

The Impacts of the Great World Wars on the Progress of a National Education System in England (1918-1945)

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Abstract:

This article deals with the history of university and the process of teaching in university in England. It also discusses a retrospective educational system in this region of the world since the Middle Ages, and how the Church lost its influence over what should be taught. In other words, it focuses on how the economic requirements outweigh theological considerations and how British society has adapted its university education system and has brought it into line with the social changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

Key words: Education, University, Teaching.

Introduction

The First World War involved combative nations from every continent. It was fought on all the oceans of the world and can justifiably be termed a 'World War'. Although it was certainly not the first huge fighting between the European powers during the past 300 years, those who experienced it called this bloody confrontation 'the Great War'. The major reasons of this War were the same as its predecessors; it began with a clash between Europeans, arising from conflict of interest and mutual fears of the European powers. The process of the war was terrible, and its consequences were catastrophic. The impacts of the War led to a radical change on the socio-educational basis. The major changes that were brought about by the First World War could be classified under two aspects: the first one was related to the disaster brought about by the war on education and the second one was the role of the State to the domain of education and the creation of a new vision that corresponded to this hard period. This Article attempts to study the impacts ensued by the Great War on the evolution of education in England and to analyze the emergence of the new voluntary schools.

I. National Education and the Great Wars, 1918-1945

By the beginning of the twentieth century, education in England was more vulnerable than ever before in her history. Nevertheless,

England had a basic educational system, though for most schoolchildren, it did not take them beyond the elementary age limit of 12. During the course of the First World War, the system was closely investigated by H.A.L Fisher, the president of the board of education. Fisher travelled around the country inspecting schools in villages, towns and cities. He became aware of a critical problem of under financing.⁽¹⁾

As it is mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Fisher's far-sighted plans for change and improvements were embodied in the wide-ranging Education Act of 1918, which aimed to meet the growing demand for improvements in the availability of education, and improved standards. He favoured the principle that education was vital not only to the individual, but also to society.⁽²⁾

The Board of Education, a central authority for England, had been created by statute in 1899, to supervise the work of the local authorities by means of advice, regulations, inspection, and by researches. By the Education Act of 1944, the board became a ministry, and the extension of its powers of control was revealed in the Act, which provided that the minister had to secure the effective execution by the local authorities, under his control and direction, of the national policy. In this Act, the minister was aided by two Central Advisory Councils, appointed by himself, one for England and one for Wales. His jurisdiction covered the system of public education. The Ministry of Education itself owned no schools, nor did it provide syllabuses or textbooks.⁽³⁾

The Act of 1944 had abolished the county boroughs and counties. The county boroughs and counties were the only local authorities, of which there were 145, as against 318, in 1902. But the vital element of live local interest in education was preserved by the creation of local divisional executives, consisting usually of the same personnel that acted in the past, though without their independence of jurisdiction. In this way, it was hoped to harmonize the need for local initiative on the one hand and administrative unity on the other. The duty of the LEAs extended to the new county colleges, which were to come into existence in 1950, for the "further education" of young persons between 15 and 18 years.

Through the progress of a national education in England, some changes occurred. Thus, it is very important to bring to light the most

obvious changes that characterized national education in England during the periods of Wars.

II. 1. Changes in the School System

The progress of education in England was related to the changes that were made by the educational acts, especially after the Forster Act of 1870. These acts improved and restricted the educational system in England. For example, the compulsory school age in 1870 was five to twelve; in 1902, it was raised to fourteen, and in 1944, to fifteen. These were the results of the efforts of government in the domain of education, which meant that it was no longer regarded adequate for children to leave education at the age of 14, as that was the age when they were seen to really understand and appreciate the value of education, as well as being the period when adolescence was at its height. It was beginning to be seen as the worst age for a sudden switch from education to employment.⁽⁴⁾

The Hadow Report of 1931 laid the foundations for a new outlook, based on an integrated system of successive grades of schooling for all children. The changes that could be remarked were the establishment of nursery schools for those under five, infant schools from five to seven, and a common primary school from seven to eleven. At this point, lay the great innovation, a system of diversified post-primary schools, distinguished by differences of curriculum.

