William Young, wishing to see compulsory taxation passed, made the incredible concession of allowing for the separate schooling of Catholics in the proposed bill. The bill ultimately failed, however, because the Protestant majority in the assembly was opposed to provisions for separate schooling. After the failure of the 1856 bill, the Superintendent of Education, Alexander Forrester, encouraged the

“blind eye” policy toward separate schooling. He recommended that the legislature not involve itself with the question of separate schooling, but rather that it “devolve the whole responsibility of the religious element upon the local trustees...acting on behalf of the parents of the district.”²⁹

The agitation for separate schooling for Catholics in New Brunswick had an impact on the updated Parish Schools Act in 1858. While very few concessions were given to Catholics, the act did contain a provision that gave recognition to the distinct needs of Catholics. Section VIII of the act contained the following clause: “...the Board of Education shall, by regulation, secure to all children whose parents or guardians do not object to it, the reading of the Bible in Parish schools—and the Bible, when read in Parish schools by Roman Catholic Children shall, if required by their parents or guardians, be the Douay version, without note or comment.”³⁰ As in Nova Scotia, however, a separate system of schooling for Catholics was never legally formalized.

Confederation and the Section 93 Compromise

It was within this colonial context, marked by independent school acts for each colony providing separate schooling to Catholics and Protestants, that the discussions concerning the future of public schooling in the new nation of Canada ensued. The prospect of that new nation sparked the concern of religious minorities. With the life of the United Province of Canada coming to an end, Catholics in what would become Ontario and Protestants in what would become Quebec realized they would soon be minorities in their new provinces. It was essential to them, then, that the protections afforded to separate schools for religious minorities be carried into law in the new nation. Indeed, as one future prime minister, Charles Tupper, noted, the protection of separate schooling was the critical factor that made Confederation possible. “I tell you that we would not have had a confederation,” he explained in 1896, “that this project would have failed miserably” if provisions were not made for separate schools.³¹

When the various colonies met at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1864 to discuss the possibility of entering into a national union, education was, then, one of the central issues. Of vital importance was determining which level of government, federal or provincial, would control education. In early listings of the division of powers, as they appeared in the *Examiner* newspaper of Charlottetown on September 5, 1864, the federal government was given the power to enforce uniformity of education.³² There is little to inform us about why education might have initially been included as a federal power. Historian Manoly R. Lupul notes that John A. Macdonald, leader of the coalition of government of the Province of Canada along with George E. Cartier, later admitted that he preferred the federal government to be in control of education.³³ In the final agreement, however, control of education was granted to the provinces, subject to certain conditions. Most importantly, the right to separate schools.

The impetus for this compromise came from the minority populations of Canada West and Canada East. In Canada East, the leading spokesperson was Alexander Tilloch Galt, a prominent Member of Parliament for the city of Sherbrooke and its surrounding areas with a significant Anglo-Protestant population. At the Confederation talks of 1864, delegates resolved to guarantee any privileges which Protestants or Catholics possessed in relation to separate schooling at the time when the federal union would go into operation. Feeling that the existing right to dissentient schools in Canada East was not enough, Galt was bent on securing new school legislation in the Parliament of the Province of Canada for Protestants in Canada East that would guarantee them the strongest separate school rights possible prior to entering federal union. When Catholics in Canada West demanded no less, however, his plan faced sudden opposition from Protestant members in Canada West who, already lamenting the gains made by Catholics there, did not want to see the extension of denominational school rights at the expense of the common schools.³⁴

Unable to secure a school bill for Protestants in Canada East, Galt resigned from office. Eager to see Confederation work and realizing he needed support from Protestants in Canada East, Macdonald persuaded Galt to attend the London Conference in 1866 across the Atlantic in

Britain where the terms of union were to be finalized. It was there that section 93 and the famous educational clause of the Canadian constitution were drawn up. While Galt did not get the new school legislation he wanted for Protestants in Canada East prior to Confederation, he did get a more elaborate provision for separate schooling that had been discussed at previous talks. "In and for each Province," section 93 begins, "the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education, subject and according to the following Provisions." Section 93(1), the first provision, being that: "Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union."³⁵ Protestants and Catholics that had been operating separate schools in their colonies at the time of union would be guaranteed the constitutional right to continue to do so in the new provinces. Section 93(2) went on to extend the separate school rights and privileges established by law in Ontario to the dissentient schools in Quebec.

Catholic minorities in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, however, were not protected by 93(2) and, alarmed at not having a legal guarantee to their own schools, began to agitate for such protection. Ultimately, according to Lupul, the London delegates had no desire to antagonize the Maritime legislatures by placing the Catholic minority in those provinces on the same footing as the Protestants of Quebec.³⁶ They did, however, add two additional paragraphs to section 93. Section 93(3) protected the right of minorities in any province with separate schools that existed during the time of union or that was thereafter established by the legislature of their province. The latter point being especially important for minorities in the Maritime Provinces, where separate schools had not yet gained full legal status. Section 93(3) also granted special power to the federal government by allowing minorities to appeal to the Governor General in Council if "any Act or Decision of any Provincial Authority affecting any Right or Privilege of the Protestant or Roman Catholic Minority of the Queen's Subjects in relation to Education." Section 93(4) gave the federal government even more power by allowing the federal parliament to enact remedial legislation should a provincial legislature refuse to comply with any decision arising from an appeal in 93(3).

Thus, despite the Canadian constitution placing education under the power of the provinces, the federal government is, ironically, the guardian of Canada's system of publicly funded separate schooling. Nevertheless, the federal government is only allowed to react to provincial school legislation, and its reactionary power itself is limited to legislation that impacts separate schooling specifically. In the end, not only were proponents of a strong federal government unable to secure education as a federal power, but they were also forced into concessions that created in Canada a labyrinth of administrative jurisdictions over education. Education would be a provincial responsibility, and thus, separate systems of education would exist throughout the new nation. Moreover, within those separate provincial systems of education, provisions to ensure the already existing separate denominational structures of schooling in pre-Confederation Canada were put in place. Finally, provisions were made to allow for further attempts to divide provincial school systems where existing separate denominational structures of schooling were not yet in place. Canadians—divided along linguistic, religious, and ethnic lines—ensured that there would be no one best system of schooling for all.

Educational Crises and the Legacy of Section 93

Section 93 had consequences that the framers of the Canadian constitution must have to some extent foreseen, even if they could not fully anticipate the magnitude of what was to come. The first major educational question in post-Confederation Canada occurred in 1871 in New Brunswick, only four years after union. When in that year the provincial government passed a common schools act, which established a free, tax-supported system throughout New Brunswick, the Catholic minority, upset that the act did not establish denominational schools, invoked section 93 and petitioned the federal government to disallow the act. Part of their argument rested on the notion that Catholic schools had existed by custom in the province, and that, in the Parish School Act of 1858 for the colony of New Brunswick, Catholic rights were recognized by the provincial legislature. Catholic schools, in other words, existed by

right even if not by law. The argument fell on deaf ears, and the federal government refused to intervene. Catholics did not lose any rights that they had by law either before Confederation or that they had acquired by law after Confederation, and, thus, remedial legislation by the federal government under section 93 could not be applied. Nevertheless, in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, Catholic schools continued to operate by convention.

A second major controversy occurred after Manitoba entered Confederation as a new province in 1870. In that year, Section 22 of the Manitoba Act had granted school rights to both Catholics and Protestants in the province.³⁷ The English-speaking population of the province had grown to the point that by 1890 there was a movement to abolish denominational schooling, which, to a great extent, meant abolishing French-language schools. The 1890 Schools Act created a non-sectarian public school system, and while it maintained the right of denominational schools to exist, it did so by pulling government funding from those schools.³⁸ Catholics quickly geared up for a legal battle and pursued the reversal of that legislation through both the courts and appeals to the federal government. The federal government initially refused to act, preferring to see the matter settled through the courts. Manitoba's provincial court supported the government's legislation. On appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, however, that decision was reversed in favor of Manitoba Catholics. On appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London (the highest court for Canadians at the time), however, that decision was then reversed in favor of the Manitoba government. The final option was for the federal government to enact remedial legislation under section 93. Initially, it seemed that Catholics in Manitoba would get their remedial legislation. A bill was introduced by the Conservative federal government in 1896, but parliament was dissolved, and an election was called that year before it could pass.³⁹

The Manitoba Schools Question proved to be a major issue that impacted the federal election of 1896. English Canadians and French Canadians were divided on the issue, with neither side fully confident in the Conservatives to handle the situation well. The liberals, under Wilfrid Laurier, narrowly won the election that year by promising a

compromise solution to the Manitoba Schools Question. They reached that compromise through a deal with the Manitoba government and without having to introduce remedial federal legislation. Catholic teachers could be employed in urban schools with at least forty Catholic students and in rural schools with at least twenty-five. Catholics would also be allowed to offer religious instruction in public schools for a half hour at the end of every day. Catholics, however, lost their state-supported school system. Understandably, the Catholic hierarchy in Canada did not see this as a compromise at all, and they accused Laurier of selling out to the English Protestant majority.⁴⁰

A similar controversy arose in the North-West Territories, an area without provincial status that was ultimately a colony of the federal government. It would later become the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. The 1875 North-West Territories Act made education a local responsibility, but also provided for separate schools in line with the rights enjoyed by Ontario and Quebec religious minorities. Encouraged by developments in Manitoba in the 1890s, however, the English Protestant majority of the territories put forward a school ordinance to establish a system of non-sectarian "national schools." The ordinance made English the official language of instruction in the schools and restricted French to primary grades and only for French-speaking children. In 1901, the territorial government went further by restricting religious instruction to the last half hour of the school day, in line with the spirit of the Manitoba compromise. Separate schools, however, could not be abolished by the territorial assembly. Nevertheless, when Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces in 1905, the educational rights of minorities as they entered Confederation were limited to the ordinances of 1901. French Catholics both in the territories and throughout the rest of Canada were dismayed. Religious minorities were guaranteed separate schools, but not of the type and quality enjoyed in Ontario and Quebec.⁴¹

The Manitoba and North-West Territories Schools Question brought to the fore the question of linguistic minority protection in education, something the framers of 1867 Constitution did not address. The issue would arise with significant repercussions to linguistic minorities in Ontario in 1910. Fearing that the French language posed a threat to

Canadian unity, a movement to eliminate French from the schools emerged in early twentieth-century Ontario. Led initially by English Protestants, Irish Catholics also supported the initiative as they could retain control of the English Catholic schools. In 1912, the Ontario government introduced Regulation 17, which made English the official language of instruction in schools and restricted French to two years of elementary education and a subject of study for one hour a day in other grades. For nearly two decades, French Canadians in Ontario were deprived of education in their own language until the Ontario government agreed to loosen its position. Since denominational schools themselves were not threatened, however, an appeal under section 93 could not be made. The issue, however, brought to the surface the limits of the 1867 compromise in uniting Canadians. Language, more so than religion, was becoming the defining feature of the two groups.⁴²

The Legacy of Section 93 in Canadian Education

Despite decreases in church attendance, fewer numbers of people identifying with any major religion, and the general secularization of Canadian society since the nineteenth century, Canadians and their politicians have shown reluctance to turn away from its divided system of public education and establish a single system for all. It was not until the late twentieth century, in fact, that any real effort to move away from section 93 was made by any of the provinces. In 1997 and 1998, however, two constitutional amendments were made in Quebec and Newfoundland to secularize their school systems. When Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, its schools were organized along a confessional basis which granted separate schools to not only Protestants and Catholics, but also Seventh-day Adventists, Salvationists, and Pentecostals. Because of the protections afforded by way of section 93, Newfoundland required a constitutional amendment when it opted to abolish its system of denominational schooling after a referendum on the matter in 1997. Since that time, the province has run a single, non-denominational, public school system.

Similarly, Quebec began efforts to secularize its school system in the 1980s but could only do so delicately due to its linguistically divided population. Quebec was ultimately able to win support for the secularization of its school system but did so via a compromise with the Protestant school boards. While Quebec's school system would become secular, it would remain divided along two separate structures, only now along linguistic lines. Protestant schools, which were already de facto English-speaking schools, would retain the right to operate separately through the new English-language school boards. Catholic school boards were replaced by French-language school boards which would serve the French-speaking population.⁴³ Uniting the two worlds of Quebec education is seemingly impossible, and the prospect of a single system of education in the province is virtually unimaginable. A divided system that replicates the divided population is the accepted norm.

The injustice of section 93 on non-Catholic and non-Protestant groups has been a recurring theme in Canada's educational history. The compromise to unite a dualistic Canada in 1867 never considered the problems it might create for a pluralistic future. The strict limits to separate schools for Catholics and Protestants set out in section 93 posed challenges to members of other faiths, particularly in Quebec. Whereas in Ontario non-Catholics could attend the non-sectarian public schools, in Quebec parents of all religions had to decide on whether to send their children to Catholic or Protestant schools. The Jewish School Question in Quebec was a particularly prominent matter in the courts after Confederation. Through legal conflict and political compromise, Jewish Quebecers were ultimately able to find a place as "honourary Protestants" within the Protestant school system in the twentieth century but remained victim to the legal reality of section 93 and to the sociopolitical reality of life as a non-Protestant, non-Catholic cultural group.⁴⁴

In Ontario, a number of groups have challenged the moral legitimacy of continuing to fund a separate system of public schooling for one religion alone. The United Nations has even weighed in on the debate, after Arieh Hollis Waldman filed a human rights complaint with the international body. In November 1999, its human rights committee ruled that funding Catholic schools while denying that funding

to other religious schools was discriminatory. It suggested that Ontario either ends its system of separate schooling, or else extends funding to other religions.⁴⁵ The committee gave the Canadian federal government ninety days to respond to its ruling on behalf of the province, but the federal government chose to remain silent. The UN has subsequently reiterated the discriminatory nature of separate schooling in Canada, but it has been to no avail.⁴⁶ The human rights argument has not been able to overpower the impenetrable force of section 93, and Catholics in Canada have time and again successfully defended their constitutional right to operate their own schools.

Perhaps the greatest injustice in Canadian educational history was the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the Confederation debates and from any provision which would have given them the equal right to operate their own schools as well. Instead, section 91 of the constitution placed all matters related to Indigenous peoples, including education, under the firm control of the federal government. The years after 1867 would see this power wielded in disturbing ways that Canadians have only begun to come to terms with. Residential schooling, which began systematically in the late nineteenth century and ended in 1996, saw generations of Indigenous children taken away from their families and placed into government-funded church boarding schools where they were assimilated into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture and stripped of their own identities. The historical exclusion of Indigenous children from the rights and benefits of public schooling afforded to non-Indigenous Canadians and their abhorrent treatment in Canada's residential school system has only recently begun to be addressed.⁴⁷

All of these educational questions and controversies can trace their origins back to a nineteenth-century colonial context. The longevity of the 1867 compromise that was meant to bring the nation together, however, is peculiar given the extent to which religion has been relegated to the margins of Canadian values since that time. Canadians today often boast of their sense of unity in an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic society built through waves of immigration throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet, separate systems of education, whether religious or linguistic, remain a central feature of Canadian education. Canadian children continue to attend schools

where they are systematically separated from other children. Designed to bring the nation together in 1867, the impact of section 93 has arguably done the reverse.

