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A COMPARATIVE HISTORY FROM BELOW? A LOCAL AND MUNDANE INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF NINETEENTH CENTURY SCHOOLING

UNA STORIA COMPARATA DAL BASSO? UNA STORIA MONDANA LOCALE E INTERNAZIONALE DELLA SCUOLA NEL XIX SECOLO

In an increasingly globalized world, the nineteenth century expansion of mass schooling can no longer be interpreted merely from within a national framework. As a result, vital efforts have been made to investigate and conceptualize the international and transnational histories of schooling. Using the historiography of nineteenth century schooling as a starting point, this article presents prospects for how these conceptualizations may be further developed employing the notion of a comparative history "from below." In this article, this notion indicates an analysis that does not take national or supranational entities as the point of departure, but instead promotes a comparative history based on the local level (school districts, municipalities, townships). Consequently, the focus of investigations will shift from national politics, transnational circulation of educational ideas, and international conferences, to the mundane history of schooling, covering issues such as local funding, local school politics, and the practical, and often non-event-worthy, realities of schooling. Although such investigations do not mainly address the oppressed or the marginalized, a comparative history from below implies a focus on the ordinary schoolchildren, parents, and teachers, and their schools. What this article consequently proposes is an international history of schooling that is simultaneously local, and a local history of schooling that is simultaneously international.

In un mondo sempre più globalizzato, l'espansione dell'istruzione scolastica di massa nel XIX secolo non può più essere interpretata semplicemente all'interno di una cornice di riferimento nazionale. Di conseguenza sono stati fatti importanti tentativi per studiare e concettualizzare le storie internazionali e transnazionali della scuola. Riferendosi alla storiografia sull'istruzione scolastica del XIX secolo come punto di partenza, questo articolo presenta alcune prospettive su come queste concettualizzazioni possano essere ulteriormente sviluppate impiegando la nozione di una storia comparativa "dal basso". In questo articolo, questa nozione indica un'analisi che non considera come punto di partenza entità nazionali o sovranazionali, ma promuove invece una storia comparativa basata sul livello locale (distretti scolastici, comuni, municipalità). Il focus delle indagini passerà dunque dalle politiche nazionali, dalla circolazione transnazionale di idee educative e dalle conferenze internazionali, alla semplice storia dell'istruzione scolastica, analizzando tematiche come i finanziamenti locali, la politica scolastica locale e la pratica nelle realtà scolastiche, spesso considerata di poco valore. Quantunque tali indagini non riguardino principalmente oppressi o emarginati, una storia comparativa dal basso implica un focus sull'ordinario: gli scolari, i genitori, gli insegnanti e le loro scuole. Ciò che questo articolo propone è quindi una storia internazionale della scolarizzazione che è allo stesso tempo anche locale, e una storia locale della scolarizzazione che è contemporaneamente anche internazionale.

Key words: primary school; comparative history; transnational history; social history; history of education.

Parole chiave: scuola primaria; storia comparata; storia transnazionale; storia sociale; storia dell'educazione.

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Introduction

The long nineteenth century saw the formation and expansion of national systems of education in Europe and North America. School laws, such as the Danish school acts of 1814, the French Guizot law of 1833, the Spanish Moyano law of 1857, the Italian Casati Law of 1859, and the Russian Statute on Elementary Public Schools of 1864, were issued. Apart from legislative changes, schooling also became a reality for increasing numbers of school-aged children, a fact that official statistics reveal (Lindert 2004, chap. 5; Tröhler 2016).

During the last forty years, increasing efforts have been made to conceptualize and explain the rise of mass schooling from an international standpoint. This development may be linked to the propagation of social and cultural history in the 1970s and the 1980s, which implied a denationalization of history in terms of the categories used (Iriye 2004, 212-13) and the current globalization processes. These processes include the increasing importance of international organizations and businesses, the emergence of global political issues such as the environment of terrorism, and the rise of technology that has promoted communication on a global level (Iriye 2004, 221; Caruso 2008, 825-27).