The Norwood Report of 1943 advocated the "tripartite" division of secondary education that was embodied in the 1944 Education Act. Selection at eleven was to be made on the basis of intelligence, performance tests, and a cumulative "school" record for each child. The School Certificate Examination taken at the end of school life, used also as a university entrance examination by some nine percent of the secondary school population, was to be simplified in structure.⁽⁵⁾

By realizing these major provisions, along the line of the Hadow, Spens and Norwood reforms, the Education Act of 1944 had tried to provide a thoroughly democratized school system, in which "irrelevant" social privilege counted less than formerly. The educational system at that time comprised nursery and infant schools; primary schools for those from seven to eleven; secondary schools in the three categories of grammar, technical, and modern; and further education in technical colleges, evening classes, and the adult education movement at large. In one other

very important respect, that of ownership, the schools in this system differed. Primary and secondary schools providing education entirely out of public money were known as county schools. Schools whose site and buildings had been provided by the contributions of several religious bodies were known as voluntary schools. In fact, these types of schools were classified among the changes that need to be analysed and understood in order to clarify and identify the origins and the development of a national education in England.

II.2. The Emergence of New Voluntary Schools

Among the obvious facts that characterized the Great Wars period was the emergence of a new type of voluntary schools. This type of schools was considered as an obvious change in the development of a national education in England. Thus, it is convenient to highlight the changes that were brought about by the emergence of the new voluntary schools.

Until 1870, the elementary schools of the country were the creation of the voluntary religious bodies. The Church of England, through its National Society, the Nonconformist (Free) Churches, through the British and Foreign School Society, and the Catholics, through the Catholic Poor School Committee. Grants from the taxes were made toward the building of these schools. Since denominational schools were unable to provide a school place for every child in the country, the Education Act of 1870 passed by the Gladstone government empowered local boards of rate-payers to establish schools out of the local taxes.

Therefore, in the famous "dual system" in English education, denominational schools were provided out of religious funds, and the newer board schools were provided entirely from public money. The LEA schools of 1902 was undenominational by reason of the Cowper-Temple clause of the 1870 Act. Some Anglicans and all Catholics, could not use these schools, although they contributed in rates and taxes toward their provision and continued to make sacrifices to provide sites and buildings for voluntary schools.

Between 1902 and 1926, the Anglican and Free Churches began to come to agreement with the local authorities as to religious teaching, and handed over to public control more and more of their denominational schools in return for the pledge to use in these transferred schools an

"Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction." In this way, the number of Church of England schools fell from 11, 552 in 1902 to 8, 970 in 1939, and the Free Church schools from 1, 401 to 314.⁽⁶⁾

Thus, as late as the outbreak of World War II, the voluntary schools were still nearly half of the 20,000 schools in the country, and provided food for about a third of the nation's children. An Act passed in 1936 made increased grant-aid available for the reorganization of these schools. After the Act of 1944, the voluntary schools had three principles to choose from.

- First, where the voluntary body could find half the cost of reorganizing one of its schools, that school remained under voluntary control; the other half of the cost would be met out of public money; and these schools would accordingly be known as "aided schools."⁽⁷⁾
- Second, where the voluntary body could not find half the cost, the school would pass under the control of the LEA, subject to certain places on the school staff being reserved for teachers of the same denomination as the original body that owned the school; and these schools would be known as "controlled schools."⁽⁸⁾
- Third, where there was an agreement between a voluntary school and a local authority, under the 1936 Act, those agreements, curtailed by the war, might be resumed; and where the agreement was approved by the Minister, the school would be known as a "local agreement school."⁽⁹⁾
- In short, the voluntary schools could preserve their independence by finding half the cost of reorganizing their existing schools, and all the cost of any new ones in the future.

