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**SOCIAL CLASS AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:
THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1870**

Cameron Lowry

Honors Thesis

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The Elementary Education Act of 1870 was in some ways a legislative reflection of changes that had already taken place throughout England and Wales. During the nineteenth century, the English education system changed significantly. Formal changes came through legislation, but changes in attitudes and perception also affected the way many people, especially in the working classes, viewed education. Working-class attitudes had begun to shift positively towards education, which was demonstrated by different forms of schooling that flourished during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Upper and middle-class attitudes towards working-class education had also begun to shift, despite continuing fears that universal working-class education would cause the whole social system to collapse. By 1870, many people who were involved in educating the working classes in some way supported a state-run education system.

The Act of 1870 was intended to expand the provision of elementary education only, but it changed the British education system in unexpected ways.¹ Because all forms of education were connected, any legislative changes to elementary education also affected secondary education and adult education. The Act of 1870 built upon the system that already existed and created school boards to govern the new schools.² These newly created school boards struggled because they had no example to follow.³ As a result, the Act of 1870 was not the end of legislation regarding elementary education. From 1870 through 1903, further legislation built upon the system established in 1870. This paper

¹ Lord Reay, *Final Report of the School Board for London 1870-1904* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1904), 7.
<https://ia902708.us.archive.org/10/items/finalreportscho00reaygoog/finalreportscho00reaygoog.pdf>, xiv.

² Reay, xiii.

³ Reay, xiii.

will focus on the many unintended consequences of the Education Act of 1870. It will also highlight the strong class dimension of this act and its consequences.

The Act of 1870 was intended to apply to working-class children only, not middle- and upper-class children. Whereas education is often viewed as a means to rise up through the social system, this was not the case in Victorian England and Wales. State-run elementary education was directed towards working-class children and functioned in ways that kept the working classes in their place in the social order.

CHAPTER ONE: SCHOOLS BEFORE 1870

Many schools existed in England and Wales before the state-run elementary education system was established in 1870. Most of these schools were paid schools for middle- and upper-class children, but some attempted to provide free education for the poor. There were even state-funded schools, which received grants based on different criteria. There was no universal compulsory education before 1880, but education became required for increasing numbers of children during the first half of the nineteenth century. There were also many obstacles to the establishment of a national school system, including religious issues and families needing their children to work.

Before understanding how schools changed during this period, it is important to understand the structure and state of schools in the mid to late nineteenth century. Many different types of schools existed during this period, some of which influenced later types of schools. By 1850, the average working-class child received only two years of schooling and could read only at a rudimentary level.⁴

18th CENTURY LEGACIES: CHARITY AND DAME SCHOOLS

⁴ Alec Ellis, *Books in Victorian Elementary Schools* (London: Library Association, 1971), 9.

Charity schools and dame schools were both forms of education aimed at the working classes. Charity schools came from outside of the working-class community, and were funded by upper and middle-class reformers. Dame schools were created by the working classes and for the working classes. The conflict between outside aid and the working-class determination to be self-sufficient continued throughout the nineteenth century.

Charity schools were supported by public subscription, by organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and were designed for children who were orphans or dependents of freemen.⁵ Charity schools had been in existence since before the Protestant Reformation, but their numbers peaked in the eighteenth century, when more than 30,000 children attended charity schools.⁶ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, some charity schools still existed, but most had disappeared or merged with other schools.⁷ Charity schools worked to give children a moral, religious, and useful training, through a curriculum of religion, literacy, and some practical skills that had vocational value.⁸

Dame Schools were run by women who often had no qualification, who charged a rate per pupil per week, and taught things like reading and writing at a rudimentary level.⁹ These were often held in kitchens or houses while the teacher did her other work,

⁵ "Early Education for the Poor," Early Education for the Poor, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://workhouses.org.uk/education/early.shtml#Ragged>.

⁶ Jane Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working-class Women in Nineteenth-century England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 85.

⁷ Purvis, 85.

⁸ Purvis, 85.

⁹ "Early Education."

meaning they were often more like childcare than school.¹⁰ Sometimes, women would take in young children and babies. In a number of cases women took in too many young children and babies ended up neglected and sometimes even died.¹¹ Many working-class parents preferred to send their children to dame schools rather than church schools even though they were more expensive, because they were not tainted by middle-class philanthropy and they did not have rules about attendance, clean clothes, or short and tidy hair.¹² Many dame schools taught boys and girls to read, while girls would also learn sewing or knitting.¹³ In single-sex dame schools, there were serious gender differences in curriculum. Instructors in dame schools for girls typically only taught sewing and knitting, with occasional New Testament reading or other very easy reading.¹⁴ Meanwhile, gaffer schools, which were by men and designed for boys, focusing on teaching writing; some girls were allowed into gaffer schools by the late 1830s to learn writing and ciphering.¹⁵ Some dame schools survived into the twentieth century, but most existed during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

MORAL EDUCATION AND THE MONITORIAL SYSTEM

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a major evangelical movement in England and Wales, which became an important factor in the development of popular education.¹⁷ A misconception about the evangelical movement

¹⁰ “Early Education.”

¹¹ Purvis, 80.

¹² Purvis, 80.

¹³ Purvis, 80.

¹⁴ Purvis, 81.

¹⁵ Purvis, 81.

¹⁶ Purvis, 81.

¹⁷ David Wardle, *English Popular Education 1780-1975*, second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 7.

was that it was comprised only of Nonconformists, or non-Anglican Christians, but there was also a major evangelical group within the Anglican church.¹⁸ Many evangelical reformers were active in the Sunday school movement, but believed the goal of any education should be the ability to read the Bible.¹⁹ Moral education was also significant in the monitorial system, which was a form of education designed by Joseph Lancaster and the basis for the British schools. Moral education was implemented because parents wanted their children to learn more than just the rudiments.

The Sunday school movement began in the sixteenth century, but dominated the nineteenth century.²⁰ This dominance was associated with a newspaper publisher named Robert Raikes, whose interest led to the opening of a Sunday school in 1780 in Gloucester.²¹ The primary goal of early Sunday schools appeared to be an attempt to teach poor children how to read the Bible and save them from the corrupting influences of society and their parents.²² Although the movement began with middle- and upper-class reformers, it was adopted by the working classes, which made it effective.²³ Many of the founders and teachers were from the working classes.²⁴ In the early nineteenth century, more working-class children attended Sunday schools than weekday schools.²⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, between two-thirds and three-fourths of working-class children aged 5 to 15 were attending Sunday school.^{26 27} The efficacy of Sunday schools

¹⁸ Wardle, 7.

¹⁹ Wardle, 7.

²⁰ "Early Education."

²¹ "Early Education."

²² Purvis, 82.

²³ Purvis, 82.

²⁴ Purvis, 82.

²⁵ Purvis, 82.

²⁶ "Early Education."

varied, but it is likely that the system had a significant effect on mass literacy in nineteenth century England.²⁸ Most Sunday schools had between three and five hours of instruction each Sunday and used textbooks in small classes divided by ability not age; the average child would attend Sunday school for four years.²⁹ Because of fears that educating the poor could cause social unrest, Sunday school promoters had to be very careful and assure the upper classes that educating the poor would reinforce the status quo rather than overturn it.³⁰ Evangelical reformers accepted social stratification and discouraged working classes from trying to break out of the system, believing that breaking the status quo would make working-class people discontented.³¹

The monitorial system was based on an idea publicized by Quaker Joseph Lancaster; although he was not the first person to think of the system, he was able to systemize, publicize, and help spread the system.³² The monitorial system became so widespread and popular that it was known as “the system.” In “the system,” students worked in groups of ten or twelve pupils, each with a “monitor” who was in charge of the group.³³ Reading and spelling lessons were done in a competition similar to a spelling bee, where each student would have a chance to answer and would move up in position each time they answered correctly.³⁴ This system provided constant activity, and unlike

²⁷ Michael Sanderson, *Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1780-1870* (London and Basingstoke: Economic History Society, 1983), 13.

²⁸ Purvis, 83.

²⁹ Purvis, 83.

³⁰ Carl Kaestle, ed., *Joseph Lancaster and the Monitorial School Movement: A Documentary History* (New York and London: Teachers College Columbia University, 1973), 2.

³¹ Wardle, 7.

³² Kaestle, 4.

³³ Kaestle, 6-7.

³⁴ Kaestle, 6-7.

the graded system which came later, pupils were classified separately in each subject, including reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, and could move up when they showed competence in a subject.³⁵ Rather than focusing solely on the rudiments, “the system” emphasized moral education, particularly “Lancasterian values” of obedience, subordination, promptness, regularity, cleanliness, thrift, and temperance.³⁶ Lancaster and his supporters likened the system to the military or a machine, because the system was exactly the same anywhere it was implemented.³⁷

The biggest issue for the Lancasterian schools was how to teach religion, because there was so much conflict between the Anglicans and the Nonconformists.³⁸ Lancaster’s solution was to teach the Scriptures without providing any context, which he believed would remove the denominational issues, but this ended up leading to many problems for Lancaster and his supporters.³⁹ Even within Lancaster’s supporters, there was division about the issue of religion, as his supporters were not ideologically united.⁴⁰ Lancaster had many issues with debt, and in 1807, a group of philanthropists began to support his educational system and help him with his debt by forming The Royal Lancasterian Institute and soliciting public funding beginning in 1811.⁴¹ In 1813, in an attempt to distance the society from Lancaster’s personal conflicts, the society changed its name to the British and Foreign Schools Society.⁴² The British and Foreign Schools Society’s

³⁵ Kaestle, 7.

