

Culture and the Politics of Comparative Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

Why do some countries form school systems that serve all the people, while others develop systems intended primarily for elites? In some countries, virtually all young students – rich and poor, academic powerhouses and those with nonacademic gifts, folks of different genders and races – can find a program that facilitates appropriate skill formation and pride in their own educational achievements. Other countries create education systems that work only for winners, such as single-track high schools, in which success is contingent on writing the best essay on “To Kill a Mockingbird.” Do not get me wrong, Harper Lee wrote a wonderful book; but its reading in eighth grade does not necessarily produce the right skills for the future car mechanic, and this requirement may diminish the spark of curiosity that excites autodidacts.

Examining a country’s cultural understanding of education can shed light on this question. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various countries gravitated toward different cultural perceptions of schooling, and the dichotomy between education for academically minded and/or elite students versus education for all continues to reverberate in education policy today. Policymakers developed schools to support various political and economic projects, such as nation-building, industrialization, and democratization; in addition, conflicts among interest groups and the political institutions defining the rules of the game mattered significantly to how nations achieved their educational goals. Yet beliefs about the purpose of education – should the primary goal of schools be to develop individuals or to build a strong society – also informed choices about the provision of schooling for citizens across social classes. These beliefs, in turn, were influenced by fundamental, cultural assumptions about the role of the individual in society, the contributions of farmers and workers,

expectations of cooperation versus competition in political exchange, and the role of the state in policymaking.

Britain and Denmark offer a compelling illustration of these different cultural assumptions. In Britain, policymakers, intellectuals, and authors from various political persuasions viewed education as an essential tool for the cognitive development of the child and believed that a well-educated individual should master a prescribed curriculum to attain full selfhood. Granted, elites on the left and right disagreed about whether educational opportunities should be extended to agricultural and industrial workers. By the end of the nineteenth century, those on the left argued for equality of educational opportunity, while those on the right remained more skeptical about a state project for uplifting and enlightening the poor. Yet even many politicians and writers on the left worried that educating the working class could “contaminate” the nation’s culture. In Denmark, elites also recognized the value of education for individual self-development, but unlike the British, both left and right viewed schools for farmers and workers as essential for a strong society. While Danish reformers also thought more about equality by the end of the nineteenth century, early educationalists were motivated by the older, deeper commitment to a strong society, and this distinguished Denmark from Britain (Korsgaard 2004; Sundberg 2004, 142).

Writers of fiction were political agents in the presentation and perpetuation of these cultural assumptions about education. Authors joined networks of *avant garde* political activists who put distressing social conditions on the political agenda and they fulfilled vital services in political movements to advance education reforms. Fiction writers were spin doctors who provided cognitive frames that influenced the construction of social problems and solutions. Writers popularized social issues with vivid, emotional language. In both countries, politicians, bureaucrats, and other activists associated education with the grand projects of nation-building, industrialization, and democratization; yet fiction writers helped to frame these great movements in nationally specific ways. A chorus of literary voices provided the soundtrack, inspiration, and subliminal messaging for campaigns supporting school development.

To understand the role of these authors as political activists, this chapter will explore three critical junctures of education development in Britain and Denmark: the emergence of public primary schools in Denmark and private, church schools for the middle and working classes in Britain in the early nineteenth century, the expansion of Danish schools and enactment of the British public elementary system in mid-century, and the creation of secondary education systems in both countries in the early twentieth century.

Choices about schooling by nineteenth-century policymakers had powerful implications for the expansion of access to industrial and agricultural working-class children. Early creators of mass, compulsory public schools (e.g., Denmark) brought non-elite students into school more quickly than laggards in education system development (e.g., Britain). Countries with strong

secondary vocational education imparted stronger skills to blue-collar workers than did nations with one-size-fits-all high schools. Experiential teaching methods held greater appeal for nonacademic children than did the rote memorization of facts and figures. Regulatory regimes that accorded control to communities, schools, teachers, and parents provided greater flexibility for instruction geared to the needs of specific populations than regimes with strong quality controls and uniform standards. The following pages tell the story of how British and Danish policymakers viewed education as a means of addressing various political and economic challenges and the role of authors in debates over schooling.

VARIETIES OF EDUCATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Most European countries developed mass public primary education systems (and subsequently secondary education) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but these systems varied on five important dimensions. The dimensions include how *public* the education systems were, the degree of *access* they offered to all classes, programmatic *differentiation*, methods of *pedagogy*, and mechanisms for *oversight* (administration and regulatory control) (see Table 1.1; for discussions of classification schemes, see Archer 1979; Green 1990; Hopper 1968; Boli et al. 1985; Soysal and Strang 1989; Moe and Wiborg 2017, 5; Busemeyer et al. 2020).

First, the education systems varied in terms of how public they were. We can look to several characteristics to better understand this variance, including the timing of when countries first instituted public primary schools, the level of resources they were willing to commit to these new projects, and the proportional balance between public and private schools (Archer 1979). Prussia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were all on the forefront of efforts to establish mass schooling, creating public, compulsory primary schools with participation rates of over 50 percent by 1850. A few other European countries – including Greece, Spain, and Portugal – also developed public systems around the same time, but with lower attendance rates under 50 percent. Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Belgium were all laggards in creating public primary education (Soysal and Strang 1989, 278).

Britain and Denmark embodied these two extremes. Royal ordinances established Denmark's system of public primary schools in 1814; but these national ordinances followed on nearly twenty-five years of extensive school-building in the provinces, a project undertaken by a school commission set up by the king. Britain enacted a public, primary school system only in 1870; previously, the responsibility for schooling had been largely left to two private, church-affiliated societies (Evans 1985, 5).

Countries also varied on the amounts spent for public education and the degree to which private schools easily coexisted with public schools. For example, German primary schools were mostly public, while Britain and Denmark

TABLE I.1 *Dimensions of British and Danish education systems*

Dimensions	Britain	Denmark
Public system		
*Timing	*Created in 1870	*Created in 1814
*Private component	*Voluntary church schools Private elite grammar schools Eliminated alternative schools except for church schools in 1870, much conflict	*Evangelical rural schools State Latin schools, few private grammar schools Little conflict over private schools, strengthened in 1855
Access by workers		
*Enrollments	*Enrollment rates were less than 50 percent in 1850	*Enrollment rates were greater than 50 percent in 1850
Differentiation		
*Class-based schools	*Different private school types	*Public fee for bourgeoisie and public free schools for workers
*Secondary VET?	*Unitary classical secondary track, no VET	*Multitrack secondary system, strong VET
Pedagogical methods		
	*Bell-Lancaster method *Set lessons, curriculum theory, rote memorization/cramming	*Philanthropist method But brief use of Bell-Lancaster *Bigger emphasis on experiential learning, not rote memorization. Diverse instructional methods for students with different abilities
Administration and regulation		
*State role	*State role contested, much church/state conflict	*State accepted as legitimate, more limited church/state conflict
*Level of govern.	*Decentralized but contested, left sought centralization	*Decentralized control accepted, left accepted decentralization
*Degree of self-steering	*Assessment regime, standardized tests, quality control	*Local autonomy, few tests, quality through teacher training

both retained a large share of private schools. Yet the Danish government provided multiple tiers of public schools, including superior schools that charged tuition for the bourgeoisie and free schools for workers; and private schools were also available to a range of classes. In Britain, upper-class youth largely attended elite private schools, while lower-class students were largely relegated to state schools, and the politics of private schooling proved more contentious. British reformers on the left unsuccessfully sought to do away with private voluntary church schools when the primary education system was created in 1870, even as their (mostly Anglican) Tory opponents viewed church schools as a last line of defense against Dissenters, Radicals, and Whigs. In Denmark, National Liberal politicians were initially wary of the private evangelical school movement. But they became convinced that offering a choice between public and private schools was the best way to expand educational access in rural communities and passed legislation in 1855 permitting parents to control their children's education (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 66–7).

The second dimension on which Western countries differed concerned the degree of educational *access*. In 1850, Danish students constituted 21 percent of the overall population, whereas British students constituted only 12 percent (Green 1990, 4–15). By 1870, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Prussia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States all had primary school enrollment rates of over 50 percent (Soysal and Strang 1989, 278). By 1895, Britain (with 55 percent) finally nearly caught up to Denmark (with nearly 60 percent) in the percentage of children aged 7–14 enrolled in primary schools (Flora and Alber 1983–1987).

Third, education systems varied on their degree of programmatic *differentiation*, or the number of diverse secondary education tracks serving students. Throughout the nineteenth century, most countries had dedicated primary schools that served citizens of diverse classes with different curricula. But as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, and as schools were used to address socioeconomic inequality, countries increasingly began to implement a regime of universal primary schools in which all students were expected to master a more uniform set of knowledge (Kliebard 1987, 4–10; Benavot et al. 1991).

At the secondary level, policymakers either created unitary schools with a uniform academic course of study (which were less likely to include working-class youth) or multitrack institutions that included a distinctive vocational training track (with higher rates of attendance by the working class). The English-speaking world, France, and southern Europe fell into the first category, while Nordic and German-speaking countries fell into the latter (Wiborg 2009; Powell and Solga 2010; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; West and Nikolai 2013; Gift and Wibbels 2014). Thus, the British Secondary Education Act of 1902 created a unitary secondary education system and eliminated secondary vocational training on the grounds of encouraging meritocracy (Evans 1985, 9). Only in 1844 did Britain develop technical secondary education options;

however, vocation education remained severely curtailed (Wiborg 2009, 11). In contrast, Denmark provided state funding for vocational training in 1892 and created multiple gymnasium tracks with the 1903 Secondary Education Act (Larsen et al. 2013; Peterson 1973; Glenn 2007).

Countries also offered differing curricula in their upper-secondary academic institutions, as we see with the British grammar school and the Danish gymnasium, both of which served the educational needs of academic youth. British (and American) educationalists were biased in favor of humanistic studies for upper-level students. In this vein, a report by the Yale faculty promoted a curriculum based on humanistic studies over scientific and practical subjects as necessary for human development, because these provided “the discipline and the furniture of the mind” (Kliebard 1987, 5). The British, public grammar schools created in 1902 offered a single humanistic program of study and severely limited the amount of instruction devoted to math and science (Eaglesham 1962, 156–7). Britain did not include any vocational courses for nonacademic students after the completion of lower-secondary education. In contrast, students in the Danish gymnasium, created in 1903, could choose from a variety of different programs of study, including classical studies, modern languages, and a math/science line. The 1903 act also created a “real class,” a one-year course of post-lower-secondary schooling for those students going into a vocational education program or entering the workforce (“Lov om højere Almenskoler, April 24, 1903”).