Basing my arguments on the historiography of the international rise of mass schooling in the nineteenth century, this article presents prospects for how a comparative perspective may be further developed in the history of schooling. In order to accomplish this, this article is organized in three main sections. The first section introduces the reader to nineteenth century schooling in Europe and North America, presenting rising enrollment levels and the content and organization of nineteenth century schooling. The second part presents the fundamental approaches to, and conceptualization of, these developments in the Western minority world. These include Andy Green's state formation theory, the neoinstitutionalist perspectives of the Stanford school, economic historical studies of the determinants of schooling, and studies of the transfer of school policy and educational models.

Based on the two previous parts, the third section of this article examines how this current state of research may be developed. In this section, I promote what I, by a slight play of words, call a comparative history from below. Drawing inspiration from the social and economic history of schooling, this strand of research examines the international history of schooling based on the local and regional level, investigating the common, ordinary, and mundane history of teachers, pupils, school buildings, school politics, and school finance. Examining such issues, these comparative studies are intended to provide analyses of similarities and differences across regions and national borders, and may question both inaccurate generalizations as well as inaccurate assumptions of local, regional, or national idiosyncrasies. By doing so, a comparative history from below provides a welcome complement to the comparative analyses of national politics or transnational studies of policies, ideas, discourses, and languages of schooling.

Addressing the international and transnational history of schooling requires certain

clarifications. The field that will be discussed in this article is the history of primary schooling. Primary schooling denotes the first basic, and in the nineteenth century most often the only, schooling that school-aged children (often defined as the ages 5-14) received. This article thus covers schools known as common schools in the United States, *folkskolor* in Sweden, *Volksschulen* in Prussia, *école primaire élémentaires* in France, and *educación primaria elemental* in Spain. As mentioned above, this article is devoted to schooling in Europe and North America. Although developments in a wide range of countries will be discussed, from Spain and Italy in southern Europe to the Nordic countries in the North, certain emphasis will be put on the Swedish case, and the traditional main examples of the historiography, including England, France, Prussia, and the United States.

A note on the usage of concepts is required. There is a range of more or less overlapping concepts used to describe a historiography that transcends or crosses national borders. These concepts includes world history, global history, international history, and transnational history, also adding terms such as interconnected histories, entangled history, and *histoire croisée* (Iriye 2004, 213; Casalilla 2007; Collins and Allender 2013). In this article, I will use the term "international" in the broad everyday sense of the word that not only encompasses relationships between countries (cf. Salomon 1993) but also includes various forms of cross-national or inter-societal relations. I will use the term "transnational" to denote various forms of «movements and forces that cut across national boundaries» (Iriye 2004, 213) that may be described in terms such as modelling, transfer, borrowing, reception, translation, and adaptation. Here, the term "comparative" will cover both formalized comparative studies that perceive comparisons as a kind of historical experiment, and comparative studies that place educational practices in an international context (see Sewell 1967, 218; Haupt 2007, 700).

The expansion of schooling in the nineteenth century

The rise of mass schooling was a truly international phenomenon. Although the long nineteenth century was a period of expansion, already the early modern period saw an increased interest in schooling. School acts, including the famous Austrian General School Ordinance of 1774 and the Prussian *Generallandschulreglement* of 1763, were issued, generally with little impact on the actual development of schooling. A significant number of schools were, however, established during this era. In Little Poland (a historical region in Southern Poland with Kraków as its main city), there were schools in 61 percent of the urban parishes in the mid-eighteenth century, and in Spain, about a fifth of all school aged children (6-13 years) attended schools in Castile at the end of the eighteenth century, (Houston 2002, 23, 35-36). In France, 23,000 primary schools had been established by 1813 (Price 1987, 309), and in Prussia about 60 percent of all children aged 6-14 were enrolled in school already in 1816 (Becker, Cinnirella, and Woessmann 2012).

Although schooling today has won an almost complete victory—the only main re-

maining frontier is sub-Saharan Africa with enrollment rates at 79 percent in 2015 (Unicef 2018)—the development towards universal primary education exhibited great national and regional differences. In the West, Northern Europe and North America led the race towards schooling for all, while Southern and Eastern Europe lagged. The north-south divide is indicated by Figure 1, which features the number of primary school pupils per 1,000 children, ages 5-14, over time. As Figure 1 indicates, countries such as the United States, England and Wales, France, and Prussia led the way, while countries such as Italy, Greece, and Portugal experienced slower growth in enrollment. One important exception to this general tendency was Finland, which despite its northern location experienced very slow development under Russian rule during the nineteenth century.

