

Education before 1944: Private, voluntary and state

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Introduction

There is a wealth of source material, most of it, not surprisingly, created by would-be or actual providers and the government rather than the recipients of the schooling. The purpose, financing, control and content of schooling, then as now, were regularly debated and contested and the sources provide rich pickings for historians. The social background, training and career paths of the newly emerging teaching profession have also attracted attention. Measuring schooling's impact in relation to other factors which affected children's lives, however, has always proved more intractable. In the absence of any substantive qualitative evidence a variety of quantitative measures have been used including the ability of marriage partners to sign their names in marriage registers but also the number of children achieving certain 'standards' in basic subjects.

The expansion, financing and control of school provision

Although the state had sought to stipulate the content of religious education in grammar schools since the 1560s in its role as guardian of the newly established Church of England, until the 1830s all schooling was provided without state aid or any secular inspection. There was no 'system' as such; provision varied across the country. It potentially reached only a minority of the population, was highly gendered and tailored towards one's social class and position in society. It was rarely free but depending on the availability of other income, fees could be subsidized or met for some pupils.

1) Private fee-paying schools and tutors

Private tutors were frequently engaged by the top echelons of society; those who could not afford to pay for individual tuition could send their children to a commercially run schools of varying quality, purpose and standard. At the top were what we would now call 'public schools' but the market also provided for other social classes with varying degrees of success. Promoters of church or state education were often critical of those which catered for the working-classes, portraying them as run by poor, ill-educated teachers or little more than crude child-minding establishments – 'dame schools', but we have little substantial evidence as

to their effectiveness or, indeed, their extent for much of the period. It is clear that from early 19th century enquiries that many parishes had small fee paying 'daily' schools, although some of them may have been linked to churches. A variant of these fee paying schools were 'factory schools', some of which were established in the wake of the 1833 Factory Act (see below)

Some of these private establishments were founded for specific purposes or social groups such as Carus Wilson's school for the daughters of clergy, initially at Cowan Bridge and later at Casterton or John Aspinall Addison's foundation of St Mary's College, Windermere.

2) Endowed (or charitable) schools

These were schools which had been established as a result of a charitable endowment, often from dating back to the 17th century. Despite having some income from land or investments, these were also fee paying and were often linked in some way with local churches. These took on a variety of forms and were of varying quality and size. It is not always possible to work out precisely what was taught before the 19th century. Some were 'grammar schools' founded under charter, particularly after the Reformation and replaced some of the early church or cathedral schools. Other 'grammar' schools were the result of local endowments although the curricula offered variety between schools and over time depending on their resources, school intake and the quality of the masters.

Cumberland and Westmorland (and probably Lancashire North of the Sands) had a much higher percentage of such schools than most parts of the country.

3) Church supported schools

- a) Sunday schools emerged from the late 18th century and, although primarily utilizing religious or 'improving' literature, particularly the Bible, have also been credited with teaching basic reading skills. They were particularly evident in areas of the country where there were high levels of child employment. Horace Mann included such schools in the government's Education Census of 1851.
- b) *Church Societies*
 - a. The British and Foreign Schools Society founded by Joseph Lancaster in 1808 was an inter-denominational society which raised funds to support the establishment and funding of schools
 - b. The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church' founded in 1811 by Dr Andrew Bell taught some basic, utilitarian 3Rs but, as its name implies, was primarily concerned moral and religious education.

The National Society was the more active of the two and expanded rapidly in the second and third quarter of the century giving grants to

Anglican schools for building etc. There were few British Society schools in Cumbria.

Although the Church of England dominated 19th century elementary provision, Roman Catholics and Dissenters also founded some schools.

4) Central government intervention

Despite a strong preference for commercial or 'voluntary provision' the 19th century the state took an increasing interest in educational provision and gradually increased its control through financial support and regulation at both local and national levels. As a result voluntary church societies, although opposed in principle to the expansion of state education, became increasingly dependent on the state from mid-century.

a) Financial support

From 1833 the state provided grants to the two societies in proportion to their own fund-raising for building or extending schools and this was gradually increased over the years until 1862 (see below).

b) Administration and inspection

In 1839 the Council of Education was established as committee of the Privy Council and HMIs were appointed to inspect, advise and report on schools which had received state assistance. The council was replaced in 1856 by the Department of Education.

c) Teacher training

Church and voluntary aided colleges were established by the 1840s but by the 1850s the government was meeting 80% of the costs and stipulating the syllabus to be taught for 'certified' teachers. The 'Pupil Teacher' scheme of 1846 allowed for the appointment of promising teenagers who assisted teachers and then were eligible for exam at 18 years.

d) Curriculum

The state increasingly determined the content of elementary education in 'certified' schools which opted to take advantage of government grants, although not private or commercial schooling.