³⁶ Kaestle, 8.

³⁷ Kaestle, 11, 14.

³⁸ Kaestle, 18.

³⁹ Kaestle, 18.

⁴⁰ Kaestle, 22.

⁴¹ Kaestle, 19-20.

⁴² Kaestle, 19-20.

schools were called British schools.⁴³ Originally, the British and Foreign Schools Society was officially nondenominational, but it came to represent Nonconformist interests.⁴⁴ The British and Foreign Schools Society became the group for Nonconformist parents who did not want their children attending Anglican schools.⁴⁵

In response to Joseph Lancaster's issues with religion, an Anglican priest named Andrew Bell wrote a three-part series called *Elements of Tuition*, which outlined a system almost pedagogically identical to Lancaster's system, only differing on the issue of how to teach religion.⁴⁶ Bell and his supporters organized the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales, which established a model school in London with Bell as director.⁴⁷ The National Society, as it was called, had supporters of the Tory, High Church party, and support of the Archbishop of Canterbury and later King George IV.⁴⁸ While the British and Foreign School Society struggled with debt, the National Society had the support of the Established Church, and was able to raise £60,000 in its first four years.⁴⁹ The National Society's schools were called National Schools.⁵⁰ National schools were fee-paying and had many rules for students and parents, including requiring that children arrive on time, clean, washed, and combed, not keeping children home unless sickness or

⁴³ "Early Education."

⁴⁴ Sanderson, 18-19.

⁴⁵ "Elementary Education in the 19th Century," UK Parliament, accessed June 19, 2017, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/in19thcentury/>.

⁴⁶ Kaestle, 19.

⁴⁷ Kaestle, 20.

⁴⁸ Kaestle, 21.

⁴⁹ Kaestle, 23.

⁵⁰ "Early Education."

other permission had been granted; National Schools also expected their pupils to attend Sunday school regularly.⁵¹

In 1846, the pupil-teacher system was implemented, mainly due to the efforts of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth.⁵² In the pupil-teacher system, a boy or girl, who was at least thirteen, was apprenticed by a teacher for five years.⁵³ Each year of the system, the pupil-teacher would take an examination, and if they passed, they received a stipend, and the teacher received a supplement to their salary from the government.⁵⁴ Initially, teachers would instruct pupil-teachers outside of class, both on the content material and a form of pedagogy, but this was a significant strain on both parties.⁵⁵ By the 1850s, the government established pupil-teacher schools, which were basically secondary schools.⁵⁶ After pupil-teachers had completed their five years, they were qualified teachers who had their “parchment,” regardless of if they went on to attend college.⁵⁷

FACTORY ACTS AND COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

Even before the Act of 1870, Parliament passed laws that indicated a shift in British attitudes about education. In 1833, Parliament passed a Factory Act that changed many of the regulations regarding children in factories.⁵⁸ Some of the new laws applied to the number of hours children could work, depending on how old they were, that no children under nine could be employed in factories, and no children could work at

⁵¹ Purvis, 88.

⁵² Wardle, 103.

⁵³ Wardle, 103.

⁵⁴ Wardle, 103.

⁵⁵ Wardle, 103-104.

⁵⁶ Wardle, 103-104.

⁵⁷ Wardle, 103.

⁵⁸ "1833 Factory Act," The National Archives, accessed July 3, 2017, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/1833-factory-act/>.

night.⁵⁹ A new regulation also required that every child employed in factories must receive two hours of schooling per day.⁶⁰ Four factory inspectors were appointed to enforce the act, because factories often did not follow these laws.⁶¹ There were many recorded examples of factories breaking these laws and being fined, usually because of children being overworked illegally.⁶² If factory owners could not follow the most basic parts of the act, the age and hours restrictions, it is unlikely that many of them were concerned with educating children. But, the act's existence indicates that there was some concern for the well being of children and their education, even if not everyone in the country wanted to follow the regulations.

The estimated numbers of children who received some education as the result of the Factory Act of 1833 were not significant.⁶³ In 1835, the cotton, woolen, worsted, and flax factories employed 47,373 children under the age of thirteen, out of 354,684 total workers.⁶⁴ In 1856, there were 44,385 children under age thirteen employed in these factories, out of 682,497 total workers.⁶⁵ All of these children should have been receiving an education by law, but it is unlikely that they all did. Even if they had all been educated, it was still not a significant part of the overall population of school-aged children. Nevertheless, the act is important because it set a crucial precedent; the state, rather than the parents, had the right to mandate school attendance. Parents could even be

⁵⁹ "1833 Factory Act."

⁶⁰ "1833 Factory Act."

⁶¹ "1833 Factory Act."

⁶² "1833 Factory Act."

⁶³ J. S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918* (Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 44.

⁶⁴ Hurt, 44.

⁶⁵ Hurt, 44.

fined, between five shillings and £1, if they did not send their children to school.⁶⁶

Wealthier employers risked a fine between £1 and £3 per child if they illegally employed children, or £5 if the employment was at night, but they were also permitted to deduct school pence at two pence a week or at a rate of one penny out of each shilling of the children's earning.⁶⁷

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS

Industrial Schools were for destitute children who had not committed serious crimes, and were intended to give children an education, teach them a trade, and remove them from environments with bad influences.⁶⁸ In some cases, these children had committed minor crimes, but sometimes the magistrates believed they needed to be removed from their environment so that they would not eventually commit a crime.⁶⁹ In Industrial Schools, children woke at six in the morning and went to sleep at seven in the evening, and during the day, they had school, learned trades, ate meals, did housework, had family worship services, and had time for play three times a day.⁷⁰ Boys learned trades such as gardening, tailoring, and shoemaking, while girls learned trades such as knitting, sewing, housework, and washing.⁷¹

Industrial Schools were initially run and attended voluntarily, but that changed after 1857.⁷² In 1857, Parliament passed the Industrial Schools Act, which gave magistrates the power to sentence children between ages seven and fourteen to time in

⁶⁶ Hurt, 44.

⁶⁷ Hurt, 44.

⁶⁸ "Ragged Schools, Industrial Schools and Reformatories," Hidden Lives, accessed June 19, 2017, <https://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/raggedschool.html>.

⁶⁹ "Ragged Schools."

⁷⁰ "Ragged Schools."

⁷¹ "Ragged Schools."

⁷² "Ragged Schools."

Industrial Schools.⁷³ This act was aimed at children who were brought to court on charges of vagrancy.⁷⁴ They were intended to expand the work of ragged and reform schools, which many people believed were doing some good but were not doing enough.⁷⁵ Ragged schools were opened by people concerned that some children were not getting the proper education, and the schools were named for the ragged clothing and shoes the children attending these schools often wore.⁷⁶

In 1861, Parliament passed another Industrial Schools Act that expanded the reasons why children could be sent to Industrial Schools.⁷⁷ This included children, apparently under age twelve, who had committed crimes punishable by prison or less. This also included children, apparently under age fourteen, who were begging or receiving alms, who were wandering the streets and had no home or “visible means of support” or were found in the company or reputed thieves. Parents could also send children under fourteen to Industrial Schools if they decided that their children were beyond their control.⁷⁸ Children had to be “apparently” under age twelve or fourteen, because children would lie about their age and, because it was not required to record births until 1875, children often did not know how old they were.⁷⁹

Though the reasons why children were sent to Industrial Schools differed from than the reasons why children would attend elementary day schools, both types of schools became compulsory during this period. Formerly, all types of schools were voluntary, but

⁷³ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁴ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁵ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁶ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁷ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁸ “Ragged Schools.”

⁷⁹ “Ragged Schools.”

the shift to compulsory education shows that British attitudes towards education shifted around this time.

The Reformatory Schools Act of 1854 was concerned with children below age sixteen who were sentenced to at least fourteen days imprisonment.⁸⁰ After their sentence, these children could now be sent to a reformatory school for between two and five years.⁸¹ In 1855, the Reformatory Schools Act applied to children below age sixteen who had received at least ten days imprisonment.⁸²

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

One important issue in the creation of the state-run education system was whether the schools should represent a specific religious denomination or provide secular education.⁸³ This ended up being an obstacle to the establishment of the system, because many powerful religious institutions did not want a state education system that was secular.⁸⁴ The Church of England especially did not want secular schools, because leaders of the Church did not want to lose the institutional power they had over elementary education before 1870.⁸⁵ These religious groups were concerned that British children would be forced into secular education.⁸⁶ Some groups, such as the National Education League, believed that all children should have access to free, compulsory, and non-

⁸⁰ Hurt, 58.

⁸¹ Hurt, 58.

⁸² Hurt, 58.

⁸³ "The 1870 Education Act," UK Parliament, accessed June 19, 2017,

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/>.

⁸⁴ "The 1870 Education Act."

⁸⁵ Hurt, 67.

⁸⁶ "The 1870 Education Act."

denominational education.⁸⁷ There was conflict among the groups advocating for a non-denominational or secular system as well.⁸⁸ Many Nonconformists wanted board schools to completely replace the voluntary schools, especially the Church schools.⁸⁹

Eventually, the groups advocating for free, non-denominational education succeeded, but the supports of the Church-linked schools succeeded as well. The Act of 1870 required that all schools under the Board would have non-denominational teachings.⁹⁰ School boards, however, were only established in areas without a voluntary board, so in many areas the Church of England school remained the only option.⁹¹ The issue of secularization of schools thus did not disappear after 1870.