The fourth area in which countries’ education systems differed was in the principles of *pedagogy* they adopted. Already by 1800, two competing theories of education had risen to prominence and were playing an important role in the expansion and differentiation of mass schooling: the monitorial approach and the “Philanthropist” model. The monitorial approach, developed by Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell in Britain, became particularly popular in the Anglo countries, France, and southern Europe. The Bell–Lancaster approach emphasized rote memorization, stipulated that students should master a specific set of knowledge, and prescribed curricular content in the form of set lessons to this end (Cordner 2016). Educationalists in both countries specified diverse educational content for the various social classes until the twentieth century, when universal schools became more prevalent.

In contrast, the Philanthropist approach to education initially derived inspiration in Denmark from schools formed by Johann Bernhard Basedow and Baron von Rochow (discussed below), and this approach became popular throughout northern Europe. The fundamental premise of the Philanthropist theory was that students learn in different ways and that schools should adopt a model of experiential learning to nurture the capacities of students with “diverse intelligences” (to use the current terminology). Experiential methods of instruction would develop students’ capacities for reasoning: Students were encouraged to explore the world and master only what they needed to know, rather than to memorize a specific set of

knowledge (Larsen et al. 2013, 50; Schleunes 1979, 329). Early discussions of education reform in Denmark were influenced by a blend of ideas drawing from Philanthropinist theory, new humanism, the works of Rousseau, and Kantian moralism. These theories shared ideas about child development (education should address the whole child), recognized the importance of experiential learning for self-directed discovery of knowledge, and embraced both scientific knowledge and humanistic insights (Bugge 1965, 25–33). The Danish king briefly endorsed the Bell–Lancaster monitorial method in the 1820s and 1830s; however, there was a subsequent backlash against this more mechanistic approach.

Finally, the last dimension on which countries' educational systems differed significantly was in their choice of various types of administrative structures and systems for *regulatory* control over education. Some countries, like Germany and Denmark, readily accepted a strong role for government and for social partners in education, whereas in others (such as Britain), the government's role was heavily contested (Green 1990; Clark 1983). Moreover, some countries concentrated regulatory authority within the national government, while others ceded that authority to decentralized units. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain created systems of centralized control over education in the nineteenth century, while Anglo and Nordic countries placed control in the hands of local communities (Ansell and Lindvall 2013). Countries also devised sharply different methods of measuring students' progress and imposing accountability on school officials. Richardson (2022, 3–5) differentiates between “summative assessment” (which relies on easily quantifiable grades and standardized tests to appraise outcomes) and “formative assessment” (which uses teachers' reports and coursework product instead of exams to evaluate outcomes). Summative assessment meshes better with national level assessment regimes; formative assessment works better when quality assessments are left more informally in the hands of local officials, schools, and teachers. While Richardson's analysis pertains to contemporary assessment procedures, countries diverged in their use of summative and formative assessment mechanisms even in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Britain and Denmark both opted to delegate significant authority over school management to local governments, though in Britain, the role of the state in developing a public education system was more contested. Yet over time, British policymakers developed national guidelines for curricula, assessment criteria, and quality controls, whereas Danish policymakers exerted much less control at the national level (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014). Robert Lowe's Revised Code of 1862 linked funding to students' performance on achievement tests, a move put into place by Margaret Thatcher's Education Act of 1988 (Lee 2019; Porter 1994, 425; Simmons 2008). Contemporary neoliberal education reformers believe that market competition among schools will enhance quality (Gingrich 2011), and Lowe anticipated much of this neoliberal thinking. In Denmark, control over curricula, testing, and quality remained in

the hands of local authorities, schools, and teachers throughout the nineteenth century (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014). The very concept of accountability has its roots in Anglo-Norman tradition and has no equivalent in that of Danish (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014, 3). In the twentieth century, Denmark would eventually develop more national regulations but even then, decisions about curricula continued to be largely left to local authorities, schools, and teachers (Kelly et al. 2018).

A TALE OF THREE MOVEMENTS

Now that we have explored the different ways that education systems differed from one another, we can return to the central question of this chapter, which is *why* countries chose these differing paths. Why did some countries develop systems of education for the upper and middle classes, particularly suitable for academically minded students, while others developed systems of education for all? To explore this question, we might begin by considering three great movements that drove the development of education systems: *nation-building*, *industrialization*, and *democratization*.

First, the development of mass primary education was often at the heart of *nation-building* or state-building projects, as political elites in pre-democratic regimes expanded schooling to inculcate a national culture and a shared set of values, to strengthen citizenship, to train soldiers, and to promulgate norms of obedience (Durkheim 1961; Boli et al. 1985; Soysal and Strang 1989; Green 1990; Benavot et al. 1991; Wiborg 2009; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020). Education was a core tool for legitimizing the state, validating the hegemony of the dominant social order, and preparing civil servants for the administrative bureaucracy (Green 1990, 77–9). As nations became more and more socially stratified, universal education provided a platform for socializing individuals from disparate class factions (Boli et al. 1985, 149–61; Benavot et al. 1991).

We can imagine that different countries' nation-building projects had different needs that contributed to variations among those countries' education systems. Countries facing boundary disputes, for example, had a particularly strong need for public schools to foster national language acquisition and cultivate patriotic soldiers (Tilly 1975; Darden and Mylonas 2016). Absolute monarchs in Prussia and Austria launched educational initiatives to shift power from feudal lords to the central state, train civil servants, and achieve social control (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Green 1990, 31; Wiborg 2009, 22).

In our case of Britain versus Denmark, nation-building may well have been a stronger motivation for developing an educational system in the latter. Danish rulers felt compelled to defend national boundaries, catch up economically, and promote Danish language and culture (Korsgaard 2004; Wiborg 2009; Nygaard 2009; Kaspersen 2020). Denmark was at war with Sweden for much of the period between 1523 and 1720, and Denmark

suffered serious setbacks when it lost both its fleet in 1807 and Norway in 1814 – making national security a high priority (Reeh 2016). Denmark's long dispute with the German states over the region of Schleswig-Holstein (which it eventually lost in 1864) reinforced the idea that public education could serve as a mechanism for cultivating a unifying sense of Danishness and consolidating territory (Korsgaard 2004). Although Denmark was initially much larger than it is today (and included the territory of present-day Norway, Iceland, and northern Germany), Danish rulers felt relegated to the periphery of Europe and sought education as a means of building economic strength (Sundberg 2004, 134).

Yet the relationship between nation-building goals and educational outcomes varies enormously across countries (Brockliss and Sheldon 2012), and nation-building alone cannot explain the distinctive Danish and British paths. Danish school-building began in the 1780s, before the Napoleonic war and acute conflicts over Schleswig-Holstein; indeed, the period between 1720 and 1801 was a period of stability not seen since the Middle Ages (Jespersen 2011, 19). Prussia, Saxony, and other states in the Holy Roman Empire (which became incorporated into modern Germany in 1871) developed educational systems similar to that of Denmark, yet they did so with different state forms.

Moreover, Britain had its own strong motivations for nation-building. British rulers faced significant obstacles in their efforts to unify the disparate parts of the kingdom and to reconcile their sharp linguistic and religious differences after 1701; in fact, national consolidation would remain a central preoccupation until 1837 (Colley 2005, 14). While Britain had fewer national security concerns than Denmark in the nineteenth century, such concerns were not entirely absent. While Britain was a victor in the Napoleonic war, the requisites of war-making could have put national education on the public agenda, just as British imperialists later saw merit in enhanced education for future soldiers (Fiduccia 1976). Politicians also faced internal disputes among the regions of the United Kingdom – think of the Irish question – and considered how education could be used to resolve these conflicts (Niessen 1984; Hamer 1972). Colley (2005, 8) suggests that British culture defined itself by fighting, which is different from Denmark's impulse for cooperation and coordination. Britain had a strong sense of mission in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with building empire, fighting Catholicism, and promoting Protestant ideology (Colley 2005, 54), and one could imagine that schools to cultivate soldiers and patriotism would be part of the British government's strategy for fighting the good fight. Green (1990) concludes that British liberal cultural values also restrained the state's role in driving education.

A second movement identified by scholars as driving the development of education systems across Europe was the process of *industrialization*, as schools were called upon to address the twin functions of social integration and skills (Durkheim 1961; Boli et al. 1985). As industrialization took off, more workers became involved in the manufacturing sectors, which required

more complex skills than agricultural production, particularly in open economies with traded goods (Wilensky 2002; Ansell 2008; Hanushek and Woessmann 2015). A somewhat different industrializing argument has it that late-developing countries created national education systems to catch up to nations with more established industrial economies (Green 1990; Becker et al. 2011, 97). Some scholars also suggest that the variety of capitalism had bearing on skills training institutions, because countries with coordinated markets had higher needs for workforce skills than liberal market economies. Coordinated market economies were more likely to include strong vocational education in secondary school systems; liberal market economies tended to develop general education (Crouch 1993; Hall and Soskice 2001; Thelen 2004; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; Anderson and Nijhuis 2011; Martin 2011; Hopper 1968, 32–4).

To some extent, arguments linking school-building to industrialization seem to fit with our cases. Because Denmark developed a coordinated market economy with a skilled workforce, it makes sense that the country developed strong and differentiated school programs for working class students. In contrast, Britain's delayed public primary school fit with its emergence as a liberal market economy with fewer specific skills for the working class. Yet the requisites of industrialization do not fully capture the timing of educational initiatives (Boli et al. 1985; Green 1990, 39, 47). British labor lost skills, in part, because workers were poorly educated due to delayed school development. The largely agricultural Denmark was a front-runner, even though guilds covered a very small part of the Danish labor force. Furthermore, the expansion of and political support for Danish vocational education happened in rural communities in the form of agricultural schools and folk high schools. Finally, high levels of labor market coordination (which foster social investments in education) are not closely associated with patterns of industrialization. For example, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden all had macro-corporatist industrial relations institutions but very different economic structures: The Netherlands was an historical frontrunner in commercial capitalist development, Sweden developed large industrial corporations, and Denmark developed small and medium-sized firms. The countries did, however, share historical cultural values placed on cooperation and skills (Martin et al. 2022).