These provisions, on the whole, did not satisfy the Free Churches, since there were over 4,000 localities where the only school was an Anglican school and the religious teaching accordingly was not satisfactory to the nonconformist parents.

The Catholic policy had always been one of Catholic education for Catholic children, in Catholic schools staffed by Catholic teachers. The government estimated in 1943 that the total cost to the Catholic body of reorganizing its schools during the next 20 years would be half a million pounds yearly including the interest and sinking fund. In general, the Act

of 1944 marked an important step forward by its insistence that in county schools each day's work would begin with a corporate act of worship.

The emergence of new Voluntary schools was not the only important change that influenced on the development of a national education in England. Public School was a type of schools that needs to be analysed.

II.3. The Emergence and Development of Public Schools

From the late Middle Ages, most schools were controlled by the Church; others were restricted to the sons of members of guilds. The need for qualified trades in an increasingly secularised society required schools for the sons of the aristocrats that were independent from the Church authority and open to all. From the 16th century onward, boys' boarding schools were founded or endowed for public use. Traditionally, most of these public schools were all boys and full boarding.

The concept of Public schools referred to a group of restricted independent schools in the United Kingdom. In England, these schools were devoted primarily for children aged between 13 and 18. Public schools originated from charity schools. Nevertheless, the term "public" indicated that the access to these schools was not restricted on the basis of religion, occupation or home location, and that they were subject to public management or control, in contrast to private schools which were run for the personal profit of the proprietors.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Public Schools were all private in origin, and with a population, which reached the higher ranks of the professions and the armed forces. Their defenders stressed their mission to produce elite of intellect and character. Their critics, on the other hand, pointed to their social exclusiveness as undemocratic. An important educational document in 1944, the Fleming Report, was concerned with "extending the association of the Public Schools with the national system," in order to make a Public School education more easily available to the poorer pupils. The curriculum from the beginning placed heavy emphasis on the Greek and Roman classics and continued to do so until well into the 20th century. Organized games, in contrast, were a late development, and, before their introduction, disorderly conduct was intermittently considerable, particularly in the early 19th century. It suggested that local authorities would reserve to themselves certain places in these schools to be filled by boys and girls from county secondary schools aided by personal grants toward fees and

boarding. The scheme had not so far been widely used.⁽¹¹⁾ In spite of this, there were further forms of education. The provision for education beyond the statutory school age of fifteen fell into several categories.

First, technical, commercial, and art education was provided in institutions run by the LEAs, open mostly in the evenings, for about 30,000 full-time students. There were systems of national certificates awarded on the result of examinations conducted jointly by the institutions concerned and the Ministry of Education for those who completed the courses.

Second, in 1944, non-vocational education for adults and young persons were made available by LEAs, by voluntary associations, and by the universities. This continued a tradition that went back to the Mechanics' Institute of the early 19th century.

Third, county colleges were to be established by the LEAs under the 1944 Act, for young persons of fifteen to eighteen. This, in fact, was a much bolder and more positive initiative, which was taken after the First World War. The curriculum of these colleges were determined by the number of persons needed in trades, textiles, ship-building, and engineering.

Fourth, initiative lay with the local authorities and direction with the Ministry of Education. Denominational enterprises in this field were warmly supported by the LEAs. Moreover, the pre-service organizations of the three armed forces became an integral part of the Youth Service.⁽¹²⁾

Teachers and the way of teaching were also influenced by the Great Wars. Thus, it is important to analyze and understand the most important changes that occurred teachers' training.

