The Origins of Basic Education

The first steps toward the development of mass systems of basic education are generally believed to have occurred in the Nordic countries. For example, in Sweden, the national church, with the urging of the king, exhorted parents and communities to foster popular literacy, and the literacy rate is believed to have increased from 20% in the seventeenth century to 80% by the early nineteenth century (Johansson 1981). But, this was largely accomplished through home education stimulated by church examinations of each family’s progress; in other words, the literacy improvement was not accompanied by the development of an elaborated educational system, and partly for that reason, it did not gain as much international recognition as subsequent reforms in Germany and France. Table 1 shows that the respective year’s basic education was made compulsory in selected states.

Six Core Ideas Lead to Six Distinctive Patterns

The first attempts to systematize modern education occurred in the European continent (which is best broken into the Prussian and French variants, with the Lowlands as a third possibility), then by the English, the American, the Japanese, and the Russian socialist patterns. The distinctive characteristics of each of these patterns can be summarized with an ideal typical schema (Table 2).

Each modern pattern was unified by a core set of ideals (much like the genotype of biology) that can be at least partially captured in a slogan such as nineteenth-century aristocratic England’s ideal of the educated gentleman or, in the American case, the continuous development of the individual. Over subsequent decades, these
national ideals were continually refined, but in the six cases under consideration, they were never fundamentally altered. These ideals thus had an enduring influence on various structural features of the respective systems, including the type of school that is most esteemed, the range of subjects covered, the prevailing theory of learning, and preferred teaching methods. In other words, there is a gentle degree of determinism implied (Muller et al. 1987), with the ideal placing some constraints on curriculum, learning theory, and so on. For example, to realize the comprehensive educational goals implied in the English concept of the educated gentleman, a boarding school is essential along with close monitoring by tutors, and as a gentleman is expected to dabble in everything, the curriculum is highly valued. A contrast might be made with France, where formal education was intended to train experts, outstanding in a particular intellectual area but with no expectation that they play such games as cricket or football.

The core patterns emerged at different periods in the global process of modernization. In each instance, there were unique confluences of internal and external forces, necessarily inviting distinctive responses. Several generalizations about the nature of educational reform can be derived from these accounts:

- Educational reform is closely associated with political shifts; economic forces are an important contextual factor.
- The magnitude and abruptness of the political shift influences the extent of the educational reform.
- Political shifts are closely associated with major class realignments, and these in turn influence the focus of the educational reform;
- Educational reform, while bold on rhetoric, tends to focus on a limited set of changes concerning a particular level of schooling at least in the short run.
- Educational reform, while often mentioning foreign examples in its rhetoric, tends to draw extensively on indigenous resources, indigenous ideals, and indigenous educational practices (both past and present).
- Even after a seemingly dramatic educational reform, the memory of past ideals and practices will persist to exert influence on the new and even possibly at some later date to replace the new.
- Thus, educational reform, in its particulars, tends to turn inward reproducing and creating indigenous patterns, rather than outward, converging on internationally celebrated patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year compulsory schooling established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German states</td>
<td>1724–1806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts (USA)</td>
<td>1852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Dates of the establishment of compulsory education in selected states
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Core educational patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period of genesis</strong></td>
<td>Prussia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideal</strong></td>
<td>Loyal mandarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representative school</strong></td>
<td>Primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>Whole person, many subjects, humanistic bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School and classroom technology</strong></td>
<td>Lectures &amp; self-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning theory</strong></td>
<td>Natural unfolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>Quasi-decentralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admin. Style</strong></td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit costs</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of finance</strong></td>
<td>Local state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These patterns were developed in the core nations of the world system and later diffused by their respective colonial and/or ideological systems. Thus, the French variant became influential in Africa, Indochina, and Latin America; the English pattern was widely diffused through Asia and Africa; the American pattern had some early influence in Asia; since World War II has had global influence, the Japanese pattern had a profound impact on Korea and Taiwan and more limited influence elsewhere; and the Russian Socialist pattern influenced China, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and many other developing societies.

The First Steps to Systematizing Education

Modern Education is one among several projects launched by the modernizing states. It is essentially a new venture, and at least for the first states embarking on the project, there was no clear design or master plan. How many different types of schools would be required? What should be the mix of academic and technical training? Who should be allowed to attend these schools? Who should pay for them – the state, the students, or private benefactors? These were some of the design issues for which there were no ready answers. And so in the early years, especially for the first modernizing societies, there was much trial and error.

The first steps focused on the design of a particular “representative” school that best reflected the most pressing needs of the modernizers. Building on this first venture these same modernizers and their successors added other schools to respond to other needs – for different skills, regions, and interested groups. As new schools were established, the elites had to make decisions about the relations between the respective schools. The decisions they made led gradually to an overall design for the emerging modern educational system. Germany was the pioneer in these endeavors and France followed in Germany’s footsteps; Victor Cousin, for example, prepared a detailed report on German education which played a critical role in the reforms of the 1830s promoted by Guizot. Numerous American travelled to Germany and France in the 1830s and 1840s to gather the insights that were later expressed in the US Common Schools Movement. And, following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan sent several missions to observe educational practice on the European continent, Great Britain, and the USA. Those states that began later drew extensively from the lessons learned by the pioneers, and this helped the late-comers to complete their task of systematization in a briefer time span. Thus Japan completed its major systemic decisions within the first two decades of the Meiji Revolution and the Bolsheviks took less than 15 years to draw up the decisive educational law of 1931.