Third, the creation of mass, public education has been associated with the process of *democratization*. As citizens became voters and were asked to weigh in on matters of national importance, they required a greater degree of knowledge about political choices than citizens in pre-democratic regimes. Additionally, with the expansion of voting rights, citizens found themselves better positioned to voice their demands for a more equal society and, thus, for a stronger system of education (Lindert 2004; Stasavage 2005; Green et al. 2006; Ansell 2008; Gift and Wibbels 2014). As workers sought education as a means to improve their own knowledge and power, elites responded with

programs to calm social instabilities (Bjerg et al. 1995, 31–2). Democratization was certainly an important motivation for the creation of primary education in Britain. Indeed, the 1870 British elementary education act was passed three years after the 1867 second reform act that greatly expanded voting rights. In Denmark, the powerful peasant movement drove school expansion in the nineteenth-century (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976).

Yet the relationship between democratization and the development of public education systems is complicated. Authoritarian regimes have their own reasons for creating mass education and cross-national comparisons suggest that democratization is tenuously connected to early school-building (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020; Del Rio et al. 2023). Britain and Denmark constitute an odd juxtaposition of cases. Britain established a parliament in 1801, but Denmark was ruled by an absolute monarchy until it created a parliament in 1849. Yet mass primary schools developed under Danish absolutism long before the constitutional monarchy was established in 1849 and before the movements by farmers and workers to develop expanded schooling. Thus, the democratization narrative fits Britain better than Denmark (Archer 1979; Green 1990, 32).

NATIONAL RESPONSES TO FUNCTIONALIST IMPERATIVES

While projects of nation building, industrialization, and democratization undoubtedly motivated education reforms, policymakers across countries made different calculations about the role that schools could play (Archer 1979). For this reason, concerns about nation building, industrialization, and democratization did not automatically translate into specific educational policy choices. To fully understand those choices, then, we must look at other factors that shaped education policy as well.

A core argument of this book is that cultural views contributed to the development of the dimensions of education discussed above: the features of the *public system*, the degree of *access* offered to all classes, the different types of programs (*differentiation*) provided at the secondary level, *pedagogical methods* and mechanisms for administrative, *regulatory control*. Each country's distinctive cultural views of education, class, society and the state provided a backdrop for Britain's creation of schools primarily serving elites and the middle classes, versus Denmark's development of educational programs that also benefit the lower classes.

First, in collectivist Denmark, politicians developed an early, mass, *public education* system with a high level of educational *access* by workers in order to invest in society, nurture useful citizens, instill patriotism, build states, and recruit soldiers (Moos 2017; Wiborg 2009). In individualistic Britain, politicians did not view workers and farmers as societal resources (Harvey 2013), and they only developed a public primary system intended to serve all citizens

TABLE 1.2 Cultural associations with dimensions of education systems

Dimensions	Britain	Denmark
Public system (timing, spending)	<i>Goals of education</i>	<i>Goals of education</i>
*Individual	*Individualism – high	*Individualism – low
*Society	*Society – low but rise with democratization	*Society – high
Access by workers	<i>References to class</i>	<i>References to class</i>
*Enrollments	*Labor – low	*Labor – high
Differentiation	<i>References to skills</i>	<i>References to skills</i>
*Class-based schools	*Skills – low	*Skills – high and rises with industrialization
*Secondary VET?		
*Pedagogical variety		
Administration and Regulation	<i>References to State</i> (state role)	<i>References to State</i>
*State role	*State – low	*State – high
*Assessment, regulation, control	<i>References to assessment</i> *Regulation – high	<i>References to assessment</i> *Regulation – low

after the legislation of voting rights. Second, Danish educators embraced educational *differentiation* at the secondary level (with a strong vocational component) again with society in mind: Different jobs required different skills, and individual ambitions should be secondary to collective needs. British reformers on the left sought to mitigate stark class differences with a uniform secondary education track, and many rejected vocational programs to assure equality of educational opportunity for working-class youth. But they spent less time talking about collective, societal needs for skills. Third, with respect to preferences for *pedagogical instruction*, British educationalists endorsed humanistic studies and the mastery of a specific curriculum to further individual self-development. Danish educationalists favored experiential pedagogical approaches to prepare Danish children for diverse societal needs (Larsen et al. 2013, 52). Finally, individualist Britain developed *national regulations* to ensure the legal rights of children; collectivist Denmark allowed for local control to meet needs of diverse communities. Table 1.2 presents cultural associations with dimensions of education systems in Britain and Denmark.

These culturally informed choices created certain paradoxes as Britain and Denmark developed their education systems. In Britain, reformers on the left were passionately concerned about inequality, and their desire for equal educational opportunity helped shape the unitary secondary education system (Green 1990, 31). Yet, in choosing such a system, Britain also abandoned any commitment on the part of the state to vocational training, which, in turn,

contributed to the deskilling of the British working class. In Denmark, reformers also came to support universal education at the primary level by the end of the nineteenth-century; however, the additional concerns about societal skills helped to preserve a strong vocational education system and foster a highly skilled working class. The incorporation of a two-tiered secondary education system ultimately produced a highly skilled working class and higher levels of socioeconomic equality than in Britain. Decentralization and voluntarism were hallmarks of nineteenth-century education and private schools drove expansion of literacy in both countries. Yet nineteenth-century voluntarism limited educational commitments in Britain but expanded public support for education in Denmark (Green 1990, xi).

My argument about the role of cultural values is meant to be complementary to other arguments about the nation-specific drivers of education reform; specifically, government institutions, patterns of interest group conflict, and religious traditions were also crucial to education policy outcomes. First, consider how the nature of governmental institutions might shape educational initiatives. Nations with strong state institutions tended to build centralized public education initiatives with strong administrative controls earlier than their peers, and achieved disproportionately high rates of enrollment. Nations with weak governmental institutions tended to be later than their peers in developing public education systems and created more limited mechanisms for administrative oversight (Green 1990, 75). At the same time, federalist governments with their many centers of power offered more opportunities for reform activity and experimentation (Manna 2006, 14).

The absolute monarchy form of government has been associated with higher levels of social and educational investments. The monarch assumed responsibility for protecting the common good and paternalistic kings used education to foster social cohesion and protect their subjects (Damsholt 2000, 80; McDonagh 2015). In the twentieth-century, countries with strong left parties and proportional electoral rules (which encouraged cross-party alliances) were more likely to increase education spending (Boix 1997; Busemeyer 2009; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Ansell 2010; Gingrich 2011; Garritzmann 2016).¹ Countries with many veto points had greater difficulty implementing postwar school reforms against the objections of teachers' unions than those with few veto points (Moe and Wiborg 2017, 17). Unitary governmental systems were more likely to produce centralized school administration than federal systems (Archer 1979). Governmental institutions affected how international reform ideas were adopted in national vocational education (Trampusch 2009).

Small states (such as Denmark) had an easier time finding a consensus on education than large states like Britain (Katzenstein 1985; Graf and Gardin 2018). Yet Denmark was a middle-sized nation and a linguistic potpourri of

¹ Parties on the left may have stronger preferences for spending that is more redistributive than educational investments (Ansell 2010; Jensen 2011; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 418).

a country that included Norway (until 1814) and parts of northern Germany (until 1864) (Jespersen 2011, 3). While Denmark's linguistic diversity came under attack in the border skirmishes with Germany over Schleswig-Holstein in the mid-nineteenth century, cultural views toward education were already apparent in the eighteenth-century age of enlightenment.

Cultural values matter to the ways that institutions shape political outcomes and the same institutions often have different impacts in countries with varied cultural norms. Danish absolutism was completely different from the absolute monarchy in France; in particular, the absolute monarch in Denmark was governed by a dual duty to God *and* to the people and this worked against despotism (Damsholt 2000, 80; Jespersen 2011, 49). Similar political parties took divergent policy positions across countries; for example, the Danish liberal and social democratic parties cooperated more on education reforms than comparable British parties and this was partly due to different cultural assumptions by the parties in the two countries (Wiborg 2009). Because Britain had a weaker central government than Germany, it had more fragile national regulations (Green 1990, viii). Yet Denmark's strong state did not develop robust centralized control of education systems, because groups across the political spectrum strongly opposed centralized oversight. Moreover, cultural continuities have persisted within countries through shifts in the institutional landscape. A similar spirit of coordination was found in Denmark in the absolutism-era Chancellery, late nineteenth-century agricultural cooperatives, quasi private corporatist channels and modern national task forces (Martin and Swank 2012).

A second factor that influenced education reform debates was the competition between various interest groups in each nation.² Nations with strong labor movements, for example, frequently managed to secure high levels of education spending and social investment (Lindert 2004; Stasavage 2005; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Wiborg 2009; Ansell 2010; Gingrich 2011, 134; Busemeyer 2015; Solga 2014; Moe and Wiborg 2017). Workers with specific skills were more likely to demand social spending than workers with general skills (Cusack et al. 2006; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 427). In countries with strong encompassing employers' organizations, firms were more likely than those in weakly organized countries to support educational investments and well-developed vocational tracks relevant to industrial skills (Martin 2011; Boje and Fink 1990, 137–8). Teachers' unions became a powerful force in educational development, especially in the twentieth century, as teachers viewed schools as a source of jobs as well as human capital development (Moe and Wiborg 2017, 1). Denmark had a weaker nobility than Britain, where the public (i.e. private) grammar schools mirrored the deeply entrenched class system (Wiborg 2009, 49).

² Archer (1979, 3) suggests attention to the social origins of education systems that tell us not only who wins but looks at how badly the losers lost.

Yet we can again observe the way that cultural considerations creep into the expression of class and interests (Archer 1979; Gonon and Deissenger 2021). Comparable British and Danish groups held different policy preferences. Around 1800, Danish elites proactively sought education to develop peasants' skills to enhance agricultural productivity; whereas, British elites feared that education would increase mass insurrection, viewed the working class as a drain on the economy and rejected social supports as contributing to overpopulation. In the mid-1800s, Danish national liberal elites sought constitutionalism and some new political rights, but they were more concerned with the social and economic well-being of the people than with electoral expansion. British utilitarian reformers supported expanded political rights, and grounded their arguments on conceptions of individualism; however, they expressed Malthusian concerns about overpopulation in advancing social benefits. Workers in Britain and Denmark also held different preferences. Around 1900, Danish unions and the Left Party fully supported a strong secondary vocational education track to build workers' skills (Christiansen 1978). Many among British labor sought a unitary secondary education track, fearing that that vocational education would channel working-class children into inferior courses and would perpetuate class inequalities (Evans 1985, 11). Thus, expressions of class interests were tempered by cultural factors (Archer 1979, 3).