One of the biggest issues relating to religion in schools was whether or not to teach the Bible, and if used, the best method of teaching scripture. This was one of the fundamental conflicts between the different denominations, because each had their own ideas about instruction in the Bible. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Bible was the book most commonly used for reading in schools, because it was published for a cheaper price than most other books used in schools, and widely available.⁹² The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge only permitted discounts on the price of the Bible, not secular books, so the Bible was the only option for many schools.⁹³ Because of the high cost of schoolbooks, some administrators and members of the government thought the government should subsidize the books, but there were issues over what those books

⁸⁷ “The 1870 Education Act.”

⁸⁸ Hurt, 79.

⁸⁹ Hurt, 79.

⁹⁰ “The 1870 Education Act.”

⁹¹ “The 1870 Education Act.”

⁹² Ellis, 16.

⁹³ Ellis, 16.

would be.⁹⁴ There was a consensus that education should teach children morals, which meant they needed religious teaching, so the issue was which denominational doctrines to teach.⁹⁵ Opposition to teaching the Bible in schools came partially from Nonconformists who did not want Anglican Bible teaching, and from Secularists, who did not want any religious instruction. But there was also opposition from the School Inspectors, many of whom were Anglican clergymen.⁹⁶ Their fear was twofold: first, that children reading the Bible in schools would not give it its due reverence; and second, that the children would have difficulty reading and would then associate that difficulty with religion, rather than with reading itself.⁹⁷ There was not clear solution. The problem of using the Bible continued throughout the nineteenth century; the Bible was one of the biggest issues in the debates surrounding the establishment of a national school system.

SCHOOL FUNDING AND THE REVISED CODE OF 1862

The government did fund education before the Act of 1870, even though there were no school boards or compulsory education system. In the 1860s, public funding for education reached just over £800,000 per year.⁹⁸ The first time government assistance was given to schools in England was 1833, when the House of Commons approved a grant for two voluntary education societies.⁹⁹ The first society given a grant was the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor, which was founded in 1811, and worked with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which had 230 schools

⁹⁴ Christopher Stray and Gillian Sutherland, "Mass markets: education," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), VI: 364.

⁹⁵ Stray and Sutherland, 364.

⁹⁶ Ellis, 16.

⁹⁷ Ellis, 16.

⁹⁸ "The 1870 Education Act."

⁹⁹ "Elementary Education."

already established.¹⁰⁰ Between 1839 and 1850, the Anglican Church's schools received eighty percent of the government's exchequer grants.¹⁰¹ The second society given the grant was the British and Foreign School Society.¹⁰² The grant was £20,000 between the two societies, which would be over £2,000,000 in the present day.¹⁰³ By 1857, the annual grant was over £500,000.¹⁰⁴ Even though there was no official state school system established, there was a national system forming. The National and British schools were the two dominant forms of elementary education.

In July of 1861, Robert Lowe, Vice President of the Committee of the Council on Education, introduced the Revised Code of 1862.¹⁰⁵ The central component of the Revised Code of 1862 was a system of "payment by results," where children could earn grants for their schools based on attendance and adherence to certain curricular goals.¹⁰⁶ Children could earn different amounts of money based on their performance, depending on their age.¹⁰⁷ Children under age six could earn a grant of six shillings and six pence based purely on their attendance.¹⁰⁸ Children over six could earn four shillings based on average attendance, as well as two shillings and eight pence each for a pass in each of the three Rs, or reading writing, and arithmetic; the maximum payment per child was twelve

¹⁰⁰ "Elementary Education."

¹⁰¹ Jones, 9.

¹⁰² "Elementary Education."

¹⁰³ "Elementary Education."; J. Alexander, "The Treasury Grants, 1833-1839," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 01, 1974): 80, JSTOR.; "Inflation Calculator," Education and Museum, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx>.

¹⁰⁴ "Elementary Education."

¹⁰⁵ Donald K. Jones, *The making of the education system 1851-81* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 43.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, 43.

shillings.¹⁰⁹ The Revised Code did not allow for students to repeat a Standard, though this did continue to happen after 1862.¹¹⁰ After the examination results were counted, a block grant would be given to schools.¹¹¹ The schools that could receive government grants under the Revised Code of 1862 was limited; only schools that charged less than nine pence in fees could be eligible.¹¹² The nine pence limit was calculated as the average per capita weekly cost of maintenance of a child in a government assisted school.¹¹³

Teachers were given financial incentives based on the results of their students. This system was rather controversial; some believed this was a fairer way to distribute grants, while some, such as Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, the Secretary to the Committee of Council on Education in its first ten years, criticized the focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic.^{114 115} One example of this “payment by results” system occurred in Nottingham, where there was a written pay scale, and men earned their salary of between £ 110 and 130 plus one-third of the grant, while women earned their salary of between 70 and 80 pounds plus one-fourth of the grant.¹¹⁶ One of the problems caused by this system was that teachers would often drill one book into students’ heads throughout the year, so that students could “read” the books, but really just had them memorized.¹¹⁷

By limiting the subjects in school curricula to reading, writing, and arithmetic, the Revised Code of 1862 asserted that schools’ functions were teaching secular knowledge,

¹⁰⁹ Jones, 43.

¹¹⁰ Stray and Sutherland, 369.

¹¹¹ Jones, 43.

¹¹² Hurt, 11.

¹¹³ Hurt, 14.

¹¹⁴ Jones, 43-44.

¹¹⁵ Jones, 9-10.

¹¹⁶ Wardle, 106.

¹¹⁷ Ellis, 28.

not religious instruction.¹¹⁸ Even though the teachers were better qualified, they were not willing to experiment or think outside of the box, which was reinforced by the Code of 1862.¹¹⁹ Many teachers did not really support this system, as it imposed standardization on the schools in order for them to receive funding.¹²⁰ Many people also did not support this system because it meant that rural and industrial areas that did not have schools could not receive money to start new schools.¹²¹

Members of the government wanted to make sure that government grants were only used for the poorest children, because they believed that otherwise, better-off parents would take advantage of free education and lose all self-reliance.¹²² In the 1860s, the Department of Education adopted a new stance in determining which children should be eligible for government assistance.¹²³ Their policy was that men who did not work under anyone, such as masons, blacksmiths, fisherman, and other similar occupations, but had people working under them, did not qualify for government assistance.¹²⁴ But, policemen, coastguards, dock and railway workers, and other similar occupations qualified for government assistance because they did not profit from the labour of anyone else.¹²⁵ The law effectively meant that children's eligibility for free schooling and meals were determined by their parents' occupations.¹²⁶

MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETIES

¹¹⁸ Jones, 44.

¹¹⁹ Wardle, 106-107.

¹²⁰ "Elementary Education."

¹²¹ "Elementary Education."

¹²² Hurt, 13.

¹²³ Hurt, 13.

¹²⁴ Hurt, 13.

¹²⁵ Hurt, 13.

¹²⁶ Hurt, 13.

Mutual improvement societies were not elementary schools, but were for adults who had not received the proper education when they were children.¹²⁷ Mutual improvement societies consisted of between six and one hundred men from the working and lower-middle classes, who met either in their own homes or in a church or a chapel.¹²⁸ At each meeting, one member would deliver a paper on any subject such as politics, religion, ethics, literature, or “useful knowledge,” which would be followed by a general discussion among the group.¹²⁹ The idea with these groups was to develop the verbal and intellectual skills of people who never had to think critically or speak in their working lives.¹³⁰ These groups were attractive to working men because they allowed freedom of expression, had no pupil-teacher hierarchy, and had reasonable costs.¹³¹

Mutual improvement societies were, however, unstable, as they relied upon steady support from only working and lower-middle-class men.¹³² Often, these men would drop out of the societies after acquiring basic literacy, which would cause the group to fall apart.¹³³ But, accepting middle-class help would have meant losing independence and therefore losing the working-class men’s support.¹³⁴ Until 1870, mutual improvements societies provided adult remedial schooling. After the Act of 1870

¹²⁷ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 58-59.

¹²⁸ Rose, 58.

¹²⁹ Rose, 58.

¹³⁰ Rose, 58.

¹³¹ Rose, 58.

¹³² Rose, 65.

¹³³ Rose, 65.

¹³⁴ Rose, 65.

took effect, England and Wales approached universal literacy, and many of these societies turned to politics and literature.¹³⁵

Because they met in pubs, and female illiteracy was so high, these groups were almost exclusively male.¹³⁶ By the late 1870s, most of the mutual improvement societies were admitting women, but even by the end of the nineteenth century many of the northern societies still did not include women.¹³⁷ Some mutual improvement societies for women were created, such as the Women's Co-operative Guild, which was founded in 1893 and continued to grow until 1938 when it had 88,000 members.¹³⁸

Mutual improvement societies were created to fill the gap that existed because there was no state education. Once this gap had been filled, instead of disbanding, mutual improvement societies adapted, and became centers for further learning for working-class adults, which was one of the unintended consequences of the 1870 Act. The changes that occurred following the Act of 1870 were not just by the government; there was social change occurring among the English people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1870

After the government granted £20,000 in support of the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society in 1833, the question stopped being if the government should intervene in education and became one of how the government should intervene.¹³⁹ State intervention was hindered by the conflict between the government and

¹³⁵ Rose, 73.