The shape of the emerging systems can be compared in terms of two dimensions: the differentiation/integration of various educational opportunities both through vertical and horizontal divisions and the segregation/inclusion of different social groups in the various educational opportunities primarily through horizontal segmentation/tracking. We suggest there are distinctive differences both in
the structure of the respective systems and in the means the respective states relied on to establish direction. Among the means available to the state for influencing direction were establishment standards, accreditation, finance, admissions, and examinations.

Once the state is satisfied with the direction of modern education, it may delegate most educational decisions to boards or other decision-making bodies composed primarily of educators. But now and again the state is likely to intervene with a new wave of reform in an apparent effort to get education back on track. These waves of reform symbolize the reality that the processes of systematization and expansion are never complete. Yet while these later reforms generate much interest and concern, some observers suggest they amount at most to fine-tuning. Ravitch (1983) finds that later reform often involves a mere recycling of old practices and thus only creates the illusion of reform.

The Political and Administrative Settings

Some of the modern states were more centralized than others and some were more inclusive or “democratic.” In centralized systems, according to Margaret Archer (1977), the flow of educational decisions is likely to reflect the pattern for other sectors such as the judiciary, the police, and public health. In decentralized societies, educational decision-making may vary between locales. Thus, in the UK, local educational authorities were established that often had no overlap with other government offices. In the USA, some states decided to assume a primary role in educational decision-making while others left this task to local communities.

To the extent that a polity is more inclusive, it is likely that a greater array of stakeholders will be offered a role in the systematizing decisions. It is common in the USA and the UK, when considering major educational reforms, to create consultative bodies that include representatives from the various political parties, the different levels of education, and the different working groups involved in educational practice such as the principals’ association, the teachers’ union. To the extent the polity is more narrowly constituted, it is more likely the state will consult with a small group of interests such as corporate leaders, the military, and religious elites.

The priority that the polities of the core societies assigned to their educational projects also varied. Especially from the early nineteenth century, Prussia/Germany became concerned with its national identity and increased its emphasis on the educational project. The educational project also received exceptionally high priority in the late developing cases of Meiji Japan and Bolshevick Russia, as both of these centralized states were determined to make radical departures from their immediate past and looked to education as a prime asset for the new nation-building agenda. In the USA, the federal government was constituted in such a manner that it could not assume responsibility for education; however, in several states of USA, local governments came to stress the importance of education as a means for cultivating an informed citizenry. In the other core nations, education was assigned a lower priority.
Vertical Differentiation

The first modern schools were established for a specific need that was high on the agenda of the modernizing elite. Tracing a couple of examples may suggest the way the architects approached the establishment of the first schools and how those first steps then shaped second steps and so on.

In the long-established nations of Germany, France, and the UK there was already a precedent of schools that the children of aristocratic and middle-class families had become familiar with. Early education was often provided in the homes by tutors and parents. When a child had reached a certain level of competence, they entered appropriate preparatory schools and thereafter in France gained entrance to the lycée, in Germany to the gymnasium, and in the UK to public schools and/or grammar schools. Thus in these societies a system was already partially established, and what remained was to develop a more formal approach to the primary level for the children from ordinary homes whose parents lacked the cultural or financial resources to provide tutors and home schooling. Also, in both France and Germany, the modernizing educational leaders took steps to transform the structure and curriculum of higher educational educations. In France the grandes écoles were diversified and strengthened. In Germany, new support was provided to the universities and new rigor introduced to the process of selecting students.

While a system was already in place in these long-established societies, there was ample room for clarification. One of Napoleon’s many notable administrative accomplishments was the drafting of the law of the university. While the term university normally refers to a tertiary level institution, Napoleon used the concept in its literal sense as the organization for the promotion of all learning. For him this meant learning from infancy to adulthood. Thus, his university specified that there be several vertically differentiated levels of education, the école primaire, the lower secondary boarding schools, the colleges and lycées, and the grandes écoles; and that these respective levels of schools be provided by the corresponding administrative units of the commune, department, academy, and university. Each administrative level was to provide the physical plans for the schools at the respective educational levels while the academic program was to be the responsibility of the university rector. The rector was to be appointed by the emperor as were the members of the Oversight Board; those responsible for administering, operating, and supervising lower levels of the system were to be appointed by the rector or his delegates. This law was exceptional for its administrative clarity and has had a major influence on much subsequent thinking in the field of educational administration.