II. 4. The New Form of Teachers' Training

The origins of teacher training in England dated back to 1840 in elementary schools and 1890 in secondary schools. The tradition from then till 1944 was that elementary teachers took their professional training in a two-year training college run by a local authority or by one of the voluntary denominational bodies, while secondary teachers were mostly university graduates who had taken a one-year post-graduate course of professional training in their university. The two services were thus to some extent separate worlds, and sharply differentiated as to salaries by the Burnham salary scales.⁽¹³⁾ These difficulties, together with the unprecedented demand for teachers that would follow the raising of the school-leaving-age to fifteen under the 1944 Act, called forth the McNair

Report on the training of teachers in 1944, to remedy the conditions of supply, recruitment, and training, and add some 70,000 teachers to the existing 200,000 throughout the country.⁽¹⁴⁾

In 1944, the McNair Report⁽¹⁵⁾ was divided on the question of the future organization of teacher training. All the training colleges in the neighbourhood of a university town were grouped around the university to form university schools or institutes of education, responsible for all the teacher training in the area, governed by bodies representative of all the constituent institutions, and awarding the title of "qualified teacher" by examination at the end of the course of training. The examinations differed between graduate and non-graduate students, but the status of "qualified teacher" was equal for all. Meanwhile, the salary scales for teachers in all types of schools had been equalized.⁽¹⁶⁾

The changes that occurred in national education in England was not limited only to elementary and secondary education. University education was also influenced by the Great Wars. Some improvements in university curriculum needs to be analyzed.

II.5. The Improvements in University Education

After the Great Wars, changes in education did not stop at the level of the elementary and secondary education. University education also experienced some improvements that participated in the development of education in England. However, in England, there were some sixteen universities and university colleges, the difference being that a university college, which had no charter, could not grant its own degrees. The universities were all self-governing. The only control exercised by the Crown was through the charter and through the royal appointment; and the annual treasury grants to the universities, through the University Grants Committee, were unconditional. The universities were independent from the national system of education, but were closely associated with it by reason of the high percentage of students coming from the county schools.

Oxford and Cambridge were residential, national in scope, federal in government and their work was based on a tutorial system. In the 19th century, the other universities were established to meet the educational needs of the generation following the Industrial Revolution. The newer universities were distinguished by their local character since two-thirds of their students lived within a radius of thirty miles. The universities

influenced the schools through their teachers, their scholarships, and their examination requirements.⁽¹⁷⁾

At the end of the Second World War, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had greatly increased their output of science graduates, in response to the appeal of the 1946 Barlow⁽¹⁸⁾ Committee on "scientific manpower". This increase of population accordingly produced congestion, and some danger of the lowering of university standards, since the increase in buildings and amenities that should have accompanied the expansion were indefinitely delayed by the post-war economic difficulties of the country. Meanwhile, the universities were still free from any outside control, despite the fact that two-thirds of their total income came from public money, in the form of grants.⁽¹⁹⁾

Financially speaking, the State had merely paid piecemeal for public education services. Two systems of finance had been tried. The first was based on the principle of block grants, i.e., total sums of money fixed and allocated for precise purposes. This system was superseded after the First World War by a system of percentage grants, which expanded or contracted according to the local authorities' total expenditure. This percentage system was not lost even during the economic crisis of the 1930s. Since 1945, the Ministry of Education paid to each LEA a combined standard percentage. Broadly speaking, the ministry's grant amounted to 55 percent of the total local expenditure.

The impact of the Great Wars on national education in England was very influential on the curriculum and the instruction given. Religious education in England was also influenced by the Great Wars.⁽²⁰⁾

II. The Impact of the Great Wars on Religious Education

Before the Great Wars, religious instruction in England was needed and very influential. However, the gravity of the Wars pushed the Government to think of a new type of instructions that help the people to protect themselves from the new arms used by the enemies.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the denominational schools were almost all Anglican or Roman Catholic; Methodist and Jewish schools formed a very small proportion of the total. The strength of the Church of England in the field of elementary education was much diminished because people believed that religious instruction was not needed.

The Roman Catholic clergy and parents had consistently regarded the State schools as Protestant establishments. On the other hand, many Protestant parents had found the unsectarian religious instruction in State schools acceptable, especially since the absence of Roman Catholics seemed to guarantee their Protestant orthodoxy. Moreover, many of the Anglican schools were in villages whose population had markedly decreased over two generations.