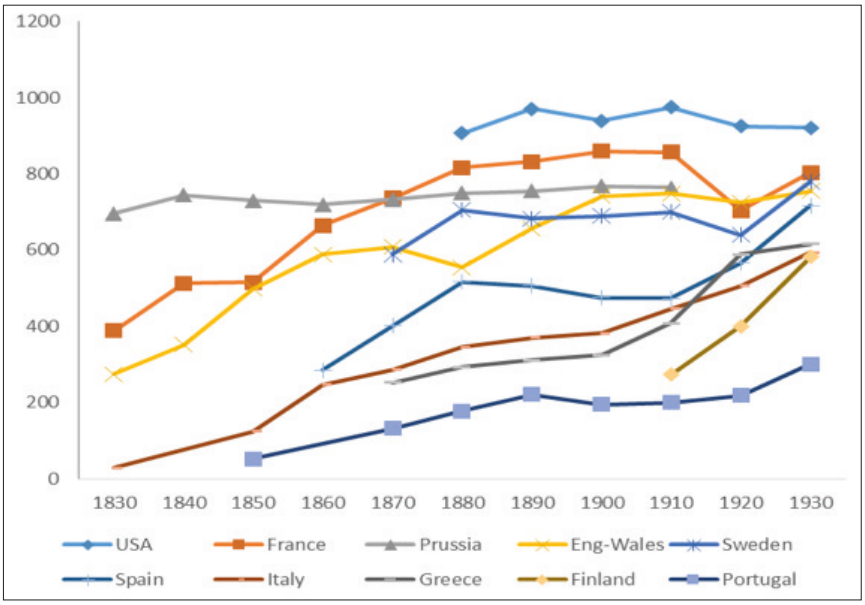

Figure 1. Varying routes towards schooling for all. Primary school enrollment 1830-1930. Note: The figure indicates children enrolled in school per 1,000 of children aged 5-14. *Source:* Lindert 2004, tab. 5.1.

When describing this development, school acts and school laws have traditionally served as milestones. In the nineteenth century, school acts were, for example, enacted in Denmark (1814), France (1833), Sweden (1842), Spain (1857), Italy (1859), Russia (1864), and England and Wales in 1870 (see, for example, Soysal and Strang 1989; Tröhler 2016). Although at times interpreted as being of the same kind, these school acts nevertheless had various status, content, and roles. Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal and David Strang have noted that some acts were merely rhetorical, in that their impact was insignificant, while other school acts clearly promoted schooling or appear as part of an expansion of schooling that clearly preceded the act (Soysal and Strang 1989, 285).

The school acts also had different juridical status. Some school acts were laws issued by the parliament (as the Guizot law of 1833), while some were merely regulations (such as the Prussian regulations of 1854 issued by the Ministry of Education) or regulations issued by the king with a law-like character (like the Swedish school act of 1842). The extent to which the school acts required compliance and were respected also varied, as did the extent to which the school regulations meant compulsory schooling for all school-aged children (Westberg, Boser, and Brühwiler 2019).

While central governments attempted to promote and govern schooling by school acts, standardized curriculums, and school inspectors, the main responsibility for nineteenth century primary schooling lay on the local level. Nineteenth century school systems were most commonly decentralized in the sense that schools were to a large degree organized and funded by local school districts, municipalities, townships, and parishes. Nevertheless, the degree to which the school systems were funded locally varied. In the 1870s, the funding covered by the local level ranged from above 90 percent in Saxony and Italy, to between 70 and 80 percent in Prussia, European Russia, and the USA, to 37 percent in Belgium and merely 3.6 percent in Ireland (Lindert 2004, 116-17; Westberg 2017, 6). As these figures indicate, the role of decentralized organization and funding varied across contexts.