In Japan the Meiji elite had no prior experience with an elaborate multilevel education system; samurai simply came to schools that consisted of several grades with a provision for further individual tutelage. The Meiji leaders were keenly aware of their technological backwardness and thus declared their intent “to seek knowledge throughout the world.” To gain access to this knowledge, they recognized
that their emissaries would require a command of foreign languages and thus one of their earliest acts was to establish a translation bureau that was essentially a small college. Given their technical focus, they also established several engineering schools. Several of these early colleges later were consolidated into Tokyo University which was recognized as the first Imperial University in 1886. At the same time, the Meiji elites declared their intention of developing a new post-feudal social structure that would enable the entire population to contribute to national development. Moreover, they established a national army that would be staffed by conscripts from all social groups, including the offspring not only of the former samurai class but also those from the peasant and commercial classes. To prepare youth for their roles both in national development and national defense, they looked to the primary school as an important agent of initial socialization. Thus in early Meiji Japan, both the primary school and the university were given high priority in the first decade of the design period.

The first recruits for the early Japanese “universities” were the legions of bright samurai who had received a Confucian education in the old feudal system that they balanced with self-education in foreign languages and books. But once this cohort had entered the new higher educational institutions, the Meiji leaders had to decide what would be required to prepare the new wave of primary school students for tertiary education. Their first step was to establish several middle schools to provide further training for the primary school graduates. In the late seventies, there was only one place in the middle schools for every 20 graduates of the primary schools. Yet the curriculum they formulated for the middle school did not provide sufficient preparation for the new higher educational institutions. To fill this gap, numerous private specialized schools (senmon gakko) were rapidly established, specializing in foreign languages and the study of selected foreign books. The government response was slower, depending on the discussion in various official committees. Finally in 1886, with the establishment of the Imperial University, the central government decided to establish a number of higher schools, modelled on the German gymnasium and the French lycée, to complete the transition from the middle school to the university. Reflecting the orderly thinking of that era, these higher schools were given the names “No. 1 Higher School,” No. 2 Higher School,” and so on. Meanwhile, the government decided to distinguish between higher educational institutions focused on higher learning on the one hand and those focused on specialized learning on the other. With this distinction various new regulations were issued outlining the types of the post-primary (or secondary) level experiences appropriate for the respective higher educational courses. As will be noted below, these regulations initially had the effect of devaluing the merits of enrollment in the now extensive private sector of post-primary specialized schools.

In decentralized systems, the process of filling the gaps between different levels of the system was less uniform. The UK system was highly segmented, reflecting

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1 The Ministry of Education’s (1980) *Japan’s Modern Educational System* provides an excellent summary of the various regulations.
class distinctions, and prominent educators were reluctant to introduce refinements out of concern that they might lower the barriers between the established classes. In the USA, first there were many colleges and underneath these was a patchwork of preparatory institutions. Most notable were the grammar schools to get most youth started in their schooling, but often lacking was an intermediary institution to bridge the gap between the grammar schools and the colleges. Partly to address this issue, grammar schools tended to have many grades, sometimes as many as ten. Then students might go to an independent preparatory school or even a preparatory school attached to one of the colleges. Over time, various intermediary arrangements were introduced, the most common being the 4-year high school. From the mid-twentieth century it became more popular to have a 5- or 6-year primary school, a 3- or 4-year middle school, and a 3-year high school.

Comparing these several approaches to vertical differentiation, it can be said that they reflect several different approaches to the “serious” business of education. In the Continental systems and to some degree in England this serious business was carried out at the secondary level in schools that were originally intended for aristocratic and middle-class families – the gymnasium in Germany, the lycée in France, the public and grammar schools in England. In contrast, in the USA, serious education began in the college. And in Japan and Russia that established modern education to break down old aristocratic traditions, serious education for all began in the primary schools. These differences in tradition are reflected in such diverse aspects as the quality of educational materials, the workload expected of educational personnel and the compensation provided to them, and finally the pace of student learning. Simply put, things get better in each system at the level where that system gets serious.

Horizontal Differentiation of Segments and Tracks

Studies of educational structure make a distinction between two principles for accommodating group differences:

- Tracking (or streaming) occurs when two more or less distinctive curriculums are offered and young people are placed in the respective curriculums based on some form of testing of their ability. Tracking may occur as early as the primary grades when students are placed into parallel tracks or streams that are more or less difficult; for example, the A stream in Malaysia for the top third-graders, the B stream for the runners-up, the C stream for the average student, and so on. At later stages in the progression of grades, the curriculums for the different tracks may become qualitatively different as for example between an academic track which prepares students for tertiary education and a vocational/technical track which prepares students for a manual labor role in the labor force.

- Segmentation is said to take place when the members of the two groups are clearly identified and explicitly routed into separate schools; these separate
schools may have ostensibly similar features as was the claim for the separate but equal schools many American states provided for white and black children, or they may vary in certain respects as was the case for the schools in the British colonies provided for members of the colonial government on the one hand that taught a rigorous academic curriculum in the English language and for the natives on the other hand that taught a more practical curriculum in the vernacular languages.

