

# The evolution of educational systems in the Nordic-, hybrid- and liberal welfare state

A comparative analysis

By Sven Poldervaart

## Introduction

Wealth from a financial perspective is divided unequally across the globe. Many Western-European nations can thereby be categorized as relatively rich compared to other parts of the world. For that reason, they can be classified as states with a lot of resources, or ‘welfare states’.

While the concept of the welfare state might seem homogeneous at first sight, namely a state with relatively extensive financial resources, diversity comes forward when the differences between the welfare states are examined more closely. One of the ways in which this diversity becomes visible, is through an investigation of the evolution and funding of different national educational systems. A driving force behind this diversity is the variety of approaches towards the allocation of resources which play a central role in the financing and organization of the educational system. But while money is of heavy influence on what the educational system eventually will look like, it is not limited to a matter of money alone. Political- and cultural aspects such as norms and values are just as important in shaping the educational system and have developed over time.

In this essay, we will investigate the relationship between the welfare state and the educational system through three representatives of different forms of welfare states: The United Kingdom which will represent the liberal welfare state, the Netherlands, which will represent the ‘hybrid’ welfare state, and Sweden, which will represent the Nordic welfare state model. We will do so by investigating the historical evolution of the educational systems in these three types of welfare states to find a deeper understanding of the relation between the organization of the educational system and society in general.

## The beginning of mass education in Northern-Europe

From a historical perspective, the Northern-European region is particularly interesting when the relationship between the welfare state and the educational system is studied. An important reason for that, is the fact that the principles and practices of mass education appeared first in the Northern European nations and their colonized regions.<sup>1</sup> This can be explained by the early secularization of these nations which paved the way for a growing interest in academic knowledge.<sup>2</sup> In addition to that, the diminishing influence of the church made way for the recalibration of social hierarchies in which the educational system could play an important role.<sup>3</sup> In line with this theory, the educational system is perceived as a tool to maintain the legitimacy and power of the dominant classes or elite within a society.<sup>4</sup> While this perspective on education is heavily debated, concession can be found in the fact that the establishment of mass education should fulfill some kind of interest, otherwise mass education would not have grown explosively from the 1800’s onwards and be turned into compulsory education around the 1900’s.<sup>5</sup>

The country which initiated compulsory primary education in 1763 was Prussia (nowadays known as Germany), followed by Denmark in 1814.<sup>6</sup> Many other Northern

---

<sup>1</sup> Meyer, J.W; Ramirez, F.O; Soysal, Y.N. *World Expansion of Mass Education, 1870-1980*. *Sociology of Education*, 65(2), 1992, p.129

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p.130

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Stang, D; Soysal Y.N. *Construction of the first mass education systems in nineteenth-century Europe*. *Sociology of Education*; 62(4), 1989; p.277

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p.278

European nations followed in the same century, with Sweden in 1842, Norway in 1848, the United Kingdom in 1880 and the Netherlands in 1900.<sup>7</sup>

While the gaps between the introduction of compulsory education in these nations might seem big at times, the actual enrollment rates in primary education did not always follow the introduction of compulsory education. While in Denmark compulsory education was introduced rather early in 1814, the actual enrollment rate in 1870 consisted of just 58% of the population.<sup>8</sup> Sweden on the other hand, which established compulsory education in 1842, had an enrollment rate of 78% by 1870.<sup>9</sup> The United Kingdom had an enrollment rate of 49% in 1870 and introduced compulsory education ten years later in 1880, in the Netherlands the enrollment rate in 1870 was 59% while compulsory education was introduced as late as the year 1900.<sup>10</sup> A clear conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that the introduction of compulsory education cannot automatically be linked to increased enrollment rates. What it does show very clearly though, is a growing interest in the nationalization of educational systems in the 1800's.

An important reason for this growing interest can be found in the shifting trend from a strong religious influence over society to the empowerment of individual citizens and the stimulation of individualization.<sup>11</sup> As a general trend, the enrollment rates by 1870 were significantly higher in Northern-European nations compared to Southern-European countries where power struggles between the state and church were oftentimes more fierce.<sup>12</sup> This situation makes clear that the relationship between the educational system and the development of society is very strong. It is therefore interesting to take a closer look at the characteristics of different types of states in order to understand this relationship more profoundly. In particular in the modern Northern-European welfare states.