A third factor contributing to varied education policy choices was differences in religious traditions (Evans 1985, 1; Wiborg 2009; Petersen et al. 2010, 39; Cox 2001; van Oorschot et al. 2008). The Catholic church had provided human capital, models of administration and sources of legal thought since medieval times (Møller and Stavnskær Doucette 2022; Grzymala-Busse 2015, 2023). Pastors provided the earliest forms of local government administration in Denmark (Knudsen 2000; Knudsen and Rothstein 1994). Lutheran countries, with their weak church-state struggles, tended to be early educational innovators (Green 1990, 28; Kahl 2005; van Kersbergen and Manow 2009). Countries that developed early mass schooling had a state church and no sizable Catholic minorities (Soysal and Strang 1989; Ansell and Lindvall 2013).

Yet cultural values also seem to play a role in the evolution of diverse religious traditions. Countries responded in very different ways to the Protestant reformation and made diverse choices about the relationships between church and state. Britain and Denmark both adopted an Episcopal model, which included a strong role for a state church in nation-building. Yet despite doctrinal similarities, the relationship between church and state – as well as between the state church and dissenting sects – evolved very differently in the two countries (Nelsen and Guth 2015, 77–8). Both countries had a state church with strong dissenting sects, yet only in Britain did sharp religious cleavages over church schools delay public education. Danish religious leaders preached moderation and policymakers supported state funding for private, evangelical schools (“Danske Skolehistorie”).

Public opinion is a final factor contributing to cross-national variations in contemporary education policy; and differences in opinion might well have driven nineteenth-century developments as well. When education becomes a salient issue for the public and the public holds a coherent position on school reform, party institutions and interest group conflict have less influence on educational choices than the powerful pressure of public opinion (Busemeyer et al. 2020). Attitudes toward redistribution shape views on educational subsidies for low-income students (Garritzmann 2016). People's views of the functions of vocational education matter enormously to their opinions about VET systems (Di Stasio and Solga 2017). If public opinion is often crucial to contemporary education reform cycles, it makes sense that it also played a role in the past; yet, assessing historical opinion presents daunting methodological obstacles, as surveys, polls and experimental design research produce data confined to recent decades. Therefore, this book explores alternative routes to understanding historical, culturally informed opinions about education policy.

Of course, cultural values, interest group cleavages, institutions, and religious beliefs undoubtedly coevolve and have a reciprocal influence on one another (Alesina and Giuliano 2015, 928; Macfarlane 1978). Cultural values illuminate why new ideas are interpreted in different ways, why class factions have such different preferences across the two countries, and why Brits are more distrustful of their political institutions than are Danish citizens. Cultural constructs predate the development of contemporary party systems, unions, and employers' associations, and the study of struggles in a single policy domain does not capture the unifying themes of culture that extend across policy areas. Yet, interests and institutions also have a feedback effect on further cultural development; for example, premodern institutions for governance reinforced regional tendencies toward cooperation and conflict (Putnam 1993).

ACTIVIST WRITERS AND CULTURAL WORK

Simply observing that culture plays a role in shaping education policy is not a particularly useful insight. Because of the complicated interaction of cultural values, interests, and institutions discussed above, it behooves us to consider precisely how cultural values are infused in specific education policy debates and how they reappear across time. I suggest a model to explain how cultural values are transmitted; namely, this happens through the *agency* of fiction writers and the *structure* of national cultural symbols and narratives found in literature. This chapter explores how literary authors as *agents* played a salient role in imbuing political challenges with a cultural perspective in episodes of education reform; Chapter 2 presents a theory of how authors' collective narratives transmitted the *structure* of cultural symbols and narratives over time.

Fiction writers participated in struggles over policy reform in several ways that reflected their cultural power. The first was by joining other intellectuals to put neglected issues on the political agenda. In pre-democratic regimes,

the general public – and even bourgeois intellectuals – had few avenues for making their concerns known. But these communities of writers and other intellectuals debated the grand issues of the day in salons and literature became a crucial medium for men and women of letters to debate issues, shape public consciousness and influence rulers (Keen 1999, 29–33; Williams 1963; Foucault 1981, 58; Znaniecki 1952, 26). The relative autonomy of fiction writers allowed authors to serve functions associated with nation-building, legitimizing governance structures and reproducing class structures (Bourdieu 1991, 655; Williams 1963).

Even in the nineteenth century, as parliamentary mechanisms for policy-making developed in Denmark and matured in Britain, authors such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig viewed political channels as limited in their capacities to cope with social challenges. Therefore, authors continued to use their work to influence specific political debates. British writers addressed issues such as poverty to which politicians paid scant attention with stories about women and children suffering from social degradation at the hands of drunken, destitute men, and they led cultural campaigns to nurture the charitable impulse in the upper and middle classes (Poovey 1995, 57; Guy 1996; Childers 2001; Dzelzainis 2012).

To have an impact, fiction needs readers, at least among the political class, and evidence suggests that a mass audience for fiction certainly existed by the mid-1800s. British elites feared the effects of rising literacy among the common man after the Glorious Revolution (Altick 1954, 4–6, 30–1; Feather 1988, 90–1; Watt 2000, 36, 47). Then, as commercial capitalism fueled the expansion of a new, literate middle-class audience for fiction, authors gained more influence (Watt 2000, 12–21, 60). Advanced printing technologies facilitated the proliferation of books, and helped to make inexpensive classics more accessible to the middle classes (Keen 1999, 4). Sales of books soared after 1774, when the publisher John Bell began printing books on coarse paper, creating a cheaper product that was more accessible to the masses (Altick 1954, 54). Writers became so influential that in 1789, Pitt expanded the stamp act on newspaper rentals to limit reading by potentially rebellious middle-class consumers (Keen 1999, 37). By the 1850s, the reading public encompassed between 5 and 6 million people (Altick 1954, 4–6). Dickens's publishers had sold 4,239,000 works by 1882 in England alone (Altick 1957, 384). Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* sold 20,000 copies in the first three months (Altick 1986, 238).

A second way that fiction writers participated in shaping policy reform was by using their artistic works to frame or to ascribe specific meaning to economic, social, and political problems and their solutions (Wedeen 2002, 713). Narratives provide cognitive frames and this gives authors a special power to influence individuals' beliefs about the causes of problems such as poverty and beliefs about social mobility (Lamont 2000; Lamont and Small 2008, 83–4; Poovey 1995; Carney 2017; Childers 2001). Narratives are crucial

to the development of imaginaries that organize economic action, because “fictional expectations” rather than “rational expectations” critically determine action under conditions of uncertainty (Beckert and Bronk 2018, 4; Fourcade 2011). Cultural tools matter to political processes when they help to solve a puzzle, and they are available, forceful, and institutionally supported (McDonnell et al. 2017; Schudson 1989, 160). The shifting cultural interpretation of the Holocaust helped to develop new forms of regulatory control (Alexander 2003, 31). Of particular interest to us is the way that authors create frames that influence how people think about the basic goals of education: to benefit individuals or to serve the broader society. Matthew Arnold has in mind education to facilitate individual self-development when he writes that the “grand aim of education” for the middle class is “largeness of soul and personal dignity”; culture brings to the lower classes “feeling, gentleness, humanity” (Kuhn 1971, 53).

A third way that authors influenced policy debates was by using fiction to make powerful emotional appeals that elevate the salience of political issues (Swidler 1986). For British political economists, individual self-interest drove social processes and fiction writers explored these themes with an intimacy unavailable to philosophers (Gallagher 2006, 10–12). Beginning with his work on the Poor Law Commission, James Kay (Shuttleworth) described poverty as a social disorder resulting from a disorganized culture (Kay-Shuttleworth 1832). Elizabeth Gaskell gave his ideas emotional power with her best-seller, *Mary Barton* (2011/1848). Gaskell believed that it was the role of thinkers like Kay-Shuttleworth and Thomas Carlyle to research objective conditions, while her own role was to teach people sympathy rather than political economy by recasting their ideas through fiction (Pollard 1965, 34–41). Dickens anticipated that *A Christmas Carol* would have “twenty thousand time the force” of a pamphlet on child labor laws (Henderson 2000, 140–3). Benjamin Disraeli explained that he wrote *Sybil* (1844) as a follow-up to nonfictional work calling attention to dysfunctional party politics and to the troubles of the working man (Disraeli 2020/1845, 454). In the United States, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* did not cause the Civil War yet it fanned the outcry against slavery (Guy 1996, 11).

A fourth way that activist writers exercised their influence was by participating in coalitions with political allies to win policy battles; within these coalitions, fiction writers specialized in using cultural touchstones to popularize esoteric policy ideas among the wider public (Poovey 1995, 15; Keen 1999, 2). Because fiction writers often appear to be one step removed from politics and therefore somewhat neutral, they can help to legitimize policy proposals. Indeed, eighteenth-century members of the “state nobility” increasingly derived their legitimacy from cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991, 655; Spillman and Faeges 2005). In this regard, Herman Bang in *Time* credits, blames and implicitly recognizes the role of the old poets who with patriotic words brought Denmark to the disastrous 1864 war: “It is the poets who have filled

us with fresh visions and heralded the new age...it is his visions that have carried us to this day...even if they were only illusions...his is the responsibility” (Bang 1984/1889, 48).

Some writers publicly worked with political parties and movements, served in Parliament, and openly participated in networks with political leaders (Carney 2017). Danish enlightenment-era author Ludvig Holberg, for example, helped to revitalize the Sorø Academy, an important school for educating future statesmen, and used the Academy to alter the course of education in Denmark. The Danish poet and priest, NFS Grundtvig, helped to draft the 1849 constitution and inspired the people’s high school movement (Martin 2018). Other writers hid behind their art, claiming political neutrality; this perhaps contributed to the relative lack of attention to their role in political change within the political science profession. In Britain, Arnold reviewed drafts of his brother-in-law’s Education Act of 1870 (establishing British mass education) and lobbied extensively for his view of education reform both behind the scenes and with his public essays and fiction; yet Arnold publicly demurred when asked to take explicitly political positions. As he wrote to his mother on October 17, 1871, “things in England being what they are, I am glad to work indirectly by literature rather than directly by politics” (Arnold 1900, 7vc7). Hardy argued for necessary political neutrality in a letter to Robert Pearce Edgcombe on April 23, 1891: “the pursuit of what people are pleased to call Art so as to win unbiassed attention to it as such, absolutely forbids political action.” Coleridge vigorously participated in the Tory, Anglican school-building effort, yet he wrote to Beaumont in December 1811, “I detest writing Politics, even on the right side” (Coleridge 1956, 352).

