

History of Education

This essay attempts to discuss the area of childhood through the ages. The concept of childhood was firstly found by a French historian called Aries. Aries studied childhood through the ages but it was argued that “his thesis under-estimated the nature of childhood within changing household structures of family forms”(Gelis,1986: Stone1974). Aries believed that during medieval society children were no more than little adults. There was no realisation of childhood. They were treated as little adults as soon as they could walk and talk. Between the 15th and 18th Century children became more a sense of amusement for adults, there was no regard for childhood and no understanding of the development of children. The only educational dimension of childhood at this stage was by ‘churchmen or gentlemen of the robe.’ This secured control over children’s ‘depravity’ with emphasis on discipline and knowledge of theology, humanities and sciences. This was initially only accessed by the upper classes.

During the first decades of the 19th Century Children were used as cheap labour, the period of time was called the industrial revolution. The state at this time could not offer any form of state education, as the huge amount of finance for such a venture was not available. Vain attempts were made to set up parish schools but they came to nothing. Education was not at this point seen as important. Children were forced to work in poor conditions and work very long hours. They were widely employed in textiles, mining, agriculture and domestic service. The work was traditional, universal and inescapable. The nation needed children to work to keep up with the demands of industry. To have spent public money or enforced children to attend school would have at this time been regarded as an infringement of liberty. It would have been impossible during the early decades of the industrial revolution to keep the economy going and release children for schooling. As industry grew so did the fact that children were not needed as much and adults that could read and write were indispensable. Quote from Robert Lowe ‘it will be absolutely necessary to compel our future masters to learn their letters.’ The **1833 Factories Act** limited the conditions under which children could be employed. Unfortunately restrictions on employment led to high child vagrancy and unemployment. Many children had nowhere to go and no means of income. Children from the poorer families were often abandoned by their parents, as they were bringing in no income and parents were unable to support them. Children were forced into petty crime or to begging. Effectively the factory children were replaced by delinquent children. (Hendrick,1990,1994) So many children were roaming the streets with no protection and no kind of welfare. They would sleep rough and steal to survive. They led the life of an adult with no authority or guidelines. The number of delinquent children with no home and no care caused an increase to crime and caused panic for authorities. Due to this panic The CHILD RESCUE MOVEMENT was formed, by a lady called Mary Carpenter. Acts were passed by parliament in **1854/1857** to set up reformatories and industrial schools. The need to help the child vagrants was seen as urgent.

Reformatories were introduced to provide a type of education for these children. They would have been sixteen years of age or under. These children would have been convicted of a punishable offence and would have been imprisoned had it not been for the emergence of reformatories. The reformatories tried to teach the children of their wrongdoing and educate them to be law-abiding citizens. Industrial schools were provided for the poor children who had taken to begging on the streets and had no home. Many of these children would have been forced to leave home. Their parents could not support them any more because household income was reduced without children’s wages. Reformatories taught of moral correctness. These schools reconstructed the role of childhood and slowly put an end to child labour. Through these two types of schools children were cared for and deprived children were separated from depraved.