### **The Nordic- hybrid- and liberal welfare state**

Throughout history, the power struggle between politics and economics has been ever present. The distribution of wealth has mainly been a topic of debate where free market solutions or tight economic regulation have been presented as ideal forms to govern the economy. Adam Smith stated for example that a free and open market is the gateway towards decomposing inequality, class differences and privilege.<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx believed in a stricter regulation of the economy to avoid a two-class struggle between the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie. Marx emphasized that an open and free market facilitates capital accumulation through inheritance and thereby carves social stratification and inequality deeper into the society.<sup>14</sup> The diversity in support for these ideologies, have had a strong effect on the political landscape and legislation deriving from it in the different types of welfare states.

While political influences change over time, the extent to which the economy is regulated is formalized in the establishment of laws regarding taxes, social benefits and more. Initially that question might seem rather simple since it is primarily a discussion about privatization of capital in the market. In reality, it reaches much further to for example worker's rights and thereby democracy. A good example of that can be found in the fact that when

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.279

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Esping-Andersen, G. *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1990). p.21

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.23-24

workers enjoy a high degree of social rights, the dependency on the market and employers will decrease.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of these social rights can lead to a decreased wage dependency and strive for the elimination of poverty and unemployment.<sup>16</sup> These social rights which are often promoted in for example social-democratic regimes, are responsible for the establishment of what became known as the ‘(Scandinavian) welfare state model’.<sup>17</sup> The way in which the social rights are shaped and how deep they reach into the economical regulations are strongly dependent on the degree to which the authority of its management is given to the state. This is strongly influenced by the political-historical background of a nation and the present social relations within it.<sup>18</sup> One definition to define what a welfare state exactly is, becomes therefore significantly harder to express since the welfare state can exist in different forms. Though, a common characteristic which can be found in all welfare states is that they to some extent strive for securing a basic level of welfare for their citizens.<sup>19</sup> The way in which that is done can range from social assistance measures to tax privileges and everything in between.<sup>20</sup> Hereby de-commodification can be used as a standard which can in a simplified sense be described as the ability for citizens to opt-out of work when they find it necessary without the potential of losing income.<sup>21</sup>

When de-commodification is used as a tool to compare the different types of welfare states, Scandinavian welfare states would show the strongest characteristics of a de-commodified welfare state while the Anglo-Saxon welfare states do the least.<sup>22</sup> The Anglo-Saxon welfare states could therefore be characterized as ‘liberal welfare states’ in which limited social benefits are implemented for citizens in need of the lowest social classes only.<sup>23</sup> The second model, the Scandinavian model or ‘Nordic welfare state’, expands these social benefits to the new middle classes.<sup>24</sup> The third model as introduced in Esping-Andersens book ‘The three worlds of welfare capitalism’, can from a Scandinavian perspective be described as the ‘Conservative’ welfare state which is present in many continental European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy and Austria.<sup>25</sup> In these continental European countries, social benefits regarding daycare and other family services are oftentimes more restricted than the Scandinavian welfare states, which can from a Scandinavian perspective be perceived as a preservation of the traditional familyhood.<sup>26</sup> Whether that is true or false comes down to personal interpretation since the Nordic welfare state can be characterized for its flat tax rates.<sup>27</sup> As a result of that, low- and middle incomes pay relatively high taxes to support daycare and family services which create a strong incentive to work fulltime instead of part-time. Within many conservative welfare states, taxes for lower- to middle incomes are less severe. In the Netherlands for example, the so-called ‘loonheffingskorting’ (tax discount) compensates taxes on lower incomes which leads to a less heavy taxation on part-time

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid p.24-25

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p.25

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p.35

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p.36

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p.38

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p.43

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p.48

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p.50

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Taxfoundation; How Scandinavian countries pay their government spending; <https://taxfoundation.org/how-scandinavian-countries-pay-their-government-spending/>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

incomes.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, people with a lower income can apply for additional benefits such as the ‘zorgtoeslag’ which is a compensation for health insurance costs<sup>29</sup> and ‘huurtoeslag’, a compensation for rental housing.<sup>30</sup>

The financial support of lower income groups leads to the fact that family services such as daycare can be performed by families themselves since the difference between the net income of a fulltime- or part-time job is reduced. From that perspective, the label ‘conservative welfare state’ can be challenged and could be replaced with ‘hybrid welfare state’, as the model is clearly a mix of liberal- and socialist influences and finds itself between the Nordic- and liberal welfare state model.