Tracking, or streaming by ability, tends to be introduced as a strategy for optimizing human resource development. With limited resources, the state asserts that it has a responsibility to provide preparation for sufficient numbers in the different spheres of the modern workplace. While tracking was evident even in the primary grades in the early modern period, most systems subsequently abandoned this practice, concluding it was difficult at that early age to truly evaluate aptitude and that the process of attempting to make these judgments placed too much pressure on young people. Hence most systems came to introduce tracking following the primary grades, with the track assignment based primarily on academic performance during the primary years and/or a primary school leaving examination. Typically, the academically more proficient were tracked to the academic schools and the less proficient were tracked to the vocational schools. This form of tracking at the secondary level was accepted in most of the early modernizing societies, though the extent of its elaboration seems to have been determined by the relative prominence of the business class in operations of the state. In Germany and France where the business classes were most prominent, the diversity of vocational/technical tracks seems to have been most extensive, whereas in the USA and Russia there were fewer tracks. Indeed, in many US school systems, there were essentially no opportunities provided for vocational and technical training.

The relative centralization of a system also appears to have favored tracking. In centralized systems authorities had responsibility for the entirety of the national labor force and thus were inclined to carry out systematic studies of labor force needs. These studies naturally led to conclusions about vocational/technical areas that were both over- and under-supplied. From these inferences, the central government authorities then might propose new policies for alterations in the composition of vocational/technical education to address future needs. Decentralized governments, lacking such an overarching perspective, were less likely to make such recommendations.

In the actual practice of tracking, certain social groups – e.g., minorities or children from the lower classes – are more likely to end up in the less esteemed track, but this is said to be a function of meritocratic selection. In some cases, societies

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2While there were relatively fewer tracks differentiated in the Soviet Russian system, at least during the early decades, the proportions of general school graduates channelled to these tracks were perhaps as large as was the case in continental Europe. In these systems, a smaller proportion went on to the academic track. In the USA, the proportion sent to the vocational-technical track was always comparatively modest.
have strong feelings about the need to preserve ascriptive differences: Girls should receive a different education from boys, aristocrats should not mix with commoners, whites and blacks should not mix. Where these sentiments have prevailed, the respective groups may be segregated in horizontally segmented educational systems that may begin from the first day of schooling. We will have more to say about segmentation below.

**Horizontal Segmentation to Serve Different Groups**

All of the modernizing societies were composed of young people with diverse backgrounds and gender differences. Marxist reinterpretations tend to suggest the major issue confronting the modern reformers was equality. While equality was an important issue, far more pronounced at the early stages of the modern transformation was the concern to build a new national identity that superseded separate religions, ethnicities, and racial identities. Equality of social classes was initially a lesser theme and tended to increase in salience over time. Gender equity was rarely considered – a woman’s place was to help her husband. While national integration was a major concern, there was always the question of how far to go in bringing people together. The other side of this question was to ask whether the members of these diverse groups wished to mix with each other.

*Religion.* The German states launched the modern transformation with the reformation. While many states broke with the church others did not. For many decades, wars took place to force a common policy. Ultimately a truce was negotiated which allowed each state to go the way of its prince. And these differences were preserved as the German states consolidated (Lamberti 1989). And so religious differences were allowed to persist according to locality, and these differences were reflected in the religious areas of the school curriculum. Integration was achieved in other subjects. It should be noted that the German solution recognized two major religious groupings – Catholicism and Protestantism. Other religions were not acknowledged – notably Judaism.

France rejected the German solution by separating church and state and this was followed in the USA as well as in Japan and Russia. Of course, in each setting there were subtleties. While church and state formally separated in the USA, many schools featured religion until well into the twentieth century. And as Bellah (1975) notes, the American schools featured the Civil Religion. In Japan, the public schools were religiously secular except they allowed emperor worship. And in Soviet Russia, the schools were also religiously secular but celebrated Soviet heroes.

However, in all of these “secular” cases, powerful religious groups were discontented – and they continuously lobbied for an independent educational system. And in the USA and elsewhere, this was ultimately allowed with the conditions that religious schools could receive no support from state funds and that they would conform to basic establishment standards for the secular subjects. And so in the
USA parallel systems emerged with the main public system supported by the state, the second independent.

Major schools in England had always been religiously based, and the English leaders rejected the continental theory that the church and state could or should be separated. Influential at this date was Edmund Burke’s commentary on the disastrous French Revolution. In earlier times, the English aristocracy and their schools conformed to the Catholic Church. Henry VIII replaced Catholic orthodoxy with the Anglican Church; after an awkward period, both the nation and its schools accommodated. And so England preserved the role of religion in the schools. Most schools included a chapel along with classrooms. By the mid-nineteenth century England became more relaxed about these matters, allowing different Protestant sects to practice in England. Similarly it allowed different schools to feature different religions.