¹³⁶ Rose, 71.

¹³⁷ Rose, 77.

¹³⁸ Rose, 77.

¹³⁹ Jones, 9.

the Anglican Church, which wanted to reassert control over the education of working-class children.¹⁴⁰ There were many movements before 1870 to create a national education system, and while they all failed, they paved the way for the Education Act of 1870.¹⁴¹

One of the most important popular education movements emerged from the Anti-Corn Law League. Between 1815 and 1846, Britain had mercantilist laws in place that prevented importing grains, which were referred to as the Corn Laws.¹⁴² When the laws were repealed, due to many factors, the Manchester-based, Radical Anti-Corn Law League claimed victory.¹⁴³ After this victory, the Anti-Corn Law League looked for other systems to reform.¹⁴⁴ In 1847, some members of the Anti-Corn Law League founded the Lancashire Public School Association, which they changed to the later became the National Public School Association.¹⁴⁵ The members of the National Public School Association advocated for a system of national, free, secular, rate-supported, locally controlled schools that were based on the model of Horace Mann's American Common School system.¹⁴⁶

In 1850, the Lancashire Public School Association held a conference on expanding nationwide in Manchester.¹⁴⁷ One delegate at this conference was W.E. Forster, from Bradford, who would later become a member of Parliament and write the 1870 Act.¹⁴⁸ One topic of discussion was what to name the association now that it was

¹⁴⁰ Jones, 9.

¹⁴¹ Jones, 15.

¹⁴² Jones, 2.

¹⁴³ Jones, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Jones, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, 16.

¹⁴⁶ Jones, 16.

¹⁴⁷ Jones, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Jones, 19.

spreading nationwide and could no longer just be the Lancashire Public School Association; this became a contentious issue.¹⁴⁹ Some delegates wanted to call it the National Secular School Association, but Forster feared that this would lead to charges of irreligion, and threatened to leave if this was the name chosen.¹⁵⁰ Instead, the new name was the National Public School Association.¹⁵¹

Religion was also a conflict for the National Public School Association, with the biggest disagreements occurring over how to teach the Bible.¹⁵² The Nonconformists wanted non-denominational religious instruction, but the compromise reached was that parents had the option to send their children to religious instruction at times when the rest of the school was closed; this instruction would be done by teachers hired specifically for religious instruction, not the secular teachers.¹⁵³

Between 1850 and 1870, there were many attempts to reform the education system. In 1855 alone, five separate education bills were introduced into Parliament; two of these were Scottish education bills.¹⁵⁴ Though all of these bills were unsuccessful, they showed that many members of Parliament were concerned with reforming the education system.¹⁵⁵ Between 1850 and 1868, four Royal Commissions on education made recommendations for the modernization of older universities, adaptation of public and endowed grammar schools to contemporary needs, and rapid expansion of elementary

¹⁴⁹ Jones, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, 19.

¹⁵¹ Jones, 16.

¹⁵² Jones, 19-20.

¹⁵³ Jones, 20-21.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Jones, 24.

schools into closer control by central authority.¹⁵⁶ But, the real push for mass education occurred in 1867, with the extension of the franchise.¹⁵⁷

In 1867, the artisan class won the right to vote, which doubled the number of eligible male voters in England and Wales.¹⁵⁸ There had been a debate for a long time in Parliament over whether education or the right to vote should come first, but once the enfranchisement occurred, there was a push for mass education.¹⁵⁹ Robert Lowe, former Vice President of the Committee of the Council on Education, gave a speech to Commons on July 15, 1867, in which he emphasized how important it was for the masses and “future political masters” to be educated once they had political power.¹⁶⁰ Lowe initially did not want the lower classes to have the right to vote because he believed they lacked decency and morality, but once they could vote, he set out to create an education system as a last defense against what he believed could become anarchy.¹⁶¹ Lowe believed education could teach the working classes to recognize that their social superiors were more highly cultivated and that recognition would keep the social system in place.¹⁶²

W.E. Forster did not believe people needed education before they could vote, because he knew if the vote were conditional on education then people would have to wait a long time before they had either.¹⁶³ Once the franchise was extended, Forster

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 28.

¹⁵⁷ Jones, 48.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Jones, 49.

¹⁶⁰ Jones, 49.

¹⁶¹ Jones, 50.

¹⁶² Jones, 50.

¹⁶³ Jones, 51.

immediately began working on a new education bill.¹⁶⁴ Prime Minister Gladstone appointed W.E. Forster Vice President of the Committee of the Council on Education in 1868, which pushed Forster even farther toward an education bill.¹⁶⁵ Forster was given many different options regarding a new education bill, but he decided to base his proposed legislation on the Manchester template.¹⁶⁶ His initial proposal allowed for voluntary schools to be rate-supported if they earmarked the money for secular instruction.¹⁶⁷

Forster introduced his bill on February 17, 1870; to general acclaim but some amendments were made before passage. Forster wanted to permit the new rate-provided schools teach only secular subjects or also provide non-denominational Biblical instruction.¹⁶⁸ Gladstone, who was High Anglican, believed this would not uphold religious purity, so he decided schools could either teach denominational religion or no religion at all.¹⁶⁹ His intention was not to limit education to one particular denomination, but he thought it was unacceptable to have non-denominational religious teachings in schools.¹⁷⁰ Ultimately, Gladstone failed, and compromise from the National Public School Association became law, meaning that board schools had to provide non-denominational religious instruction, but parents had the right to remove their children

¹⁶⁴ Jones, 51.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, 56.

¹⁶⁶ Jones, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, 63.

¹⁶⁸ Jones, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Jones, 63.

¹⁷⁰ Jones, 63.

from the religious instruction.¹⁷¹ There was a proposal to make reading the Bible compulsory, but that was rejected.¹⁷²

On Lowe's suggestion, the bill denied rate-support to voluntary schools in return for an increased exchequer grant of fifty percent.¹⁷³ This amendment created a "dual system," with voluntary schools and board schools under separate control.¹⁷⁴ The voluntary and privately run schools continued to run as they had before the 1870 Act, and new board schools were established in communities with no voluntary provision.¹⁷⁵ Initially, the board schools were only attended by the poorest of children, but by the end of the 1870s and into the 1880s, better paid working-class families began to send their children to the board schools.¹⁷⁶ By the 1890s, over 2,500 new school boards existed in England and Wales, which had all been created by the Education Act of 1870.¹⁷⁷ But, there were also about 14,000 management committees for individual voluntary schools.¹⁷⁸ This system was very uneven because the voluntary schools only received central state funding, but schools under the school boards also received local funding.¹⁷⁹

A proposal to elect the new school boards by ballot passed against Tory opposition after an all-night sitting.¹⁸⁰ These new boards had many responsibilities in adapting the school system in their districts. Provisions varied in different areas, because

¹⁷¹ Jones, 20-21.

¹⁷² Jones, 67.

¹⁷³ Jones, 66.

¹⁷⁴ Jones, 66.

¹⁷⁵ Hurt, 71.

¹⁷⁶ Hurt, 71.

¹⁷⁷ "Further Reform, 1902-14," UK Parliament, accessed June 19, 2017, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/reform1902-14/>.

¹⁷⁸ "Further Reform."

¹⁷⁹ "Further Reform."

¹⁸⁰ Jones, 67.

every district had some discretion and had slightly different ways of running their district. Before 1880, individual school boards could even choose whether or not to enforce compulsory education. Forster also proposed that sending children to school should be compulsory, but he faced Tory-Anglican opposition and wanted to pass the bill, so the compromise was that individual districts could enforce attendance however they wanted.¹⁸¹ Eventually, however, members of the government recognized that not every board was going to be proactive in enforcing legislation, so they made elementary school attendance compulsory in 1880.

The school boards faced significant obstacles in creating a new school system. Some of the issues, including changes to standards and curricula, were anticipated, but many unintended consequences of the Act of 1870 required subsequent legislation and new policies put in place by the school boards.

The Act of 1870 was intentionally vague so that it could be more easily adapted in the future. This intentional vagueness, however, led to some issues with understanding.¹⁸² The act did not even define what “a child” was or what “Elementary Education” meant.¹⁸³ Not until 1902, with the passage of a new Education Act, were these key issues resolved.¹⁸⁴

In the period between 1870 and 1902, a variety of legislation supplemented the initial act. The 1876 Royal Commission on the Factory Acts recommended compulsory education as a solution for ending child labor.¹⁸⁵ The 1880 Education Act made school

¹⁸¹ Jones, 63-64.

¹⁸² Reay, xiv.

¹⁸³ Reay, xiv.

¹⁸⁴ Reay, xiv.

¹⁸⁵ “The 1870 Education Act.”

attendance compulsory for all children ages five through ten.¹⁸⁶ In 1893, the age was extended to age eleven; in 1899, it was extended to age twelve.¹⁸⁷ The Elementary Act of 1900 raised the compulsory age limit from thirteen to fourteen.¹⁸⁸ The raise in the compulsory age limit went into effect in May 1901.¹⁸⁹ With the compulsory age being raised in 1901, children between three and fourteen were registered.¹⁹⁰

The Elementary Act of 1902, drafted by AJ Balfour, was designed to address the conflicts between the school board and the management committees.¹⁹¹ The Elementary Act of 1902 reorganized the administration of education on the local level.¹⁹² The Act dissolved all of the school boards in England and Wales and placed all elementary schools under the control of local education authorities of the county and county borough councils.¹⁹³ The Elementary Act of 1902 also began the formal Secondary Education system.¹⁹⁴ Councils were encouraged, but not required, to subsidize existing secondary schools and provide free spots for working-class children, but, these schools still tended to cater to middle-class children.¹⁹⁵

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS AND MEMBERS

The School Boards created by the Education Act of 1870 were meant to be the most democratic of all local government elected bodies in England and Wales, but that

¹⁸⁶ “The 1870 Education Act.”