During the long nineteenth century, primary schools offered a limited education that varied greatly by region and the local circumstances of each school. In most countries, reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion were the main school subjects, supplemented with school subjects such as history and geography. In Denmark, the school acts of 1814 noted that schools in rural areas and market towns were supposed to promote religiosity and citizenship, which was translated into a curriculum including reading, writing, arithmetic, and Christianity, but also history, geography, and gymnastics (Larsen 2017, 11). In some countries, a distinction was made between two levels of knowledge. The Spanish Montesino Regulation of 1838 differentiated between a complete curriculum that included reading, writing, arithmetic, Spanish grammar, and the Catholic doctrine, and an incomplete curriculum that did not include all these subjects (Mallorquí-Ruscalleda 2019). In Sweden, the school act of 1842 indicated two levels of possible instruction. The minimum level of instruction covered reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, biblical history, and church singing. The level above that also included geography, history, arithmetic, geometry, linear-drawing, science, and physical education (Westberg 2014b, 53). Regardless of how this content of schooling was formulated in school acts and regulations, nineteenth century primary schools generally did not prepare school children for secondary schools and higher education.

Apart from the limitations of the content taught, schooling was marked by significant local and regional differences that encompassed everything from the number of teachers and schools, enrollments, and attendance, to the quality of school buildings and the content and form of instruction. This was, for example, the case in Italy, with its remarkable north-south divide (see, for example, Cappelli 2016), but also in other countries such as France, Spain, and the German states (Galor and Franck 2017; Soto-Vázquez et al. 2017; Cinnirella and Hornung 2016). In the latter case, the ex-

penditure per school pupil in 1900-1901, for example, ranged in the Northwest from 77 German marks per pupil in Bremen to 25 marks per pupil in Lippe, and in the Northeast from 65 marks per pupil in Lübeck to 30 marks per pupil in Reuss senior (Lindert 2004, 122)[1].

Such regional differences also marked schooling in other respects. In Italy, the reports from the Provincial Royal Inspectorates (1865) indicate that Italian schooling varied in terms of methods used. The method of teaching a pupil at a time (the individual method) dominated, for example, the schools of the Milan province, while teaching entire classes (the simultaneous method) was preferred in the district of Naples (Bandini 2015, 207-08). Likewise, the quality of school buildings varied, which is shown by reports from Sweden and Switzerland (Westberg 2014a, 75; De Vincenti 2015, 277). In the latter case, 70 and 69 percent of the school rooms in 1873-38 were deemed as "good" (*gut*) in Bülach and Zürich, respectively, while 48 percent of the school rooms in Uster and Winterthur received the same verdict. Schooling in the long nineteenth century was thus marked not only by significant quantitative differences, but also by significant qualitative differences.

Conceptualizing the international expansion of schooling

The truly international rise of mass schooling, outlined above, has been addressed in a wide variety of ways. During the first half of the twentieth century, often within a pronouncedly national framework, schooling was commonly presented in a whiggish and hagiographical manner that emphasized legislative measures, prominent individuals and their supporting visions of education (McCulloch 2011, 27). Such narratives generally stressed the significance of famous educationalists such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Dewey, and of legislative measures including the school acts mentioned above.

When the theories of history and social sciences entered the research field of educational history, these narratives' emphasis on educationalists and educational legislation were questioned. Instead, theoretical frameworks were introduced that included those based on the functionalist conflict perspectives that explained schooling in terms of social control and discipline required by the increasingly industrialized and urbanized West (for a critical outline of this perspective, see Boli 1989, 11-19). Mary Jo Maynes concluded, for example, that the rise of mass schooling was a response to the socioeconomic and political changes that marked the western world (Maynes 1985, 5). In this context, schools were promoted, as formulated by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, «as agents for the social control of an increasingly culturally heterogeneous and poverty-stricken urban population in an increasingly unstable and threatening economic and political system» (Bowles and Gintis 2011, 231). In this line

[1] Reuss senior was one of two German principalities (the other named Reuss junior) that later merged into Thuringia.

of research, Lawrence Stone noted how schooling was promoted as a tool for protecting the upper classes against political radicalism and revolutions (Stone 1969, 137), and E. P. Thomson argued that schooling trained children in the habits that industrial work demanded (Thompson 1967, 84).

Comparative studies did, however, soon question the causal links between schooling, industrialization, and urbanization that these explanatory models presuppose. In international comparisons, the largely rural nineteenth century Sweden and Norway have been presented as arguments against such explanations. In addition, studies of regions in individual countries does not indicate that the industrialized regions led the way towards mass schooling. In the Netherlands, enrollment was instead higher in agricultural provinces such as Namur and Drenthe than in industrial provinces, and in the nineteenth century United States, enrollment was often higher in rural than in urban areas; in general, high enrollment rates preceded industrialization (Boli 1989, 27-31; Craig 1981, 178; Meyer et al. 1979).