Class. An emerging theme of the modern revolution was the promotion of equality. Class differences clearly troubled the German leaders, but they chose to use the educational system to preserve class differences (Mueller 1984). In the UK some mobility took place through allowing able commoners to buy a position in the upper class. But especially in France there was much tension as the bourgeoisie were largely excluded from the royal court. And the imperial government levied exceptionally heavy taxes on the commercial and peasant classes in order to carry out its policies of national defense and conquest. And so the concern with equality was increasingly articulated and became a clarion call of the French Revolution. But, as it soon became evident, the revolutionaries were interested in limited equality – for the bourgeoisie but not for the workers or peasants. And the educational reforms that followed mainly focused on opening up new opportunities for those resident in the cities and towns.

The entry-level schools in the urban areas were generally of superior quality in Germany and France, and so in this way the upper classes gained an advantage. In England the upper classes were unwilling to leave their destiny to chance – and so they retained a system of independent public schools that preserved the right to select their students based on such criteria as lineage, wealth, and upbringing.

The USA was essentially a rural nation and so these issues were less salient. But ultimately it followed the continental pattern by instituting the norm of neighborhood schools. Residential class segregation led to class segregation in educational access. Japan was somewhat unique in recognizing the threat of class segregation. The new leaders who were themselves from relatively peripheral fiefs were determined to give commoners a decent chance, especially those from peripheral rural areas. And so they set up schools throughout the nation including rural areas and they put in place financial regulations requiring the government to actually spend more on rural than on urban schools. Moreover, within an area they set up a hierarchy of

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3Mueller (1984) pp. 143 ff argues that the Prussian King William III, following Napoleon’s defeat in 1806 of the German states, intentionally favored the urban schools so as to improve the prospects for the recruitment of the urban middle classes into the Prussian civil and military services. The King felt aristocratic nepotism had weakened the quality of these services, and, moreover, he doubted the loyalty of many of the aristocrats.
middle schools and high schools and enforced strict meritocratic criteria for entrance to the best schools. As it turned out, the former samurai did better on average, but many commoners also succeeded.

The new Soviet Russia also was concerned about class equality. Indeed in the earlier stages, the revolutionary general schools actually favored children from worker families over those from upper- and middle-class good families.

**Ethnicity and Race.** All of the modernizing states were formed through bringing together people of diverse cultural backgrounds. This was perhaps most notable in the USA which is often depicted as a nation of immigrants. But in the European states there was also much diversity as the new nation-states were composed of numerous principalities with their distinct traditions. Similarly, Soviet Russia was composed of many nations, languages, and religions. Even in supposedly homogeneous Japan, the Tokugawa system spanned a far-flung archipelago, and there had been such diverse developments of the supposedly common Japanese language that natives of Kyushu Island in the South were unable to understand natives of central Kyoto, not to speak of those from the northeastern areas of Tohoku and Hokkaido. For most of the modernizing states, modern education was seen as a mechanism for blending ethnic differences. As long as children could do well in the official language of the state, they were included in the common school.

The USA was somewhat unique in its unwillingness to include one subgroup, the Negroes, in its conception of equality. This reluctance varied by region, but in most Southern states the Negroes were owned as slaves and provided with no social rights, including the right to education. After the Civil War the Negroes (later to refer to themselves as Blacks and African Americans) obtained citizenship and became eligible for equal education. But the response in many states was to provide “separate but equal” education. Race was not an official consideration in the other core societies – except possibly for Japan where a separate system was set up to provide education for certain “immigrant” groups (notably Koreans).\(^4\)

**Gender.** Finally in virtually all of the core societies, gender was treated in a special way. German laws discuss girls in the same breath as boys, but a somewhat distinct curriculum was prepared for the two sexes. Japan was explicit about separation; girls were to become good wives and wise mothers while boys were to become productive members of the economy. And so especially after the primary school distinct tracks were established for Japanese boys and girls; through World War II girls were not admitted to the Imperial Universities. Only in Bolshevik Russia was there no separate formal provision for boys and girls.

**Summary**

Different patterns of tracking/segmentation were thus established to provide for the preservation of religious, class, racial, and gender differences as outlined in Table 3.

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\(^4\)Nations that favored segmented education at home such as the UK and the USA replicated this pattern in their empires. The British set up separate schools in English for the colonial officers and in the vernacular for the “natives.” While the French and the Japanese “welcomed” everyone in the colonies to a single school system, these schools set such high linguistic (classes were only in the language of the colonial administration) and academic standards that most locals failed.
Table 3  Segmentation principle for different groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups/nations</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Race and ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Protestantism and Catholicism allowed by locality</td>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td>Equal as long as able in national language</td>
<td>Equality but implicit tracking from upper elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>No religion in schools</td>
<td>Tracking with urban bias in school location</td>
<td>Equal as long as able in national language</td>
<td>Equality but implicit tracking from upper elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Anglican religion featured in all schools</td>
<td>Elite schools use ascriptive criteria for admissions</td>
<td>Equal as long as able in national language</td>
<td>Equality but implicit tracking from upper elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No religion in public schools, but in independent Catholic schools</td>
<td>None, except neighborhood admission principle</td>
<td>“Separate but equal” segmented schools systems for whites and blacks</td>
<td>Equality but implicit tracking from upper elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>No religion in public schools, but independent private schools allowed to include religious instruction</td>
<td>Resources favor periphery schools</td>
<td>Equal as long as able in national language</td>
<td>Explicit girls’ track after the primary grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Russia</td>
<td>No religion in schools</td>
<td>Admissions may discriminate against descendents of old ruling class</td>
<td>Equal, and local languages allowed in primary schools</td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vertical Integration of Level