Notes

1. Notable exceptions include Weir, *The Separate School Question in Canada*; Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada*; Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*.
2. Wilson, Stamp, and Audet, eds., *Canadian Education: A History*.
3. Titley and Miller, eds., *Education in Canada: An Interpretation*; Kach et al. eds., *Essays on Canadian Education*.
4. Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling*, 6.
5. *An Act Concerning Schools and Schoolmasters*. Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1766, 6 George III, Cap. 7. Colonial legislatures in British North America were based upon the British model. They consisted of a popular lower house and an aristocratic upper house. The British crown headed each colony and was represented by an imperially appointed governor.
6. *An Act for Encouraging the Establishment of Schools Throughout the Province*. Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1811, 51 George III, Cap. 8.
7. *Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of New-Brunswick From Tuesday the 12th of February, to Thursday the 14th of March, 1793*.
8. *An Act for aiding and encouraging Parish Schools*. Acts of the General Assembly of New Brunswick, 1802, 42 George III, Cap. 6; MacNaughton, *The Development of the Theory and Practice of Education in New Brunswick*, 56–68.
9. *An Act to establish Public Schools in each and every District of this Province*. Statutes of Upper Canada, 1807, 47 George III, Cap. 6; *An Act granting to His Majesty a sum of Money, to be applied to the use of Common Schools throughout this Province, and to provide for the Regulations of said Common Schools*. Statutes of Upper Canada, 1816, 56 George III, Cap. 38.
10. *An Act for the encouragement of Elementary Education*. Statutes of Lower Canada, 1829, 9 George IV, Cap. 46; *An Act to repeal certain Acts therein mentioned, and for the further encouragement of Elementary*

- Schools in the Country parts of the Province*. Statutes of Lower Canada, 1832, 2 William IV, Cap. 26.
11. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report*, vol. 2, 16.
 12. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report*, vol. 2, 39. The full text of the commissioned report on education can be found in vol. 3, Appendix D.
 13. Tröhler "Curriculum history or the educational construction of Europe in the long nineteenth century."
 14. *An Act to repeal certain Acts therein mentioned, and to make further provision for the establishment and maintenance of Common Schools throughout the Province*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1841, 4 and 5 Victoria, Cap. 17.
 15. *An Act for the establishment and maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1843, 7 Victoria, Cap. 29.
 16. *An Act to make better Provision for Elementary Instruction in Lower Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1845, 8 Victoria, Cap. 41; *An Act to repeal certain Enactments therein mentioned, and to make better provision for Elementary Instruction in Lower Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1846, 9 Victoria, Cap. 27.
 17. Philips, *The Development of Education in Canada*, 182. Similar figures for Canada West are given in Gidney and Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education*, General Tables, 324–25.
 18. Wilson, "The Ryerson Years in Canada West," in Wilson, Stamp, Audet, *Canadian Education*, 219.
 19. *An Act to amend the School Law of Lower-Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1849, 12 Victoria Cap. 50.
 20. *An Act to provide for the establishment of a Normal School*, and further to promote Education in Lower Canada. Statutes of the Province of Upper Canada, 1851, 14 and 15 Victoria, Cap. 97.
 21. *An Act to amend the Common School Laws, and further to promote Elementary Education in Lower Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1856, 19 and 20 Victoria, Cap. 14.
 22. *An Act to make better provision for promotion of superior Education and the establishment and support of Normal Schools in Lower Canada and for other purposes*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1856, 19 and 20 Victoria, Cap. 54.
 23. *An Act for the better establishment and maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1846, 9 Victoria, Cap. 20; *An Act for amending the Common School Act of Upper Canada*.

- Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1847, 10 and 11 Victoria, Cap. 19; *An Act for the better establishment and maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1850, 13 and 15 Victoria, Cap. 48.
24. Wilson, "The Ryerson Years in Canada West," in Wilson, Stamp, Audet, *Canadian Education*, 234.
 25. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West*.
 26. *An Act supplementary to the Common School Act for Upper Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1852/3, 16 Victoria, Cap. 185.
 27. *An Act to amend the laws relating to Separate Schools in Upper Canada*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1854/5, 16 Victoria, Cap. 131.
 28. *An Act to restore to Roman Catholics in Upper Canada certain rights in respect to Separate Schools*. Statutes of the Province of Canada, 1863, 26 Victoria, Cap. 5.
 29. Alexander Forrester, Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia, 1864, quoted in Hamilton, "Society and Schools in Nova Scotia," in Wilson, Stamp, Audet, *Canadian Education*, 104.
 30. *An Act relating to Parish Schools*. Acts of the General Assembly of New Brunswick, 1858, 21 Victoria, Cap. 9.
 31. Charles Tupper, Debates of the House of Commons, 1896, column 2406; quoted in Audet, "Education in Canada East and Quebec," in Wilson, Stamp, Audet, *Canadian Education*, 168.
 32. Wallner, *Learning to School*, 120; Lupul, "Educational Crisis," in Wilson, Stamp, and Audet, *Canadian Education*, 267.
 33. Lupul, "Educational Crisis," 267.
 34. *Ibid.*, 268–69.
 35. British North America Act, 1867.
 36. Lupul, "Educational Crisis," 269.
 37. *An Act to amend and continue the Act 32 and 33 Victoria, Chapter 3; and to establish and provide for the Government of the Province of Manitoba*. Statutes of Canada, 1870, 33 Victoria Cap. 3.
 38. *An Act respecting Public Schools, 1890*. Revised Statutes of Manitoba, Legislature of Manitoba, To and including those of 1891, vol. II., Cap. 127.
 39. See Cruncian, *Priests and Politicians*.
 40. See Russell, *The Canadian Crucible*.
 41. See Lupul, *The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question*.
 42. See Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, and Cecillon, *Prayers, Petitions, and Protests*.

43. See Freeland, “Educational Reform and the English Schools of Québec,” 243–60.
44. See Fraser, “*Honorary Protestants*,” and MacLeod and Poutanen, *A Meeting of the People*.
45. United Nations Human Rights Committee, *Arieh Hollis Waldman v. Canada*. Communication No. 694/1996, Doc. No. CCPR/C/76/D/694/1996, 5 November 1999.
46. United Nations Human Rights Committee. *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee*. Doc. No. CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5, 20 April 2006.
47. In 2008, the Canadian government created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed to document and bring to light the traumatic history of residential schooling in the country. See <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>. Accessed 19 November 2018.

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13

The Elementary Education Act of 1870: Landmark or Transition?

David Mitch

The British Parliament became increasingly involved in the provision of elementary education over the course of the nineteenth century. Its purview in educational affairs included not only England and Wales, but also Scotland, Ireland and on occasion various of its colonial realms. Wales generally shared in arrangements with England but not necessarily with a spirit of national unity. The outbreak of the Rebecca Riots in Wales in the early 1840s led to the appointment of the 1847 Commission on Education in Wales. Anglicans who could not speak Welsh led this commission. The generally negative assessment of its report about the poor state of Welsh education and of Welsh morals more generally led defenders of Welsh cultural traditions to refer to activities of the Commission as the “Treachery of the Blue books for its activities.”¹

For Ireland, an entirely separate educational system was set in place in conjunction with local denominational authorities. While Parliament appropriated funds to support Irish educational establishments, much

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_13

of the authority for supervising Irish educational affairs rested with those directly involved in governance of Ireland.² Similarly, Parliament appropriated on occasion funds in support of elementary schooling for various of its colonial realms, but the actual development of provision and administration of schooling tended to rest with the colonial governments and administrators.³ The case of Scotland is more complex. At the end of the seventeenth century, Scotland had already established provision for a school in each of its parishes, funded out of local taxes on land. Thus, at an early stage, Scotland was able to finesse the issue of denominational contention for control over schools as a barrier to using land taxation to fund schools that plagued England up until its Education Act of 1870. But between the 1830s and 1869, many of the same arrangements for state supervision of schooling in England were applied in Scotland as well. However, in 1872, Parliament passed a separate Education Act for Scotland.⁴

Thus, from a nation-building perspective, the educational activities of the British Parliament and the British state concerned multiple nations during the nineteenth century, not just that of England. In this chapter, which deals with the Education Act of 1870, I will however focus on the creation of this act in the context of England and Wales, and the act's consequences in this regard.

The Education Act of 1870

With the passage of the Education Act of 1870, the British Parliament signaled its firm commitment to providing universal access to primary schooling throughout England and Wales. Admittedly, the Education Act of 1870, “A Bill to Provide for public Elementary Education in England and Wales,” was in many ways only a way station in the formation of a national system of primary education in England. Government funding and supervision of schooling had commenced as early as the 1830s and government provisions for school inspection, teacher training and certification were in place by the early 1840s.⁵ And even prior to government involvement, religious and philanthropic associations had been active at a national scale in building and operating primary

schools since at least the early nineteenth century, and by some accounts since the early eighteenth century.⁶ Furthermore, much remained to be done to insure universal elementary schooling after 1870, including making compulsory schooling universal (1880) and eliminating fees for primary schooling (1893).

Although the Education Act of 1870 did not initiate government involvement in English elementary education, it was distinctive and novel because it was an actual act of parliament. Already in 1833, the Parliament had introduced on an annual basis funds to support the building of schools for the poorer classes. However, these funds were initially distributed by the Treasury directly to groups promoting schools at the local level with the advice of the two major voluntary schooling organizations, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (an Anglican organization) and the British and Foreign School Society (formally non-denominational but with an affinity for dissenting religious groups). This arrangement not only limited the control that the government had over the distribution of these funds but also impeded any control over how school buildings were constructed and maintained, and the content and quality of instruction.

Previously, members of Parliament who wanted to promote the growth of popular education had chosen indirect, executive measures rather than formal acts of parliament in order to minimize confrontations between the various denominational groups with strong vested interests in the provision of popular schooling. Thus, to address problems of parliamentary control over school provision, the Privy Council in 1839 created the Committee of Council on Education to administer the parliamentary grants.⁷ The Privy Council chose this less public approach to creating a body with supervisory powers over elementary schooling in order to avoid the interdenominational squabbling between Anglicans and non-conformists that an act of parliament might spur. In principle, the Privy Council was and still is an advisory body to the Monarch. In practice, the Privy Council was a means for the ministers of the government of the day to make executive decisions which are then formally announced in the name of the Queen.⁸

The members of the Committee of Council on Education were primarily cabinet ministers. However, the Committee did have a permanent secretary and much of the impetus for expansion of the scope of the Committee stemmed from the efforts of the first two secretaries, Sir James Phillips Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth), who served from 1839 to 1847, and R.W. Lingens who served from 1847 to 1867.⁹

The task initially assigned to the Committee by the Order in Council was “to superintend the application of any sums voted by Parliament for the purpose of promoting public education.” However, the scope of what was entailed by “superintendence” became increasingly expansive including increasing provision of funds for operating schools, for teacher training and certification, and for school inspection. The latter task was an especially sensitive one, as the Church of England and its affiliated religious society, the National Society insisted on having a say in who could be appointed to inspect schools associated with the Anglican Church, and other denominational groups involved in the provision of mass elementary schooling insisted on similar involvement.¹⁰ Thus, while parliamentary expenditure on elementary education had grown from £30,000 in 1839 to £369,000 in 1855 and £836,920 in 1859, actual control over schooling by the British government was limited by the presence of powerful religious denominational forces in Parliament limiting the influence of the Committee of Council on Education.¹¹

There is a case to be made that the true landmark educational act establishing a national education system in England was the Balfour-Morant Act of 1902. The 1902 Education Act provided for local tax funding of all types of elementary schools. The act also resulted in the elimination of some 2568 school boards along with some 14,238 bodies of Voluntary School Managers, who had previously had direct access to national government, and replaced these with 328 Local Education Authorities. The 1902 Education Act also allowed for rate-funding (out of local property taxes) for denominationally affiliated voluntary schools as well as for the secular successors to Board Schools. Finally, it allowed for the provision of secondary schooling from government funding.¹² In the case of England, Galor and Moav therefore settled on the

Balfour-Morant Act as the key turning point with the Education Act of 1870 as just a way station.¹³

Moreover, the development of a universal system of elementary schooling was not just a matter of one act of parliament. Not only did the Education Act of 1870 build on existing legislation, it was also improved by numerous other pieces of parliamentary legislation. The development of a system of primary schooling involved the development of a substantial local as well as national apparatus for the building and operation of schools. This involved numerous political and educational actors at not only the national level but also at the local and regional level as part of what can be loosely be called civil society. Smelser summarizes the process culminating in the Education Act of 1870, in his suggestively titled book *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, as one exhibiting the characteristic English trait of “muddling through.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, there is a compelling argument to be made that it was with the 1870 act, that England became clearly committed to a national system of primary schooling. Perhaps most fundamentally, the act committed the nation to make sure that its entire school-aged population had access to elementary schools through its plan of “filling in the gaps,” that is identifying through surveys in which locales school provision was inadequate and then providing for a mechanism for the establishment of school boards to build and operate these schools funded out of local property taxes. Norman Morris formulated the role of the 1870 act like this: “The year 1870 is in many ways the 1066 of English education. It lurks in the memory as both a climax and a new beginning.”¹⁵

Content of the Education Act of 1870

Debate over the Education Act of 1870 lasted from February into early August of 1870. The act itself runs some 40 pages consisting of 100 clauses. The act did not create a single national school system but instead, as mentioned above, was intended to ensure universal access to primary schooling. Thus, its vital fifth paragraph stated that “[t]here shall be provided for every school district a sufficient amount of

accommodation in public elementary schools [...] available for all the children resident in such a district for whose elementary education efficient and suitable provision is not otherwise made.”

This meant that the act provided for an inquiry to be conducted into the amount of public school accommodation required for adequate provision in each school district in comparison with current actual provision. The act itself did not specify the ages appropriate for school attendance nor otherwise specify criteria for determining adequate provision.¹⁶ Areas found to be deficient in provision of schooling were given up to six months to allow for voluntary organizations to build additional schools to remedy such deficiencies. Localities had the option initially whether due to deficiency or by preference to establish school boards who would be responsible for building and then operating schools to be funded in part out of local property taxes. However, in areas in which deficiencies in provision were found, the department of education could mandate establishment of a school board, even in the absence of local initiative to do so.

The act also authorized the Education Department to declare a school board to be in default if a board failed to provide adequate schooling for its district, or if it failed to conduct schools in accord with regulations required by the act. Much of the act itself contains details as to how these boards would be established and how elections would occur. A key point of contention was whether or not local rates could be used to fund voluntary schools—the ultimate decision was no.

The resultant national system clearly involved important elements of both centralization and decentralization. The system was centralized in that a national Education Department ensured that each district throughout the country was adequately provided with elementary schooling and issued regulations regarding school facilities and school operation. However, the system was decentralized in that much of the funding for schools came from and was administered by local authorities including local philanthropies, religious groups, and local school boards.

A central aim of Edward William Forster and Robert Lowe, key architects of the act, was the resolution of long-standing acrimonious disputes between Anglican and non-conformist religious

groups for control of elementary schools. They intended the act to be neutral with respect to religious denominations. The act stated that voluntary schools could not require school children to attend Sunday schools or church services of any particular denomination. In addition, any instruction or services in religion in such schools were required to be offered either at the beginning or end of the school day to facilitate children being exempted from such activities if not consistent with their faith. Another key element to the compromise behind the act was the increase in central government funding to voluntary schools to compensate for being subject to possible board school competition.

Although the act was intended to raise school enrollments, it did not enact compulsory schooling for all of England and Wales. Instead, the act allowed school boards and school attendance areas at their individual discretion to pass by-laws requiring school attendance for children above the age of five and below the age of 12 years. There were, however, a wide range of exceptions from such by-laws created by school boards, including sickness or a home to school distance of more than 3 miles. Thus, compulsory schooling was introduced as an option subject to local initiative rather than as a national requirement in order to comply with rural interests that were opposed to compulsory schooling mandates.

The act itself did not directly change the curriculum or teacher qualifications. To qualify as a recognized school under the act, the school had to meet already established qualifications for a parliamentary grant under the Revised Code of 1861. The Revised Code specified that to receive a parliamentary grant, a school had to allow inspectors to examine students in mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic. And the head teacher had to be certified by either passing an internal examination at the end of a two-year training college course or by passing an external examination given to already practicing teachers. A grant-receiving school also had to commit to paying a certified teacher from its own funds at least double the direct government grants for the teacher's salary. This implied a minimum salary for a male certificated teacher of between £30 and £90 and for a female certificated teacher of between £20 and £60.¹⁷

The Historiography of the Education Act of 1870

There is a long historiography on the Education Act of 1870 going back to its passing. One major strand in interpreting the significance of the act is that it provided a compromise or truce point between competing factions involved in the provision of elementary schools. On the one side, dissenting and secular forces had been pushing for schools with no religious elements in their curriculum and funded out of local property taxation. This group was represented by a national pressure group lobbying Parliament called the National Education League. On the other side were those who feared that using property taxes to fund schools would advantage schools run by non-Anglicans and that such a funding scheme would challenge the Anglican superiority in educational provision throughout much of the country.

Some commentators have viewed the Education Act of 1870 as a victory for the Anglican side. In its initial version offered by W.E. Forster, the act enabled school boards at their discretion to provide funding for Anglican supported schools. This drew strong opposition from the National Education League. In order to salvage the act, Lowe, current Chancellor of the Exchequer and previous Vice President of the Committee on Council on Education, proposed a compromise by which only board schools could rely on property taxes for funding while the national subsidy per school child provided by Parliament to all schools would increase. Thus, church funded schools got more funds from central government sources as a way of helping them compete with the funding Board schools were to receive from local sources. Commentators have viewed this as a better bargain than Anglican forces could have anticipated given the perceived inadequacies of the current voluntary system, especially in provision in major industrial urban areas.