HMIs had initially sought to influence curriculum by persuasion but the government 'Newcastle Commission' of 1858-62 introduced a 'Revised Code' which linked payments to certified, inspected schools to the numbers attending and the results of annual inspections of standards in three core subjects. This was criticised as encouraging teachers to concentrate on a narrow curriculum and was revised in 1891 to a more general inspection of standards allowing for the inclusion of more subjects. Inspected schools were expected to meet certain requirements such as the keeping of regular school log books and the provision of specified activities which were often gendered

such as drill for boys and needlework for girls. The principle of paying by results of inspections remained in place into the 20th century.

e) Attendance

Attendance at school for the vast majority of children remained voluntary until the 1870s. However certain categories of children were required to attend school much earlier:

- Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844 introduced compulsory part-time schooling for children who worked part-time in textile factories which fell under these Acts. Initially special 'Factory Schools' were established but most children attended either a church or, after 1870, state school. As the provisions of the Acts were extended to other trades, the system became known as the 'half-time' system. From 1876 special arrangements were made for children in agricultural districts to take extended seasonal periods of leave from school subject to meeting specific attendance or standards criteria. School holidays in rural areas were also heavily influenced by the timing of the local hay, corn or other harvests. The age at which children could start part or full time work was gradually raised over the course of the century but the system came under increasing criticism once full-time compulsory education for other children had been introduced in 1880. The erosion and abolition of the half-time system was fiercely opposed by trade unions in the textile industry which remained the major employer of such labour into the 20th century but the decline of children's work opportunities in other industries reduced its incidence in other areas. However, it was only abolished in 1918.
- Workhouse schools. From 1846 all children in workhouses were required to attend school. Initially separate schools were provided within workhouses and in some cases so-called 'barrack schools' were funded by several unions to provide boarding and schooling for all their children. From the 1870s, however, these fell out of favour and workhouse children increasingly attended state supported elementary schools, albeit being distinguished as paupers by their uniforms.
- 1870 the new School Boards (see below) were entitled to introduce compulsory attendance once they had adequate provision but it was only in 1880 that attendance for all was made compulsory to the age of 10; the school leaving age was gradually raised to 14 but, depending on the standards obtained, children could leave early or undertake part-time work depending on local byelaws.
- School attendance committees for areas without school boards were introduced in 1876. These were based on the same boundaries as Poor Law Unions and had the power to introduce compulsory attendance and appoint school attendance officers. They could also

offer 'free places' to poor children, but because of the connection with the poor law, many parents seem to have been reluctant to take advantage of this.

- Compulsory attendance to the age of 10 was introduced in 1880 and this was gradually raised to 14 by 1918, but children could obtain full or part exemption under local bye-laws if they met attendance figures or reached specific standards.
- 1891 the possibility of free education for all was introduced with the offer of additional grant to church schools which abolished fees. Most, but not all schools took up this offer.

Enforcing attendance was particularly problematic during the 1870s and 1880s in areas where compulsory attendance was enforced prior to the abolition of fees.

f) School Boards

The Education Act of 1870 required areas to make adequate provision of schooling. Those deemed inadequate had to create democratically elected and accountable local 'School Boards' which could levy local rates to finance the provision of schooling where voluntary church-aided provision was deemed inadequate. School boards were given powers to decide on the extent to which, and how religion was taught and this led to fierce contests on some boards between 'church' and 'secularist' parties. To prevent the establishment of a school board introduction of a school board which might introduce state secular education., churches, particularly the Church of England, were took the opportunity to expand their own provision so school boards were not introduced everywhere. In some parts of the country boards also established 'Higher Grade' schools which offered education to the older children of school age.

g) County Councils

From 1888 the new democratic County Councils were given more authority and power to finance and control education. Initial forays were into 'technical education' including agricultural education, initially usually migratory (eg butter or cheese classes held on farm) and then in the agricultural colleges.

The Education Act of 1902 replaced school boards. County Councils, or in a few cases, boroughs, took responsibility for other government inspected and helped to fund elementary schools such as those which were church or diocesan aided. The decision to use local rates to support church aided-schools led to widespread opposition on the part of Nonconformists and secularists who objected to paying rates to support Church of England schools. Board schools became **Council Schools** while church schools became 'church aided' – with original funding from endowments being used for

maintenance etc while the council paid the salaries of teachers. The remaining fees were abolished.