Rules are created to build links between the different types of schools. The most significant are those relating to student admissions and passage from one grade or level to the next. Perhaps the most dramatic initiative of modern education was to declare that all children had the right to education. The various German states made this assertion from the middle to the end of the eighteenth century. The Revolutionary Council of France made its declaration on the right to education in 1794. England debated this question for several decades, but did not actually issue a formal declaration until 1902. Both Japan and Russia asserted every child’s right to education
within a few years of their respective revolutions. The declaration of the right to education placed a responsibility on the state to provide educational opportunities for all and on parents to send their children to school (or otherwise provide for the educational needs of their children).

Whereas schools might in the past have been able to select new students from a larger group, now they were expected to accept all who applied. In some systems, this new obligation led schools to attempt to design a school atmosphere that adjusted to the needs of all of the children, regardless of their sociocultural background. In others, notably France, the approach was to accept all students but to place stiff barriers in front of those who did not adjust to the school routine. In the early modern French primary schools, children were given academic tests at the middle and end of each academic year in each subject, and those children who failed even one test were expected to take the school year over again. Thus the early French system was characterized by high repetition rates leading to frequent dropouts. In contrast, the Japanese and Russian systems from early on adopted a philosophy of automatic promotion that placed considerable pressure on the schools to find ways to reach out to their slow learners.

While the approaches for the early years varied, most systems developed procedures for measuring the academic potential of their primary school graduates. In the continental schools, summative examinations tended to be exclusively relied on. In contrast, in the USA, Japan, and Russia, the schools tended to combine course grades with summative examinations as the basis for determining academic potential. Elsewhere we go into greater detail on the examination procedures of the different systems (Cummings 2003).

As these decisions were being made, another highly contentious issue was the assignment of formal responsibility for decisions on admissions and promotion for those school levels beyond compulsory education. In that the state was paying some to all of the bill for public education, the argument was advanced that it should have this responsibility. On the other hand, educators were inclined to assert that academic matters were their responsibility. In the more centralized systems, the state tended to win out in these debates. Thus in France, the examinations came to be prepared by the center. In contrast, in the USA in most cases the teachers of the respective schools came to assume responsibility for the examinations. In the other systems, the responsibility varied depending on the level. To the extent that evaluation was the responsibility of frontline educators there was a tendency for multiple criteria to be used (and in the US case written summative examinations might be excluded from these criteria) whereas when the responsibility rested with the state the hard criteria of performance on a national examination was relied on.

In the cases of Germany and Japan (Ringer 1974; Amano 1990) schools and universities were initially invested with the responsibility for examinations. But after some time, the respective states sought to insert their authority in the process. Among the various reasons put forth was the argument that the educational institutions were training future civil servants and thus the state needed to be involved. The university counter-argued that in certain fields, such as medicine, the state lacked the competence to manage suitable examinations. The actual responsibility
for different examinations seesawed back and forth. Eventually both ran their own respective examinations.

In England, a variant of the examination system known as “payment by results” was introduced in the 1870s (Reisner 1923, p. 282) to allow individual schools considerable autonomy in the conduct of their programs but to subject their students to an annual performance test. Schools that did well in these examinations were provided with increased resources whereas those who did poorly had their allocations cut. Once schools came to understand the impact of this system, they began to dismiss low-performing students and at the same time to recruit superior students from nearby schools. The result was so disruptive to the lives of young people that it was discarded within a few years. The reader may appreciate the similarity of the English “payment by results” approach and recent reforms proposed for the USA.

As the objective of these measures was to ensure quality control, some systems also considered alternative approaches such as supervision or accreditation. In most of the centralized systems, inspectors were appointed to visit schools and evaluate their educational programs. Where these inspection systems were well staffed and considered reliable, the process of inspection of the whole school could substitute for an evaluation based on the examination performance of each student in the school.

Recognizing the possibility of the external imposition of quality control measures, educators in the USA from the late 1800s devised an alternative approach of voluntary evaluation where several educational institutions joined in an educational association, set their own standards, and carried out their own evaluation exercises (Selden 1960). The evaluation involved a statement of institutional mission and a report on the resources available to realize that mission. If peer institutions felt the resources were appropriate for the mission, the institution was accredited. In this way, the schools and universities of the decentralized American system sought to forestall opportunities for the state to intervene in their autonomous educational activities. Accreditation came to be widely practiced in the USA.