While there were clear elements of compromise and legislative skill by both Forster and Lowe in securing final passage of the act, the religious and political affiliations of those on both sides of the struggle for passage of the act were mixed. It is thus problematic to associate the

act narrowly with one religious denomination or political party. Forster himself had mixed allegiances, including liberal party affiliations and Quaker origins, but also Anglican connections.¹⁸

However, the historiography on the act has also pointed to more general interests at work behind the act than just partisan disputes about control over religious content of the curriculum. One long-standing set of issues concerns the relationship between the passage of the Education Act of 1870 and the Voting Reform Act of 1867. Lowe is often quoted as observing around this time that education must be improved and extended as a way of “educating our masters.”¹⁹ One set of issues of interpretation is whether the aim was simply to control new working-class voters, or instead, whether the 1870 act can be interpreted as reflecting redistributive sentiments of the expanded electorate toward extending and improving school for the working classes because they saw it in their interests to do so. Brian Simon emphasized the role of trade unions and their interests in the act.²⁰ Also, this line of interpretation would fit in with Peter Lindert’s emphasis on the role of extending the franchise in the spread of mass schooling internationally.²¹

There are also alternative interpretations of Lowe’s views on this, and what he meant by the expression “educating our masters.” It is not clear how strong an impetus of the Voting Reform Act of 1867 was, or whether timing was more than coincidental. There were numerous previous failed education acts over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, yet the impetus seems to have been moving in that direction irrespective of franchise changes. The Voting Reform Act itself, while it roughly doubled the size of the electorate, still primarily extended the franchise to more skilled working-class males. One still had to have enough property to be a rate payer to vote under this act. The relevant working-class group was quite likely already sending their children to school. Thus, a purely redistributive interpretation of the consequences of franchise extension is probably not appropriate.²²

The historical sociologist, Andy Green, highlighted the role of Marxist and related class-based interpretations of what many historians have viewed as England’s late and half-hearted efforts to put in place

a national system of education. From Green's perspective, the question is why England, compared with Prussia and France, was so late and sluggish to establish an educational system.²³ One class-based strand of interpretation attributes both the delay and the act itself to the persistent influence of landed interests on English affairs. By this account, rural landed interests had the most demand for child labor in farming and were most vested in maintaining the existing voluntary system of elementary school provision. Green attributes this view to Perry Anderson though the work in question is not specifically on education. Those critical of this perspective argue that it overstates the continued influence of landed interests in the later nineteenth century.²⁴

Nevertheless, one can clearly identify the presence of landed interests in both the series of compromises that resulted in the act itself as well as in the subsequent evolution of the educational system in England including the 1902 Balfour-Morant Act. Both the effort to retain basic elements of the voluntary provision of schooling, and the limited commitment to compulsory schooling can be seen as persistent influences of landed interests in the Education Act of 1870.²⁵ Moreover, the enabling of rate aided support for voluntary schools along with the abolition of school boards can be seen as reflecting the influence of landed interests as well.

Alternatively, Eric Hobsbawm and Green argued that the delay in establishing a national education act and the half-hearted nature of it reflects the lack of commitment of rising bourgeois and manufacturing interests to social reform.²⁶ Green argues that even the radical, Benthamite social reformers in England "were extremely ambivalent about state involvement in education."²⁷ He claims that these reformers appealed abstractly to the ability of education to promote happiness and moral virtue or to prevent crime. However, they failed to develop an effective set of political alliances for the promotion of government financing and operation of schools.

Green also attributes the English delay to a "traditional liberal hostility towards the state" which he sees as having origins in "gentry capitalism" with concerns for protecting both individual and local voluntary efforts as well as gentry property rights against intrusions of a centralized authority.²⁸

Nation-Building Circa 1870

William Edward Forster, the author of the Education Act of 1870, and others at the time noted England's deficiency relative to other nations in the provision of popular elementary schooling. This was seen not only as one factor in England losing its competitive economic edge but also as a more general failing to provide what was coming to seem as a prerequisite for a modern nation.

Appealing to a motive of nation-building may overstate the sense of agency that those pushing for a national education system in England either felt or were able to actually exercise. However, international comparisons and a sense of English educational deficiency relative to either the USA or Germany did figure prominently in the parliamentary debate and deliberation over the Education Act of 1870. Thus, W.V. Harcourt noted in Parliament on July 7, 1870, that the expenditure of the comparatively much smaller state of Massachusetts in North America was spending more on schooling than the entire British Empire at this time. Harcourt saw this as a problem, Armytage argues, since education for Harcourt "was as national a need as the army or the navy." Armytage also notes Harcourt's observation that England was expending millions of pounds on defense from a hypothetical invasion while allowing a "hostile force of ignorance and vice" to fester in towns and villages throughout the country.²⁹

The link between education and nation-building was also evident in the works of Lord Morley. In his *Struggle for National Education*, Morley appealed directly to military arguments for spread of popular education: "The triumphant North in America was the land of the common school. The victory of the Prussians over Austrians at Sadowa in 1866 was called the victory of the elementary school teacher."³⁰ A similar reference to national strength was made by W.E. Forster. Toward the end of the peroration of his speech to parliament, introducing the Education Act of 1870 to the House of Commons, he offered what could be interpreted as a nation-building or at least preservation of international standing argument for the provision of mass schooling:

Upon this speedy provision of education depends also national power. Civilised communities throughout the world are massing themselves together, each mass being measured by its force; and if we are to hold our own position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world we must make up the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual.³¹

Forster also seems to have believed that providing access to elementary education was a national not just a local responsibility. A number of historical accounts of the Education Act of 1870 argue that an investigation into the educational conditions of the four large industrial cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham revealed deficiencies in schooling provision and school attendance that provided much of the immediate impetus to parliamentary action. Indeed, Forster himself in introducing the act states “That report [the one just mentioned] I have reason to believe will abundantly confirm my statement that we cannot depend upon the unaided and uninspected school.”³² Such quotes certainly support the view that the Education Act of 1870 was based on an idea of a national responsibility for providing universal access to schooling and an expectation of universal enrollment.

Nevertheless, there also seem to have been other clear motives than nation-building as such. Introducing the act, Forster’s peroration also mentioned industrial prosperity as at stake with the risk of England losing international competitiveness if it did not develop a more educated and hence more skilled workforce. Nation-building arguments have appealed to the pressure of Germany and the USA as rivals for international industrial supremacy as an important factor in resulting in the Education Act of 1870.³³ Forster also alluded to the recent extension of the franchise to working-class voters in his peroration. He argued that “now that we have given them [“the people”] political power we must not wait any longer to give them education. There are questions demanding answers, problems which must be solved, which ignorant constituencies are ill-fitted to solve.” And at the very end of his peroration, Forster appealed to education as an antidote to crime and misery.³⁴

Bringing the State Back In

Rather than just a general nation-building rationale, a more fruitful framework for making sense of the Education Act of 1870 may be that proposed by Theda Skocpol in her influential essay “Bringing the State Back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research.”³⁵ In that essay, she argues for considering the state as having autonomy from the broader society and examining the state as an actor independent of societal interests. In the case of the Education Act of 1870, one can identify a number of state-related actors who arguably had some degree of autonomy from other societal interests. Forster and Lowe were key to developing the Education Act of 1870 as a viable compromise.³⁶ Moreover, the process of passing the act and promulgating it involved substantial engagement with local and regional community leaders both associated with the existing voluntary system and the system of school boards that the act brought about as a supplement. The act also saw the substantial expansion of the national bureaucracy associated with education.³⁷ Gosden documents that the staff of the Education Department central office, excluding the roving inspectors, rose from 56 in 1857–1858 to 509 in 1899.³⁸

Norman Morris emphasized that a key contribution of the act was the creation of a second system of schooling run by school boards to augment the existing voluntary system. Norman argued that it was politically feasible to fund non-denominational schools run by the new School Boards out of local property taxes, whereas this had not been feasible for existing schools run by Anglican and non-conformist groups because of disputes about the use of local government funds for either type of denominational school. Thus, according to Morris, the act made it politically feasible for the first time in England to use local property taxes (also known as the rates) to fund elementary schools of any sort.³⁹ He notes that this was a quite late stage addition to the act at the initiative of Chancellor of the Exchequer Lowe. According to Lowe, the use of the rates was required to fill in gaps of the existing school system and to fund board schools. Lowe realized that there would be considerable political difficulties in use of the rates to fund voluntary

schools as well as board schools, and, indeed, Sylvester has noted the difficulties this would entail from Lowe's secular University of London seat would put him in electoral jeopardy.⁴⁰ Sylvester notes that the value of the rating system for Lowe was that "payment and control would go together."⁴¹ In a memo to Gladstone, Lowe argued that by increasing the Privy Council grant to voluntary schools by one-half, local ratepayers would be relieved of the burden of funding such schools while the local school boards would be circumscribed from managing these schools.⁴²

By lowering the national financial burden through use of rates to fund board schools, while also conciliating voluntary schools with a higher level of parliamentary grant support, Lowe was able to craft a suitable compromise that made the rate option feasible. It was precisely addressing such details that made the act effective. The handling of such issues also indicates a core characteristic of the act of 1870. Instead of being the expression of the will of a specific social group, the act was an exercise in political agency and compromise involving a wide range of national and local level interests.

Consequences of the School Act

McCallum argued that with the Education Act of 1870, the English State assumed responsibility for educating its children. As evident from above, the act provided areas found to be without adequate elementary schools with school boards, with the local ratepayers electing the members of the boards. These boards would then be responsible for the construction and operation of these schools using funds from local rates.⁴³

One of the immediate consequences of the act was a surge of school construction by voluntary schooling groups during the six-month window allowed for parliamentary funding for such construction. In the years prior to the act, applications for school building grants to the Education Department had averaged around 150 per year. In the period between passage of the act in August of 1870 and the cutoff for receipt of applications for further school building on December 31, 1870, some 3342 applications were submitted from which 1633 grants were

awarded resulting in the provision of over 280,000 additional school places with a cost to voluntary subscribers of £1,348,000.⁴⁴ Many districts were thus able to avoid the establishment of school boards.

The act of 1870 also resulted in new school boards. During 1871, some 288 school boards were formed. By March 31, 1876, some 1550 school boards had been established. Of these some 663 or 43% of the total were formed as a result of compulsion by the Education Department due to perceived local deficiencies. By April of 1895, some 2470 school boards had been formed of which 1065 or 43% were due to compulsion by the Education Department.

The act of 1870 was also followed by an increase in the number of schools. Between 1870 and 1880, the number of inspected elementary schools in England and Wales more than doubled from 8281 to 17,614. Over the same period, the number of scholars on school registers on inspected schools doubled from under two million to almost four million. The total number of certificated, assistant, and pupil teachers rose from 28,341 to 71,202, and the Education Department grants rose from £894,561 to £2,487,667.⁴⁵

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 provide further evidence on the impact of the Education Act of 1870 on a variety of dimensions including trends in school attendance, enrollment by age, the improvement in enrollment for school children in higher standards relative to those in lower standards, school expenditure and income, and numbers of teachers. While correlation is not causation, the marked acceleration in trends

Table 13.1 Numbers of children in average attendance in England and Wales, 1870–1895

Year	Board	All voluntary	Church of England	Roman Catholic	Wesleyan	British
1870		1,152,389	844,334	66,066		
1875	227,285	1,609,895	1,175,289	106,426		
1880	769,252	1,981,664	1,471,615	145,629	121,408	243,012
1885	1,187,455	2,183,870	1,631,763	172,849	128,567	250,691
1890	1,457,358	2,260,559	1,680,596	193,285	131,805	254,873
1895	1,879,218	2,445,812	1,850,545	230,392	129,724	235,151

Source Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870–1895*, 350, Table 1

Table 13.2 Trends in numbers of teachers in England and Wales, 1860–1895

Year	Certificated teachers	Pupil teachers
1860	6683	13,237
1865	10,423	9356
1869	13,263	12,842
1870	13,729	14,612
1871	14,446	18,166
1872	16,417	21,738
1873	18,780	25,020
1874	21,203	27,216
1875	23,653	29,245
1880	41,426	32,128
1890	73,533	31,162
1895	92,580	34,003

Source Carpentier, *Système Educatif et performances économiques*, 258–59

observable immediately after 1870 in a number but by no means all of the dimensions considered is suggestive of a strong impact.

Who Was Served by the Act?

Forster's intent with the act of 1870 was to reach out to the lower urban classes in major cities which investigations had revealed were without access to schools. These groups came to be called the residuum. Much of the promulgation of the act did come to center on compulsory schooling and dealing with the residuum. However, on grounds that a rising tide lifts all ships, arguably more respectable elements of the working classes benefited as well by the increased expenditure per child and improvements in teacher qualifications associated with the act's promulgation.

This purpose of the act was, however, not undisputed. Lowe, a key player in formulation of the act, rather saw the act as aimed at the more respectable, artisanal elements of the working classes. He did not see it as aimed at sopping up the ragamuffins he saw clogging the streets of major cities. Marcham observes of Lowe that he did not favor compulsory school attendance provisions and that he thought that "destitute children of the great towns" should be dealt with by the police,

poor-relief authorities and private philanthropy rather than through public elementary schooling.⁴⁶

Twentieth-century historians and social scientists have also made assessments of which social groups in England and Wales the act intended to target. Sturt and Smelser have noted that the Education Act of 1870 provided for “Public Elementary Education” in contrast with preceding attempts in the mid- to late 1860s which provided for “education for the poor” such as those introduced by Bruce.⁴⁷ This is suggestive of the more comprehensive view of the act in terms of the population it was to serve compared with even recently previous efforts. Insofar as this was the vision of the act’s key author, Forster, it appears to have differed from other key players, Lowe, in particular.

That the act only enabled rather than mandated compulsory schooling attendance provisions at the local level also suggests ambivalence about the committed reach of the act. As has already been noted, landed interests had major reservations about the act since they were particularly opposed to mandated universal compulsory schooling requirements. In addition, concerns were raised that compulsory schooling measures constituted an “attack on long-cherished notions not only of the duty and responsibility of the parent toward the child, but of his complete authority over him, the child being more of an adjunct or possession of the parent rather than an individual in his own right.”⁴⁸ The *Edinburgh Review* stated in 1874 that direct compulsion constituted “the principle of direct interference with individual liberty and parental authority.”⁴⁹

In the debate on the 1870 Education Act, John Walter, Member of Parliament (MP) for Berkshire, stated that while open to “permissive compulsion” he opposed universal direct compulsion because any gain from the limited number of children brought into schools due to it would be offset by the weakened sense of duty most parents would feel toward their children. And. Smith, MP for Westminster, stated that the working men in his district found it an affront to their dignity to be compelled to send their children to school simply on account of some little ragamuffins running about the streets.⁵⁰

In 1880, England was to adopt universal compulsory schooling and ultimately there were active efforts to get ragamuffin children out of the

streets. But at the time of 1870 Education Act, views were more ambivalent on whether public elementary schooling also was to encompass this segment of the population.

Complexities of Establishing Elementary Schools

The Education Act of 1870 can be credited with leveraging the onset of universal schooling and universal adult literacy in England by 1900. It provided for universal access to schools and laid the foundation for compulsory school attendance legislation. Establishing central government supervision of school provision can, on the one hand, be interpreted as a concession by landed and church-related interests. On the other hand, it successfully preserved the tradition of voluntary and church-based provision of schooling so central to landed groups and the established church.

There were aspects of preserving England's relative national standing that provided impetus to the act and to that degree, elements of nation-building. Nevertheless, the act is properly seen as primarily an exercise in political compromise. Both in its crafting and passage, and in its implementation, the act should be seen as reflecting the agency of politicians, bureaucrats, and civil society more generally. At the same time, the act should be seen as capturing the balance of social forces in England at this time regarding how elementary schooling should be provided. The framework that the act provided was to persist for over 30 years until the Balfour-Morant Act. And even though then superseded, the Balfour-Morant Act itself, at least partly, reflected the persistence of the forces of voluntary tradition that had been so crucial when formulating the Education Act of 1870.

That the Education Act of 1870 was issued just three years after the major franchise reform of 1867 is probably more coincidence or at least correlation rather than a direct response of Parliament to "educating its new masters." As noted above, similar legislation had been introduced into Parliament a decade or more prior to 1867 and the social group acquiring the franchise in 1867 probably already had access to elementary schooling while the group newly acquiring such access was not to

obtain the franchise until subsequent franchise reforms. Many of the major policy developments that created a system of national elementary education occurred due to the executive action of the Committee of Council on Education and reflected the major divisions within Parliament regarding how such a system should develop. Furthermore, some parliamentary attention was given over the course of the nineteenth century not only to schooling in England and Wales but also in Scotland and Ireland and on occasion in Britain's colonial possessions.