This would have prevented deprived children from mixing with young criminals and learning new skills from them. Hill, in 1855 wrote that the delinquent 'is a little stunted man already – he knows much and a great deal too much of what is called life – he can take care of his own immediate interests. He is self-reliant, he has so long directed or mis-directed his own actions and has so little trust in those about him, that he submits to no control and asks for no protection. He has consequently much to unlearn – he has to be turned again into a child' (in **Hendrick, 1990**) Both these schools emerge as a response to delinquency and destitution. The re-educating of children helped to re-socialise and teach moral correctness. Schooling has always involved more than just gaining knowledge. A child is socially constructed through school. As the economy grew more money was available and the need to educate more readily acceptable to keep up the growing Empire. The **Education Act in 1870** was a major step forward in education as the state took responsibility for educating all able-bodied children from the age of 4 until 11. The school leaving age increased three times between 1870 and 1940. Many rural areas ignored this age because children were needed in the home or out at work to bring in a wage. Further to the 1870 Education Act and the 1833 Factory Act many more acts were introduced limiting ages for working and making provision for schooling, each Factory Act was an Education Act and vice versa. Schools in this era tended to copy the layout of factories, they would have a vast hall with tiered seating and galleries for the classes. **The 1918 Childrens Act** increased the leaving age to 14. Again this was ignored and authorities were forced to employ school attendance officers. Parents would be sent warnings and if the children repeatedly were absent from school after the warnings summons were sent and fines issued. In London in the year ending March 1900 28,836 summons were sent out. This dramatically dropped in following years. Many children wanted to work as they were accepted as adults when they earned a wage and their opinions counted. Some children would be made fun of by older working children for going to school. **Ref Children, childhood and English Society 1880-1999 – Harry Hendrick.** The concept of 'national childhood emerged'. Children were given back their childhood, child labour was stopped and all were children were entitled to an education. Hendrick noted: 'There is no doubt that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the school played a pivotal role in the construction of a new kind of childhood – this construction directly involved all children – and was intended to be inescapable. (**Hendrick 1990**)

During the later 19th century Britain had widening markets, industry was increasing. The state was growing and the importance of the Empire was realised. Children were seen as vital to keep up with the running of the Empire. Children were the 'Bricks for Empire Building' (**Bean and Melville, 1989**) By 1900 ordinary people were given some political power by being given the right to vote.

Dawinism and the Eugenics Movement.

Attention began to be focused on health. Due to children being in one place, studies were easily achieved covering all school age children. Hendrick noted that the school provided opportunities 'to doctors who, in common with sociologists, psychologists, educationalists and philanthropic reformers, used the classroom as a laboratory in which to produce scientific surveys of the pupils.' Schools would now have regular medical inspections.

The ability to create and sustain a healthier child was now possible, this was for the good of the nation. Health issues were scientifically proven and in 1906 the liberal government introduced the **Child Welfare Act**. This meant improved conditions for ordinary people. There was now a medical service and free school meals for the poorest families. Many studies on children began and child psychology was used, proving child welfare was now of the utmost priority. The **1908 Children's Act** passed a bill to separate child offenders from adults by introducing borstals and juvenile courts.

The Child Guidance Council had the responsibility to treat 'maladjusted', 'difficult' and 'delinquent' children. This created a growing national concern for mental health and general childhood mental health problems. The child Guidance Clinic identified maladjusted children and assisted the families in developing conditions within which it could be avoided and 'cured.' This was backed by state funding because of the realisation of children being a vital key in the future of the empire, it was realised they will grow up to pay taxes and look after the country. Urwin and Sharland (1992) have noted, 'The neglected toddler in everyone's way is the material which becomes the disgruntled agitator, while the happy contented child is the pillar of the state' It was decided through the state and the Guidance clinics that the state needed to intervene on family life to promote the upbringing of stably sound children, thus eliminating 'problem children.'

After the Second World War Britain began a whole scale reconstruction. Childhood being the central theme for reconstruction. The commitment to childhood had two major sets of ideas. The child was an important investment to the nations future and the family unit was seen as the institution to nurture and socialise the child. Society has always attempted to effect children in a number of different reasons, disciplinary, politically, professionally and educationally. Women were to return to the home as mothers, carers and socializes. The emphasis on the child being part of a healthy properly functioning family was information passed on to the public. This also emphasised the other side to the functional family, the dysfunctional family. This legitimised increase state intervention as evidenced in the whole range of child care legislation from the later 1940's to the present day.

Early Years Provision from 1900 onwards

Children and families who were able to be independent were relatively left to get on with it with no help from the state beyond the public education system. This taught children from the age of 5 until 14. Middle class families would have a close family unit with closer relationships built between parents and children. Many mothers stayed home to care for the children unless the man was on a very low income. When mothers needed to work, children would be left in the care of relatives or friends before and after school. If no care could be found the child would stay at home alone or with siblings for the mother to return. These children who let themselves in at home without any adult to care for them were given the label 'latch door key kids'. There were no laws at this time preventing children being left alone. In comparison to middle class families the upper class families would have a home governess and tutor to care for their children. Their was no real closeness between children and their parents. The parents would usually spend a maybe two hours with them a day. The children were kept very much separated from the adults in the house other than staff. If they were not tutored home they would be sent to boarding school where contact with parents would be limited to school holidays.