Councils also took over some established 'grammar' schools and acquired powers to expand provision of 'secondary' or 'higher' education as it was then called. Scholarships were provided for a small number of poorer pupils from council schools selected by competitive examination.

Counties adopted a variety of approaches to managing schools – reliance on school managers; appointments to school boards; creation of district education divisions.

Questions and Approaches

The importance of voluntary and later local school board and council provision means that there is ample scope to explore the potentially distinctive nature of expansion and operation of schooling at local and regional level.

Key potential questions of interest include:

How and why did the provision of school buildings vary over time in a particular area and what factors might have influenced it.

Who were the main promoters and controls of elementary schooling at local level in terms of individuals, organisations and commercial enterprises?

Why did some areas adopt school boards? What were the roles of school board members from the 1870s? What influence could they exert and what issues divided them?

Who were the teachers and how did their roles change over time?

What was taught in schools and with what consequences? Can one define or measure 'effectiveness' or 'influence' or education?

Sources

Private establishments are difficult to research for any period and details of individual publicly funded and endowed schools prior to the 19th century are often patchy. The quantity of information on most schools increases dramatically during the late 19th century. Issues of confidentiality and data protection, however, mean that some of the more recent sources for the 20th century which contain details about individuals can be restricted.

A good introduction to the huge range of sources available is

W.B. Stephens

***Source for English Local History* (CUP, 1981, ebook 2010) chapter 7**

For the early period CCHT handbook recommends

EITHER William Nicolson, *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle: with the Terriers Delivered to Me at My Primary Visitation* (CWAAS, 1877) [for Carlisle diocese pre-1856] OR *The Cumbria Parishes 1714-1725 from Bishop Gastrell's Notitia, with additions by Bishop Porteous 1778-1779*, ed. L.A.S. Butler, CWAAS Record Series Vol. XII (Kendal, 1998) [for parishes in Chester diocese pre-1856]

'The Diocesan Book of Walter Fletcher, Chancellor of Carlisle Diocese, 1814-46'; copies of the relevant entries, transcribed by Dr. Jane Platt, will be made available to volunteers working on particular parishes.

House of Commons Parliamentary Papers

Nationally there were surveys of school provision in 1818 and 1833 (Select Committees) and several major Royal Commissions in the 1860s but by the closing decades of the century there were REGULAR surveys, reports and enquiries into almost every aspect of provision. (see Stephens for some examples)

The only complete survey was the Census of Education of 1851 conducted alongside the census of population and the Religious Census of that year. The published tables, arranged by registration district and county, and Horace Mann's calculations and commentary can also be freely accessed on Histpop website. These do not contain details of individual schools.

Some examples include

- Charity Commission Reports for Cumberland and Westmorland including school endowments:
1828 (389) Charities. A list of the counties reported upon,
1822 (129) Westmorland and 1823 (258) Westmorland East Ward;
1820 (5) Cumberland Allerdale Ward including St Bees foundation;
1821 (159) Cumberland – more Allerdale and others
- 1818 and 1819 Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders – returns of schools
- 1835 Abstracts of Education Returns for 1833
- 1837-38 (395) Education. Returns of parliamentary grants
- 1846 [741] Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education (some schools visited)
- 1852 [1532] Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education; schools of parochial unions (workhouse schools)
- 1854 Census of Education 1851 – summary tables by registration district
- 1864 (204) Education. Return of all endowed schools receiving grants from government in the years 1862 and 1863
- 1867-68 [3966-XVIII] Schools Inquiry Commission. Vol. XIX. Northern division. Special reports of assistant commissioners (Cumberland and Westmorland school reports)

- 1871 [C.406] Report of the Committee of Council on Education **and subsequent years**
- 1871 (201) Elementary education (civil parishes). Return – all schools
- 1878-79 (42-II) Endowed Schools Acts, 1869, 1873, and 1874. Copy of scheme for the management of the foundation known as the Endowed School founded by Margaret Hodgson at Wiggonby, in the parish of Aikton, in the county of Cumberland.
- 1886 (191) Report from the Select Committee on Endowed Schools Acts
- 1902 [Cd. 1038] Board of Education. List of school boards and school attendance committees
- 1903 [Cd. 1490] Board of Education. Lists of public elementary schools and training colleges under the administration of the board.
- 1906 (178) Education (England and Wales) (non-provided schools).
- 1906 [Cd. 3182] Board of Education. List of public elementary schools
- 1908 [Cd. 4207] Departmental Committee on Agricultural Education in England and Wales (evidence from Cumberland)

Census and Parish Registers

Can be useful for tracing individuals (school teachers, school board members etc)

Ancestry and Find My Past are both available through Cumbria Libraries online

National Archives

The Department of Education files (ED21) are held in National Archives at Kew. There are research guides to the contents. After 1870 these include files for each parish which can contain correspondence, reports, returns etc – although these are not necessarily complete or detailed.