Notes

1. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 159–76. Publications of Parliamentary commissions were frequently called Blue Books in reference to their blue paper covers.
2. Balfour, *The Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland*, 80–119; Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 195–231.
3. Bacchus, *Education as and for Legitimacy*; Johnson, *Brief History of Canadian Education*, 57, 118; Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, 23–39.
4. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity*, 103–9; Balfour, *Educational Systems of Britain and Ireland*, 129–48; Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 231–53.
5. Gosden, *Development of Educational Administration*.
6. Jones, *Charity School Movement*.
7. Gosden, *Development of Educational Administration*; Stephens, "Introduction."
8. Everett, "Privy Council."
9. Gosden, *Development of Educational Administration*, 32–41.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 6, 13.
12. Lowndes, *Silent Social Revolution*, 57–58.
13. Galor, *Unified Growth Theory*, 34; Galor and Moav, "From Physical Capital to Human Capital Accumulation."
14. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 369.
15. Morris, "1870: The Rating Option," 23.
16. See Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London*, 20–22 for further detail on this point.

17. See Tropp, *School Teachers*, 19.
18. See Haywood, "M.P.'s and the 1870 Education Act" for an account of the parliamentary maneuvers employed by Forster and Lowe and of the religious and political affiliations of M.P.'s who debated the passage of the act. See Sturt, *Education of the People*, 300–5 for more on Forster's views and influence.
19. See Marcham, "Educating Our Masters."
20. See Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*.
21. See Lindert, *Growing Public*.
22. See Lowe, *Primary and Classical Education*; Marcham, "The Myth of Benthamism"; Marcham, "Educating Our Masters." For the source of actual Lowe quote see Simon *Studies in the History of Education*, 354, n. 2.
23. See Green, *Education and State Formation*.
24. See E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English"; Richard Johnson, "Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson and English Social Development."
25. Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education*, 115–25. Sutherland mentions the resistance of rural, landed interests to universal compulsory schooling.
26. See Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*; Green, *Education and State Formation*.
27. See Green, *Education and State Formation*, 264.
28. *Ibid.*, 263.
29. See Armytage, "1870 Education Act," 126–27.
30. Cited in Sturt, *Education of the People*, 299.
31. See Stanyer, "Verbatim Report," 18.
32. *Ibid.*, 7.
33. See Ramirez and Boli, "On the Union of States and Schools," 191.
34. Both Forster quotes can be found in Stanyer, "Verbatim Report," 18.
35. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In."
36. See Sylvester, "Robert Lowe and the 1870 Education Act."
37. See Bishop, *Rise of a Central Authority for English Education*.
38. Gosden, *Development of Educational Administration*, 29–30.
39. Morris, "1870: The Rating Option."
40. Sylvester, "Robert Lowe and the 1870 Education Act."
41. *Ibid.*, 20.
42. Cited in *ibid.*, 21.
43. McCallum, "Supplementary Section," in Halevy, *History of the English People*, vol. 4, 447.

44. Murphy, *Education Act of 1870*, 68.
45. Bishop, *Rise of a Central Authority*, 101.
46. Marcham, "Educating Our Masters," 86.
47. Sturt, *Education of the People*, 303; Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 136–43.
48. Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education*, 123.
49. Cited in *ibid.*, 123.
50. Cited in *ibid.*, 122.

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14

“Hidden” Governance or Counterfactual Case? The US Failure to Pass a National Education Act, 1870–1940

Nancy Beadie

Comparative history highlights the exceptionally decentralized structure of education authority in the USA. As contrasted with most nations of Europe, Asia, and Latin America, the US administers virtually every aspect of curriculum policy, accreditation, certification, and hiring at state and local rather than national levels. Even as compared with other countries with federated governmental structures, such as Canada, US policy-making in education is characterized by exceptionally low levels of standardization, articulation, and coordination both within and between provincial state systems.¹ Why is that?

In the 1870s and 1880s, the USA came very close to establishing a truly national education system. Between 1870 and 1890, Congress considered more than twenty bills that would have established federal funding and oversight of common education in US states and territories. The most nearly successful of these, known as the Blair Bill, was voted on five times between 1882 and 1890. Despite a major campaign of data collection, constituency mobilization, and coordinated

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_14

argument, however, the effort ultimately failed. Meanwhile, as Congress knew, comparable national acts were successfully adopted by many other nations during the same period. What were the consequences of the failure to establish such a system in the USA?

This chapter assesses the causes and consequences of US failure to pass a national education act in the period from 1870 to 1940. More broadly, it aims to restore a sense of historical contingency to that eventuality by resisting presumptions of historical “inevitability” on two fronts. On the one hand, much historical scholarship presumes that the absence of national authority in education was effectively congenital in the USA, a condition embedded in the nation’s constitutional framework that no amount of mobilized political interest or rational policy-making could ever amend or transcend. By contrast, this chapter argues that the establishment of a national education system was a real and viable option in the 1870s and 1880s. Accordingly, its failure is an outcome to be explained rather than simply presumed. On the other hand, much comparative historical scholarship assumes the establishment of national education systems as normative, inextricably bound up with the project of forging the modern nation-state. In this chapter, by contrast, I argue that though the imperative of national integration may have been common across many states, the choice of means was not. The USA duly considered the model of national education as a means of integration but rejected that option. That decision has had real consequences that in some ways are still being realized.

To chart this history, the present chapter begins with a brief overview of the conditions of mass education in the provincial states of the US circa 1870. It then explains the “window of opportunity” for passage of a national education act that opened in the twenty-year period following the Civil War (1861–1865), from 1870 to 1890. Following a description of the most nearly successful federal legislation of the 1880s, the essay concludes with an analysis of the factors that shaped the contingencies of passage and key consequences of the act’s defeat.

An underlying question throughout the analysis is how far a national education system can be said to have been established in the USA in this period *despite* the absence of formal structures of governance, funding, and supervision at the federal level. Some scholars of political and

policy history have highlighted “hidden” structures of the nation-state in the USA in the nineteenth century.² This literature, which ranges across policy areas, from water rights to welfare, argues that the national government put into place a set of structural conditions that enabled provincial state governments and a variety of non-governmental organizations to undertake policies that were often national in scope even when not centrally directed by the federal government. For the most part, scholars working in this tradition have ignored education as a domain of analysis, especially for the period before 1890.³ Yet education as a policy domain in many ways exemplifies this notion of “hidden” national governance.

At the same time, as compared with other countries, the USA offers something of a counterfactual case. Scholars of comparative economic history and public finance emphasize the importance of central state funding in effecting both the expansion of mass education and the convergence of system conditions across divergent regions of consolidating nation-states.⁴ Correspondingly, a central feature of the proposed Blair Bill of the 1880s was that it aimed at closing gaps between jurisdictions by providing the greatest amount of funding to states that most needed it. Evidence suggests, however, that failure of the Bill had an impact opposite of this intention, effectively giving “permission” to provincial systems to depart from normative standards of schooling and thereby *increasing* divergence in school conditions and outcomes.⁵

Political Dynamics in the USA to 1870

As in many countries, distinct regional norms and models of school organization, funding and attendance developed in the USA from the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth centuries. This resulted in different political economies and cultures of schooling in urban and rural areas of the USA, North and South, before the Civil War (1861–1865). School enrollment rates for the North were 20–30 percentage points higher than those for the South in 1860, with northern rates for the highest attending age cohort (ages 10–14) ranging between 75 and 81% during a single year and even higher proportions attending

school sometime during their youth.⁶ Moreover, these rates were for free children only, excluding slave children who resided almost entirely in the South, inclusion of which would have further widened gaps between regions. Generally, school organization in all areas depended heavily on local initiative and funding from multiple sources. In the North, however, a combination of factors fostered higher levels of school organization and attendance in rural areas than in the South. A dissentient tradition of decentralized Protestant church organization, together with a township political structure, widespread independent household control of surplus wealth, and ready access to corporate legal powers, favored the creation of local common schools open to both girls and boys, resulting in very high levels of school attendance and literacy in the general population of the North by the 1820s. These conditions, in turn, when combined with state-by-state elimination of property qualifications for suffrage and high levels of rural household integration in a capitalist commercial economy, created constituencies for additional state-level funding for common schools. As a result, by the 1850s northern and midwestern states had all declared state-level commitments to universal tuition-free common schooling for all inhabitants supported at least in part by state funds.⁷

The South, meanwhile, with a much different political economy, created consolidated tax-supported municipal school systems that were comparable to those in the North in major cities such as Baltimore, Maryland; Charleston, South Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana; and St. Louis, Missouri; as well as in state capitals, like Raleigh, North Carolina. However, a combination of factors depressed school organization, school attendance, and literacy attainment in many rural areas. These included a tradition of hierarchical (Anglican and Catholic) church organization in older settled areas, reliance on county-level political structures, concentration of surplus agricultural wealth and political power in a smaller number of households, limited integration of other rural households in a capitalist commercial economy, and limited access to corporate legal powers.⁸ These conditions—together with formal legal restrictions against literacy instruction and congregation among the largest rural laboring population in the South, enslaved blacks—in turn meant that even when property qualifications for suffrage among white males were eliminated in most states by the late 1840s, strong

constituencies for state systems of funding and administration for common schools failed to develop. Thus, on the eve of the Civil War in 1860, tuition-free common schooling had not been mandated in the South to the same degree as it had in the North and Midwest.

The Civil War itself, however, like conflicts in many countries in the 1860s, was essentially a war of national consolidation. Viewed from the perspective of political economy, the war was an effort to permanently incorporate a separatist South into the structural terms of the capitalist northern economy, convert the "political-economic program of the North into a nationalist ideology," and thereby "ensure American preeminence in the world system."⁹ Although leading theorists of the history of US political economy and government like Richard Franklin Bensel, Theda Skocpol, and Stephen Skowronek have largely ignored the place of state-supported mass education within this scenario, systems of state administration and support of mass education were an integral part of the northern "political-economic program."¹⁰ At the end of the War, they became a core component of the structure the North tried to impose on the South through Reconstruction, just as they had long been central to the development of new states and territories of the US West. As a result, provincial state systems of mass education achieved a new level of rhetorical and structural convergence in the USA in 1870.

Windows of Opportunity

After the Civil War, systematic development of mass education became a state-level commitment in southern states on terms similar to those of states in the North and West. To some extent, this was the result of deliberate postwar national policy on the part of the victorious Union government. Applying the model developed over previous decades in the territorial West, Congress in 1867 effectively "re-territorialized" the defeated South, requiring southern states to reapply for statehood by writing new state constitutions subject to approval by Congress. As a condition of readmission, new southern state constitutions had to acknowledge the abolishment of slavery and meet several other

conditions. Among these was the establishment of state systems of universal, tuition-free common education.

This increased state-level convergence on the terms of systematic public education in turn made federal support for common education both more possible and more desirable from southern as well as national perspectives. After all, if southern states were now responsible for providing systematic and universal common education, as their new postwar Reconstruction constitutions now required, then federal funding could be helpful, even necessary, especially in the context of postwar financial loss and economic crisis.

Other factors favoring federal intervention in education were the interests of some southern white leaders in promoting programs of “internal improvement,” generally assumed to include systems of public education as well as of railroads, banking, and manufacturing. To some southern leaders, the abolition of slavery and the associated challenge to the southern plantation economy made the shift to a new political economy of capitalist finance and industrialization both necessary and possible. For a time, according to political historian Michael Perman, moderate coalitions in both the Republican and the Democratic parties offered the possibility of bridging sectional divides between North and South through policies aimed at fostering both southern and national economic development.

Another force promoting federal intervention in education was the activism of African Americans in the South. With the right to suffrage apparently settled by constitutional amendment in 1870, African Americans for a limited time exercised some leverage in party politics through their own representatives and through the interest that both Republicans and Democrats had in cultivating new voters. As W.E.B. DuBois established in his 1910 and 1935 studies and subsequent scholars have further detailed, African-American political leadership, constituency demand, and organization were essential to establishing strong education provisions in southern state constitutions and statute law during the height of southern Reconstruction from 1867 to 1876, but also beyond, especially in states like South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana with majority or near-majority black populations.¹¹ Reinforcing these dynamics was the nascent infrastructure of school

organization and national funding developed under the US Freedmen's Bureau and various missionary organizations.

Nonetheless, existing scholarship emphasizes the temporariness of these dynamics. Indeed, each of the factors described above can be conceived as a short-lived window of opportunity. As described by Perman, for example, the ascendancy of white moderates in southern state politics was indeed quite short-lived, peaking in the period from 1868 to 1872. After that, political dynamics in most southern states pushed the Democratic Party to extremes of strategic white supremacy and anti-Northern resistance.¹² Ron Butchart describes the devastating effects of the demise of federal funding for freedmen's schools after 1873 and withdrawal of northern moral, military, and legal protection of black schools after 1876, with many schools, teachers, and students burned and beaten into retreat as well as starved of funds. Edward Blum contrasts the northern culture of moral mission in support of freedmen's education in the immediate postwar era with a new culture of white reconciliation promoted by popular religious leaders in the North beginning in the mid-1870s. According to Blum, this "reforging" of a "white republic" was premised on white supremacy and assumed the sacrifice of black civil rights and interests, including rights to publicly supported common education.

All this is certainly and tragically true. At the same time, this narrative of short-lived opportunity obscures a simultaneous shift in federal strategy away from trying to impose or enforce the development of *state* systems of education in the South and toward the development of a *national* education policy. Aware in the Fall of 1875 that the states of Alabama and Texas were in the midst of revising their Reconstruction constitutions to eliminate both their rhetorical commitments and their infrastructures for state support of universal common education, President Ulysses S. Grant proposed an amendment to the federal constitution that would have guaranteed the right to such an education for all. Other Republican leaders also shifted their focus to national education policy at this time. To some extent, this shift was a political maneuver by the Republican Party, which aimed at shoring up support at the national level by framing an issue with strong popular appeal across its core constituencies at a key political moment. Although an

education amendment to the federal constitution narrowly failed passage in August 1876, proposals for a federal system of common school funding and administration moved to the top of the national legislative agenda, becoming a focus of sustained Congressional activity through the 1880s.¹³

Key Provisions of the Blair Bill

Between 1870 and 1890, Congress considered twenty different bills that would have established a national system of funding and administration for common education in the USA. Structurally, the bills proposed to support education on very similar terms. In keeping with the already convergent rhetorical commitments and structural provisions for education extant in the states in 1870, the bills assumed that provincial states bore primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining systems of public schools. Federal funds would supplement, not replace, local and state funds for systems of schooling. In order to receive federal funds, states would have to meet certain minimal requirements. At this initial legislative stage, none of the proposed legislation projected powers of school accreditation, teacher certification, or curriculum standardization at the federal level (though it is possible that such powers would have developed later if initial legislation had been successful). In this way, the proposed federal system, much like existing state systems, institutionalized a high degree of local autonomy.

The most nearly successful of these “national education acts” was the Blair Bill, which came to a vote in 1882, 1884, 1886, 1888, and 1890.¹⁴ Three of those times it passed the Senate but not the House, with the strongest votes in 1884 and 1886. Although precise terms of the Bill varied slightly with each introduction, basic provisions remained the same over the decade-long period of its consideration. The Bill was fundamentally a funding act. It specified four main things: (1) the source and amount of money to be appropriated by the federal government for apportionment to school systems in the states and territories; (2) the formula to be used to calculate the share of federal funds each jurisdiction received; (3) the types of educational institutions on

which the funds could be expended; and (4) the conditions which states and territories had to meet to be eligible to receive such funds.¹⁵

A distinguishing feature of the Blair Bill was the *source* of funding it designated for federal aid to schools. Unlike previous proposals, the Bill specified that funds would be appropriated from the general treasury, rather than from sales of public lands. This decision meant that substantial amounts of funding could be made available right away, rather than waiting for sales to occur and income to accrue. It also meant that the *amount* of funding could be specified precisely from the outset rather than depending on the outcome of uncertain sales or revenues. This availability and specificity of funding were crucial to the basic logic of the Bill, which was premised on the idea that conditions of illiteracy could best be eliminated through a major short-term infusion of federal funds concentrated in places where it was most needed. By this means, the Bill's sponsors believed, lagging school systems could be jump-started and brought to a minimum standard, with subsequent provisions focusing on maintenance. As specified in the 1884 and 1886 versions of the Bill, the total amount of federal funds distributed annually would increase over the first few years, peaking in year 3 at \$15,000,000, and then decline thereafter to a figure of \$5,000,000, for a total of \$78,000,000 over 8 years. Sections of the 1886 Bill also appropriated an additional \$2,000,000 in funds for school building and allowed for a small portion of the basic allocation (1/10) to be used for teacher education.