¹⁸⁷ “The 1870 Education Act.”

¹⁸⁸ Reay, 16.

¹⁸⁹ Reay, 16.

¹⁹⁰ Reay, 21.

¹⁹¹ “Further Reform.”

¹⁹² “Further Reform.”

¹⁹³ “Further Reform.”

¹⁹⁴ “Further Reform.”

¹⁹⁵ “Further Reform.”

was not true in practice.¹⁹⁶ Once elected, members sat on the boards for three years.¹⁹⁷ All members had to be rate-payers, or tax-payers, but there were no property or residential qualifications, and in this regard, all members were treated equally.¹⁹⁸ The extension of the franchise in 1867 and the creation of local government elected bodies was a means of obtaining more efficient administration, and also made self-government valued by many people.¹⁹⁹

School board elections had a cumulative voting system, where each elector could cast as many votes as there were members.²⁰⁰ Each elector could choose to cast all of their votes for the same candidate or they could spread their votes out among the candidates.²⁰¹ Secret ballots were not universally enforced until 1872.²⁰² Most of the boards had been five and fifteen members, so people usually had been five and fifteen votes.²⁰³ London was the exception; there were forty-nine school board members in 1870 but in 1882 the London board increased to fifty-five members.²⁰⁴

But, many obstacles existed for the working classes regarding involvement in the school boards.²⁰⁵ One major issue was voting hours.²⁰⁶ In London, voting took place from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, so the timing was not a problem for working men.²⁰⁷ But, outside of London, voting only had to take place for seven hours in a row, which usually meant

¹⁹⁶ Hurt, 75.

¹⁹⁷ Hurt, 75.

¹⁹⁸ Hurt, 75.

¹⁹⁹ Hurt, 77.

²⁰⁰ Hurt, 71.

²⁰¹ Jones, 71.

²⁰² Jones, 72.

²⁰³ Jones, 71.

²⁰⁴ Jones, 71.

²⁰⁵ Hurt, 83.

²⁰⁶ Hurt, 83.

²⁰⁷ Hurt, 83.

voting was from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm.²⁰⁸ These hours created problems for men who started work early and ended work late.²⁰⁹ There were attempts by working men in Sheffield in 1870 and Birmingham in 1873 to get the polls to stay open until 8:00 pm, but these attempts failed.²¹⁰ The argument made by those in charge was the voting was held on the shortest days of the year and that voting should only occur during daylight hours.²¹¹ Polling places were also far away from where working men worked, so even if they could leave early from work they could not reach the polls in time.²¹² In 1885, the Third Reform Bill fixed hours for parliamentary, municipal, and most school boards elections from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.²¹³

The working classes also faced additional issues serving on the school boards, and as a result, few working-class people served on the boards.²¹⁴ School board membership was best suited to people who were independently wealthy or could choose when they worked, as the school boards met during school hours and met often.²¹⁵ For example, in Birmingham in 1875, the School Board Chairman had 128 meetings and the nine other members of the board had more than seventy meetings.²¹⁶ The school board members were also very busy, including having to do jobs that today would be done by paid

²⁰⁸ Hurt, 83.

²⁰⁹ Hurt, 83.

²¹⁰ Hurt, 83-84.

²¹¹ Hurt, 83-84.

²¹² Hurt, 84.

²¹³ Hurt, 84.

²¹⁴ Hurt, 95.

²¹⁵ Hurt, 95.

²¹⁶ Hurt, 95.

officials.²¹⁷ When the school board was first created in Bradford, the members had to visit over one hundred schools to compile an educational census.²¹⁸

Board school teachers were banned from sitting on school boards after the Revised Code of 1875, which was accepted by the National Union of Elementary Teachers.²¹⁹ Therefore, any teachers who did sit on boards were either private school teachers, women who had given up teaching when they married, former teachers, or those subsidized by local associations.²²⁰ Many school board members had no professional experience in schools, so they were often out of touch and had no interest for the problems of teachers and schools.²²¹

ATTENDANCE AND SCHEDULING

The Education Department calculated in the 1860s that one-seventh of the population were in the upper and middle classes, and therefore would provide their own education.²²² The new system was based on the assumption that upper and middle class parents would not want to send their children to school with the working classes.²²³ This meant that six-sevenths of the population belonged to the working classes that fell under the state system.²²⁴ In 1870, the elementary school population was about 1,500,000, and by 1880, it was about four million.²²⁵

²¹⁷ Hurt, 96.

²¹⁸ Hurt, 96.

²¹⁹ Hurt, 96.

²²⁰ Hurt, 96.

²²¹ Wardle, 109.

²²² Hurt, 5.

²²³ Hurt, 5.

²²⁴ Hurt, 5.

²²⁵ Ellis, 21.

One of the biggest issues leading to differences in the expected numbers and actual numbers was that there was no precise way to anticipate the numbers of children who would need education. Many discrepancies existed between the 1872 Report and the reality.²²⁶ For example, in 1872, the London School Board estimated 88,661 more places were available than there actually were in 1871, when there were only 262,259 available.²²⁷ The London Board already knew that 103,863 places were needed, which meant that the total was actually 192,524 needed.²²⁸ In 1874, the London Board's officers were told to keep their records so they could re-schedule districts each year, but they continued to rely on the 1871 census for years.²²⁹

Between 1870 and 1903, attendance improved, with certain years reaching record-breaking numbers.²³⁰

Year	Percentage of Children Attending Schools
1871	78.3%* ²³¹
1881	79.7%** ²³²
1896	80.4% ²³³
1899	81.2% ²³⁴
1901	82.4% ²³⁵

²²⁶ Reay, 10.

²²⁷ Reay, 10.

²²⁸ Reay, 10.

²²⁹ Reay, 14.

²³⁰ Reay, xx.

²³¹ Reay, xx.

²³² Reay, xx.

²³³ Reay, xx.

²³⁴ Reay, xx.

²³⁵ Reay, xx.

1902-1903	85.6% ²³⁶
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*Did not reach 78.3% again until 1877

**Did not reach 79.7% again until 1895

The school boards found that it was more difficult to enforce compulsory education than to register all of the children.²³⁷ However, attendance numbers improved steadily after 1880, which continued until the First World War.²³⁸ An increasing number of children also attended Anglican schools, representative of the dual system. From 1870 to 1900, Church school attendance more than doubled, from 844,344 in 1870 to 1,855,802 in 1900.²³⁹

The London School Board, for example, initially underestimated the numbers of children, because they did not realize how many children they would really have to serve.²⁴⁰ In 1881, the London Board found that the population they were serving was about one-sixth of the population, which was a proportion that increased throughout this period.²⁴¹ Initially, the London Board's estimation of how many children they would have to serve was about a quarter of a million lower than the actual number.²⁴² This problem was not unique to London, but due to the much larger population and higher availability of records, London serves as a good example of some of the issues facing school boards throughout England and Wales.

²³⁶ Reay, xx.

²³⁷ Stray and Sutherland, 373.

²³⁸ Stray and Sutherland, 373.

²³⁹ Hurt, 176.

²⁴⁰ Reay, 1.

²⁴¹ Reay, 1.

²⁴² Reay, 1.

After realizing they were not sure about the number of children requiring education, the Board set up committees to assess the need for education in each Division.²⁴³ One Division was for children between ages three and five and the other Division was for children between ages five and thirteen.²⁴⁴ Combining the number of children who were enrolled in school and the children who should be, the Board found that the total number of children who should be provided with Elementary Education was 478,718.²⁴⁵ The number of children who needed Elementary Education between ages three and five was 139,095, with 70,440 attending and 68,655 not attending.²⁴⁶ The number of children who needed Elementary Education between ages five and thirteen was 435,598, with 328,239 attending and 107,359 not attending.²⁴⁷

Schools had different ways of allotting spaces for the different divisions. The Managers of the National School, Luton, Bedfordshire, wrote to the Education Department that they wanted to allow “two-sevenths for boys, two-sevenths for girls, and three-sevenths for infants.”²⁴⁸ The schools considered infants to be children between ages three and five.

Many children who fell in the elementary education age range did not attend. In 1872, 176,014 children did not attend school.²⁴⁹ Of these children, 95,975 had a valid excuse, while the other 80,039 children had no valid excuse.²⁵⁰ Some of the excuses given for children were that they were ill, disabled, too young, working at home, working

²⁴³ Reay, 4.

²⁴⁴ Reay, 4.

²⁴⁵ Reay, 7.

²⁴⁶ Reay, 6.

²⁴⁷ Reay, 6.

²⁴⁸ Reay, 24.

²⁴⁹ Reay, 5-6.