Where the three types of welfare states differ, is that the liberal welfare state is based upon market solutions and selective public services, the Scandinavian welfare state has its foundation in state centered and tax-financed welfare benefits and the ‘hybrid’ welfare state emphasizes labor market performance.<sup>31</sup> This division of welfare states from Esping-Andersen has received a lot of critique for its strong generalizing character.<sup>32</sup> For example the Australian and British welfare state are categorized in the liberal welfare state group while differences between them have been strong over time. The same counts for the ‘conservative’ welfare state in which southern- and central European systems show significant differences.<sup>33</sup> For that reason, this essay will elaborate further on three representatives for these general systems consisting of the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden. Not only for the fact they are all part of the three different main groups, but since all these countries are Northern European as well. In that way, a combination can be found between the history of some of the oldest mass educational systems in the world which are culturally related but politically and economically very diverse.

## The evolution of the Swedish educational system

The educational system of Sweden in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, can be characterized for its emphasis on citizenship.<sup>34</sup> An important reason for that, can be found in the fact that Sweden is a nation-state and the schooling system could be utilized to unify a national identity through the definition of citizenship.<sup>35</sup> While a logical assumption might be that the definition of citizenship through education would be in the interest of the state to unify and centralize the state more strongly, its driving force came from the middle class as well.<sup>36</sup> The middle class pushed for the reform and extension of the educational training since educational credentials gained importance on the labor market to distinguish competence.<sup>37</sup> A logical conclusion that can be drawn from that fact is that competence and the idea of

---

<sup>28</sup>Belastingdienst; Loonheffingskorting;

[https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk\\_en\\_inkomen/jongeren/teruggaaf\\_jongeren/begripen\\_jongeren/loonheffingskorting](https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk_en_inkomen/jongeren/teruggaaf_jongeren/begripen_jongeren/loonheffingskorting); Accessed 06-04-2020.

<sup>29</sup>h Belastingdienst; Zorgtoeslag;

[https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk\\_en\\_inkomen/toeslagen/zorgtoeslag/voorwaarden/voorwaarden-zorgtoeslag](https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk_en_inkomen/toeslagen/zorgtoeslag/voorwaarden/voorwaarden-zorgtoeslag); Accessed 06-04-2020.

<sup>30</sup>Belastingdienst; Huurtoeslag;

[https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk\\_en\\_inkomen/toeslagen/huurtoeslag/](https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/privewerk_en_inkomen/toeslagen/huurtoeslag/); Accessed 06-04-2020.

<sup>31</sup> Kettunen, P; Petersen, K. *Beyond welfare state models: transnational historical perspectives on social policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011). p.2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p.3

<sup>33</sup> Ibid p.2-3

<sup>34</sup> Sjögren, Å.K; Larsson, E; Rimm, S. *Agents and subjects: schooling and conceptions of citizenship in early nineteenth-century Sweden*. History of Education, 48(3), 2019, p.297

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.298

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.299

meritocracy gained popularity in the nineteenth century in Sweden. Sweden distinguished itself hereby from Prussia where -as mentioned before- the first mass education system was established. A research project of Ingrid Lohmann and Christine Mayer shows that in the early 1800's the educational system in Prussia was primarily used as a tool to protect the 'new bourgeoisie'.<sup>38</sup> The emphasis on citizenship in the Swedish educational system can therefore not be taken as a general trend in any nation at the time of the establishment of compulsory education. To a greater or lesser extent it was a typical Swedish phenomenon.