Vertical Integration of School and Economy

An important factor thought to influence equality of opportunity is the way the different systems are linked to the labor market. A major goal of modern education is to provide human resources for the various positions that are available in the economy. The salience of this goal varies across the societies. In late developing societies such as Japan and Russia, one of the strongest arguments advanced for the establishment of particular institutions was their vital importance in preparing elites for particular jobs of national importance. Indeed in Japan it was said that vocational schools were set up first and factories followed as the first cohort of graduates finished their commencement ceremonies. While the rhetoric was more muted, England looked to its top universities for recruits to join both the civil and colonial services.

The economies of the core societies varied considerably in terms of their “work systems” with some economies having a greater prevalence of daily wage and
entrepreneurial opportunities, some an emphasis on organizational jobs, and yet others an emphasis on professional jobs. To the extent that the former types of job are prevalent, employers are more likely to stress the importance of vocational–technical education and to the extent that the latter jobs are prevalent the stress will be on academic training preparing young people for first and second degrees in the higher educational system. Distinct from the demands of the labor market is the overall philosophy concerning the role of the state in preparing young people for work. In all of the core societies, lip service is given to job preparation. But in socialist societies, the state tends to guarantee every school graduate a specific job. And in corporatist societies there tends to be a relatively close alliance between employers and the educational system both at a policy level and through personnel connections. Thus, every Japanese secondary school and higher educational institution has a network of employers it works with for the placement of graduates, and in these educational institutions it is their responsibility to place every one of their graduates who seek employment.

In the socialist and corporatist systems, the educational system is expected to prepare youth for work. Thus these systems have a well-developed vocational/technical educational system for blue-collar workers. And even in their academic system, the various programs tend to be relatively specialized in nature (e.g., 3-year professional first degrees) as contrasted with the liberal arts degree prized in the USA or England. Thus in the socialist as well as the Japanese systems, young people move directly from schools into jobs and receive all of their training on-site and fully funded by their employers. In Germany, training is offered on-site and largely funded by employers. Ironically the more democratic systems build the sharpest division between schools and employers. Since these links are weaker, the public sector there spends relatively more on post-school training programs. In England training may be on the premises of (prospective) employers, but the state provides large subsidies for this training. In the USA, training is more typically provided in job training centers managed by and paid for by the state with no or minimal support from employers. And participation in these centers provides limited connections with employers and no guarantee of actual employment. The several patterns are depicted in Table 4.

Private Sector or Not

In the premodern educational systems, most schools were private and usually associated with religious organizations. Germany’s folk schools were supported by local churches and communities, France’s schools were provided by the Catholic Church, and most schools in England were affiliated with the Anglican Church until the 1870 Education Act.

The modern education project is normally thought of as an initiative of the new nation-state, and in this initiative the state may absorb prior private initiatives in order to realize its self-proclaimed mission. Indeed in France, the Revolutionary
Council sought to nationalize the Catholic educational system. Also, whereas the private system played a major role in Japanese and Russian education both prior to the respective revolutions as well as in the early years after the revolution, the new states were determined to launch major educational initiatives aimed at eliminating the private sector. In the Soviet case, all private schools were eventually closed, and in the Japanese case the state at one point indicated that no young person who had received training in a nonstate school need apply for position in the national civil service, a regulation that had the potential of severely undermining the demand for private schools.

But even in these instances, private educators played an important role. Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Keio Juku is generally regarded as the first modern school in Japan, having been established in 1855, 13 years before the Meiji Revolution. There were important revolutionary private initiatives in the first days of the Russian Revolution. And while the French revolutionaries threw out the Catholic schools, they rehired the former teachers who abandoned their monastic robes to assume positions in the new revolutionary schools.

In England, the private sector provided the only response to popular needs for education, while the parliament procrastinated. Similarly, in the early decades of the American experience all educational opportunities were provided by private institutions.

While the private sector made important contributions it nevertheless was viewed as a threat by most states. These states questioned the advisability of allowing

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
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<th>Secondary education</th>
<th>Human resource training programs</th>
<th>Job search</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Mainly general</td>
<td>Pre-hire, mainly at training schools, public funding</td>
<td>Individual responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>General, but with tracking</td>
<td>Mainly general but with voc-tech tracks</td>
<td>Pre-hire, mainly at work sites, public funding</td>
<td>Individual responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Market and corporatist</td>
<td>General, but with tracking</td>
<td>Half general and half voc-tech</td>
<td>Pre-hire, mainly at work sites, public funding</td>
<td>Individual responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Corporatist</td>
<td>General, but with tracking</td>
<td>Half general and half voc-tech</td>
<td>Pre-hire, all at work sites, corporate funding</td>
<td>Individual responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Corporatist</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Half general and half voc-tech</td>
<td>Post-hire, all at work sites, corporate funding</td>
<td>Schools help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>More voc-tech than general</td>
<td>Post-hire, all at work sites, public funding</td>
<td>State guarantees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
private education. A prominent theory argues that these states were persuaded to permit private schools as they became convinced that private schools had the capability of responding to special needs that important sectors of the public wanted but that the state, with its limited resources, did not consider essential. Indeed, Estelle James (1987) has identified two distinctive ways in which private schools can serve special needs: (a) through responding to the differentiated demands or needs of particular class, religious, or gender interests that are not prioritized by the state; and (b) through responding to the excess demand for educational opportunities over and above that which the state is prepared to meet. According to this theory, private education will accordingly have two patterns – a set of differentiated schools from grade 1 through higher education for key interest groups such as the Catholics in the USA, and a set of excess schools to meet the popular demand for secondary and higher education in societies where educational expansion is still in its early stages as in nineteenth-century Japan or a contemporary developing society.