²⁵⁰ Reay, 7.

abroad, half-timers, whole-timers, absent from neglect, and other causes.²⁵¹ There were some acceptable excuses for not attending school; illness and physical disability were automatically accepted, but the Board had to decide which other issues were valid.²⁵² Children under age five were allowed to stay home because there was nothing the Board could do to take the children away from those parents.²⁵³

The London School Board decided that half of the cases of children at work would be accepted, so whether or not children who were working were excused from school was based on their circumstances.²⁵⁴ The use of compulsory education to stop children working was not entirely effective though, as by 1901, around 300,000 children in the UK worked outside of school hours.²⁵⁵ The high numbers of children working meant that truancy was a major problem, because many families relied on their children's incomes and could not afford to send them to school.²⁵⁶

CONDITION OF CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOLS

Many of the children attending schools were in poor condition, but it took a long time for anyone to recognize this problem, and even longer before it was addressed.²⁵⁷ This was a major unintended consequence of compulsory education, and it forced policymakers to confront issues of health and hunger amongst the poorest children. As far back as the 1860s, a group of teachers in Horncastle, Lincolnshire, was campaigning

²⁵¹ Reay, 6.

²⁵² Reay, 6.

²⁵³ Reay, 6.

²⁵⁴ Reay, 6.

²⁵⁵ "The 1870 Education Act."

²⁵⁶ "The 1870 Education Act."

²⁵⁷ Hurt, 101.

against children coming to school with lice.²⁵⁸ But, the children in the worst condition would likely not have attended school before 1870.²⁵⁹ The “underfed” children, which is how higher classes referred to hungry and malnourished children at the time, would not have attended schools before 1870 unless they were schools that specifically targeted the poorest children.²⁶⁰

The physical condition of school children did not become a major issue nationwide until the end of the nineteenth century, but schools were dealing with the poor conditions of many children beginning in 1870.²⁶¹ In 1894, Dr. James Kerr, England’s first medical officer, did an examination of 300 children in Bradford and found that a third of the children had not taken their clothes off for at least six months.²⁶² Parents who were too poor to afford heating would just sew their children into their clothes for winter.²⁶³ There were often no baths in the slums, a situation that continued until after World War II.²⁶⁴

Because many children were “underfed,” there was a movement to provide free meals to children in schools.²⁶⁵ Free school meals were more likely to be found in urban areas than rural; urban schools were likely to give out soup, while the rural programs that did exist often just gave children cocoa.²⁶⁶ Yet many of those in charge feared that giving too much food to children would pauperize the parents, so free meals often provided just

²⁵⁸ Hurt, 102.

²⁵⁹ Hurt, 102.

²⁶⁰ Hurt, 102.

²⁶¹ Hurt, 102.

²⁶² Hurt, 103.

²⁶³ Hurt, 103.

²⁶⁴ Hurt, 103.

²⁶⁵ Hurt, 105.

²⁶⁶ Hurt, 105-106.

the minimum amount of food necessary to keep the children alive.²⁶⁷ Many members of the government in 1884, including J.G. Fitch, Chief Inspector for the Education Department, believed it was parental responsibility to keep their children fed.²⁶⁸ Some members of the government attempted to determine whether children were underfed because of parental indifference and irresponsibility or because of poverty, but this was impossible.²⁶⁹ There were people who thought the restrictions on which children were eligible for free meals were too harsh, but many children suffered because of perceived faults of their parents.²⁷⁰

In 1899, due to the scale of social problems affecting London schools, the London School Board appointed a Joint Committee on Underfed Children.²⁷¹ The purpose of this committee was to make sure children were not abusing charity meals, by keeping watch on how many students were taking the meals each day.²⁷² No other areas had similar boards until after 1906.²⁷³

CHAPTER THREE

The Education Department and the school boards also had to make choices regarding the design of the schools, the curriculum, and the standards. In some instances, regarding curriculum and standards, the Education Department and the boards were continuing practices that began before 1870. But they were also creating a system more expansive than had existed in England and Wales before 1870.

²⁶⁷ Hurt, 105.

²⁶⁸ Hurt, 108.

²⁶⁹ Hurt, 108.

²⁷⁰ Hurt, 110-111.

²⁷¹ Hurt, 144.

²⁷² Hurt, 144.

²⁷³ Hurt, 144.

London provides a good example in examining the unexpected consequence of the Act of 1870 and compulsory education, because London was the most influential school board, and in some respects served as a model for smaller boards. Due to increases in the London population, the public demand for education, and the number of children attending public schools, the School Board's responsibility expanded.²⁷⁴ The population of London increased between 1871 and 1904, from 3,261,000 to 4,536,000, which was an increase of 1,275,000 people.²⁷⁵ In addition to an increase in the population, there was also an increase in public interest in the education system.²⁷⁶ In December 1898, the Board wrote that because public opinion was continuing to look favorably on public education, it believed that more children over the age of thirteen would voluntarily stay in school.²⁷⁷

PHYSICAL DESIGN OF SCHOOLS

Early schools were often ill-adapted to teaching, "partly because of the fact that there was very little professional knowledge of the requirements of a good school, and partly because there was a very meagre code of the then Education Department."²⁷⁸ There was often poor workmanship in the building of schools, so many of the facilities would be falling apart.²⁷⁹ Often the staircases were "long, steep, narrow, and ill-lighted."²⁸⁰ These schools had no cloakrooms, and when they did exist they were insufficient.²⁸¹ The

²⁷⁴ Reay, xv.

²⁷⁵ Reay, xv.

²⁷⁶ Reay, xiii.

²⁷⁷ Reay, 20.

²⁷⁸ Reay, 35.

²⁷⁹ Hurt, 170.

²⁸⁰ Reay, 35.

²⁸¹ Reay, 35.

classrooms were “unsuitable” sizes, with bad lighting, often coming from behind the students.²⁸² The sites were often too small to have sufficient playgrounds.²⁸³

Rural school facilities were especially bad.²⁸⁴ In 1897, the National Union of Teachers produced a pamphlet criticizing rural schools in general, using one rural school as an example for how bad the conditions really were.²⁸⁵ The school was gloomy and dark, so it was hard to see; the school had to light lamps all day in winter, as the windows were very small.²⁸⁶ One of the classrooms was formerly a stable and the playground and the approach to the latrines are always covered in water.²⁸⁷

The decorative detail was a variable in the cost of schools.²⁸⁸ The School Board policy was to “give these buildings, as public buildings, some dignity of appearance, and make them ornaments rather than disfigurements to the neighbourhoods in which they are erected.”²⁸⁹ The cost difference was only about five percent, and the schools were received better by the neighborhoods if they were more decorated.²⁹⁰ During this period, the “cost of maintenance” per child rose steadily, mostly because of an increase in teacher salaries.²⁹¹ Even the later Boards, which needed to make schools more cheaply in poorer neighborhoods, did not disregard the look of the schools, because they wanted the school buildings to be a “contrast to their poor surroundings.”²⁹²

²⁸² Reay, 35.

²⁸³ Reay, 35.

²⁸⁴ Hurt, 168.

²⁸⁵ Hurt, 168.

²⁸⁶ Hurt, 168.

²⁸⁷ Hurt, 168.

²⁸⁸ Reay, 39.

²⁸⁹ Reay, 39.

²⁹⁰ Reay, 39.

²⁹¹ Reay, xxii.

²⁹² Reay, 39.

The number of children a school could accommodate was initially calculated based on square footage.²⁹³ The number of square feet per child changed over time, and was also different for infants than it was for children.²⁹⁴ Around 1879, classrooms were made for sixty students, with a “minimum superficial area” of ten square feet in the Senior departments, which became the rule in school planning.²⁹⁵ In London, infants’ departments in the older Board schools gave eight feet per infant, but on February 23, 1897, the Board changed this to nine square feet per child.²⁹⁶ Beginning in 1899, the Senior departments of all Voluntary schools gave ten square feet per child.²⁹⁷

The idea of calculating the number of children per square feet did not always work in practice.²⁹⁸ Sometimes managers of schools would say that their schools could not accommodate the number of children the “Department would have the Board credit them.”²⁹⁹ One example was the Jews’ Free School in Whitechapel, where the Department calculated square footage using the “total area of the school, including drill and examination halls, workshop, cookery room, etc.” even though they were not available as classrooms, so they should not have been used in the calculations.³⁰⁰ Another example was the Wesleyan School, Westminster; on the eight-foot basis, the number given by the Managers did not match up with the Education Department numbers.³⁰¹

²⁹³ Reay, 34.

²⁹⁴ Reay, 34.

²⁹⁵ Reay, 36.

²⁹⁶ Reay, 27.

²⁹⁷ Reay, 27.

²⁹⁸ Reay, 28.

²⁹⁹ Reay, 28.

³⁰⁰ Reay, 28.

³⁰¹ Reay, 28.

Eventually, the London School Board decided it would be more efficient to designate the number of children by classroom, not square footage. "On July 4th, 1901, the Board determined that, in order that no class should exceed 50 usually present, or 60 on the roll, in new schools, the rooms be, as a rule, planned for 40, 48, 50; and that not more than one or two rooms be planned for 56 or 60"³⁰² By 1903, they had 559,668 places filled in permanent schools, with many more projected.³⁰³ By 1903, there were 475 permanent schools, all with either one or two stories.³⁰⁴

New schools were designed in a way that classrooms led off from corridors, allowing fresh air into the rooms from opposite sides.³⁰⁵ This new design helped combat the smells of dirty children, which was always a problem but was especially bad in the winter, when many children would be sick in the classrooms.³⁰⁶ Even when improvements began, there were still issues.³⁰⁷ For example, when corridors were introduced, they also had to serve as cloakrooms, but they were too narrow, so hanging cloaks in them was "inconvenient and dangerous."³⁰⁸ Throughout this period, schools often had separate entrances and, if the school had space, separate playgrounds for the two sexes.³⁰⁹

STANDARDS

³⁰² Reay, 38.