Some caveats are in order. Most importantly, authors and their narratives were themselves subject to control by the powers that be, as power relations permeated the production of books. Publishers, the state and other elites had the means to promote or suppress literary voices, and while the barriers to publishing were lower in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, publishers gave a platform to chosen authors (Altick 1986). Powerful actors and institutions (such as markets, laws, industrial structures) controlled what commentary was printed, what texts were published and who was allowed to engage in discourse (Foucault 1981, 52–6; Peterson and Anand 2004). Fiction may have inspired social activism, but social movements also brought authors to attempt new genres of fiction (Isaac 2009). Authors themselves experienced an essential antagonism between their autonomy (based on their relative autonomous worlds of the ivory tower) and their political engagement (Bourdieu 1991, 658).

Moreover, individual authors chose either to reinforce or to challenge elite power structures, and assessing writers’ influence presents a challenge when they supported opposing sides of a debate. Groups and diverse fields competed over the formation of national identities and offered diverse national myths to claim legitimate political authority (Poovey 1995, 15; Keen 1999, 2). Some authors legitimized coercive institutions, as when their stories held

victims responsible for structural failings or when bildungsroman conveyed cultural norms of appropriateness (Apol 2000, 62). Yet others challenged dominant power relations, by drawing attention to the contradictions and cognitive dissonance inherent in governing institutions (Claybaugh 2003–2004, 45–6). Tensions also divided generations. Romantic writers held the poets of the French revolution in contempt for the terror associated with the so-called age of reason; and Romantics harkened back to religious and emotional themes. Romantics, in turn, lost favor with the failure of progressive reform after 1848 (Bourdieu 1991, 657). Modernists across Europe rebelled against the social norms of the prior age: They challenged organized religion, and in some countries such as France, they protested patriotism and nationalism (Bourdieu 1991, 658).

Yet despite political and generational cleavages among authors, common threads often brought together opposing sides. Both political camps in Britain at the dawn of the nineteenth century agreed that society was an amalgamation of individuals. British radical utilitarian thinkers – against the protests of their conservative countrymen – fought for the rights of individual workers; in contrast, Edmund Burke resolutely rejected individual rights and viewed the French Revolution as an assault on traditional British culture. But he also considered the historical construction of a people to be a “wholly artificial” construction entered into by individuals forming the social contract (Williams 1963, 9). Burke and William Cobbett, were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, but both attacked industrialization (Williams 1963, 3). Later, British authors on the left and right worried about the culture of poverty.

If authors systematically came from different class backgrounds in Britain and Denmark, this could also contribute to cross-national differences in the cultural expressions of the literary world. For example, if Danish writers could more easily develop within the agricultural and industrial classes than British writers, we might expect Danish authors to be more supportive of education for workers. Yet, writers from both countries largely came from the bourgeois class until the late nineteenth century, although Charles Dickens and Hans Christian Andersen were obvious exceptions to this general rule. In mid-nineteenth century Britain, working class journalists and some fiction writers sought to challenge the cultural hegemony of the middle class by disseminating their ideas through periodicals. The autodidact movement provided an enthusiastic audience for their products (Murphy 1994, 7–31). But many of those who most prominently championed the working class came from the bourgeoisie; for example, Percy Shelley was educated at Eton and expelled from Oxford. Novelists had close links to their publishers in the nineteenth-century and this tended to reinforce the hegemony of the middle class (Feather 1988). In Denmark, a working-class literature developed only at the end of the nineteenth century with the appearance of Martin Andersen Nexø, Jeppe Aakjær, and Johan Skjoldborg (Lund 2020, 51, 56).

Finally, fiction writers undoubtedly wielded greater influence in the early days of education expansion, before political institutions and interest groups were fully established. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, trends toward mass education accelerated as economic and political globalization took off, and these likely reduced cross-country differences in authors' depictions of education. With time, writers also became more supportive of mass education, and this was particularly true in Britain, where authors once divided by diverse political perspectives came to share views about the powerful social and political forces driving educational expansion.

This model for understanding how education systems developed suggests that cultural frames provided context for struggles among social actors. Movements of nation-building, industrialization and democratization broadly inspired expansion of schooling. The western world experienced periods of individualism/liberalism (such as the mid nineteenth century and the late twentieth century) and collectivism/coordination (such as the late nineteenth century and period after the second world war). Changing paradigms in education policy set off new trajectories, and coalitions of authors, politicians, and other agents competed to advance their preferred solutions to educational problems. Dynamics of political contestation, labor power, business organization and party politics all contribute to educational outcomes. Yet beneath these very real power struggles, cultural frames, marshalled by activist authors, slyly informed the articulation of interests and the interpretation of ideas. These frames persisted even through periods of individualism and collectivism, and they had a bearing on the fault lines of contestation.

AUTHORS IN POLICYMAKING EPISODES

The following section of this chapter will explore how writers engaged in reform episodes as political agents and how they used cultural tropes to advance specific educational solutions to pressing economic, political and social problems. Danish and British writers were active at three critical junctures in the development of education systems: the establishment of initial primary schools in the early nineteenth century, the expansion of primary schools in the mid-nineteenth century and the enactment of secondary schooling in the early twentieth century. In each case, challenges associated with nation-building, industrialization and/or democratization broadly inspired educational initiatives. New ideas about education often precipitated reforms in both countries; however, these reforms were picked up in somewhat different ways. Networks of authors and intellectuals advanced specific approaches, lobbied for change with political allies, popularized educational appeals, and helped to unite other social actors from diverse class fractions around educational strategies. These cases are developed at much greater length in Chapters 3 to 5. Chapter 2 also reports quantitative findings showing us that British and Danish authors collectively depicted education in nationally distinctive ways and suggest that these provided broad context for education policy choices.

Primary Schools in Denmark, 1720–1820

Mass education became a project in both Denmark and Britain around 1800, and both countries made choices about expanded educational access (to workers and farmers), pedagogical methods for instruction and the role of the state. Denmark developed a national school system in 1814 with a series of Royal proclamations that required seven years of compulsory education. For example, the Proclamation for Common Schools in the countryside of July 29, 1814 (Anordning for Almue-Skolevæsenet paa Landet i Danmark 1814) was designed to serve children outside of the capital city, while Copenhagen had its own ordinance. The push for mass public education began in earnest after the crown prince and progressive estate owners staged a bloodless coup in 1784, removing the mentally ill king from the throne. The progressive estate owners who were involved in the coup played important leadership roles in the new regime: They included among others Andreas Peter Bernstorff (President of the Danish Chancellory, in effect prime minister, and minister of foreign affairs), Christian Ditlev Reventlow (who also became prime minister), Christian's brother Johan Ludvig Reventlow (leading educationalist and supporter of land reform), and Ernst Schimmelmann (minister of finance). The new rulers immediately created commissions for land, education, and poverty reforms that produced far-reaching social experiments. The Great School Commission launched a massive school-building campaign across the country that culminated twenty-five years later in the 1814 act creating a national system (Christiansen et al. 2010).

The journey toward mass education, however, was marked by political struggle. First, while educating agricultural and industrial working-class children was more widely accepted in Denmark than in Britain, conservative and progressive forces had different motivations for expanding *access* to schools. Military ambitions and religious duty had driven the crown's development of rider schools in 1721 and a royal decree for mandatory schooling in 1739 (reversed in 174), and these concerns continued to motivate conservatives to support education reforms at century's end (Reeh and Larsen 2015, 42–3). But the progressive civil servants who helped to engineer a coup and played a leadership role in the new regime supported education for additional social and economic reasons. The progressive reformers sought land reforms to improve agricultural productivity and believed that expanded mass primary schooling was key to obtaining peasants' participation in this growth strategy (Holm 1900, 33–40; Lundgreen-Nielsen no date; Larsen et al. 2013). Education would enhance the collective good and contribute to the nation-building project (Sundberg 2004, 141–6; Markussen 2014). Both conservatives and progressives wished to prevent revolutionary unrest of the French ilk, and even those amenable to the objectives of the French revolution were also sympathetic to the Danish monarchy (Damsholt 2000, 96).

Second, factions held to different views of the content and *pedagogical* methods for educational instruction. The reform faction supported the new

Philanthropist pedagogical ideas promulgated by Basedow and Rochow that endorsed experience-based education rather than rote learning; in contrast, some conservative voices continued to favor the memorization of religious tenets. The reformers faction wanted to create happy and useful citizens; to this end, education should encompass courses on history, mathematics and natural sciences in addition to religious instruction, and schooling should combine the practical with the theoretical. In contrast, Bishop Balle sought to scale back the expanded curriculum and to focus instruction instead on religious topics and on practical methods for agriculture (Larsen et al. 2013, 75–86).

Third, the role of the state was more settled in Denmark, an absolute monarchy, than in Britain; yet conflict remained. Within the commission, the Reventlow brothers and their allies wanted national education experts to administer the new school system; however, the more conservative Bishop Balle wanted the church to retain control and to keep school oversight fixed at the local level (Larsen et al. 2013, 83; Reeh 2016, Loc 2846). Moreover, commission members began the march toward a national system by encouraging school-building within local communities and commissioners had to persuade conservative estate owners to engage in the school-building effort (Bohe 1895–1931, XLIV; Larsen et al. 2013, 84–8). Both farmers and conservative estate owners did not want education to interfere with peasant children's work (Larsen et al. 2013, 84–8).

Writers contributed both to the conceptual framework of mass schooling and to securing support for the education project. Most importantly, Ludvig Holberg's writings in the mid-1700 were an inspiration to the later generation of enlightenment reformers such as Johann Bernhard Basedow, who taught at the Sorø Academy before moving to start his school in what is now northern Germany. Holberg offered vivid representations of the importance of education to society, emphasizing the positive contributions of workers, the importance of social investments and the necessity of state leadership. Additionally, Holberg institutionalized his educational ideas by his bequeathing his fortune to the Sorø Academy and encouraging the academy to instruct with his methods, such as teaching in Danish and encouraging the study of history, literature, and old Nordic myths. Sorø hired Holberg's former students such as Jens Schielderup Sneedorff (professor of law and politics and later tutor to the crown prince), who wrote that peasants should be honored members of society, and Andreas Schytte, who sought peasant education for the sake of the common good (Plesner 1930, 20–8).