The emergence of the Swedish citizenship education did not only come from the growing needs of 'nation building' and the middle class to distinguish themselves for career purposes, it came as a replacement for religious education as well.<sup>39</sup> In a way, the loyalty to the church and god made place for loyalty towards the state. Marc Depaepe and Paul Smeyers stated regarding this issue that the 'schooling project manifested itself as a secularized version of Christianization'.<sup>40</sup> This phenomenon was not exclusive for Sweden and emerged all over Europe at the time. It had the purpose to strengthen a national identity through the introduction of new subjects such as geography and history, and school inspections were established to control the educational system.<sup>41</sup> An important reason for that, is the fact that the relationship between local communities and the state could be very complicated. It was therefore necessary to excess 'power from above' to create a sense of belonging to the entire nation.<sup>42</sup>

The ideological ideas behind the establishment of the nationalized educational system, have at all times been influenced by dominating political powers in Sweden. In 1917, right after the Liberals and Social Democrats formed a coalition government in Sweden, the ministry of education belonged to the domain of the Social Democrats. As a result of that, equality regarding the access to educational training became an important focus point since the stimulation of equal opportunities belonged to the political Social-Democratic agenda.<sup>43</sup> The promotion of that equality came forward in both the goal of equal access to education for boys and girls and for different social classes.<sup>44</sup> More specifically, this ambition was translated into legislation by 1920 which demanded nationalization, progressive wealth taxation and stricter inheritance tax regulations.<sup>45</sup> Although the Swedish political landscape changed multiple times in the 1920's and liberal- conservative and social democratic governments succeeded each other, the idea of accessible and equal education persisted over time.<sup>46</sup> The funding and organization of the Swedish educational system were heavily influenced by that.

The emphasis on universal equality and accessibility of education is not exclusively a Swedish phenomenon. Many other primarily Nordic countries share the same beliefs and have structured their educational systems in comparable ways. Though, within this process of shaping the educational system, many Nordic countries took Sweden as a role model for what it should look like.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that process went through several phases. In

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.300

<sup>39</sup> Evertsson, J. *History, nation and school inspections: the introduction of citizenship education in elementary schools in late nineteenth-century Sweden*. *History of Education*, 44(3), 2015, p.259

<sup>40</sup> Depaepe M; Smeyers P. *Educationalization as an Ongoing Modernization Process*. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), 2008. p.380.

<sup>41</sup> Evertsson, J. *History, nation and school inspections: the introduction of citizenship education in elementary schools in late nineteenth-century Sweden*. *History of Education*, 44(3), 2015, p.259

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p.272

<sup>43</sup> Lindensjö, B. *From liberal common school to state primary school: a main line in Social Democratic educational policy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). p.311

<sup>44</sup> Ibid p.312

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Telhaug, A.O; Mediås, O.A; Aasen, P. *The Nordic Model in Education: Education as part of the political system in the last 50 years*. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 50(3), 2006, p.245

the ‘classical period’ from 1945 until 1970, social goals such as creating equal opportunities and community fellowship were dominantly present as a result of the social democratic ‘golden era’ in which its ideology was implemented deeper in society and the educational system.<sup>48</sup> In the second phase between 1970 and 1985, more attention was given to individual emancipation of the students. As a result of globalizing influences more room was given to local influence over school development.<sup>49</sup> The third and last phase which could be distinguished in Sweden, was a phase of decentralization.<sup>50</sup> As a result of international economic competition and free markets, the educational policy development was heavily influenced. Instead of the earlier emphasis on national- and social unity more focus drifted towards the assessment of students’ academic skills in an international comparative perspective.<sup>51</sup> The Nordic education today is therefore heavily influenced by international competition but still keeps the ideal of equality and accessibility in mind. For example, by maintaining tuition-free education.

### **The evolution of the Dutch educational system**

As mentioned before, compulsory education was introduced in the Netherlands in the year 1900.<sup>52</sup> From that point onwards, the nationalization of the educational system took place and could be utilized to build towards a stronger sense of national identity and citizenship like in other parts of Europe.<sup>53</sup> But before that point was reached, local schools already existed and many students already went to school or received private education at home. The extent to which educational training was attended was rather big since thirty years before the implementation of compulsory education in 1900 enrollment rates were already at 59%.<sup>54</sup>

Just like in Sweden the influence of the church on educational training had been significant and mastering Latin was an indication of that relationship. Up until right before the second world war a preacher asking for a bill at the doctor would for example often receive the answer “Latin does not pay Latin” as an expression of mutual respect.<sup>55</sup> Though, from the reformation onwards the influence of the church over educational practices decreased and mastering Latin became a more and more exotic skill for elite students to express their socio-economic class rather than actual usefulness in daily life.<sup>56</sup>