Instead, various other lines of research have been pursued. Historians of education have remained interested in the agency of the central government. As noted by Raymond Grew and Patrick Harrigan, educational history has been marked by an inclination to study schooling through the lens of the state. In legislative narratives, still at play in the late twentieth century, schooling has been perceived as an expression of a national state, similar to national anthems, and as a result of a national school act, national curricula, and school inspectors (Grew, Harrigan, and Whitney 1983, 25-26; see also Rockwell and Roldán Vera 2013, 1-2).

From a wider international perspective, such analyses have, for example, compared the role of the state in Prussia and the United States, or observed how schools promoted a shared culture and language, and created a sense of national pride, in order to foster Italians or Frenchmen (cf. Hobsbawm 1992, 91; Herbst 2002). Among the state-oriented perspectives on the rise of mass schooling, Andy Green's state formation theory remains one of the most influential. In this perspective, school systems emerged as a response to the different needs of the nation states to create a national identity, language, and culture. Thus, intensive state formation processes may explain the rapid development of national school systems. According to Green, the rise of mass schooling has been linked to military conflicts (Prussia), revolutions (France), a struggle for independence (United States), or state-led attempts at stimulating the country's economic growth (Green 2000, 213-14).

In contrast to state-oriented perspectives, the history of education has also been marked by a long tradition of local perspectives, examining and emphasizing the role of local communities in the rise of mass schooling (see, for example, Link 1986; Kaestle 1983; Eklof 1986). Nancy Beadie has, for example, observed that the local expansion of mass schooling in the United States cannot be explained by state formation, but that emphasis instead must be placed on the agency of common households. Beadie notes that it «is hard to believe […] that the vast majority of ordinary households who scraped together the surplus goods or cash necessary to pay tuition fees for their children's schooling or to contribute to local school construction in the 1810s and

'20s, did so primarily for reasons of national unification» (Beadie 2010b, 30). I myself have, similarly, emphasized the role of local organization, politics, and funding, when explaining the rise of mass schooling (Westberg 2015a; Westberg 2017). Instead of interpreting the expansion of schooling in Sweden in terms of state formation, I have argued that this development was dependent on the organizational and political formation of Sweden's more than 2,300 parishes (Westberg 2017, 207).

The properties of the local and regional levels have also been the focus of more recent studies in economic history, that due to advanced quantitative methods are able to analyze the impact of various social, economic, demographic, and political factors. As a part of studies into regional economic development, and often as part of an interest in the development of human capital, studies have shed new light on the development of schooling in England (Goni 2013), Italy (Cappelli 2016), Spain (Beltrán Tapia and Martinez-Galarraga 2015), Prussia (Cinnirella and Hornung 2016), and the United States (Go and Lindert 2010). These quantitative studies have examined the impact of, for example, inequality in wealth and landownership, political voice, local fiscal capacity, path dependency, political reforms, and the organization of school systems, in order to map and explain regional but also national differences (regarding the latter, see, for example, Lindert 2004; Gallego 2010; Chaudhary et al. 2012).

In this strand of research, Peter Lindert's decentralization hypothesis is of particular interest. Based on international comparisons, Lindert argues that it was not the actions of central governments that determined at what rate schooling developed prior to World War I, but how decentralized school systems were in terms of funding and organization. Decentralized school services allowed the individual school districts to finance and organize school-based initiatives that, for political and practical reasons, could never have been carried out at a state level. Consequently, Lindert argues that it was not military conflicts with France that contributed to the expansion of the Prussian school system, but the Prussian school districts' ability to organize schooling by themselves (Lindert 2004, chap. 5). According to Lindert, «Prussia's early leadership in education received only a slight impetus from the central state. It was more the result of a spontaneous political will to levy local taxes in thousands of school districts» (Lindert 2004, 121).