Sneedorff (professor of law and politics) was the most important transmitter of Holberg's ideas at the academy and trained young nobility to be political leaders or civil servants for the fatherland (Plesner 1930, 115–6, 20–8). Like Holberg, Sneedorff passionately argued for peasants and a conception of individual freedom that instilled in all the right and duty to participate in society. Sneedorff had a major impact on the thinking of Count Johann Hartvig Ernst von Bernstorff, the minister of foreign affairs, uncle of reforming

politician Andreas Peter Bernstorff and a leader in land reform on his own estate. Sneedorff also influenced the educational thinking of Johann Bernhard Basedow (a close friend, fellow teacher at Sorø, and husband of Sneedorff's cousin). Basedow transported the Sorø educational ideas from Holberg and Sneedorff to Germany, where he started the earliest alternative school (Plesner 1930, 32–3, 81). The academy educated estate owners, such as Christian Ditlev and Johan Ludvig Reventlow, who reported being deeply influenced by their training at the Sorø Academy (Bobe 1895–1931, I, xxx–xxxii; II, i) and who would go on to head the Poverty, Education, and School commissions set up in the 1780s (Larsen et al. 2013, 54–69).

Later romantic writers contributed to education reform and other nation-building projects by providing crucial support to the postcoup government. They gathered at the Drejer's Klub in Copenhagen to discuss the reform agenda and formed the Society for Future Generations (which included civil servants) to nurture citizenship and disseminate useful knowledge. When conservative estate owners from Jutland mobilized to oppose reforms, writers intervened with a war of words in *Minerva* and other venues to ardently support the new regime and the end of serfdom (Bokkenheuser 1903, 24–5, 116–8, 177–82).

Thus, authors were deeply involved with debates over education and more broadly in the nation-building project to construct a modern Denmark. Holberg inspired new ideas about education and funded an academy to use experimental methods; later romantic writers participated in coalitions with civil servants leading the reform efforts. While the 1814 royal proclamation scaled back many progressive elements of the education agenda, the progressive reformers and their literary allies left a legacy for future generations: to view the (largely agricultural) working class as a partner in society and to cultivate useful citizens with both practical skills and humanistic knowledge.

The Great School Commission was deeply influenced by these ideas, although divisions between progressives and conservatives grew sharper when an economic and military crisis broke out in the country after 1800. Denmark joined the wrong side of the Napoleonic war, saw its fleet destroyed by British, and finally declared bankruptcy in 1813. Consequently, the 1814 royal proclamations emphasized religious instruction and practical methods for agriculture more than the expanded educational program favored by enlightenment progressives (Larsen et al. 2013, 75–86; Reeh 2016). Yet the themes of the enlightenment would resurface and continue to influence educational thought throughout the nineteenth century.

Primary Schools in Britain, 1720–1820

The British government failed to develop a public mass education system during this period; however, two charitable societies built primary schools for the middle- and some lower-class children. Radicals and Dissenters formed

the British and Foreign School Society in 1808 to support a network of monitorial schools inspired by Joseph Lancaster. Then, in 1811, the Anglicans formed the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor to build schools embracing Andrew Bell's monitorial school model. Few of the figures involved in these efforts had any interest in a state system of primary education (National Society 1812; Doheny 1991; Kaestle 1973).

As in Denmark, British policymakers, writers, and other intellectuals debated questions of how much access workers and farmers should have to education, what pedagogical methods should be used for instruction, and what role the state should play. Significantly more disagreement about working-class *access* to education existed in Britain than in Denmark. British elites were intensely worried about economic and political instability, as the French Revolution raged across the English Channel. Yet Tories (largely from the Anglican landed gentry), Whigs, and Radicals (more frequently drawing from urban commercial interests) often disagreed about how best to resolve social instability. Radicals such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Holcroft (novelist and publisher) believed that workers had a human right to education. Many Tories and Whigs feared that education would only give rise to revolutionary impulses among workers (Brantlinger 1998; Parille 2011, 25). This skepticism was reinforced by the writings of Thomas Malthus (1809/1797), who argued that giving resources to the poor would simply lead to overpopulation. Religious devotees such as children's book writer Sarah Trimmer saw education as a means of saving children's souls to bind them to the Anglican Church.

On issues of *pedagogy*, there was broad support for the Bell–Lancaster method and the versions of monitorial teaching by Bell and Lancaster were quite similar: both used an instructional pedagogy that followed a specific curriculum and asked that students engage in rote memorization to master this curriculum (Kaestle 1973; Foakes 1989, 197–204). But the National Society (associated with Bell) and British and Foreign Society (associated with Lancaster) disagreed vehemently about whether Bell or Lancaster was the true architect of the monitorial method. During this period, there was also substantial agreement that the church societies rather than the *state* should take responsibility for education, and only Radicals on the left favored a national system. Schools became a weapon in religious wars for the souls of the poor, and neither the mainstream Anglican Church nor Dissenting sects were willing to cede this instrument for religious victory to government (Pachori 1983).

Writers provided a cultural lens to frame the educational debates. They touted education as a boon to individual self-development among the upper and middle classes and they helped to neutralize fears of working-class literacy by depicting education's contribution to social stability. Yet all but some Radical writers questioned the advantages of a public system (Stone 1969).

Authors also participated in the educational societies' school-building drive; indeed, Coleridge's Royal Institution speech in 1808 was a galvanizing force around poor people's education (Pachori 1983, 26–31). Both Coleridge and

Wordsworth had insider connections to the National Society, as Coleridge's brother, George, and Wordsworth's brother, Christopher, were both vice-presidents of the society (National Society 1812, 95–162). Coleridge favored romantic notions of individual self-discovery in upper-class education, but he thought that the Bell system would work well for lower-class children (Pachori 1983, 26–34). Wordsworth sought learning for the middle-classes, was more pessimistic than Coleridge about also educating the poor and campaigned tirelessly against a national education system (Wordsworth/Knight 1907, 180). Trimmer was another great proponent of the Anglican schools, although she died before the formation of the National Society (Dunn 1848, 47).

Some Radical and Whig writers – such as philosopher Jeremy Bentham and the poet and Radical politician Lord Byron – endorsed the British and Foreign School Society, although their role was more muted than that of authors supporting the National Society (Bentham 1818, 53; British and Foreign School Society 1814). Bentham was impressed by the efficiency of the Lancaster method (Bentham 1818, 53). Lord Byron (poet and Radical politician) was on the board of the British and Foreign School Society (British and Foreign School Society 1814). Byron also favored education as essential for self-development; in *Don Juan*, he ridiculed Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, who focused instruction narrowly on religious themes (Byron 2007/1819–1824).

To summarize, Danish progressive and conservative factions largely agreed on the importance of educating young people of all classes and on the role for the state in schooling. British elites, on the other hand, were much more divided over the appropriateness of working-class education and over the legitimate role for the state. Danish authors helped to build support by celebrating worker education, and casting it as essential to a strong society. While some British authors on the left supported education for workers as a human right, writers largely remained unconvinced that extensive working-class education would be a boon to society.

Expansion of Primary Schools in Denmark, 1820–1870

In the mid-nineteenth century, both Denmark and Britain expanded mass education, and politicians, fiction writers, and other intellectuals in both countries pondered questions about educational access for the lower classes, pedagogical methods, and the role of the state. In Denmark, the king promoted a monitorial system of instruction shortly after the 1814 proclamations. Yet subsequent widespread dissatisfaction with Bell–Lancaster prompted a private school-building movement and renewed enthusiasm for experimental learning methods. The Danish Law on School Freedom of 1855 (Friskoleloven af 1855) gave parents the right to develop their own schools and to organize instruction around local needs for child labor. Another school reform in 1856 made administrative changes that enhanced local power over the evaluation and assessment of state schools, funded agricultural schools and improved

teachers' salaries. An 1855 reform expanded the curricula of the Latin Schools from their sole focus on classical languages to include tracks studying modern languages and mathematics (Skovmand 1944, 124, 112–13; Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 125).

Fiction writers joined in political struggles over the path to education reform both by framing the debate and by participating directly in political encounters. Two groups of writers and intellectuals were particularly noteworthy. One influential group of novelists, playwrights, poets and other intellectuals coalesced in Copenhagen around National Liberal political ideas and the playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Heiberg was the director of the Royal Danish Theatre, a prominent National Liberal activist and an editor of the *Monthly Journal for Literature* (*Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*) (Larsen 2006, 29). This group included such figures as the novelist Thomasina Gyllembourg and the poet Henrik Hertz. Another group consisted of authors (from the provinces) associated with priest and poet NFS Grundtvig, novelist Bernhard Severin Ingemann, novelist Steen Steensen Blicher and novelist/fairy-tale author Hans Christian Andersen. They belonged to the new romanticism school and embraced educational realism.

Policymakers, writers and other intellectuals engaged in debates about access, pedagogy and state control during this period of state expansion. There continued to be broad support for expanding *access* to education by lower-class children; however, the reasons for this commitment varied. King Frederik VI (who moved to the right over time) was increasingly alarmed about national security threats after the Napoleonic War and viewed the robust implementation of the new mass school system as essential to getting farmers and workers to rally to the defense of the realm (Reeh 2016). In contrast, both the National Liberal and Grundtvigian factions of writers and other intellectuals largely regarded mass education as crucial to “dannelse,” a Danish term that may roughly be translated as “cultural formation.” Both camps imagined an organic society that transcended individuals and rejected any conception of education that did not place central importance on the historical life of the people (Nygaard 2009, 93–6; Larsen 2006, 98).³ Heiberg advocated for elite-led cultural formation and Grundtvigt favored a bottom up approach; but no one argued that the cultural formation of the working class would detract from Danish culture, as was the case in Britain. Some National Liberals also argued for education to be an individual right, although rights-based arguments were less popular in Denmark than in Britain (Kålund-Jørgensen 1953–1956, 453).