After the Second World War small numbers of mothers started to go to work out of a financial need, these numbers increased in the 1960's. A cultural tradition in Yorkshire was to work in the mills making textiles. Women may have worked alongside their husbands some doing the same job but women were paid very little in comparison to men.

Changes experienced economically and socially in society from the 1960's to 70's onwards.

Industry shrank and many manual jobs lost but over the years have been counterbalanced by a huge growth in the service sector. Jobs in the public services, such as education admin and health have increased showing a growth in childcare provision. There has also been a massive increase in the private sector best described by the growth in Information Technology. It is now socially and culturally expected that women will work and not stay at home, whether they have children or not. The government helps fund low income parents childcare costs thus allowing mothers with children of all ages to go out to work. This is of course the parents choice but financially

parents are offered incentives by the government to work. Some people argue mothers should be funded to stay at home to care for pre school children not funded to work.

During the 19th Century the care of children without parents or whose parents could or would not look after them gradually became the states responsibility. Poor law institutions would care for them or they would be boarded out with families. These children had a very hard life as they would be expected to work hard in return for food and lodgings. Charitable organisations such as Dr Barnado's also ran orphanages and boarding out schemes. Deprived children without families were not sent to a loving and caring family but strategies would be put in place to give training to enable them to find independent employment. Love and nurturing was not considered an important part of development. Older children if they were lucky could have fares paid by charities to go to Canada or Australia to find work.

The 1933 Children and Young Persons Act gave magistrates in juvenile courts the power to take children away from the care of their parents if the child was not cared for properly. They would then be looked after by foster homes or children's homes run under the Poor Law.

The 1948 Children's Act which took recommendations from the Curtis Report attempted to bring together all responsibilities for homeless children. Through the act professional child carers were employed through a local authority children's committee. These carers would supervise children who had been boarded out or fostered. The authority was also now responsible for children whose parents felt unable to provide adequate care. The children's department would also provide magistrates with information. They would be responsible for children in remand homes, committed to the care of local authority or children in Approved schools. Young offenders also came under the class of deprived children. Young offenders were treated the same way as adults until the beginning of the 19th Century and punishments were very harsh. A prison was opened in 1838 to deal with children to segregate them from adults in prison. In 1854 Reform schools were established as an alternative to prison. In **1908** an Act was passed to abolish imprisonment for children under 14.

The children's departments of local authorities were abolished in 1971. Taken from, **Pat Young 'Mastering Social Welfare'(1995)** Local Authorities now made them become part of the new generic social work department. All previous separate social services were now merged into one. These covered health, the elderly, the physically and mentally impaired, the psychiatrically ill and children and families. Some local authorities found this difficult to apply so reverted back to specialist social work provision. Since the implementation of the **1991 NHS and Community Care Act**, the local authority social workers assess situations of children and families in need and arrange for them to receive packages of care. This is an example of mixed economy care' introduced by the Conservative Government. The idea is care should be provided by both the public sector, private and voluntary provision. Many public local authority care homes closed down due to the huge growth in private care. Childcare provision in today's society is huge and growing steadily. There are many facilities such as day care, holiday clubs and after school clubs.

Britain's educational history shows us that in 1860 many parents would have resented their children attending school. From around 1960 onwards parents would be appalled for their child not to receive a full education. In 1830 education cost our country nothing compared to today when it is the most expensive social service. The 1870 Education Act was the first and probably the most important step towards a full system of public education.

Ref:

Nineteenth Century Education – Eric Midwinter

Ref Children, childhood and English Society 1880-1999 – Harry Hendrick.