These appropriations were financially significant at the time. According to the Bureau of Education, in 1880 total funds expended on public schools from all sources (including taxation and permanent endowed funds) nationally was \$76,952,007. Thus, the Bill proposed to appropriate an amount equivalent to that total over eight years, though it would allocate it on different principles. Instead of distributing funds to the states based on population, which would have favored densely populated northern states where high rates of school organization, funding, attendance, and literacy already existed, the Blair Bill directed that funds be allocated on the basis of adult illiteracy rates, defined as the ratio of persons over the age of 10 who could not write to the total number of persons in that age cohort. This meant, initially at least, that

southern states would receive 75% of the federal funds appropriated, effectively doubling existing school expenditures in the poorest states with the least educated populations.

As indicted by the Bill's title, the funding appropriated under its authority would be aimed primarily at supporting "common" schools in the states. Several sections of the Bill then took care to clarify the meaning of "common" schools. First, somewhat unusually as compared with much state legislation at the time, the Bill specified the content of instruction common schools should provide. Section 6 of the Bill stated "that the instruction in the common schools wherein these moneys shall be expended shall include the art of reading, writing, and speaking the English language, arithmetic, geography, history of the United States, and such other branches of useful knowledge as may be taught under local laws." This delineation of the content of "common" education was in no way controversial, but the explicit inclusion of geography and history nonetheless clarified that the type of education that Congress intended to support went beyond the bare rudiments of literacy to encompass education for citizenship.

The Bill further highlighted its intent by distinguishing the types of schools to be supported in the territories from the types of schools to be supported in the states. Section seven of the Bill clarified that federal funds could be used only for common schools in the states, but allowed for federal funds to be used for *both* common *and* industrial schools in the territories. Section eleven similarly directed that in the *states*, funds could be used only for common schools "not sectarian in character," but it made no such prohibition in the *territories*. By allowing for support of industrial and sectarian schools in the *territories*, the Blair Bill indicated that federal funds appropriated under its terms could be used to support missionary industrial schools for Native Americans in the West. In the process, however, it also carefully distinguished such projects from that of educating African Americans in states of the South. In other words, the Blair Bill insisted that African Americans should be educated for citizenship, not just labor.

This effort to ensure a degree of equality in the *content* of education for African-American children in the South was further reinforced by provisions delineating the procedures for fund allocation. In three

separate provisions, the Bill stipulated that schooling must be provided, and that funds must be allocated, on an equal basis by race, even as the Bill also explicitly permitted racial segregation. Section 2, for example, which established the federal funding formula, addressed issues of allocation in states and territories that maintained "separate schools for white and colored children." In such jurisdictions, "the money received...shall be apportioned and paid out for the support of such white and colored schools respectively, in the proportion that the white and colored children between the ages of ten and twenty-one years, both inclusive...bear to each other." Additional sections stipulated basic requirements for the terms of funding, governance, accessibility, and accountability of school systems eligible for federal funds. Repeatedly, those requirements emphasized equal provisions by race.

In summary, the Blair Bill was a national education act that would have provided substantial annual federal funding to US states and territories for support of existing school systems. Federal funding was intended to provide a substantial influx of funds, but not to replace that provided by local jurisdictions, which were required to provide funds at levels matching federal appropriations. The instruction to be supported was primarily *common* English education for citizenship offered under non-sectarian public administration, though some allowance was made for support of church-affiliated industrial schools for Native Americans in the territories. The schooling supported was to be provided for *all* children at equal levels in equal facilities without discrimination, though the Bill allowed for racially segregated systems to receive federal support on a "separate but equal" basis. The Bill did not attempt to make education *compulsory*, leaving such legislation entirely to provincial jurisdictions. Similarly, although some provisions for funding school building and teacher training were included and the Bill did require states and territories to report teacher employment and salaries, it otherwise asserted no authority to regulate teacher training, certification, or pay. In all these ways, then, the Blair Bill proposed centralized funding with little central administration. This minimal assertion of central authority was deliberately designed to make passage of the Bill as politically feasible as possible. Arguments for the Bill likewise aimed at maximizing national political support.

Campaign for the Blair Bill

The central argument for the Blair Bill was an updated version of the standard enlightenment idea that the preservation of republican government required the general diffusion of intelligence. As articulated by Senator Henry Blair in 1886, “government for the people by the people implies that degree of popular intelligence which will enable the masses of men to comprehend the principles and to direct the administration of government in such ways as to promote the general welfare.”¹⁶ More specifically, sponsors of the Bill operationalized this principle as requiring that everyone exercising the right of suffrage be educated to read and write. Promoters of the Bill marshaled statistical evidence demonstrating that significant portions of the population in all regions of the country were *not* literate (in English) and that current levels of public school provision and support were insufficient to achieve universal literacy. Without major investment in universal public education, the national government would be subject to corruption through ignorance and demagoguery. Addressing these threats required a substantial influx of federal funds guaranteeing common education to all.

Groundwork for this political campaign had been laid when Congress established the Bureau of Education in 1867 and at the same time commissioned a study of American literacy based on census data. In the process, it also somewhat surprisingly revealed that relatively high rates of illiteracy existed in many places outside the South. This analysis was then deliberately invoked by sponsors of the Blair Bill to develop the case for establishing a system of national aid for education. Whereas the main impetus for the bills of the early 1870s derived from the needs and imperatives of the Reconstruction South, the Blair Bill campaign deliberately encompassed other issues as well, including the education of immigrant populations in northern cities and of Indians and Spanish-speaking residents of the West.¹⁷ Promoters accordingly mobilized national constituencies in support of Bill’s passage, including petition drives; endorsements by major federated labor, farm, and women’s groups; appeals to sectional interests in Congress; and Congressional lobbying by industrial philanthropists and former US presidents. As part of the campaign, the National Education Association (NEA)

sponsored state-level conferences across the country, including states of the South, to mobilize support among education professionals. In the early 1880s, this southern strategy was particularly effective, resulting in thousands of petitions which in turn won support from southern members of Congress.¹⁸

Congressional proponents of the Blair Bill and their allies also enlisted legal theorists to develop arguments aimed at undermining constitutional objections to the exercise of federal power in education. Article 4, Section 4 of the federal constitution, known as the "guarantee clause," specifies that "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government." Referring to this clause, proponents of the Bill argued that the federal government had a duty and the people had an interest in doing what it took to guarantee republican government in the states, and that this interest and duty extended to ensuring that everyone exercising the right of suffrage in the nation was literate. Moreover, in the absence of such conditions of literacy, the people of the nation as a whole had the power to direct the federal government to step in and join with the states to fulfill the duty to educate the populace sufficiently to exercise the right of suffrage.¹⁹ As Senator Blair put the point in 1886:

Our leading proposition is that the General Government possesses the power and has imposed upon itself the duty of educating the people of the United States *whenever for any cause those people are deficient in that degree of education which is essential to the discharge of their duties as citizens* either of the United States or of the several States wherein they chance to reside.²⁰

This argument and the supporting campaign were largely successful.

Convergence of Interests

Many factors favored passage of the Blair Bill in the mid-1880s. Among these was the considerable success of Blair and his allies in forging a truly national convergence of interest behind the Bill. That convergence

of interest encompassed all regions of the country and substantial portions of both political parties. As a result, the USA in the mid-1880s came as close as it would ever come, before or since, to establishing a national system of education.

Republican Party leaders certainly had an interest in supporting the Blair Bill as a means of rescuing at least some of the principles of southern Reconstruction. They also had an interest in bridging growing divisions in the Party by promoting a Bill perceived by many, at least, as a reform policy with wide appeal in the general population across sectional lines. This included (mid-)western contingents of the Party often in rebellion against northeastern domination of the Party on economic issues. In the midwestern swing state of Ohio, in particular, the issue of federal support for the principle of universal, non-sectarian common education had proved to be a fulcrum on which Republican victories could turn at both state and national levels.²¹

In the South, meanwhile, federal aid for education as encoded in the Blair Bill was a truly bi-partisan issue. Most state officials, private philanthropists, and Congressional representatives, black and white, Republican and Democrat, recognized the financial benefits of the Bill for southern states and supported the Bill on those grounds, albeit with different rationales in mind. Although some Radical Republicans and a few black political leaders in the North criticized and even opposed the Blair Bill for not going far enough in ensuring black civil rights or providing enforcement powers for its equity provisions, black political leaders in the South (virtually all Republicans) overwhelmingly and strongly favored its passage as offering the only hope of sustained public support for black education. Meanwhile, many white educators and political leaders in the South, almost all Democrats, *also* strongly supported the Blair Bill and worked for its passage. A key to understanding this bi-partisan, bi-racial appeal in the South lies in the role that the Peabody Education Fund played in promoting universal common education for *white* students in the immediate postwar period. Established by George Peabody at the start of Congressional Reconstruction in 1867 to promote “intellectual, moral, and industrial education in the most destitute portion of the Southern States,” the Peabody Fund was administered by a partnership of northern and southern philanthropists.

This alliance of moneyed leaders played an important role in negotiating the terms of the Bill and lobbying for its passage. In their correspondence, they argued that federal aid was essential for sustaining mass education for both blacks and whites, though some articulated a rationale more concerned with the management of labor, both black and white, than with education for citizenship.²²

The support of industrial philanthropists notwithstanding, the Blair Bill also enjoyed active support from the first major national labor union in the USA, the Knights of Labor. At the same time, the influential Women's Christian Temperance Union, a major national voluntary organization that also transcended the country's sectional and party divisions, endorsed the Blair Bill, flooding Congress with petitions in support. Given otherwise divergent interests of blacks and whites, labor and capital, Republicans and Democrats, northerners and southerners, and gender politics, the relative success of the Blair Bill in mobilizing support across race, class, party, and region was impressive, arguably unparalleled in any other policy domain of its time. The Bill passed the Senate by large margins in both 1884 and 1886, with the margin increasing in 1886. Healthy margins of success were also predicted in the House whenever the Bill should come to a vote, as assessed not only by Bill's sponsors but by the press at the time. Roll call votes on key procedural issues show that two-thirds of the House in 1886 wanted to vote for the Bill. In other words, Blair and his allies had indeed succeeded in forging a convergence of interest in favor of a federal system of aid for education.

The Blair Bill's Demise

In the end, however, no such national educational system was established. Why? Contrary to what one might assume given the truisms of US history and education, the Blair Bill was *not* defeated by southern state's rights advocacy. Nor can its defeat be explained by a *loss* of power on the part of the northern Republican leadership most responsible for forging the coalition behind its passage in the 1880s. Paradoxically, the demise of the Blair Bill resulted from something closer to the opposite

of these scenarios: The virtually complete partisan victory of northern Republican interests in federal politics at the end of the 1880s.

To understand this paradox, we must first step back to consider the role of education in the US political economy. In the USA, some level of federal support for schooling had always been central to the logic of economic development through the practice of public land grants. Beginning with the first new lands appropriated from Native Americans in the 1780s after the Revolutionary War, Congress set aside a portion of each township surveyed to support schools, a tradition expanded in subsequent territorial acts. By allocating land for schools, Congress encouraged (white) family settlement and at the same time allied the state with the interests of capital. In order to realize income on such lands, states sold or leased them, investing the proceeds in banks or other capital enterprises. In this way, school lands forged a “community of interest” among capitalists and settlers that was essential to the political logic of state formation.

The Blair Bill proposed to establish a similar logic at the federal level, but on somewhat different terms. At the time, in the mid-1880s, the tariff system produced a substantial annual surplus in the federal budget. But the tariff itself was also a divisive political issue. Democratic leaders from northern, border, and western states favored the repeal of tariffs, while northern Republican leaders, insisted on retaining tariffs to boost domestic industry. Southern Democrats and Republicans, meanwhile, were mostly indifferent to the issue, since industrial development in the South at the time was still minimal. In this context, the Blair Bill effectively forged a convergence of interest between the corporate economic interests of northeastern capitalists and the interests of southern taxpayers, politicians, and white and black families through federal aid in support of schools. Indeed, John Carlyle, the House majority leader from Kentucky who was the most powerful opponent of the Blair Bill, charged that the Bill’s sponsors had no real interest in education at all; that the only purpose behind the Bill was protection of the tariff.²³ As an analysis of the primary motivations of the Bill’s chief Congressional sponsor, Henry Blair, this claim does not seem to pass historical scrutiny. However, as a statement of the practical political dynamic underlying the Bill, this assessment was essentially correct. The tariff provided

the hidden political logic behind *both* support and opposition to the Bill through most of the 1880s.

At the end of the 1880s, however, this logic fundamentally changed. Through most of the 1880s, northern and border state Democrats who strongly opposed the tariff, *and hence* the Blair Bill, controlled the House leadership. Despite the fact that a majority, even a supermajority, of House members supported the Bill, and despite objections from southern members of their own party, this Democratic leadership repeatedly maneuvered to prevent the Bill from coming to a vote. In 1886, however, Democrats lost seats in the House and in 1888, they lost control of both the Congress and the Presidency. With Republicans now firmly in control of all branches of government, and the tariff now vindicated by a solid basis of popular support, it would seem that the widely popular Bill, long-sponsored and promoted by Republican leaders, could be passed. Paradoxically, however, that is not what happened. Even though the new Republican president, Benjamin Harrison, had worked on the Bill as a Senator, and despite the fact that Harrison won the election based in large part on his opposition to tariff repeal, Republicans effectively abandoned the Bill. Through a combination of passive neglect and active withdrawal of support, the Bill suffered final defeat in 1889–1890.²⁴

This, then, represented a fundamental alteration of the terms of “national consolidation” promoted by both “hidden” and the visible agents of national government over the previous twenty years. Until 1888, a coalition of northern and southern capitalists, philanthropists, educators, social scientists, intellectuals, and voluntary and professional organizations promoted a vision of national integration that encompassed *both* commerce and culture, economics and politics through the establishment of a national system of common education. Under this arrangement, northern states would make a substantial short-term investment in southern social and political institutions with the understanding that this investment would ensure a degree of long-term political integration of otherwise divergent regional interests on common (and essentially northern) structural and political terms. In making this investment, northerners would effectively retain support for the tariff that fostered industrialization and associated financial returns for northeastern capital.

Once the battle over the tariff had effectively been won by northern capital in 1888 *without* compromise, however, the Blair Bill lost the keystone of its political logic. Their victory apparently complete, northern leaders reneged on their original offer to the South. In its place, they promulgated a new vision of national integration that withdrew federal financial support for educational institutions. In this vision, the terms of integration would *only* be economic, not social, cultural, or political.

In response, a similar recalculation occurred in the South. Until 1888, a plurality of southern leaders accepted that universal education was a necessary condition of national integration and compatible with the interests of southern capital. In 1888, however, southern elites increasingly doubted those assumptions. If northern Republicans were no longer willing to invest in black education, why should they? Key parties of the coalition thus recalculated their interests, achieving the new political convergence between northern and southern capital detailed by the historian James Anderson. Under this arrangement, northern and southern capital effectively conspired in the political subordination of laboring classes, black and white, in an imperial system of captive labor *within* the borders of the domestic United States that other imperial nations harnessed largely through external colonial relationships. Southern political and economic elites proceeded in 1890 to revise their state constitutions to systematically restrict black voting rights. One result, as Robert A. Margo has demonstrated, was a radical disinvestment in black education in the South from 1890 to 1950, with correspondingly radical inequality of educational access and literacy rates. Another consequence, explicitly articulated by a few agents of capital, was the deliberate institutionalization of racialized inequality as a means of dividing working-class solidarity and organizational power.²⁵ The window of opportunity for establishing a national system of federal aid for education closed.

Consequences of Failure

The consequences of Blair Bill's failure were many and substantial. For this chapter, one particular set of consequences will be highlighted. That is the lost opportunity for establishing a political base for long-term

reconstruction of economy and politics in the USA in the late nineteenth century. The potential for the development of such a political base has often been invoked as a kind of black hole of possibility by political economists, but connections to the contingencies of the Blair Bill and education as a policy domain have so far not been recognized.

In *Yankee Leviathan*, political economist Richard Franklin Bensel provided a powerful explanation of the relatively weak central authority that characterizes the USA as compared with other countries. That explanation turned on the Civil War and the immediate postwar period. In effect, the question of why the USA developed a relatively weak central state authority became the same as that of why Reconstruction failed. To answer that question, Bensel applied concepts of interest group politics to a complex analysis of Congressional voting patterns during the height of Reconstruction. In his assessment, northeastern finance capital played a critical role. Although the origins of the Civil War, in his account, lay in the aggressive attempt by the "modernizing' North" to integrate the "premodern' South into a national political and economic system," financial capitalists in the postwar period soon became the Republican faction most hostile to continued federal intervention in the southern political system.²⁶ According to Bensel, this hostility was rooted in economic interests, including resumption of the gold standard, reestablishment of the southern cotton economy, and distrust of federal capacity to administer national monetary policy. From this perspective, state's rights ideology and the maintenance of a politically and economically subordinated agricultural labor force in the South served the interests of Northeastern capital as well as those of southern white landowners.