Despite the widespread enthusiasm for expanded access, policymakers and educationalists disputed the best *pedagogical* practices. King Frederick VI and his allies determined that the monitorial system (“Den indbyrdes Underviisningsmethode”) would cultivate obedience and discipline, qualities

³ Dannelse is similar to the German conception of “Bildung,” but whereas Bildung has more to do with forming the individual, Dannelse also refers to evolving collective society.

needed for military purposes; they rejected the older enlightenment-inspired methods favored by Basedow and the Reventlow brothers (Reeh and Larsen 2015, 41–6). The rigid methods of Bell–Lancaster, meanwhile, sat uneasily with many writers and other intellectuals, who worried that the new techniques would destroy students’ capacities for independent learning and would fail to provide for *dannelse* (Bugge 1965; Reeh and Larsen 2015, 49). Grundtvig and Ingemann promoted the idea of a secondary “real school” at the Sorø Academy to teach Danish language, history, sciences, mathematics and practical skills. It was hoped that such a program of instruction would cultivate a strong sense of society among youth (Hørby 1967, 76).

Finally, questions about the *role of the state* in education became salient in the wake of the failed monitorial system experiment. Dissatisfaction with the methods endorsed by the state system inspired a powerful movement for greater parental freedom in education and intensified the desire to retain school regulation at the level of community (Reeh 2016). The desire for greater freedom also gave rise to the development of private free schools and folk high schools by Grundtvig-disciple Christian Kold. The schools instructed students in Danish literature and myths and used narrative and experiential techniques to stimulate the imagination (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 117–19). The folk high schools also became important venues for exposing people to literature, and Ingemann, Blicher and Andersen all supported the schools (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 117–19; Skovmand 1944, 416–17; Kålund-Jørgensen 1953–1956, 453).

While National Liberal politicians initially resisted the private schools, all political parties eventually recognized that private schools would advance schooling for rural children (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 66–7). Politician Anders Sandøe Ørsted circulated a survey among local school officials to solicit views on the “freedom principle.” A county representative responded that greater freedom would result in expanded school participation: “freedom versus compulsion in schools – that is the main question on which everything else turns on...If you give up compulsion, all other favorable improvements will come by themselves, everything will fall easily into place with little help from and adjustment by the state” (Larsen 1899, 200–1).

Expansion of Primary Schools in Britain, 1820–1870

The 1870 Elementary Education Act in Britain finally created a public primary education system and created new local school boards to oversee schooling. In decades preceding the act, reformers had experimented with various forms to expand educational access; however, while the 1870 act protected the church-based voluntary schools, it effectively eliminated the rights of localities to develop alternative school forms. The bill’s architect, William Forster, strongly favored uniformity and strong national capacities for school inspection (Roper 1975, 185–202; Marcham 1973; Shuman 2000, 12).

Policymakers, writers and other intellectuals confronted issues of access, pedagogy and state control in the decades leading up to the 1870 reform. Elites on the left and right continued to disagree about working-class *access* to primary school education until at least the mid-1800s; opponents feared that schooling would prompt workers to question class inequities. At the same time, social unrest associated with industrialization, free trade, landless agricultural workers created by the Corn Laws and worker movements (e.g. Chartists and Luddites) caused mounting alarm among elites (Kestner 1988, 58). The Second Reform Act of 1867, which greatly expanded suffrage and democratic controls, also helped to persuade skeptics of the benefits of public education, as many came to view schooling as a boost for social stability. Robert Lowe (Vice President of Committee of Council on Education) expressed this logic when he famously remarked that politicians must educate their “future masters” (Marcham 1973).

Victorian fiction writers and intellectuals helped to expand an interest in educating the poor. Although writers such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hughes and Charles Dickens continued to depict education as crucial to individual self-development; many Victorian social reform novelists also emphasized that expanded *access* to schools for the working class could aid in solving social problems and societal unrest. Authors such as Dickens, Gaskell and Charles Kingsley depicted the working class as enveloped in a destructive culture of poverty. Authors used their work to nurture a charitable impulse in the upper and middle classes, and to show that education constituted a means of combatting this culture and ameliorating social ills (Goodlad 2001, 593–5; Armstrong 1986, 642–3). Yet unlike their Danish contemporaries, British authors generally did not draw attention to the poor’s economic contribution and to how an underinvestment in the skills of workers might detract from the collective good.

Politicians and writers also deliberated questions about best *pedagogical* methods. The assumptions of the monitorial system were deeply entrenched. Students should master a specific set of information with set lesson plans using rote memorization, and a cramming culture permeated education at all levels (Cordner 2016). Yet some critics found fault with the mechanistic methods of the Bell–Lancaster model and supported the development of other types of schools, in part, to expand access. One result of this experimentation was the “ragged school” movement, which created schools for the poorest children; teachers taught practical skills such as carpentry, shoemaking and tailoring in addition to religious instruction (Schupf 1972, 165).

Ultimately, standardized curricula with fixed lesson plans remained the standard model for British education, and experiments with alternative schools were largely cast aside with the 1870 reform (although voluntary church schools remained very much part of the system) (Schupf 1972, 168). Writers played a part in this process, because many set a priority on quality over access. Some British authors such as Dickens ridiculed the cramming culture and the

mechanistic set lessons that defined most primary school teaching. Yet many defended the standardization of curricula and showed less enthusiasm than their Danish counterparts for experiential learning techniques. While Dickens made fun of cramming, he joined novelist William Thackeray in lambasting cheap schools on the grounds that these did not meet quality standards and failed to cover essential knowledge (Gargano 2008). Some authors such as Charles Kingsley joined biologist Thomas Huxley in promoting Darwin and the study of natural sciences in education (Hale 2012). But many authors also followed Matthew Arnold in celebrating the use of a humanistic curriculum and the study of classic works to elevate British culture and foster self-development (Farrar 1867).

Policymakers, intellectuals and writers also disagreed about the appropriate roles for the *state* and the church in education, and on mechanisms for administrative oversight. Partisans bitterly contested the role that the church would play in public education: Tories insisted on preserving the church schools, while the Liberals sought a truly national, nonreligious education system (Roper 1975, 185–203). In lieu of a national education system, Whigs/Liberal policymakers developed regulations for government oversight of local and private schools. A Committee of the Privy Council on Education was established in 1839 to formulate national education policy, carry out school inspection for quality control, and make grants to local and voluntary schools (Doheny 1991; Smith 1923; Ross 1967, 275). Mechanisms for government oversight became further institutionalized with the Revised Code of 1862 that set up a system of payment by results in which government funding would be contingent on students' performance on exams (Midgley 2016).

Writers worked to sway public opinion in the lead up to the 1870 act. Kingsley gave a famous lecture in 1870 entitled, "The Human Soot," in which he argued that elementary education could cure social problems (Wilson-Bates 2015, 388–90). Arnold wrote a series of hilarious letters to the Pall Mall Gazette (later published as *Friendship's Garland*) in which his ignorant and inane alter ego defends the inadequacies of the British education system to a German visitor (Arnold 1883/1871).

Arnold also worked tirelessly behind the scenes to directly advocate for education reform. His brother-in-law, William Forster, was the architect of the 1870 bill, which Arnold helped to shape by reviewing and commenting on successive drafts (Connell 1950, 88–9, 112). In an 1868 letter to his mother, Arnold wrote "I am being taken into their secrets, *very confidentially*, by three different centres of educational power at once" (Matthew Arnold, January 18, 1868).

To summarize, in the mid-nineteenth century, British and Danish policymakers sought to expand educational access and experimented with new forms of schooling to this end. Denmark moved away from the monitorial method, endorsed parental control over schools, permitted the growth of alternative school forms, and continued to leave control over education in local hands.

Britain continued to emphasize the rote memorization associated with the monitorial method, fought over private church schools and sought to centralize oversight in national bodies. Britain's 1870 act ended alternative school forms such as the ragged schools. Whereas British policymakers strengthened central oversight with the Revised Code; Danish political elites affirmed local autonomy and parental rights

Danish Secondary Education System Development, 1870 to 1920

At the turn of the twentieth century, concerns about industrialization and global trade drove an interest in the development of secondary schooling. In addition, politicians and writers grappled with how to use education to build citizenship and reduce inequalities, on the one hand, and to create skills, on the other. Yet while the Danish system included vocational education in its new secondary education system, Britain developed a one-track secondary education program that focused on classical, humanistic studies and ended secondary vocational training.

Denmark's 1903 Act on General Secondary Education established multiple tracks within the new upper secondary schools (later called the gymnasium) to serve the diverse needs for academically oriented youth; the act also created new free middle schools (at the lower secondary level) that linked primary and secondary education. A one-year "real course" was made available to nonacademic youth, who were not headed for gymnasium (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 94). The earlier Law for State Support for Folk High Schools and Agricultural Schools of 1892 made a significant commitment to technical education at the secondary level, by establishing government funding for technical, agricultural and folk high schools. Concerns about educational inequities contributed to the passage of the Primary Education Act of 1899 that created the universal Danish folk schools, providing free education to children from all social classes and ending the earlier system of distinct public schools for different social classes (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 65).

By the late nineteenth century, the politics of education policy encompassed a broad field of actors and institutions that did not exist in the early days of school development. Party politics had grown increasingly important to political outcomes and fierce conflict between the two major political parties, the ruling Right Party (Højre) and the Left Party (Venstre), created political stalemate during the 1880s and early 1890s, causing few acts to be passed during this period (Henrichsen 1911, 67–72). Early institutions for school administration had also been set into place and teachers' unions played an increasingly important role in politics (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 55–6; Moe and Wiborg 2017). Yet despite the acute partisan conflict that immobilized Danish governance at the end of the nineteenth-century, the secondary and primary education initiatives came to be broadly supported by all of the major parties (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 65).

Fiction writers became very important in this climate of political unrest. A network of modernist/realist authors in The Modern Breakthrough movement, led by the literary critic Georg Brandes and his brother, the novelist (and future finance minister) Edvard Brandes, struck new ground in literature. Writers attacked the earlier generation's romanticization of workers' lives with a new realism that starkly depicted social problems. The modernist authors helped to frame issues about educational access and the differentiation of secondary education. Moreover, they became involved in party politics and helped to build coalitions among interest groups.

Authors contributed to the growing support for *access* to secondary education for all classes (Skovgaard-Petersen 178, 138). In the decades before the key education reforms, modernist authors lobbied for greater access to secondary education for farmers and workers, arguing that cultural formation for the masses (*almendannelse*) had become as vital as culture formation for elites (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 11–12). Authors celebrated industrialization as a national project to increase growth and portrayed workforce skills, attained through secondary education, as essential to the industrializing campaign.