While this theory is interesting, it appears that there are numerous exceptional cases. For example, there are a number of contemporary societies where the entire educational system is provided by the private sector (Cummings and Riddell 1994). There are several societies in Africa and Latin America where the private sector is prominent at the elementary school level but less so at the secondary level. These exceptions suggest a simpler explanation for the prevalence of private schools than that proposed by the above theory. From the institutional perspective, the several core nations develop unique political solutions for the recognition of private educational institutions; later, these solutions are imitated by the newly emerging societies as they draw on the models of the core nations to develop their respective systems. The solutions of the core nations were as follows:

- In Germany the states were in control, but depended on local/private support for folk schools.
- In France, private schools were initially disallowed. But France did not have sufficient resources to develop a public system, and so it allowed the church to play a major role in primary education in the early years. Later, when the state was able to collect more resources the state policy toward Catholic schools vacillated.
- In England the private sector prevailed – the so-called public and independent schools that start from the lowest grades and go through to college/university. These schools were firmly entrenched and the state never considered the option of disbanding these institutions or interfering in their operations.
- The USA as it approached independence was increasingly influenced by French thought which placed a strong emphasis on the separation of church and state. This thinking was embodied in the US Constitution and over time had a profound impact on private education in the USA. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, young children were not allowed to attend religiously founded schools. But from the second half of the nineteenth century, religious schools were allowed as long as they provided the curriculum of public schools and independently secured adequate financial resources. These changes led to
the opening of a prominent Catholic school sector at all grade levels. And private catholic institutions also thrived at the tertiary level.

- In Japan, private schools were initially allowed without restraint, and thus many were created at all levels, but especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. But the state became nervous – perceiving some private schools as politically too liberal, and was shocked that the Christian schools taught that there was God other than the Emperor. These concerns peaked in the eighties with the proclamation of the new constitution and various educational laws that included much stiffer rules for the founding and operation of private schools. While these regulations were later relaxed, the private sector had been dealt a blow. Subsequently, private schools were able to regain an important foothold at the secondary and tertiary levels but they were not able to reestablish their prominence at the primary level.

- In Russia, private schools were closed soon after the commencement of the Revolution and they were not tolerated through the period of Soviet rule.

**Evaluation**

The private sector is restrained in every system, but the pattern varies. The above “systemic” solutions were first practiced in the core societies and then later exported around the world. Thus when Cummings and Riddell (1994) reviewed the prevalence of private education in 129 countries, they found that most of the countries had developed a public–private educational mix that resembled one or the other of the above patterns practiced by the core nations. Systems with a modest private sector are able to accommodate the demands of certain interest groups without significantly jeopardizing core policy objectives. In contrast, in systems with large private sectors such as Japan where over half the places in secondary and higher education are in private schools, it is difficult to preserve certain policy objectives. In particular, the principles of uniform quality and equal access may be compromised.

This chapter has focused on three areas where the state has sought to shape education:

- Through establishment and finance
- Through examinations
- Through employment

Through working in these three areas, the several states have established distinctive systems. These systems vary in their complexity as indicated by their different degrees of vertical and horizontal differentiation as well as by the extent and locus

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5See William K. Cummings, “Private Education in Asia” in Cummings and Altbach (1994) for an explanation for the very large private sectors in the educational systems of Eastern Asia.
of their integration. It is apparent that some systems took all levels of their educational systems seriously whereas others put particular emphasis on one level or other. Similarly, some systems put more effort into monitoring and or smoothing the transition from one level or segment to another, whereas others allowed these differentiated parts to stand as obstacles or challenges for the young people going through the systems. While the several states devoted most of their effort to influencing these three levers of control, they evidenced less interest in other matters such as the recruitment of teachers or framing the pedagogy – all to be taken up in the second major section of this study.

**Conclusion**

The review of the reform experience of the core societies has the following implications for the analysis of reform elsewhere:

- Educational systems throughout the world have been profoundly influenced by the institutional patterns developed in the core societies. Any attempt to promote reform needs to take account of that influence.
- Educational reform in the core societies was never easy; major reforms were usually stimulated by associated ideological, political, and economic change. Thus, in analyzing the prospects for reform in a particular environment, it is essential to look beyond education to the broader societal context.
- Factors such as leadership, resources, theoretical fit, and persistence are conducive to successful reform.
- Even after a reform is launched, its trajectory is likely to be shaped by residual interests such as the demands of class, ethnic, and religious groups. Thus, the reform plan is but the first step in an uncertain journey of implementation. What finally emerges from this journey may but faintly resemble what was envisioned.

**References**