Grounded in a notion of politics as a direct reflection of economic interest, Bensel's account suffers some from the hazard of apparent inevitability. Nonetheless, Bensel did briefly consider issues of contingency—that is, what it would have taken for things to have turned out differently. To imagine such alternatives Bensel drew on conceptions of interest group politics as well as on the analytical examples set by other leading political economists such as Theda Skocpol and Stephen Skowronek. From this perspective, he suggested that in order for the forces of finance capital to have been successfully resisted and a more

serious reconstruction of property relations and political power to have occurred, not only would military occupation of the South have had to continue, but an alternative political base would have had to have been established with a shared interest in reconstruction of the southern political economy. In outlining such a scenario, Bensel suggested the possibility of “massive use of federal patronage in the South to establish an independent, white office-holding class to complement the black yeomanry created by land redistribution.” Just as quickly as he made that suggestion, however, he also dismissed it, noting that “what this office-holding class would have done is a salient question” since “the largest (and in many cases, the only) federal presence in the South, after the military, was the post office.”²⁷

Scholars of US political economy writing before and since Bensel have largely ignored education as a domain of national policy-making. Consequently, they continue to miss the major potential significance of federal aid for education as a means of social, economic, and political integration after the Civil War. In his sequel to *Yankee Leviathan*, Bensel mentioned the Blair Bill briefly and described its fortunes in a footnote, but without connecting it to his earlier suggestion regarding the potential for creating an alternative politics in the South.²⁸ Although the Blair Bill, with its many compromises, would not have established agents of central state authority in the form of federal inspectors, and certainly would not have single-handedly reversed the tides of white supremacy, it is not far-fetched to imagine it fostering development of a class of state agents and office-holders with roots in the South that had an interest in federal government spending and infrastructure and associated ideas of citizenship education and civil rights. Such a scenario would surely have had some effect on the political trajectory of the South and on social, economic, and political integration of the nation at large. Instead, as Bensel put the point, “incomplete political integration coincided with the creation of national markets and corporate consolidation.”²⁹ Thus, the process of national integration and consolidation in the US case proved partial and one-dimensional as compared with that of other countries. More economic than political, it resulted in what Bensel characterized as the comparative weakness of the American central state. What was lost, however, was not simply central authority,

but a potential for cross-race, cross-party, cross-region alliances on other than economic grounds.

Notes

1. Green, *Education and State Formation*; Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy*; Lindert, *Growing Public*; Beadie, "Education, Social Capital, and State Formation"; and Beadie, "North America."
2. Balogh, *Government Out of Sight*; Novak, "Myth of the 'Weak' American State"; Baldwin, "Beyond Weak and Strong"; Clemens, *The People's Lobby*; Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*.
3. An exception is Steffes, *School, Society, and State*. Steffes focuses on the post-1890 period, however, and thus on developments following those discussed in this chapter.
4. Lindert, *Growing Public*; Cappelli, "Escaping from a Human Capital Trap?"
5. Beadie, "The Federal Role in Education."
6. Soltow and Stevens, *Rise of Literacy and the Common School*, 119–21. On the limitations of single-year rates for the antebellum period, see Vinovskis, *Education, Society, and Economic Opportunity*.
7. Beadie, "Education, Social Capital and State Formation"; also Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital*.
8. Beadie, "North American Systems."
9. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 18.
10. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*; Skowronek, *Building a New American State*; Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.
11. DuBois, "Reconstruction" and *Black Reconstruction*; Anderson, *Education of Blacks*; Williams, *Self-Taught*; Span, *From Cotton Field*.
12. Perman, *The Road to Redemption*.
13. Beadie, "West to East."
14. Beadie, "The Federal Role in Education."
15. Blair, *The Education Bill*.
16. *Ibid.*, 5.
17. See Beadie, "War, Education and State Formation."
18. Lee, *The Struggle for Federal Aid*.
19. Beadie, "The Federal Role in Education."
20. Blair, *The Education Bill*, 5, italics added.

21. McAfee, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction*; Holt, *By One Vote*.
22. This account of Congressional politics depends heavily on Croft, "The Blair Bill."
23. Croft, "The Blair Bill," 120–1.
24. Croft, "The Blair Bill," 133.
25. See, statements by industrial philanthropist William H. Baldwin, quoted in Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 82 and 91; and similar quotations in that chapter from George Peabody, Robert Ogden, and others.
26. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 10.
27. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 351.
28. Bensel, *Political Economy of Industrialization*, 172n.
29. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 17.

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15

School Legislation, Mass Schooling, and Historiography

Daniel Tröhler

Against the background of recent trends in educational historiography—that is, in the ways that history of education in general and history of schooling in particular are written—this edited volume addressing the history of school acts is being published at a good point in time. This is for two interrelated reasons that both have to do with contemporary historiography, which somehow, but for different reasons and in different ways, neglects the relevance of school legislation, or school acts or decrees. This volume can be read as a rehabilitation of a formerly popular way of writing history of schooling that has lost significance over the course of the last decades in the face of different epistemological “turns” and the rejection of the idea of “grand narratives” of a more or less linear development based on political deliberation.¹ But it can also be interpreted as a sensible alternative to an increasingly popular historiography that aims toward a new grand meta-narrative covering half a millennium. According to that meta-narrative, regional and

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J. Westberg et al. (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13570-6_15

foremost national distinctions and policies are at best marginalia in the march toward a more or less uniform “world culture.”²

Hence, this volume stands in the middle of two popular but rather contradicting historiographical trends that neglect or relativize school legislation. The first is inclined to reject the idea of rationality and progress based on deliberation and is devoted to advocating irreducible pluralities and effects of desire and power. The second is bound to ignore any particulars in order to obtain a big picture of one great development of human rationality toward one global unity and harmony. However, suggesting a historiography that represents an alternative to those two popular but opposite historiographical trends may result in being caught between two stools. That is why special attention deserves to be given to the particular challenges faced by a historiography of schooling that focuses largely on policy and school acts, decrees, and regulations—which in a *formal respect* represent legitimate acts of will according to the constitutions and which in a *material respect* regulate human behavior, in this case the behavior of all people involved in and around schooling.³

This concluding chapter aims to highlight the potentials of a school history that deliberately focuses on school acts or related legal norms in the long nineteenth century, by first depicting its traditional and—from today’s point of view—problematic form and thereafter analyzing the fate of this kind of traditional historiography against the background of the two historiographical types mentioned above.⁴ The fourth section reflects upon what we can expect when dealing with legislation in the context of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the nation-states and their embeddedness in cultural traditions and idiosyncrasies that affect both constitutions and legislation. The final section deals with the danger of national epistemologies in writing national histories of legislation, which often make scholars blind toward both their epistemological point of departure in framing their research and the intensive transnational flows of ideas and concepts that were translated and nationally adapted in such a way that later on their multiple origins are as difficult to recognize as are the national epistemologies.

History of Schooling and History of School Legislation

As the title of this volume rightly suggests, the rise of mass schooling takes place in the long nineteenth century and goes along with processes of state-formation and eventually nation-building—that is, roughly from the French Revolution in 1789 to the foundation of the rather short-lived Austrian Republic in 1918 and the establishment of Finland as a republic in 1919. Basically, these multiple processes of state-formation and nation-building addressed the question of how, in a given territory, political power is distributed and the social order should be organized. The basic answer to this question was the constitution, the highest law of a sovereign state, be it centralized or federal, but also of a region, such as in Europe the German or Austrian *Bundesländer* or the Swiss cantons, in the USA the states, and in Canada and Australia the provinces, whose claims of validity are, however, subordinate to the national constitution.⁵

In an interesting way, historiographers—with the exception of some legal historians or political scientists—did not engage much with constitutional history, especially not historians of education.⁶ This is all the more surprising as constitutions indeed represent the ultimate highest authority of the legal system or the legal order, and this applies at least to some degrees also to countries with no formal constitution, such as the UK and partly Canada with their constitutional conventions, or common law, the body of law derived from judicial decisions of courts and similar tribunals in the past. Constitutions embody the fundamentals of the dominant visions about how (ideal) citizens should be organized politically, legally, socially, and economically. Formally and materially, they lay the foundation of all legislation—that is, every law and regulation that materializes these visions. In this respect, school acts are no exceptions and as I have argued elsewhere, quite the contrary. In an impressive way, constitutional reforms in a country are usually immediately followed by a new school law that aims at organizing the creation of the desired future citizens envisaged in the (new) constitution.⁷

Testifying to the ultimate importance of these basic laws for the contemporaries is the incredible battles over new constitutions, especially in times of “revolutions,” such as the fights over the Constitution of the United States, the French constitutions, and the constitutional orders around 1848 in Prussia or in Switzerland, which decided on sovereignty or subordination, monarchy or republic, participation or representation, centralism or federalism, inclusion or exclusion, or privileges or equities. The same, although certainly on a somewhat lower level of importance, applies to all the laws that have to be in accordance with the constitutions. As a result, many countries have even erected a court with the power of judicial review over the constitutionality of laws (and court decisions), such as the Supreme Court of the United States (and a Supreme Court in each of the states), the *Noregs Høgsterett* in Norway, the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* in Germany, the *Conseil constitutionnel* in France, or the *Corte costituzionale* in Italy. Of all legislation beneath the constitutions, school legislation is of particular interest, as it aims not only to formally *regulate* the behavior of its actual addressees, the teachers and the students as the future citizens, but also to *fabricate* particular kinds of people that are intrinsically characterized by loyalty to the (nation-)state, as many of the chapters in this volume emphasize.⁸

Given the importance that legislation actually had at least for contemporary protagonists, and given that legislation processes were evidently more publicly debated in participatory political regimes (that is, in democratic republics), it is understandable that for a long time, historiographies in those *republican* countries focused more on the history of schooling than on educational ideas (which was the case, e.g., in the German monarchies) and that they outlined their school histories based on the sequences of school acts and the debates connected with them.⁹

Often, these school histories, as histories of political deliberation and the passing of school acts, are written as the result of tensions between “(religious) conservatives” and “liberals” in France or in Switzerland, or the polemic forces of the time, as if, historically, only two more or less homogenous groups had been fighting each other for more influence.¹⁰ This kind of research, which was popular foremost in the first part of the twentieth century, has been pushed back in recent decades for good reasons. One of these is that in such traditional investigations of school

legislation (and here we come to an aspect of methodological nationalism¹¹), the historical controversies at the time around school legislation are often only summarized *within* the frame of the polemic languages of the ideological frontlines of the time (not seldom with clear sympathies for one side). In contrast, these controversies are only rarely analyzed as political statements that owe their power to underlying normative systems, as if the “linguistic turn” has not led to deeper reflections about *langues*, systems of reasoning, styles of thought, or ideologies that frame political deliberation.¹²

A second reason why this traditional kind of historiography has been marginalized is that it is inclined to equate school history (and not seldom even the history of education) with political debates, education policy, and legislation. As a result, it ignores an array of remnants of schooling that are valuable sources for the history of schooling, such as school buildings, learning materials, blackboards, school uniforms, dunce caps, rods, school satchels, or, with regard to the broader history of education, toys, children’s games, playgrounds, or children’s books, as if the “cultural turn” or “material turn” in historiography has not urgently suggested that we widen our perspective on schooling.¹³ Hence, identified as being superficial (with regard to debates as discourses) and presumptuous (with regard to the selected sources), this kind of school historiography with its traditional focus on school acts has—against the background of recent historiographical developments—proven to be distorting and inappropriate. The following part of this chapter will outline how historians lost interest in school legislation in the context of some of the newer historiographical trends and also indicate why the disinterest means to throw the baby out with the bath water.

The Historiographical Effects of the Linguistic and Cultural Turns

Traditionally, investigations of school legislation often resembled a traditional history of ideas, which focuses on noble idea(l)s borne by outstanding men throughout history.¹⁴ This style was then soon

complemented or even challenged by “institutional history.”¹⁵ Sometimes these two styles were even amalgamated into one: the history of great educators and school promoters and their idea(l)s.¹⁶ Almost all of these early styles of writing history were designed to serve the purpose of teacher education. They were to help prospective teachers to become the desired teachers in the fabrication of future loyal citizens of the respective nation-states.

The almost exclusive focus on expected (moral) effects in teacher education led authors of histories of education to isolate themselves from historiographical innovations in the science of history. The science of history profited in the first half of the twentieth century from research in linguistics and then in the philosophy of language that in the 1950s was labeled the “linguistic turn.”¹⁷ This affected historiography, which started to look for particular political *langues*, or linguistic arsenals of political speech acts.¹⁸ It rediscovered classical republicanism as a language that embodied visions of civic virtue that in particular in Protestant circles culminated in pertinent educational theories whose roots had been blurred for a long time.¹⁹ With the interesting exception of the historiography in Germany, the potential of the linguistic turn and its inherent approach to contextualizing (educational) ideas has been acknowledged in many parts of the globe, particularly in the Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, and Hispanic worlds, as a means to understand how the idea of education and (modern) school curriculum—as part of legislation and regulation—has become tangible in the dialectic between the ancient anti-commercial concept of virtue and the emergence of commercial society in the long eighteenth century.²⁰ In the same setting of linguistic contextualization, religion as forming the minds has received more attention in the analysis of dominating educational *langues* for instance in analyses of the education policy of modern republics such as Argentina or China.²¹

However, the effects of the linguistic turn on historiography have not yet been sufficiently explored. What can be said is that at the time when the linguistic turn was fruitfully implemented in different areas of historiography and accompanied by claims of “discourse analysis” rather than hermeneutical content analyses, it was soon followed by a new turn that somehow criticized the linguistic turn as being overly focused

exclusively on language or verbal expressions. This new turn, the “cultural turn,” promised to be more encompassing. However, it was almost immediately followed by an array of offshoots: the “spatial turn,” the “material turn,” the “performative turn,” the “postcolonial turn,” and the “pictorial/iconic turn,” to name just a few. Often, these “turns” stressed that their objects had a longer history of their own, suggesting that they were heirs of a respectful past that was now in need of historiographical innovation. This claim was performed by adding “new” to the particular field of inquiry, creating “new cultural history,” “new material history,” “new curriculum history,” and also in sociology “new institutionalism,” which increasingly began to argue historically and to which I shall return in the next section of this chapter.

In different ways, these “new” historiographies started to deal with artifacts that had been neglected by the traditional history of ideas and the traditional history of schooling, which focused on policy and school legislation. A first initiative in educational historiography had been launched with a volume on *The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education*, which emphasized the relevance of visual sources in historiography and pointed to metaphors, icons, teaching aids, wall charts, textbooks, emblematic use, school architecture, exhibitions, film, cartoons, cigarette cards, and photographs as representations of value equal to that of written documents.²² This kind of historiography was discussed internationally and further developed to reappraise the visual turn in a way that considers images as “objects to think with,” as material artifacts that have a social biography and whose circulation and re-appropriation in different contexts and visual regimes is relevant for understanding how they work and gain new meanings.²³ In accordance with and not independently of gender historiography, the study of the visual focused on embodiedness, sensitivity, and emotions—elements that are starting to be more focused on in new curriculum history, too.²⁴

Against the background of these different “new” historiographies focusing on materialities, objects, icons, sensitivities, and emotions, traditional school historiography—widely restricted to policy debates around school legislation, administration, and reform—appeared to be a collection of simply “normative sources” with little informative value regarding actual school reality, a massively underfed but presumptuous

historiographic skeleton that could not even enjoy sympathy from the new history of ideas in the wake of the linguistic turn. The result of this criticism was not so much a creative reflection upon the traditionally defined scope of the unit of analysis—school legislation as attempts to materialize and implement ideas of good schooling for the ideal citizen in an envisaged social order—but rather thorough neglect and oblivion regarding the topic. All of a sudden it seemed as if school acts or governmental regulations did not matter at all in the shaping of (mass) schooling in the making of the modern world: Having once enjoyed almost too much or too encompassing attention in the foremost national school historiographies, school legislation has now almost lost its *raison d'être*. A companion to this process of neglecting has been, by all means, the historiographic *antithesis* to the linguistic and cultural turns—namely another “new” approach in the social sciences, “neo-institutionalism,” which due to its different style of argument will be discussed in the following.

Neo-institutional Historiography

All of the different epistemological “turns” and historiographical claims of “new” histories in the social and cultural field of human (inter)action have brought about many innovations and have excavated historical testimonies and remnants and turned them into valuable sources that were long ignored in the writing history as way of making sense of the past. This richness and plurality have their own drawback, in particular regarding new barriers in the conversation between scholars and between their researches: As a result of these developments, we have many niches and hollows of scholarship but also increasingly fewer mutual perceptions of the research being conducted in other specialized areas. Independent, international, and bi- or even multilingual journals in educational historiography that bring together junior and senior researchers who are normally active in dispersed fields of expertise and that cover a broad range of topics are an exception.