The Inland Revenue District Valuation survey of 1909-1914 (IR58), which covers every property in the country, will include some basic details of schools.

Local Archives

Most sources such as log books, registers, accounts etc for individual schools will be found in local archives. These can be scattered through a variety of categories however: ecclesiastical records at parish, township **or diocesan** level; religious organisations; charities; vestry (pre 1894) and parish council (post 1894) records; school boards; borough records; county council records, poor law records.

Enter the name of the school into CASCAT or use the excellent guides and links to the most relevant sources on the Cumbria Archives website. **NONE OF THESE ARE TOTALLY COMPLETE, HOWEVER, SO CHECK ALL OF THEM AS APPROPRIATE**

- for records of individual schools (which include such sources as managers' minutes, log books and admissions registers):
http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/official/schools.asp
but check also diocesan, parish, parish council and religious organisations lists (eg Penrith Methodist schools are not listed under schools, but under Methodists)

- for records of School Boards, 1870-1902:
http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/official/sb.asp
- for county council records
http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/official/cc.asp
- for borough records
http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/official/boroughs.asp
- for rural and urban sanitary authorities/district councils (school attendance)
- for Poor Law Unions
http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/official/poorlawunions.asp

There are also school records in the records of other religious organisations, such as the Methodists, Quakers and Roman Catholics. Use the catalogues or guides to locate them.

In addition, relevant sources can sometimes be found in private collections eg WDX 269 Mrs J Jewell of Windermere deposited Records of Relieving Officer and School Attendance Officer (offices combined 1878) for Ambleside District of Kendal Poor Law Union monthly returns to School Attendance Committee, 1881-83; correspondence, 1878-83.

Local newspapers and relevant journals

As well as an emerging specialist press, local newspapers, parish magazines, trade journals, etc all contain information on school boards, adverts, appointments etc These are time consuming to use but can be sampled for specific periods known to be associated with activities at specific schools.

Carlisle Patriot, Westmorland Gazette, Kendal Mercury

What look like fairly full runs of these papers for extended periods of the 19th century can be accessed through the **British Library Newspaper Archive** <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> by subscription. Alternatively they are available through **Find My Past** which is also free online in Cumbria libraries. Although the search engine is set up for genealogical research on Find My Past it can easily be adapted for other research (eg name of person = school board; keyword = place)

Directories

Often useful for basic information on all schools and often the only source for the existence of smaller private schools.

Oral History and Autobiographies

Although now impossible to collect for the pre-1914 period but where archives exist these are capable of offering insights even if they are rarely sufficient for a detailed local case study.

Physical remains

Surviving school buildings. Their layout and organisation can provide clues to the operation of schools. Pevsner's guide often contains information.

Old photos and ephemera

Select (very) Bibliography

Cumbrian schools

There are some local published histories of individual schools, especially grammar schools, while TCWAAS contains a lot of articles with references to specific schools. A searchable index is available on the old website

<http://cumbriapast.com/cgi-bin/ms/main.pl>

For general overviews

C.M.L. Bouch and G.P. Jones *The Lake Counties 1500-1830* (Manchester UP 1961).

J.D Marshall and J.K. Walton *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester UP, 1981) chapter 6.

J.D Marshall 'Some aspects of the social history of 19th century Cumbria, 1: Migration and literacy' *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, ns, 69, 1969, pp.280-307.

General reading (see also Stephens under sources above)

W.E. Marsden 'Diffusion and regional variation in elementary education in England and Wales, 1800-1870', *History of Education* 11.3, 1982, pp.173-194.

W.B Stephens *Regional Variations in Education during the Industrial Revolution, 1780-1870: the task of the local historian*, provides useful comparative figures and outlines the agenda.

G. Sutherland Elementary education in the 19th century, (*Historical Association* pamphlet no.76 1971) – a succinct introduction.

J.S. Hurt *Elementary education and the working class 1860-1918* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) provides general introduction to this later period.

G. Sutherland 'A view of education records in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Archives*, 15, 1981, pp.79-85