The implementation of compulsory education in the year 1900 was the result of a nationalized educational system which gradually grew within a century. In 1796, a report called ‘Algemene denkbeelden over het nationaal onderwijs’ (general thoughts on national education) was published which emphasized the benefits for both citizens and society as a whole of a formal educational training.<sup>57</sup> In 1798 the first Dutch minister of education was established and in 1806 the first educational legislation was introduced based upon the report of 1796.<sup>58</sup> As a

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Stang, D; Soysal Y.N. *Construction of the first mass education systems in nineteenth-century Europe*. *Sociology of Education*; 62(4), 1989; p.278

<sup>53</sup> Evertsson, J. *History, nation and school inspections: the introduction of citizenship education in elementary schools in late nineteenth-century Sweden*. *History of Education*, 44(3), 2015, p.259

<sup>54</sup> Stang, D; Soysal Y.N. *Construction of the first mass education systems in nineteenth-century Europe*. *Sociology of Education*; 62(4), 1989; p.278

<sup>55</sup> Boekholt, P.T.F.M; de Booy E.P. *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen, Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1987). p.65.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.64

<sup>57</sup> Noordman, J.M.A; Rietveld-van Wingerden, M; Bakker, N. *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland: idee en praktijk, 1500-2000* (Assen, Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2006). p.548

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

result of the implementation of these new rules, the educational system became centrally financed and ‘Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands’ (general civilized Dutch) was introduced at schools to standardize the Dutch language and diminish the influence of regional dialects.<sup>59</sup> Simultaneously, religious influence over the curriculum was reduced.<sup>60</sup>

Unlike the Swedish educational model, promoting equality and accessibility of education for all had a lower priority in the Dutch educational system. Up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century primary education was generally perceived as a satisfying level of educational training for all citizens.<sup>61</sup> Around the introduction of compulsory education in the year 1900, secondary education did already exist and was subsidized by the government but it was only accessible for recruited students of the highest social classes which needed an educational preparation for the more scarce and prestigious jobs.<sup>62</sup> During the 20<sup>th</sup> century this situation changed drastically. As a result of the industrialization, the demand for educational training became accessible and desirable for a broader public and many families invested significantly in the educational training of one or more of their family members.<sup>63</sup> Later on, the state started subsidizing the educational training of citizens which stimulated the explosive growth of the educated population even more.<sup>64</sup>

The partial financing of education by the state and individuals still exists in the Netherlands today. While primary- and secondary education are completely state funded, higher education demands a tuition fee of over 2000 euros per academic year.<sup>65</sup> Compared to the Swedish model where all education is state-funded, the Dutch educational system can therefore be seen as a more liberal model where ‘the user pays’, at least to some extent.

## The evolution of the British educational system

From a historical perspective, the late nineteenth century marks an interesting era for investigating the British educational system. An important reason for that is that from 1850 until 1870 the educational system was drastically reformed by appointing Royal Commissions to increase the states’ influence over the British education of all levels.<sup>66</sup> In 1870 the enrollment rate in British education was 49% before it was made compulsory ten years later in 1880.<sup>67</sup> Just like in the Netherlands, a result of the early industrialization in the UK led to a rapidly growing middle class with similar needs as in the Netherlands: the demand for educational training grew explosively.<sup>68</sup> The desire to reform the educational system did therefore not only come top-down from the state to the people, but the other way around as well.

The state funding of the educational system in the UK has since the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century been restricted to elementary education alone. Secondary education and university education fees were not covered by the state and should be funded privately by citizens

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.550

<sup>61</sup> Boekholt, P.T.F.M; de Booy E.P. *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen, Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1987). p.257.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid p.258

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Rijksoverheid; Collegegeld;

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/hoger-onderwijs/vraag-en-antwoord/hoogte-van-het-collegegeld-hogeschool-universiteit>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

<sup>66</sup> Muller, D; Ringer F; Simon B. *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987). p.88.