³⁰³ Reay, xxi.

³⁰⁴ Reay, xxi.

³⁰⁵ Hurt, 170.

³⁰⁶ Hurt, 170.

³⁰⁷ Reay, 35.

³⁰⁸ Reay, 35.

³⁰⁹ Jane Martin, "To 'Blaise the Trail for Women to Follow Along': Sex, Gender and the Politics of Education on the London School Board, 1870–1904.," *Gender & Education* 12, no. 2 (June 2000): EBSCO.

With the push for a large-scale elementary education system, there was also a necessity to establish some type of standards by which to assess the schools. Often schools faced difficulties in meeting the standards. One major issue was that children were often assessed by standards meant for younger children, which meant that they continued to follow lower standards and would never reach the higher standards.³¹⁰ Initially, the standards were based on the Revised Code of 1862. Even by 1874, educational assessment had not improved very much; at this time, the Inspectors were only really assessing attendance and cleanliness, hoping that if students were in good schools with “efficient teachers,” they would eventually have the results the Board wanted.³¹¹ Often, children would fail the examination for one standard, which meant they could not move on to the next standard. This would be comparable to not being promoted to the next grade level in modern schools. For the second standard, or the second level, all children had examinations for reading, writing, and arithmetic, and Plain needlework for girls.³¹² In 1874, one Inspector appointed by the London School Board to inspect a school said the school’s inefficiency was due to most children not meeting the standards for their ages. None of the children between ages eight and eleven could meet the arithmetic standards for their age; not even short division. Only one out of fifteen of the children between age six and eight could write the letters of the alphabet from dictation.³¹³

Despite such problems, educational attainment improved throughout areas where the school boards were in charge, particularly in London. In 1873, 2.2 percent of children

³¹⁰ Reay, xv-xvi.

³¹¹ Reay, xvi.

³¹² Reay, xv.

³¹³ Reay, xvii.

in the London Board's schools were above third Standard, but by 1903, it was 30 percent.³¹⁴ In 1886, 1.2 percent of children in the London Board's schools were in "Seventh and Ex-Seventh standards," and by 1903, it was 4.4 percent.³¹⁵ Even though improvements were made, many children remained far below their age-appropriate standard.

CURRICULUM

In response to unexpected results from the Education Act of 1870, the London School Board continued to make changes to its curriculum. The infants' schools, for children ages three to five, had no real curriculum.³¹⁶ The standards above Standard III were considered senior schools, which had their own curriculum.³¹⁷ The first London Board's Committee wrote a Curriculum Report that suggested essential and discretionary subjects.³¹⁸ Essential subjects included the Bible and "Principles of Religion and Morality, taught in accordance with the famous "compromise," which the board had already adopted."³¹⁹ Essential subjects also included reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar and composition.³²⁰ In the Senior Boys' Schools, essential subjects included bookkeeping and mensuration, meaning "geometry applied to the computation of lengths, areas, or volumes from given dimensions or angles".³²¹ Essential subjects also included systemized object lessons, with a course in elementary instruction in physical science for

³¹⁴ Reay, xvii.

³¹⁵ Reay, xvii.

³¹⁶ Reay, xvi.

³¹⁷ Reay, xvi.

³¹⁸ Reay, xviii.

³¹⁹ Reay, xviii.

³²⁰ Reay, xviii.

³²¹ Reay, xviii.; *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Mensuration," definition 2, accessed June 21, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mensuration>.

six school years, as an introduction of science exams given by the Science and Art Department,³²² as well as the history of England, elementary geography, elementary social economy, elementary drawing, music, and drill.³²³ For girls, essential subjects also included plain needlework and cutting-out.³²⁴ Discretionary subjects included domestic economy, or “the theory and practice of household management,” algebra, and geometry.

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In 1888, subjects were added because “children leaving school should be more fitted than they are now to perform the duties and work of life before them.”³²⁶ The subjects that were added in 1888 included manual training, Slöjd, or wood-working, Mechanics, Practical Geometry, Hand and Eye Training, and Cookery,” which was only for girls.³²⁷ Cookery involved cooking and kitchen skills, but the cookery girls did learn was often impractical, because working-class girls would often learn cookery with ingredients that would not be available to them in their real lives.³²⁸ Girls also had to give up one of their academic subjects if they chose to take cookery.³²⁹ By the 1890s, the curriculum for the girls also included “laundry work and housewifery.”³³⁰ Some people, including some female London School Board members, thought girls’ education should be “equal but different,” so domestic subjects were promoted for girls.³³¹ The Code of

³²² Reay, xviii.

³²³ Reay, xviii.

³²⁴ Reay, xviii.

³²⁵ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Domestic Economy,” accessed June 21, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domestic%20economy>.; Reay, xviii.

³²⁶ Reay, xviii.

³²⁷ Reay, xviii.

³²⁸ Hurt, 184.

³²⁹ Hurt, 184.

³³⁰ Martin.

³³¹ Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984), 94.

1900 put more of an emphasis on teaching the English language, following the lead of the Americans.³³² The Code of 1900 also put more of an emphasis on history, so that students could more actively participate in social duties.³³³

Throughout the nineteenth century, many schools had difficulty choosing books for their students to use. The idea of the modern textbook, originally stylized as textbook, was introduced around 1830.³³⁴ In the 1830s and 1840s, Irish Commissioners produced schoolbooks that cost a few pennies each, which made them attractive to English schools as well.³³⁵ In 1852, after complaints about the Irish Commissioners undercutting the British government, the Irish Commissioners lost their publishing privileges.³³⁶ They could still offer the special prices to Irish schools, but everyone else had to buy the books at full price directly from the publishers.³³⁷ The first collection of books specifically for England and Wales on education, including textbooks, was created after the 1851 Exhibition.³³⁸

The national proportion of the budget spent on books did not improve much after 1870.³³⁹ Before 1870, there was a specific book grant, but after 1870, there was not a proportion of the budget set aside for books.³⁴⁰ Many children still did not have books at

³³² Reay, xix.

³³³ Reay, xix.

³³⁴ Stray and Sutherland, 359.

³³⁵ Stray and Sutherland, 366.

³³⁶ Stray and Sutherland, 366.

³³⁷ Stray and Sutherland, 366.

³³⁸ Stray and Sutherland, 366.

³³⁹ Ellis, 29.

³⁴⁰ Stray and Sutherland, 373.

the end of the nineteenth century; some children still did not have adequate schoolbooks by the mid-twentieth century.³⁴¹

Year	Percentage of School Budget Spent on Books
1844	5%
1852	8.3%
1880	6.1%
1890	5.5%
1900	7%

From 1870 to 1890, the distinction between readers and textbooks increased.³⁴² In 1881, School Inspectors were encouraged to emphasize to schools that books used to teach reading should be different from textbooks for other subjects.³⁴³ Schools were encouraged to have different sets of books for each subject, with reading books used to fine tune reading skills.³⁴⁴ But, schools did not always have books for every subject. The London School Board provided textbooks in arithmetic, geography, and grammar, but instructed schools to teach the other classes orally.³⁴⁵

After 1870, the Committee of the Council on Education instructed Inspectors to not recommend specific books to schools.³⁴⁶ But, the Inspectors recognized that many school managers and teachers still needed guidance, so they suggested publishers should

³⁴¹ Stray and Sutherland, 374.

³⁴² Ellis, 30-31.

³⁴³ Ellis, 30-31.

³⁴⁴ Ellis, 30-31.

³⁴⁵ Ellis, 36.

³⁴⁶ Ellis, 31.

be required to submit books for approval by the Education Department.³⁴⁷ In 1884, it was agreed that Inspectors should not allow schools to use books that were clearly unsuitable or did not follow the requirements of the Code.³⁴⁸

In 1881, a new type of textbook was introduced that students could use for the entire year.³⁴⁹ Schools had about forty weeks of teaching in the year, with six weeks for holidays and six for revisions before examinations.³⁵⁰ The textbooks for the lower standards would have forty lessons, while the textbooks for higher standards would have sixty sections, consisting of material for “due length” lessons.³⁵¹ The Code of 1884 clarified what “due length” meant, making a general rule that in Standards I and II, textbooks would have forty lessons with at least eighty pages of small text, while books for the higher standards were required to have sixty lessons and at least one hundred and twenty pages.³⁵² Specific page counts were given because if the books were too short, students would be able to memorize them by the end of the year, and therefore they would not really be reading during their examinations.³⁵³

The content of the books remained a problem even after 1870. One of the biggest problems that increased after 1870 was the use of baby talk, proletarian accents, and broken English in dialogue in children’s books, which meant it was difficult to teach children to read from those books.³⁵⁴ This was also considered to be a drawback of using recreational literature; even though it was often more interesting for children, it did not

³⁴⁷ Ellis, 31.

³⁴⁸ Ellis, 31.

³⁴⁹ Ellis, 30.

³⁵⁰ Ellis, 30.

³⁵¹ Ellis, 30.

³⁵² Ellis, 30.

³⁵³ Ellis, 30.