Writers also weighed in on issues related to *differentiation* of secondary education: the make-up of the curricula and the inclusion of vocational training programs. A major source of conflict during this period concerned reform of the content and structure of the academic secondary-education Learned Schools. Many within Højre sought the continuing strong focus on a classical curriculum; whereas, many teachers and members of Venstre wanted to create a much stronger academic math and science line and to add a course of study in modern languages (Nørr 1979, 196). Modernist novels broadly supported the new courses of study; they cast aspersions on classical studies with unsympathetic, self-indulgent young protagonists, who used Greek and Roman tropes to over-romanticize the world and to alienate themselves from society (e.g. Jens Peter Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*).

Modernist authors supported the inclusion of vocational training in secondary education, by contributing to the sense that course offerings at the secondary level had to meet demand for a variety of skills (Skovgaard-Petersen 178, 138; Nørr 1979, 197–8). They supported social investment in skills and emphasized connections between economic growth and a thriving society (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 11–12). While the Venstre Party initially offered the greatest support for technical education, Højre also came to endorse state funding of vocational education (Skovmand 1944, 422). Authors also worked to convince the Grundtvig-inspired folk high schools to provide better skills for the new global economy (Skovmand 1944, 422).

Authors critically entered into the fray of party politics and helped to swing power away from Højre and toward Venstre. The dysfunctional political realm led writers to ascertain that cultural politics was necessary for political change (Frederiksen 2020, 65–6). Modernist writers joined the fight against Højre Prime Minister Jacob Brønnum Scavenius Estrup in November 1878

by developing their own faction of the Left Party (Venstre), which they called “Literary Venstre” or “European Venstre”) (Hvidt 2017, 122–8). Edvard Brandes wrote to his brother Georg in 1877 that the problem was not simply Right Party strength but Venstre weakness, and he suggested the authors cooperate with the farmer wing of Venstre to bolster opposition to the right (Sevaldsen 1974, 235–8). Writers worked closely with Venstre politicians to sway public opinion on social rights and education (Frederiksen 2020, 70–1, 114, 166–7). Ultimately, the Literary Venstre helped the Venstre Party forge a new ideological platform that was crucial to the battle for constitutional reform. Venstre leader Christian Berg noted that the Literary Venstre faction allowed Venstre to wage “war with culture more than with the party.” Literary Venstre members eventually populated the influential Radical Left party that would provide crucial support to the expansion of the welfare state (Henrichsen 1911, 96). Viktor Pingel, leader of the student society movement and a close associate of Georg Brandes, concluded that the struggle for democracy in Denmark had been very much along cultural lines (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 135).

Finally, authors helped to facilitate links between farmers in the Left party and workers in the social democratic party, and this farmer-labor coalition was to become a hallmark of social democracy. Evangelical farmers and urban workers had little contact with one another and few common cultural reference points, but the authors and intellectuals managed to bridge both groups and ended up playing an important role in facilitating connections in advance of democratic change in 1901.

British Secondary Education System Development, 1870 to 1920

In 1902, the British Conservative government passed an act creating upper secondary education, eliminating funding for technical education and strengthening central regulation by establishing New Local Education Authorities (to be monitored by the Board of Education). In the decades leading up to the act, a series of royal commissions had advocated for secondary vocational training and some urban school boards developed postprimary technical classes (Devonshire Commission 1872–5). Parliament passed industrial acts to build skills and permitted county councils to raise rates for technical education (Gowing 1978, 1–12, ff 52, 58). Yet these measures were abandoned when the 1902 bill’s architect, Robert Morant, committed Britain to a course of humanist secondary studies to the exclusion of upper-level vocational training and shifted the funding for technical schools to the new upper secondary institutions (Allen 1934). Regulations passed in 1904 developed national curricula guidelines, largely devoting coursework to the humanities and restricting math and science instruction (Eaglesham 1962, 156–7; Vaninskaya 2010, 952). Legislation in 1918 revisited technical education, but the Labour Party distrusted “instrumental” motives for vocational schools for working-class

children (Ward 1973, 38). Paradoxically, the rejection of vocational tracks ultimately limited workers' educational attainment (Vlaeminck 2000, 5).

Politicians from across the ideological spectrum agreed generally on the need for a secondary education system and a more integrated primary education system; yet, there were major power struggles over the degree of *differentiation* within secondary education (such as funding for vocational education) and over the appropriate roles of the church and the *state*. Many Liberal Party politicians (such as Sir James Bryce and Arthur Ackland) and some Conservatives (such as John Gorst) were strong supporters of technical education, but other political figures (such as Education Secretary Robert Morant) sought a uniform secondary education system built on a humanistic curriculum.

Significant disagreements between activists also persisted on the issue of administrative oversight of education and the role of voluntary church schools in the new state system. Many Liberals and Liberal Unionists sought a universal secular education system and rejected funding for religious schools; Conservatives wanted funding for voluntary religious schools (Daglish 1997; Eaglesham 1962). Legislation created a new Board of Education in 1899 and the 1902 act replaced the old school boards with new LEAs and preserved funding for voluntary schools (Robinson 2002, 159–63).

Prominent writers across the political spectrum advanced the case for humanities-oriented secondary education for decades before the 1902 act (even though vocational education had significant support among northern manufacturers and some other authors). Arnold led the charge to improve middle class culture with a stronger program of humanistic secondary education until his death in 1888 (Letter V5P30D1 Matthew Arnold to William Forster May 19, 1879). Arnold (1883/1871) parodied the middle-class philistine views on education and lack of an enlightening humanistic curricula in his afore-mentioned satire, "Friendship's Garland." Liberal Thomas Hardy advocated for classical education for all social classes; Hardy's biographer, Michael Millgate, describes Hardy's goals as "self-education, self-development and self-discovery" (Millgate 2004, 106). Conservative Rudyard Kipling linked humanistic education to Britain's imperialist ambitions; thus, "The White Man's Burden" lauded imperialism and admonished youth to educate themselves in order that they might later run the empire (Gilmour 2002, 127–8). On the left, authors decried global systemic risks and promoted education as antidote to these risks (Crosthwaite 2010, 331). The British Fabians were appalled by the disparities between social classes and many felt that vocational education would only reinforce this state of inequality. Some Fabians (such as Sidney Webb) were sympathetic to vocational education, but others (such as Wells) considered it to be suitable only for substandard jobs (Vaninskaya 2010, 959–60).

Authors were divided about the role of the state in education reform. Some joined Sidney Webb in strongly supporting an enhanced state role for purposes of administrative efficiency (Webb, Diary, 10/1/1901, 93). Others

such as William Morris and Thomas Hardy were more skeptical about governmental institutions and more favorably disposed toward self-education (Cordner 2016).

Authors and intellectuals were animated political actors in the coalition to pass the 1902 education bill, and provided crucial support in shaping the ideology surrounding the act. Fabians backed the 1902 act despite its support for church schools, and provided extensive advice to John Gorst (VP of Committee of Council on Education) and to Robert Morant (architect of the bill). The Fabian Co-Efficients dining club brought authors and politicians together on a weekly basis; for example, Beatrice Webb credited the Fabians for persuading Richard Haldane, a Liberal, to support the bill “breaking from his political friends” (Webb, *Diary*, 11/10/1902, 2169; 4/20/1904, 2285–6). Kipling greatly influenced the Conservative agenda (Carrington 262, 393), and his support for classical studies resonated in the bosom of John William Mackail, who was the major point person on the 1904 revisions at the Board of Education, the husband of Kipling’s favorite cousin and a pallbearer at Kipling’s funeral (Coates 1980, 17).

Ultimately, British authors’ views on education policy played a significant role in shaping other actors’ perceptions but ultimately did little to bridge opposing interests. Fabians claimed that their comparative advantage lay in offering policy advice; and Shaw bragged that the Fabians “were the recognized bullies of and swashbucklers of advanced economics” (Shaw 1892, 16, 3). Yet Fabians remained distant from the labor movement, did little to mobilize workers and made limited headway in persuading Liberal Party members to support the education bill.

CONCLUSION

This chapter probes why some countries created education for all, while other developed schools that primarily served the upper and middle classes, and particularly catered to academically minded students. I suggest that authors played a special role in educational reform episodes and that this cultural perspective expands our understanding of the comparative politics of education. Scholars have championed many different motives for the development of education systems: Arguments centered on the nation-building function of education often emphasize elite calculations (particularly in authoritarian regimes), whereas those focused on industrialization and democratization explore the contributions of class conflict to schooling (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Green 1990, 39, 47; Boli et al. 1985; Wilensky 2002; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Ansell 2008; Hanushek and Woessmann 2015; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020). One may reasonably argue that nation-building, industrialization, and democratization all motivated the expansion of education at different points in time. Yet, cultural views also mediated both policymakers’ reform agendas and social groups’ preferences for specific educational strategies to realize these

functional requisites. A cultural perspective helps us to understand choices about features of education systems beyond spending levels, a topic that has been relatively understudied by social scientists (Moe and Wiborg 2017).

Such a perspective provides historical context for current battles over education. Strong, coherent public opinion is crucial to contemporary education choices (Busemeyer et al. 2020). But public opinion data became available only in the twentieth century, and this work helps to fill our gap in knowledge about historical views toward education. In the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, privatization has been a rallying cry for neoliberal education reformers, who believe that market competition among schools will enhance quality (Gingrich 2011). This work suggests the historical cultural reasons why private schools take diverse forms and have different cultural meanings in liberal and social democratic countries. My focus on the cultural aspects of education system development complements cross-national and (sometimes) quantitative investigations of education system development and differentiation offered by scholars such as Ansell and Lindvall (2013), Moe and Wiborg (2017), Busemeyer et al. (2020), and Paglayan (2020).

Finally, a cultural perspective sheds light on the historical processes that create complementarities between education and social policy (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 433; Busemeyer 2015; Iversen and Stephens 2008). Cultural constructions of education have meaning for both the historical development of education systems and contemporary cross-national variations in patterns of social investment in education today. Historic cultural debates over education anticipated contemporary discussions about the use of education to promote economic growth, social investment, and equality. Culturally constrained choices in education systems continue to have a powerful impact on the fortunes of low-skill young people, treatment of vulnerable populations, patterns of inequality, opportunities for social solidarity, and social stability (Huber et al. 2020).