<sup>67</sup> Stang, D; Soysal Y.N. *Construction of the first mass education systems in nineteenth-century Europe*. *Sociology of Education*; 62(4), 1989; p.278

<sup>68</sup> Muller, D; Ringer F; Simon B. *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987). p.90.



themselves.<sup>69</sup> What the state did involve itself with, was the redistribution of these incoming fees over the educational institutes. Within secondary education these institutes were for example the grammar schools and ‘public’ schools, within higher education institutions such as Cambridge University and Oxford University can be taken as an example.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to for example Sweden, the British government did not involve itself in the direct funding of the entire educational system from tax resources. Instead, it took a redistributing role of incoming tuition fees which were to be divided over educational institutes in the form of subsidies.<sup>71</sup> The only exception to that, was the funding of primary education.

Around 1880 when compulsory education was introduced in the UK, a period started where primary education was officially compulsory, but its funding was left to citizens themselves. It was for that reason the British government started to subsidize primary education for working class families by charging fees below comparable private schools.<sup>72</sup> In the year 1891 tuition fees for primary education were abolished in general which made it accessible for all children in the country. As a result of that enrollment rates increased significantly and the population became more and more educated.<sup>73</sup>

The British educational system today is very diverse with both publicly- and privately funded education. The admission criteria for these schools differ strongly and can have influence on tuition fees, selection procedures and more.<sup>74</sup> The educational market is therefore heavily liberalized and to a great extent exposed to the free market. Compared to both the Swedish and Dutch educational system, the British school system can therefore be seen as the most liberalized.

### **A comparative analysis of educational systems in the welfare state**

While the connection between the educational system and the general economical- and political structure of society are often perceived as tightly connected, the extent to which they do can be discussed. While the educational system is clearly an important source of knowledge for vital productive techniques and economic skill requirements for the economic progress of society, other factors might play a significant role in this process as well.<sup>75</sup> Because of that, the question arises whether economic wealth is the result of knowledge produced by the educational system or whether the educational system can be seen as a ‘welfare project’ deriving from economic prosperity. In other words, does a nation become wealthy because its population is well educated, or do citizens become educated because the wealth of their country allows them to? And if so, is that knowledge produced by the formal nationalized educational system or merely an informal transmission of knowledge among citizens themselves? Regardless of the answer, a correlation between wealth and educational training comes forward in the Northern-European and North American case which developed at a very early stage and can still be noticed today. Instead of discussing the extent to which the educational system is responsible for wealth, it might therefore be more useful to accept the correlation between the

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.89

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Mitch, D.F. *The Impact of Subsidies to Elementary Schooling on Enrolment Rates in Nineteenth-Century England*. *The Economic History Review*, 39(3), 1986, p.389

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Gov.uk; School admissions; <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

<sup>75</sup> Green, A. *Education and state formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Institute of Education, 2013). p.82

two as a given and focus more on what the relationship between the state and the educational system looks like.

What the three investigated educational systems have in common, is the fact that they went through a phase of industrialization and a diminishing influence of the church. According to Michael Katz, these two aspects together with urbanization and the changes in family structure can be seen as the responsible factors for the rapid changes of the educational system in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and exponential growth of mass education in the western world.<sup>76</sup> Though, the funding behind the educational system differs strongly, which came forward in the analysis of the three different types of welfare states in relation to their educational systems.

Essentially, the funding of education comes down to the extent of state control or a liberalization of the (educational) market. In that sense, the connection between the funding of education and the organization of the state show a strong resemblance. In the Swedish case for example, the Nordic welfare state model can be characterized by strong state intervention to regulate the free market. Within the Swedish educational system this becomes visible through the full state-funding of the entire educational apparatus. In the British case, we find a strongly diminished state control where an open and free market is less regulated. Within the educational system this leads to the open competition of schools where the bill of educational training is presented to the individual citizen instead of coverage by the state. The third example that has been investigated, the ‘conservative’ or ‘hybrid’ welfare state, shows an in-between pattern of state- and societal organization. In the Netherlands, which has been investigated as a representative for this type of welfare state, state control is present to a higher extent compared to the British case but to a lower degree compared to the Swedish system. Within this system, subsidies are an important tool to tailored-fit governmental support to individual cases. Within the educational system this comes forward through a strongly subsidized tuition fee for higher education which is equal for all universities in the country.