Understandably, this complexity gave many scholars the impression of a lack of clarity in historiography, which helped to pave the way for

historiographic attempts to regain clarity in the place of complexity. The most popular suggestion in this respect was made not by historians but by sociologists who had included some of the newer cultural theories in their explanations of the functioning of organizations. “Neo-institutionalism” started with reference to the “old” sociological institutionalism as advocated foremost by Max Weber by addressing questions of “cultural persistence” that were not adequately addressed by Weber.²⁵ How do organizations react to external pressures and why do subsequent reforms have so few actual effects?

These questions of persistence were successfully addressed by making a distinction between what is called the actual “organization,” or the “technical activity” of an organization, and the “formal structure” of this organization that responds to the shared cultural expectation that is the “institution” or to the “institutional environment.”²⁶ Institutions are therefore cultural rules that give certain entities (like organizations or professions) and their behavior collective meaning and value. Here, culture means far more than general values and knowledge that influence tastes and decisions, for it is assumed to define the ontological value of actor and action.²⁷ Institutions obviously depend largely (not exclusively) on cultural-cognitive beliefs as the most important of their three pillars (the other two being rules and norms).²⁸

The sociological need to include “culture” in order to explain the persistence of modern organizations, not least educational organizations, could have led to a strengthening of the emphasis on plurality borne by most scholars of the different “new” histories. But neo-institutionalism, devoted to a macro-sociological point of departure for the analysis, chose another way. Acknowledging the historicity of cultural convictions that shape organizations and witnessing a global spread of organizational patterns that is interpreted as assimilation (“isomorphism”), neo-institutionalism assumes a new grand narrative of a global history heading toward a more or less uniform world society, a world culture shaped by a world curriculum.²⁹

Against this background, the expansion of mass schooling since the end of eighteenth century is seen as institutional changes that were at first domestically motivated but then also understood as due to external pressures of the globalized world or due to “cultural principles

exogenous to any specific nation-state and its historical legacy” that exert pressure on the national educational systems and their reforms performed mostly in laws.³⁰

From this perspective of neo-institutionalism, history of schooling is conducted by concentrating on two aspects: legislation mandating compulsory education and the expansion of mass schooling in terms of enrollment. Even though the neo-sociological historical account acknowledges international variations between the national educational systems in the rapidness of passing school acts and building schools and in the interrelation of legislative and organizational system building, the relative timing of compulsory education laws and the actual expansion of (compulsory) mass schooling led the neo-sociological interpreters of the past to conclude that there is, in fact, “little empirical support for the impact of differentiation.”³¹ Rather than emphasizing the *differences* between the national school legislations and enrollments regarding mass education, this historiography urged us to see the historical features of modern Western education *in toto*—that is, its focus on individual achievement, its focus on curriculum in general rather than on occupational education or training, its mass character including children of different social strata, and its instrumental character in nation-building. Through this lens, mass education is implemented nationally but is part of a global process to construct a universalistic and rationalized society that fosters general skills appropriate for a social world in which individuals are particularly valued.³² These individuals eventually become national citizens as part of the societies of the nation-states, which internationally all seem to be related and similar.³³

Hence, in contrast to most of the other so-called new historiographies, the neo-sociologist account does in fact emphasize the importance of school legislation in the different nation-states but only as rather similar cross-cultural phenomena understood as performances of a supra-national development of a Western culture whose roots date back over 500 years.³⁴ Mass schooling is then seen as “educational transformation of global culture”³⁵ in the march of a half millennium of history, suggesting the rise of upcoming global redemption, a “future Eden.”³⁶ This account serves to take contemporary phenomena labeled “globalization” and to assemble them into an overarching historical

account labeled globalization; “globalization” becomes, in this way, an intellectual, that is, historical legitimation of current political slogans. It is obviously written in a language of redemption (“Eden”), of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*; it performs as a history of salvation and represents as such an object of discourse analysis in the wake of the linguistic turn.³⁷ Its attraction lies less in a valid account of the past than in the offer to escape the confusion that may be perceived by the historiographical developments in the wake of the foremost cultural turn.

Sensible Historiographical Expectations Concerning School Acts or Legislation

The section just above on “Neo-institutional historiography” testifies that school legislation—at risk of being condemned to irrelevance by the cultural turn and its many side branches of “new” historiographies as depicted above—is still an object of research. And “neo-institutional historiography” does not construct, like the “old” attempts did, and reduce school history to sequels of political debates and legislation, and it does indeed take *culture* into account as a kind of variable. However, in this historiography these cultural variables appear to be reduced to ultimately unimportant variables of one and the same global culture—namely the Western rational individual in his or her historical forms and manifestations across spaces, mostly nation-states. In this account, school laws do indeed have a meaning, but this meaning is interpretatively limited to testifying to the advancement and the advent of a globally shared culture, society, and of course school order. National legislations then are both manifestations and catalysts of progress on the road to global harmony.

It now becomes evident why I stated at the start of this chapter that this edited volume on school acts is being published at the right time. It puts school legislation back on the agenda of historical inquiry in education without following the (semi-)millennial agenda suggested by neo-institutionalism. In this volume, school legislation is connected to a cultural phenomenon, mass schooling, that took place in the context

of state-formation and nation-building in the long nineteenth century. Hence, this volume does not take school acts simply *as* school acts, as the traditional school history was inclined to do but relates school acts to the all-encompassing social and cultural transformation that the Western world underwent in the transition from the Ancien Régime to the age of nationalism.

There is a broad discussion about what nationalism is, and it is remarkable to see how theories at first advocated the *naturalness* of nationalism. This was criticized by a group of scholars who emphasized the role of *economic and social* phenomena of modernity in the invention of the idea of the nation, a theory which in turn was criticized *culturally* by the argument that myths, symbols, memories, values, and traditions had always existed but were then configured into the idea of the nation and of nationalism in the face of the phenomena of modernization.³⁸ Whatever theory scholars advocate, however, they agree that “nationalism” as the “ideology” of a very limited intellectual and political elite preceded the age of nation-building, and we have good reasons to assume that the rise of mass schooling and, with it, the general dissemination of (explicit and hidden) curricula play a decisive role in the generalization of nationalism or at least of national identity in the masses, creating what has been called “banal nationalism.”³⁹ Nationalism can be understood, then, as discourse, emerging at a particular time by referring to long historical tradition, cultural distinction and uniqueness, and a bright national future.⁴⁰

As people do indeed “invent traditions” but not in “circumstances of their own choosing,” they have to act within a shared cultural background. Nobody can simply invent a new social order at will and from scratch without connecting it in a meaningful way to pre-existing values.⁴¹ Accordingly, school acts are dependent not only on the institutions but also on cultural traditions that have a much older existence in the memories and values of the people. And as little as nations can be “invented,” school acts cannot be designed from scratch, and normally, encompassing reforms themselves undergo reform when they are applied in real life in classrooms, as the famous theory labeled the “grammar of schooling” brings to light.⁴² In a similar way, but focusing more on legislation, historians demonstrated quite early on

that, for instance, legislation in the revolutionary Helvetic Republic (1798–1803) was only successful if it followed laws or regulations of the Ancien Régime that had existed for centuries and that one of the reasons for the ultimate failure of the Helvetic Republic was the fact that it was devoted to a different interpretation of liberty and to a centralized rather than a federal system of political order.⁴³

We certainly speak here about culture but not about a uniform *world* culture that we face in the near future, and the current revival of not banal but crude nationalism in many nation-states of the world suggests that we refrain from semi-millennial hopes of redemption and motivates us to understand the interrelation between culture, nation(-state), and schooling. This deserves in-depth study of how schooling has been shaped in political deliberations that themselves, in turn, depended on longer cultural traditions. Accordingly, the modern school—taking here the example of the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland and based on micro-historical analyses—did not develop, as was traditionally believed, from the time that Zurich passed its “liberal” constitution in 1830 and in its wake the “liberal” school act in 1832 but instead developed gradually over a time span of more than 100 years between 1770 and 1870.⁴⁴ School acts and decrees, or school legislation, are themselves a cultural act, materializing existing (dominant) perceptions about what the “mass” means in “mass education.” And this is certainly not the same in Prussia or France or the Netherlands, to name just a few examples. And not seldom, school acts or decrees do not simply open the door for new practices but sanction pre-existing common practices, giving them legal justification and acting as standardizing means.

Prospects of Legislative Historiography in Education and Schooling

This edited volume titled *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling* makes an important step in putting education legislation back on the historiographical agenda without equating policy and legislation with schooling or even with education. It overcomes the partial disregard of a

new cultural history occupied with issues that traditional school history ignored for a long time, and it points to a sensitive alternative to the neo-sociological neglect of the differences between the various legislations as expressions and catalysts of traditions and inventions. It is an up-to-date and, in this sense, an alternative plea for a sound handling of policy and legislation.

Yet, this alternative approach faces particular problems with which historiography must cope with. Although it is plausible to focus on nation-states, historiography has to stay alert so as not to fall again into what is called methodological nationalism, or what I wish to term “epistemological nationalism,” or supposedly non-negotiable and thus usually non-negotiated points of departure of research that includes the framing of research interests and fields, the formulation of research questions, and the choice of research methods. These epistemologies are developed in academic milieus that are part of the larger elite culture, standardized in academic associations that in education are still predominantly nationally defined, protected in peer-review procedures in journals (often borne by national associations) and in job recruiting committees, and handed down in research, teaching, and examinations at the universities. The authors of the chapters in this volume have dealt with this challenge in various ways and skills, but fortunately, the one claim of a national *Sonderweg*—that as a *Sonderweg* stands in contrast to all the “united” other cases—remains an exception.

Of course, mass schooling developed within the frame of the (nation-)states. In some sense, what Michael E. Sadler, historian and comparatist of education, wrote over 100 years ago is still true: “A national system of education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties and ‘of battles long ago’. It has in it some of the secret workings of national life.”⁴⁵ To contemporaries around 1900, it was clear that “every school is a machine deliberately contrived for the manufacture of citizens,” and it was stressed that “each nation has ... the system best suited to its idiosyncrasies” and can “only be understood when seen in its own setting.”⁴⁶ The nationalist frame did not prevent people from looking across national borders, but they did not do so by adhering to a “best practice-policy” of copy and paste but by observing—in the perception of their own nationalist language or

discourse—whether other nations offered anything to learn. Admiration did not mean uncritical adoption, as we can see in the words of comparatist Robert E. Hughes: “The discipline of the German school is admirable, so is the general system of training – *for German children*; yet there can be no doubt that such a system would be the very worst for English or American children.”⁴⁷

This was, of course, a nationalist exaggeration, since transnational exchanges were not unusual at all. Not only was Prussia the object of curiosity and jealousy—beyond the fact that Prussia incorporated at least French ideas as well as Pestalozzi’s educational method and that Pestalozzi became almost a saint of the German teachers all through the nineteenth century⁴⁸—but also many of the evolving school systems were owed to complex mutual processes of transfer, translation, and transformation.⁴⁹ There is a large historiographical movement—which started by focusing on the borders between France and Germany—that emphasizes transnational dependencies of the emerging and developing nation-states and thus of their school systems. This historiographical movement developed several research agendas that all deal with the fact that nation-building, national institutions including education systems, and academic reasoning have developed in cross-national mutual interdependencies, without suggesting phenomena like “isomorphism.” Some keywords in this respect are “connected history,” “*transferts culturels*,” “*histoire croisée*,” “entangled history,” and “shared history.”⁵⁰

By providing a collection of historical essays on school legislation in different countries in the long nineteenth century, the editors of this volume definitely head in a direction of historiography that is sensitive to comparative aspects for the benefit of both actual transcultural transfers or other forms of complex dependencies and epistemological self-reflections, allowing authors to distance or even to emancipate themselves from the national epistemologies in which they were socialized, intellectual and institutional contexts, which allowed them to make institutional careers. Admittedly, this potential has not been exploited extensively by the authors of the individual chapters and case studies in this volume, even though some of the chapters point to transnational flows.⁵¹ However, the expectation of groundbreaking innovations may also be exaggerated for an edited volume that

of course cannot completely break new historical ground. Still, this volume provides readers and potential new publications with a convincing genre of research that is “modest” with regard to its unit of analysis, school legislation, and that has to be contextualized in a proper and illuminating way with regard to national ambitions, cultural legacies, and transnational or international flows in the formation of educational institutions. School legislation will, then, have rightly regained intellectual attention in research without claims of covering school history *in toto* but in its appropriate place in the intersection of national and educational policies on the one hand and curriculum in the broadest sense on the other.

Notes

1. The quote is from Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*; see also Flynn, “Foucault’s Mapping.”
2. Boli and Thomas, “World Culture in the World Polity.”
3. Generally speaking, it can be assumed that more people and more political institutions will be involved in these kinds of decision takings in democratic republics than in (absolute) monarchies, in which the extensive executive power would be more inclined to issue decrees than to enter into complex negotiations resulting in a law.
4. I follow here largely Tröhler, “History and Historiography.”
5. Spain’s national constitution guarantees limited autonomy of the nationalities and regions but does not allow these regions to have a constitution of their own.
6. Education historians may have been interested if a constitution had a paragraph concerning schooling, but they certainly did not care about the constitution as designing the desired social order and the ideal future citizens.
7. Tröhler, “Curriculum History in Europe”; Tröhler, “Curriculum History or the Educational Construction of Europe.”
8. With regard to creating loyalty through school reform, the study by Harp, *Learning to Be Loyal*, is exemplary.
9. On the interrelation between republicanism, nation-building, and education of the future citizens, see Tröhler, Popkewitz, and Labaree, *Schooling and the Making of Citizens*.

10. Lehembre, *Naissance de l'école moderne*; Nique, *Comment l'Ecole devint une affaire*; Criblez, Osterwalder, and Späni, "1798–1848–1874. Bildung und Politik"; Criblez, *Bildungsraum Schweiz*.
11. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism."
12. Regarding the linguistic turn, see Tröhler and Horlacher, "Histories of Ideas and Ideas in Context."
13. Fendler, "New Cultural Histories"; Dussel, "Visuality, New Materiality, and History"; Hermann, "Materialities and Iconography."
14. Schwarz, *Geschichte der Erziehung*.
15. Guizot, *Essai sur l'histoire*.
16. Hunziker, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Volksschule*.
17. For more details, see Tröhler and Horlacher, "Histories of Ideas and Ideas in Context."
18. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; Pocock, *The Concept of Language*; Skinner, "Reply to My Critics"; Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding."
19. See Tröhler, *Languages of Education*.
20. For instance, Valero, "Mathematics for All."
21. For instance, Osterwalder, "Die Sprache des Herzens"; Gomez Caride, "Governmentality and Religion"; Friedrich, "Global Microlending"; Zhao, *China's Education*.
22. Dussel, "Visuality, New Materiality, and History"; Depaepe and Henkens, *The Challenge of the Visual*.
23. Dussel et al., "Visuality and History of Education." The quote is from Priem and Dussel, *Images as Objects to Think With*.
24. McLeod, "Gender and Feminist Histories of Education"; Lesko and Berg, "New Curriculum History."
25. Zucker, "The Role of Institutionalization."
26. Meyer and Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations," 81, 104.
27. Meyer, Boli, and Thomas, "Ontology and Rationalization," 18.
28. Scott, *Institutions and organizations*, 57.
29. Meyer, "Introduction [1992]," 6–7.
30. Meyer and Ramirez, "The World Institutionalization of Education."
31. Soysal and Strang, "Construction of the First Mass Education Systems," 278.
32. Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer, "Explaining the Origins," 157.
33. This is a pure allegation that does not pass the test of historical-empirical inquiry, which becomes evident, by the way, in the current

- resurgence of nationalism. It makes sense, then, to understand at least concepts like ‘constitution,’ ‘society,’ and ‘citizen’ as *floating signifiers* that are materialized and codified in different nation-states in different ways; see Tröhler, “Curriculum History in Europe”; Tröhler, “Curriculum History or the Educational Construction of Europe.”
34. Meyer, “Introduction [1992],” 7; Meyer, Boli, and Thomas, “Ontology and Rationalization,” 23.
 35. Baker, *The Schooled Society*.
 36. Meyer, “Introduction [2012],” xiii.
 37. Tröhler, “Globalizing Globalization.”
 38. Özkrimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 49, 72, 143; see also Ichijo and Uzelac, *When Is a Nation?*
 39. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.
 40. Özkrimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 205–16.
 41. Zimmer, *A Contested Nation*.
 42. Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering Towards Utopia*.
 43. Wyss, “Die schweizerischen Landgemeinden”; Muralt, *Alte und neue Freiheit*.
 44. Tröhler, “Classical Republicanism, Local Democracy, and Education”; Tröhler and Hardegger, *Zukunft bilden*; Katzenstein, *Schule und Zivilreligion*.
 45. Sadler, *How Can We Learn*, 11.
 46. Hughes, *The Making of Citizens*, 4, 12, 387.
 47. Hughes, *The Making of Citizens*, 11.
 48. Osterwalder, “Condillacs Rose”; Tröhler, *Pestalozzi*, 80–94; Horlacher, “Do Educational Models.”
 49. Cowen, “Transfer, Translation and Transformation”; Cowen, “Comparative and Transnational Histories.”
 50. Strayer, *The Making of the Modern World*; Gruzinski, “Les mondes mêlés”; Espagne and Werner, “Transferts”; Fontaine, “Transferts culturels et pédagogie”; Werner and Zimmermann, “Penser l’histoire croisée”; “Beyond Comparison”; Sobe, “Entanglement and Transnationalism”; Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*.
 51. An exemplary case study reconstructing the formulation of very first school law of modern Luxembourg in 1842 considering the mutual influences from France, the Netherlands, and Belgium is provided by Thyssen, “The Stranger Within.”