It was becoming increasingly difficult for the denominationalists to conform with what was brought by the Act of 1902. At that time, many existing schools were too old or otherwise unable to satisfy modern standards in educational provision or even in hygiene. New schools were required as population grew, towns expanded, and slums began to be cleared. Yet in spite of all this, the denominational schools still occupied thirty percent of education in England; their contribution to the total educational provision was too considerable to be replaced⁽²¹⁾.

Other religious groups formed not only a considerable, but also a determined and well organized part of the Parliament elections, as the Roman Catholics, in particular, continually made clear at election times. It followed that if the State wished to effect a general improvement in educational provision it would have to help the denominational schools in the only way available: by making at least a partial contribution to the cost of new buildings extensions, and repairs.

By this time, the idea of secularism and the neglect of any type of religious instruction in the curriculum emerged and spread over England. Such idea created a gap between the State and the Church. Each of the political parties had some supporters who wished the government to help the denominational schools and some who opposed such a policy. Many Nonconformists still objected to any extension of State provision for denominational teaching.

The Second World War put an end to school building, but even before peace came, R. A. Butler, the President of the Board of Education, had initiated discussions to pave the way for the educational developments that were hoped for after the war. By the Education Act of 1944, the State replaced the Church in accepting greater responsibility for the education of the people. The Board became a Ministry in which the duty of the Minister was to secure the effective execution of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area far from the supervision of the Church.

For the sake of brevity, many British educationists preferred the schools that were supported from central and local government funds as "State schools." In these schools, it became compulsory to provide for "a corporate act of worship" each day, wherever possible and also for religious instruction according to a syllabus agreed by the local education authority. No teacher in a State school could be required to give religious instruction or refuse appointment or promotion on religious grounds. Children in State or other types of schools receiving grants from public funds could be withdrawn from religious instruction if the parent so wished.⁽²²⁾

There were two kinds of Denominational schools: fully denominational, or "aided" and partially denominational or "controlled." These schools provided teachers and received equipment before the Act of 1944. However, controlled schools were those surrendered to a local authority by a denominational body; they were like State Schools. These schools had the right, if the parents so wished, to have denominational religious instruction given in the schools twice a week by a strictly limited number of appropriate teachers; on other occasions, religious instruction had to be in accordance with an "agreed syllabus," as in State schools.

Much of the activity and finance of some of the denominational bodies had been diverted from the schools to training colleges. But even so, by 1964, about one seventh of teachers beginning training in England and Wales were in (nondenominational) university departments, and of those in training colleges about one fifth were in Anglican colleges and about one tenth in colleges were connected with the Roman Catholic Church.

During the Great Wars, special education was needed for the particular students who were affected by the Wars. New schools occurred for educating the defective students and all the students who were affected by the Wars. Therefore, it is convenient to study and analyze those particular schools and all the educational requirements that occurred during the period of the Great Wars.

III. Particular Educational Requirements

Following the 1902 Education Act, the new LEAs assumed the functions previously exercised by school boards, including those relating to special education. They were empowered to provide secondary education for blind, deaf, defective and epileptic children.

New facilities were opened by voluntary organisations: day and boarding schools for physically handicapped children, schools in hospitals and

convalescent homes and trade schools. These included the Heritage Craft Schools and Hospital at Chailey, Sussex in 1903, the Swinton House School of Recovery at Manchester in 1905, the London County Council's Open Air School at Plumstead in 1907 and the Lord Mayor Treloar Cripples' Hospital and College at Alton in 1908. Manchester's LEA opened a residential school for epileptics in 1910. By 1918, there were six such schools throughout the country.⁽²³⁾

School for mentally defective children was one of the most important schools, which was designed for children who were affected by the War. For that reason, it is necessary to study the type of education that was designed for the mentally defective children, especially the blind and deaf children.