## **Conclusion**

Based upon a rough and general analysis, the relationship between the organization of the educational system and the different types of welfare states seems evident. Just like the healthcare system, police, the army and other state-funded organizations and institutions, education and its funding follow a trend of the dominant political powers in the nation-state it operates in. The likelihood to encounter a liberalized educational system in a strongly liberalized country is for example rather big since the educational system oftentimes follows the trend of the general distribution of resources in society. Still, the way the educational system is constructed is not a matter of funding alone. The unique component of the educational system is that it has been used throughout time to give direction to the transmission of norms, values and culture through its curriculum. Because of that, an interesting discussion may arise which reaches further than the earlier mentioned ‘wealth accumulation theory’ where the question was posed whether education is responsible for the creation of wealth or merely a welfare project. This discussion stretches further once the transmission of culture is taken into consideration as well. For example, when the content of textbooks and dominant political beliefs of teachers prefer a certain political stream over another, does that translate into students adapting these beliefs? And is the educational system thereby an institute to reproduce cultural values as well? While the answer to this question might be hard to investigate, it seems undeniable that the relationship between the educational system and society is very strong.

The historical development of a nation plays a significant role in this process and the educational system has often used for multiple purposes ranging from creating a national

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid p.35

identity to the facilitation of meritocratic competition for the rising middle class. What is best or desirable, seems therefore a question on which the answer changes continuously.

As for the different types of welfare states, this discussion is oftentimes about the allocation of resources and whether that responsibility lies with the state or the citizens themselves. There is no objective right or wrong regarding that question, but a fact is that the answer differs significantly among the different types of welfare states.

## References

Belastingdienst; Huurtoeslag;

<https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/prive/toeslagen/huurtoeslag/>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

Belastingdienst; Loonheffingskorting;

[https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/prive/werk\\_en\\_inkomen/jongeren/teruggaaf\\_jongeren/begripen\\_jongeren/loonheffingskorting/](https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/prive/werk_en_inkomen/jongeren/teruggaaf_jongeren/begripen_jongeren/loonheffingskorting/); Accessed 06-04-2020.

Belastingdienst; Zorgtoeslag;

<https://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldcontentnl/belastingdienst/prive/toeslagen/zorgtoeslag/voorwaarden/voorwaarden-zorgtoeslag/>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

Boekholt, P.T.F.M; de Booy E.P. *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen, Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1987).

Depaepe M; Smeyers P. *Educationalization as an Ongoing Modernization Process*. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), 2008.

Esping-Andersen, G. *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

Evertsson, J. *History, nation and school inspections: the introduction of citizenship education in elementary schools in late nineteenth-century Sweden*. *History of Education*, 44(3), 2015, p.259-273.

Gov.uk; School admissions; <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

Green, A. *Education and state formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Institute of Education, 2013).

Kettunen, P; Petersen, K. *Beyond welfare state models: transnational historical perspectives on social policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011).

Lindensjö, B. *From liberal common school to state primary school: a main line in Social Democratic educational policy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

Meyer, J.W; Ramirez, F.O; Soysal, Y.N. *World Expansion of Mass Education, 1870-1980*. *Sociology of Education*, 65(2), 1992, p.128-149.

Mitch, D.F. *The Impact of Subsidies to Elementary Schooling on Enrolment Rates in Nineteenth-Century England*. *The Economic History Review*, 39(3), 1986, p.371-391.

Muller, D; Ringer F; Simon B. *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Noordman, J.M.A; Rietveld-van Wingerden, M; Bakker, N. *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland: idee en praktijk, 1500-2000* (Assen, Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2006).

Rijksoverheid; Collegegeld;

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/hoger-onderwijs/vraag-en-antwoord/hoogte-van-het-collegegeld-hogeschool-universiteit>; Accessed 06-04-2020.

Sjögren, Å.K; Larsson, E; Rimm, S. *Agents and subjects: schooling and conceptions of citizenship in early nineteenth-century Sweden*. *History of Education*, 48(3), 2019, p.297-316.

Stang, D; Soysal Y.N. *Construction of the first mass education systems in nineteenth-century Europe*. *Sociology of Education*; 62(4), 1989; p.277-288.

Taxfoundation; How Scandinavian countries pay their government spending;

<https://taxfoundation.org/how-scandinavian-countries-pay-their-government-spending/>;  
Accessed 06-04-2020.

Telhaug, A.O; Mediås, O.A; Aasen, P. *The Nordic Model in Education: Education as part of the political system in the last 50 years*. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 50(3), 2006, p.245-283.