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Index

A

- Absenteeism 5, 11, 33, 78–82, 135
- Alexander II, Tsar 255, 258, 260
- Allgemeine Schulordnung* 1774 17, 26, 37. *See also* General School Ordinance 1774
- Almueskolen* 125
- Ambulatory schools 202, 209, 210
- Ancien Régime 95, 97, 99, 171, 173, 360, 361
- Anglican, Anglican Church 285, 301, 303, 304, 306, 308, 309, 313, 328
- attendance, School 5, 22, 26, 32, 44, 69, 71, 80, 98, 104, 128, 156, 157, 210, 237, 284, 306, 307, 312, 315–319, 328
- Augustenborg, Duke of 124

B

- Balfour-Morant Act 1902 304, 310, 318
- Balle, Nicolai Edinger 122, 123
- Basedow, Johann Bernhard 122
- Berlin 26, 45, 48
- Bert, Paul 155
- Blair Bill, the 325, 327, 332–346
- Bonaparte, Napoléon 148
- Borgerskole* 125
- Boullanger crisis 155
- Bourbon Restoration 149
- Boys 31, 33, 73, 75, 76, 81, 82, 126, 149, 152, 156, 158, 159, 161, 174, 176–183, 187, 206, 235, 236, 267, 328
- education 31, 75, 76, 126, 148, 149, 152, 156, 161, 174, 176, 177, 180, 181, 206, 267

- schools 33, 71, 73, 75, 76, 81, 82,
 126, 149, 152, 156, 158, 159,
 161, 176, 178–183, 187, 206,
 235, 236, 267, 328
 Buisson, Ferdinand 155, 159, 164
- C**
- Cadiz Constitution 1812 173, 174,
 186
 Calvinism 86, 94, 95, 98–100, 102,
 103
 Cameralism 21, 34, 122
 Canadian Constitutional Act 1867
 277, 278, 280, 292, 295
 Carnot, Hippolyte 152, 153
 Casati law of 1859 2, 5, 224, 227,
 231, 237, 238, 242
 Catholic Church 18, 25, 34, 35, 55,
 173, 280, 285, 296, 298
 Catholicism 17, 21, 24–26, 45, 50,
 55, 69–71, 78, 94, 98–103,
 105–107, 109, 110, 152, 154,
 155, 174, 175, 177, 278, 279,
 281–295, 328
Certificat d'études primaires 156, 159,
 164
 Certificate 32, 85, 96, 148, 149,
 151, 156, 235
 certificate of ability 149, 151
 certificate of good behavior 149,
 151
 Christian confirmation 125, 126
 Christian VI, King of Denmark 119
 Civil War, the American (1861–
 1865) 74, 154, 326, 327, 329,
 343, 344
 Clemens IV, Pope 25
- Collèges* 149, 163
 Colonial 9, 10, 278, 281, 287, 295,
 296, 301, 302, 319, 342
 Common schools 6, 278, 281–283,
 285, 286, 288, 290, 296–298,
 311, 328, 329, 332, 334, 345
 Compulsory schooling 5, 10, 17–19,
 32, 33, 44, 50, 52, 79, 85,
 124, 128, 154, 156, 157, 207,
 210, 231, 236, 237, 303, 307,
 310, 316–318, 320. *See also*
 Obligation
 Condorcet, Marie Jean Antoine
 Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de
 73, 87, 174
 Copenhagen 125–127, 129–131,
 136, 139, 140
 Coppino Law 1877 237
 Cousin, Victor 41, 202
 Crimean War of 1853–56 255, 257,
 259
 Curriculum, Curricula 31, 47, 49,
 54, 56, 58, 71, 73, 75, 77,
 79, 82, 84, 96, 97, 104, 111,
 124, 126, 137, 138, 153,
 157, 158, 177, 190, 206,
 207, 212, 215, 244, 259,
 264, 267, 269, 279, 286,
 297, 307–309, 325, 332,
 354, 357, 358, 364–366
- D**
- Daneo-Credaro law 1911 224,
 238–241, 243
 Declaration of the Rights of Man
 and of the Citizen 145
 Diderot, Denis 147, 162

Discipline 24, 43, 59, 96, 147, 149, 363
Duma 256, 257, 269, 270
 Duruy, Victor 153, 163
 Duruy law 1867 148, 152, 153, 156, 160

E
École polytechnique 149
École primaire élémentaire 150
École primaire supérieure 150
Écoles maternelles 158
 Education Act of 1870 5, 302, 303, 305, 308–315, 317, 318, 320, 321, 326
 Educationalization 86
 Elizabethan age (1833–1868) 172
 Enlightenment 20, 24, 35, 47, 58, 93–96, 98–100, 110, 121, 122, 124, 146, 161, 171, 254, 336
 Enrolment rates 32, 266

F
 Falloux, Alfred de 152, 153
 Falloux law 1850 148, 152, 153, 158, 160, 163
 Ferry, Jules 154, 155, 163, 164
 Ferry laws 5, 148, 156, 157, 159
 Finnish War 1808–1809 198
 Forster, William Edward 306, 308, 311–313, 316, 317, 320
 Foucault, Michel 2, 12, 43, 59, 364
 Frederik VI 120
 French Revolution 34, 95, 124, 145–148, 152, 154, 155, 165, 351

G
 Galt, Alexander Tilloch 288, 289
Generallandschulreglement of 1763 1
 General School Ordinance 1774 17, 24, 26, 27, 32, 34

Girls
 girls schools 31, 235
 school girls 73, 152, 206, 328
 schools for girls 153, 154, 158, 176, 180, 181, 186, 187, 232

Goblet, René 155
 Goblet organic law 148, 155, 157, 158

Golovnin, Aleksandr 256–258
 Grammar school 51, 74, 76, 132, 135, 205, 281
 Great School Commission 121, 122, 124

Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume 150, 163
 Guizot law of 1833 1, 148, 150, 152, 160, 163
Gymnasium 27, 50, 60, 74

H
 Helvetic Republic 69, 72, 74, 87, 361
 Holstein 11, 119, 120, 122, 125, 126, 131
 Home schooling 156, 307
 Home to school distance. *See* School routes
 Household instruction 196, 213
 Human capital 217, 223, 225–227, 229, 236, 240, 241, 243–246, 319, 345
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von 48, 60

I

- Identity 10, 78, 85, 123, 147, 161, 174, 223, 227, 235, 278, 284, 360
- Ideology/Ideologies 79, 97–99, 101, 110, 111, 199, 269, 329, 343, 353, 360
- Industrialization, industrial revolution 121, 227, 229, 243
- In-kind 71, 129, 179, 211
salaries 71, 129, 131
taxes 71
- Itinerant teachers 70, 202. *See also* Ambulatory schools

J

- Jesuits 25, 30, 70
- Jews, the Jewish people 125, 126
- July Monarchy 150
- July Revolution 1830 76

K

- Karl XIV Johan 195
- Kindergarten 158
- Kingdom of Sardinia 223
- Korf, Nikolai Aleksandrovich 263, 273

L

- La Chalotais, Louis-René de Caradec de 146, 162
- Literacy, literacy rates 11, 71, 82, 135, 148, 174, 224, 239–241, 243, 333, 342

- Louis XVI 146
- Lowe, Robert 306, 308, 309, 313, 314, 316, 317
- Luther, Martin 196
- Lutheranism 26, 46, 50, 55, 98, 119, 123, 126, 137
- Lycée* 149

M

- MacMahon government 155
- Marx, Karl 254
- Mass schooling 3, 5–7, 57, 67–69, 79–81, 84–86, 94, 120, 121, 137, 145–149, 152, 153, 161, 163, 171, 196, 210, 214–217, 234, 243, 273, 274, 278, 284, 285, 309, 311, 351, 357–362. *See also* Popular schooling
- Minister of public instruction 150, 152, 153, 155, 164, 165
- Montesino Regulation 1838 172–174, 176, 186
- Moscow Literacy Society 267
- Moyano Act 1857 172, 175

N

- Napoleonic Wars (1803–15) 124, 134
- Nation building 148, 279, 281
- Normal school, *Normalschule*, *École normale primaire* 25, 27, 29, 30, 37, 56, 151, 158, 159, 165, 285, 297
- Norway 119, 126, 127, 202, 352

O

- Obligation 33, 37, 45, 71, 76, 107,
128, 134, 156, 157, 174, 175,
177, 233, 256, 259. *See also*
Compulsory schooling
Old Regime. *See* Ancien Régime

P

- Parish priest 148, 149, 151
Patriotism 93, 95, 123, 126, 137,
157
Payments by results 177
Pellet ordinance of 1836 152
Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich 49, 51,
363
Philanthropy 34, 94, 98, 111, 122,
161, 302, 306, 317, 336, 338,
339, 341, 346
Pietism 26, 45, 133
Pillarization 109, 114
Pius IX, Pope 102, 285
Popular schooling 161, 303. *See also*
Mass schooling
Pragmatic Sanction, The 19, 20, 35
Primary school 6, 9, 11, 67, 73, 75–
80, 82, 84, 85, 94, 121, 130,
149–164, 171–173, 175–178,
180, 182, 183, 185–187, 195,
197–199, 201–205, 207, 208,
210–212, 214, 224, 225, 230,
231, 233–237, 239, 241–243,
245, 246, 257, 260, 262, 263,
272, 302, 303, 305
primary education 13, 67, 75–80,
82, 94, 112, 113, 149, 150,
152, 154, 160, 162, 171, 172,

174–176, 179, 181, 183, 186,
224, 228, 231, 233–238, 240,
241, 302

primary instruction 149–154,
156–163

Private schools 47, 49, 94, 96–99,
102–106, 108–111, 128, 135,
153, 177, 231

Private teacher 128, 133, 134, 151

Protestantism/Protestants 17, 21,
22, 26, 45, 46, 69–71, 78, 86,
87, 94, 98–101, 103, 105,
106, 108–110, 150, 196, 199,
213, 214, 259, 278, 279, 281,
283–289, 291–294, 299, 328,
354

Public education 9, 85, 102, 104,
108, 161, 172, 174, 175,
233–235, 238, 269, 277, 278,
293, 304, 330, 336

public instruction 146, 150, 152,
153, 164, 165, 285

public schools 20, 24, 31, 46,
48, 56, 71, 76, 79, 96–107,
109, 110, 114, 125–128, 132,
136, 140, 153, 157, 158, 160,
161, 177, 182, 186, 234, 278,
280–282, 284, 287, 291–296,
298, 306, 332, 333, 336

R

realschule, realskole 26, 125, 132

resistance, Popular 208

Reventlow, Christian Ditlev Frederik
122

Reventlow, Johann Ludwig 122

- Revised Code of 1861 307
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 72, 87, 146, 162
- Royal ordinance of 1816 149–151
- S**
- salaries, Teachers 11, 30, 54, 57, 71, 75, 86, 104, 106, 120, 128, 139, 164, 203, 259, 262, 268, 307
- Sanctions 19, 35, 105, 156, 231, 361
- Schimmelmann, Ernst Heinrich von 122
- Schleswig 119, 120, 122, 125, 126
- School acts of 1814 126, 128, 129, 131, 202
- School boards 5, 53, 54, 127–129, 135–137, 203, 233, 235, 238, 259, 261–263, 294, 304–308, 310, 313–315
- School buildings. *See* Schoolhouses
- School districts 5, 10, 32, 77, 127, 128, 132, 202–205, 208, 211, 214, 233, 305, 306
- School fees 30, 33, 44, 120, 158, 177, 203. *See also* Tuition fees
- Schoolhouses 29, 44, 121, 128, 129, 134, 226, 233
- School inspection 26, 32, 33, 35, 49, 52, 56, 96, 99, 101, 205, 210–212, 214, 261, 265, 284, 302, 304. *See also* State school inspection
- School lands 340
- School routes 135, 205
- School subjects 10, 82, 126, 151–153, 157, 211–213
- School taxes 30, 71, 73, 96, 102, 153, 164, 215, 256, 266, 305, 306, 308, 313. *See also* Taxes
- Science 3, 12, 72, 74, 75, 124, 131, 159, 160, 246, 354, 356
- Secondary education, secondary schools 163, 242, 243, 245, 297
- Section 93* 277–281, 287, 289–291, 293–296
- Secularization 34, 147, 154, 157, 158, 293, 294
- Seven Years' War 1756–1763 22
- Silesia 17, 26, 38, 45, 71
- Social control 4, 207, 223
- Social question 200
- Someruelos Act 1838 172, 173, 175, 176, 185, 189
- Stapfer, Philipp Albert 72–76, 84
- State building 32, 34, 271
- State formation 3, 4, 7, 171, 187, 211, 271, 320, 340, 345
- State intervention 8, 102–104, 106, 108, 137, 224, 237–239, 243, 254
- State school inspection 32, 205, 210, 214. *See also* School inspection
- State subsidies 102, 104, 106, 108, 203, 204, 237
- Statistics 31, 59, 79, 139, 140, 163, 178–180, 186, 210–212, 217, 234, 235, 246, 269, 270, 274
- Surveillance 151, 163, 304. *See also* School inspection
- school 75, 151, 201, 258, 260, 266, 291, 295, 303, 304, 308, 319

surveillance committee 75, 151,
163, 201, 258, 260, 266, 291,
295, 303, 304, 308, 319
Süvern, Johann Wilhelm 42, 48, 60

T

Talleyrand, Charles-Maurice de 146,
147, 162

Taxes 23, 30, 71, 73, 95, 102, 122,
153, 164, 215, 236, 256, 266,
302, 304–306, 308, 313

in-kind 71, 129, 179, 211

monetary 177, 204, 343

Teachers 11, 26–30, 32, 33, 37, 38,
42, 44, 45, 47, 49–58, 69, 71,
73, 74, 76, 77, 79, 81, 86,
96, 97, 101, 104, 111, 120,
121, 129, 131–136, 139, 148,
149, 151, 154, 155, 157–160,
162–165, 177, 197, 203, 204,
206, 208, 209, 211, 216, 217,
226, 233, 235, 238, 239, 244,
261–265, 267, 273, 285, 286,
292, 307, 315, 320, 331, 333,
335, 352, 354, 363

salaries and wages 30, 54, 57, 71,
86, 104, 128, 131, 139, 158,
164, 203, 204, 229, 238, 239,
259, 262, 307, 335

secondary employment 30, 178

Teacher training college/seminar
122, 131, 139, 140, 178, 261

Textbooks 19, 28, 30, 35, 37, 76,
82, 85, 96, 97, 100, 133, 148,
157, 165, 259–261, 263–265,
273, 286, 355

learning material 148

Theresa, Maria (Empress) 17–25,
33–36

Third Republic 154–157, 159–162,
164, 165

Tuition fees 71. *See also* School fees

U

University, Imperial University 149

Urbanization 185, 253

V

Violence 200, 260

Voltaire, François-Marie Arouet 146

von Felbiger, Johann Ignaz 7, 9, 17,
26–30, 33, 34, 37, 71

W

Wages. *See* salaries, Teachers

War of the Austrian Succession
1740–1748 18, 21

Weber, Eugen 156, 164

Wilhelm I, Friedrich 18, 44, 59, 61

Winkelschulen 22, 36

World War II 225, 230, 241, 253

Z

Zemstvo 254, 256, 260–271, 273