In 1908, the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the mentally defective children proposed that institutional provision for Defective Children was to be preferred to provision in special schools. This proposal was not accepted, however; the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 required local education authorities to ascertain and certify which children aged 7 to 16 in their area were defective. Only those who were judged by the authority to be incapable of being taught in special schools were to pass to the care of local mental deficiency committees.⁽²⁴⁾

The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic) Act 1914 converted into a duty the earlier powers conferred on authorities by the 1899 Act to provide for the education of mentally defective children. The 1918 Education Act did the same in respect of physically defective and epileptic children. Thus, compulsory provision was extended to all the categories of handicapped children.

In 1929, the Mental Deficiency (Wood) Committee reported that 105,000 school children were mentally defective, that only a third of them had been 'ascertained' and only half of these were actually attending special schools. The Committee also estimated that a further ten per cent of all children, though not mentally deficient, were retarded and failing to make progress in ordinary schools. After 1944, these children were categorized as 'educationally sub-normal'.

The Wood Committee argued that mentally deficient children should not be isolated from the mainstream of education and proposed that the system of certification should be abolished. It could not, however, consider that these special schools would exist under a different system of classification and under different administrative provisions. If the majority

of children for whom these schools were intended were incapable to lead the lives of ordinary citizens, with careers, the schools must be brought into closer relation with the Public Elementary School System and presented to parents not as something both distinct and humiliating, but as a helpful variation of the ordinary school. This view of special education as a variant of ordinary education advanced a principle, which would later be extended, to all forms and degrees of disability.⁽²⁵⁾

By 1902, most blind children were receiving education, which was free for those whose parents could not afford to contribute towards the cost. Children with partial sight or hearing were at a disadvantage in ordinary schools, and there was no provision of academic education for girls. Nursery education for blind children began in 1918, when the Royal National Institute for the Blind opened its first residential home for deprived blind children.⁽²⁶⁾

The first provision for partially sighted children was made by the London County Council in 1907, when myopic children in the Authority's blind schools were taught reading and writing. The following year, the Council established a special higher class for myopic children. In 1934, the Board of Education Committee of Inquiry into Problems relating to Partially Sighted Children recommended that where possible these children should be educated in classes within ordinary schools and should not be taught alongside the blind. The Committee found that provision for 2,000 partially sighted children was being made in 37 schools and that a further 18 schools for the blind offered special education for the partially sighted. Nevertheless, many partially sighted children were being educated as if they were blind.⁽²⁷⁾

Educational provision for the deaf was not brought into line with the blind until 1937 under the Education (Deaf Children) Act. The first special school for partially deaf children was established by the Bristol LEA in 1906, and another by the London County Council soon afterwards. But, most partially deaf children continued for many years to receive ordinary education or to be taught with deaf children in special schools.⁽²⁸⁾

Their needs were examined by the Committee of Inquiry into the Problems relating to Children with Defective Hearing appointed by the Board of Education in 1934. Reporting four years later, the Committee recognized that the needs of partially deaf children were different from

those of deaf children. It suggested a three-fold classification: those capable of attending ordinary classes without special arrangements; those more severely affected who might either attend an ordinary school with the help of a hearing aid and support from visiting teachers of lip-reading or be taught in a special school (day or boarding) for the partially deaf; and those whose hearing was so impaired that they needed to be educated with the deaf. Teachers of partially deaf pupils had the same qualifications as those of the deaf. The Committee's report led some authorities to provide residential schools for the partially deaf.⁽²⁹⁾

The Great Wars had profound consequences on the development of education in England. Through this study, it is obvious that the Great Wars motivated the Parliament to think for an ideology that help the society to go in parallel with what was brought about the Great Wars. In fact, the period between 1918 to 1945 had witnessed a considerable change in the domain of education especially universities, in both structure and curricula. Also, the expansion of secondary education and a greater demand for university places were the main character of twentieth century education in England.

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