³⁵⁴ Ellis, 27.

always provide an acceptable model of English vocabulary and grammar.³⁵⁵ Many of the books produced for schools had no illustrations, which made it difficult for some students to be captivated by the reading.³⁵⁶ In 1891, publishers realized this was a problem and began printing graphic books for the schools, with lithographically printed illustrations.³⁵⁷

The teachers of domestic subjects, such as cookery, were usually women.³⁵⁸ The teaching of domestic subjects was seen as suitable for even middle-class women, while elementary teaching was only considered an achievement for working-class women.³⁵⁹ Mrs. W. Fothergill, an examiner employed by the London School Board to review their cookery, “argued the need for women ‘of higher cultivation and social status,’ whose ‘sense of taste’ and ‘dainty cleanliness’ would make them superior teachers.”³⁶⁰ Working-class women were thought to be unsuitable for teaching cookery because their poor upbringing meant that they did not have good taste.³⁶¹

It could also be difficult for schools to find qualified teachers. H.B. Philpott, who wrote a contemporary account of the London School Board, wrote that it was difficult to appoint qualified male teachers, because for men, teaching was considered a poor profession, even though it was a good profession for women.³⁶²

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT AND EFFICIENCY

³⁵⁵ Ellis, 26-27.

³⁵⁶ Ellis, 29.

³⁵⁷ Ellis, 29.

³⁵⁸ Annmarie Turnbull, "An Isolated Missionary: The Domestic Subjects Teacher in England, 1870-1914," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994): 83, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612029400200042>.

³⁵⁹ Turnbull, 83.

³⁶⁰ Turnbull, 84.

³⁶¹ Turnbull, 84.

³⁶² Wardle, 109.

Initially, schools received grants based on how well their students performed in individual subjects.³⁶³ Schools could have low or average performance in some subjects and good performance in others, but they would be judged according to performance in each individual subject, rather than judged by all of the subjects at once.³⁶⁴ With the Code of 1900, “block” grants were introduced, which gave schools overall grants, rather than for each individual subject; “block” grants judged schools as a “harmonious entity.”³⁶⁵ The result was that failures in a single subject could now cost a school its entire grant. For example, one thing that could cost schools their government grants was not teaching girls needlework.³⁶⁶

Especially in the beginning of the School Board system, most of the attention of the London School Board and the schools was focused on getting children to attend schools. As a result, many schools were inefficient, which the Board knew. Even as early as August 1871, many schools were condemned in the Board’s report as inefficient.³⁶⁷ In inefficient schools, older students often attended a school for at least two years and were only tested at the second standard, which meant they would never be tested on the upper standards, because they would be out of school.³⁶⁸ By 1903, there were 1,149 efficient schools, with 312,925 scholars in London.³⁶⁹ There were 250 schools in London that were either just efficient in buildings or instruction, but not both, with 37,995 scholars.³⁷⁰

³⁶³ Reay, xix.

³⁶⁴ Reay, xix.

³⁶⁵ Reay, xix.

³⁶⁶ Martin.

³⁶⁷ Reay, 4.

³⁶⁸ Reay, xv.

³⁶⁹ Reay, 8.

³⁷⁰ Reay, 8.

In all of London's board schools, there were 1,399 schools completely or partially efficient, with 350,920 scholars.³⁷¹

DEVELOPMENTS FROM ELEMENTARY DAY SCHOOLS

As an unintended result of the Act of 1870 and subsequent legislation, a few types of schools developed from Elementary Day Schools. The intention of the Act of 1870 was to create a national elementary education system, but other forms of education developed to fill gaps elementary schools left. Elementary Day Schools were the schools that rose to prominence during this period, for children up to age thirteen to go to school during the day. The three main developments from Elementary Day Schools were Higher Grade Schools, Evening Schools, and Special Education Schools.³⁷²

Higher Grade Schools were similar to Secondary Schools, but were not exactly the same.³⁷³ Higher Grade Schools were for children who were either too young to attend or perhaps would never attend secondary school.³⁷⁴ Before 1900, most people had no need to attend secondary school, so they would stop after elementary school.³⁷⁵ In some cases, however, students would arrive at the highest standard before they could leave school, either because they were legally too young, after the introduction of compulsory education in 1880, or because their parents wanted them to have more education.³⁷⁶ The government added a seventh standard, which still did not solve the problem, so higher grade schools were created.³⁷⁷ Larger school boards, beginning with Bradford, gathered

³⁷¹ Reay, 8.

³⁷² Reay, xx.

³⁷³ Reay, xx.

³⁷⁴ Wardle, 37.

³⁷⁵ Wardle, 116.

³⁷⁶ Wardle, 37.

³⁷⁷ Wardle, 37.

all of these students into higher grade schools, where they essentially did secondary school work.³⁷⁸ Higher grade schools often sought to create some sort of vocational secondary education.³⁷⁹ Usually, higher grade schools focused on science and technical subjects, but there were also some commercial schools, which were comparable to trade schools.³⁸⁰ Initially, the commercial schools were for boys, but eventually girls could also attend.³⁸¹ Sometimes, it was possible for children to go straight from higher grade schools to higher education, without ever attending secondary school.³⁸² There were not very many higher grade schools, as they could only exist in large towns and had no support from the Education Department, because of their questionable legality.³⁸³ According to the Act of 1870, government grants that were supposed to be given to elementary schools; the Act, however, only addressed the lower limits of elementary education, not the upper limits.³⁸⁴

The legal status of higher grade schools was one of the issues that led to the Act of 1902.³⁸⁵ Higher grade schools were created for working-class students, which the Act of 1902 did not take into account. In addition to abolishing the school boards, the 1902 Act established official secondary and technical education.³⁸⁶ The Act of 1902 encouraged councils to subsidize existing grammar schools and provide free places for working-class children; councils were also permitted to set up secondary grammar

³⁷⁸ Wardle, 37.

³⁷⁹ Wardle, 129.

³⁸⁰ Wardle, 129.

³⁸¹ Wardle, 129.

³⁸² Wardle, 129.

³⁸³ Wardle, 129-130.

³⁸⁴ Wardle, 37.

³⁸⁵ Wardle, 37.

³⁸⁶ "Further Reform."

schools.³⁸⁷ Unfortunately for working-class children, the expansion of secondary education was slow, and catered mainly to the middle classes.³⁸⁸ Higher grade schools were taken away, but the system that replaced them largely excluded the working classes, which left working-class children with few options for education beyond elementary school.

Evening Schools also evolved as a result of the 1870 Act.³⁸⁹ Before 1870, Evening schools were for uneducated adults, but once more children were educated, they were less necessary and saw low attendance.³⁹⁰ By the end of this period, Evening schools in ways that expanded the work of Day schools, by allowing children to continue their education in the evenings, or attend school in the evenings if they could not attend school during the day.³⁹¹

Special Educations centers were established for the “training of physically and mentally defective children,” which was a new development for the time.³⁹² When the Act of 1870 was passed, there was no intention of providing special education, but one of the unintended consequences of the Act was the need for special education. Lord Reay, author of *Final Report of the School Board for London 1870-1904*, writes that the “admirable work which has been done for the blind, the deaf, the cripples, and the feeble-minded is, I believe, universally recognized.”³⁹³ The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 established special schools by extending compulsory

³⁸⁷ “Further Reform.”

³⁸⁸ “Further Reform.”

³⁸⁹ Reay, xx-xxi.

³⁹⁰ Reay, xx-xxi.

³⁹¹ Reay, xx-xxi.

³⁹² Reay, xxi.

³⁹³ Reay, xxi.

education to blind and deaf children.³⁹⁴ The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899 extended compulsory education to physically impaired children.³⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

Literacy is often used to determine how educated a group is, but literacy rates can be deceiving. In nineteenth century England, literacy was determined by a person's ability to sign for a marriage license.³⁹⁶ Although people were definitely illiterate if they could not sign their name on a marriage license, the ability to sign a marriage license does not mean a person is literate.³⁹⁷ Literacy rates are still important, as they are one of the only ways of measuring a population's education on a large scale, but they are not the only way to determine how successful an education system is. In examining the English education system of the nineteenth century, it is more important to consider rates of children attending schools and rates of adults trying to further their education, which are both reflections of the working-class attitudes towards education.

Unfortunately for the working classes, not all of the legislative changes worked in their favor. Beginning in 1870, there was a conflict between the working-class desire to be self-sufficient and responsible for their education and state intervention. While the ultimate outcome of increased literacy was positive, working-class wants were not always taken into account when creating legislation about education. In some cases, the working classes were not opposed to education, which was reflected in the many mutual improvement societies and internal education methods that existed before the Act of

³⁹⁴ "The 1870 Education Act."

³⁹⁵ "The 1870 Education Act."

³⁹⁶ Sanderson, 10.

³⁹⁷ Ellis, 10.

1870. But, the state-run system was not always created in a way that reflected the direct needs of working-class people. There are many examples of unexpected issues the school boards and the Department of Education dealt with that may have been avoided if they had been more familiar with the struggles of the working classes. The lives of the working classes were much more nuanced than the contemporary characterization of lazy, irresponsible parents who refused to send their children to schools.

English education changed significantly during the nineteenth century, which was reflected in the schools that were formed, the working-class attitudes towards education, especially in light of the autodidactic culture, and the government's increasing involvement in the education system. The Act of 1870 was a reflection of these cultural changes, but also pushed for even more changes in the system. Never before had there been a national attempt to register all children for elementary education. The Act of 1870 also led to compulsory education, which permanently shaped the English education system. There were many unintended consequences of the Act of 1870, which ultimately led to the Act of 1902, which ended the school board system established in 1870.

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