Apart from these studies of nation states and the local and regional level of schooling, there are vital studies relating the rise of mass schooling to a level above states and nation states. Of great significance in this respect are the neoinstitutionalist conceptions of mass schooling, formulated at Stanford University by researchers including John Meyer and Francisco Ramirez. Their analysis of the international rise of mass schooling is based on the world model of the nation state (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992, 129). This Stanford school of global analysis argues that despite the fact that nation states exhibit great diversity in terms of population, wealth, and culture, they all are situated in a world environment in which they must present themselves as nation states among other nation states. Since school systems have become a core criterion for a nation state in this world model, schooling has consequently spread across the world (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992; Meyer and Ramirez 2009).

In this respect, these studies have emphasized the process of isomorphism, which is the process that makes individual units in a population resemble each other (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 149). According to Meyer and Ramirez, this process has been promoted among school systems by the development of normative models of nation states, an increasing integration of nation states in a nation state system through communication and exchange, and the professional and organizational developments of educational systems (Meyer and Ramirez 2009, 116-17). As a result, school systems were produced that bore greater resemblances to each other than what could be expected from the diverse nature of nation states, in terms of the introduction of compulsory schooling, enrollments, and curricula. According to these authors, these isomorphic processes became even more pronounced after World War II when the nation-state model continued to grow in importance worldwide (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992; Meyer and Ramirez 2009, 119; Caruso 2008, 837).

As is evident from a quick glance at the existing research on mass schooling, there are an ever-increasing number of publications that may be (at least loosely) coupled with this framework, even though they at times are critical of the neoinstitutionalist paradigm. These studies address, in various ways, how national school systems are entangled in a wide range of international and transnational processes of imitation, translation, modelling, reception, and coerced isomorphism (Caruso 2015, 25-26). These studies include investigations of educationalization; that is, how education became a solution to an ever-increasing number of social, economic, and even personal problems (Smeyers and Depaepe 2008; Tröhler 2013). From a neoinstitutionalist perspective, such studies may be said to historically examine how education and the fate of nation states have been linked together in the world model of nation states. The historical link between education and the creation of new states through constitutions has also been examined in this respect. As shown by Daniel Tröhler, constitutions were often soon followed by the issuing of school acts in, for example, France, the Helvetic Republic, Austria, and Italy (Tröhler 2016).

Equally important are studies dealing with the dissemination of educational models. As emphasized by the neoinstitutionalist framework, isomorphism and homogenization is often the result of uncertainty. When the goals of an organization are uncertain, and the methods for reaching those goals similarly so, modelling and mimicking are common responses (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 151). In this respect, studies have shown how processes of borrowing, coping, importing, appropriation, and diffusion have marked the history of schooling (see, for example, Phillips 2000; Lindmark 2006; Del Mar del Pozo Andrés 2009; Pfister 2009). These studies include important studies of the dissemination of monitorial education that reveal a homogenization of nineteenth century school practices in a global perspective, while simultaneously indicating how this truly global phenomena of the monitorial system always was practiced in local, regional, national, or continental variants (see, for example, Caruso and Roldán Vera 2005). In this respect, these studies of monitorial education highlight a tension between international, national, and local levels of analysis, that is also present in the other perspectives on mass schooling, mentioned above.

The local and the mundane in the comparative history from below

The growing international and transnational research on the history of mass schooling has in many ways transformed the research field. From having a limited national perspective, charting the emergence of schooling in individual countries, the international context of schooling has become a self-evident dimension of research. When investigations into schooling in one country are presented, references are almost by necessity made to schooling in other countries, at the least in the introductory chapter or section. When international processes and organizations have played a part in the history that is examined, this role is most often noticed.

As indicated by the growth of the research field and the multiplication of concepts such as transnational history, global history, and interconnected histories, there is still great potential for investigations that transcend national borders. In order to present my proposal for future research, I will use the distinctions made by Marcelo Caruso when discussing the internationalization of educational practices. In this context, Caruso distinguished between internationalization taking place *between* nation states, and internationalization taking place *above* nation states through international organizations and meetings (Caruso 2014). My suggestion, mainly inspired by studies in social history, economic history, and historical studies addressing the local history of schooling, is that we should continue to develop what I choose to call a comparative history from *below*. The three stand-out features of such a perspective (a focus on local and regional levels; a shift in topics; specific analytical purposes) is presented below.

Firstly, a comparative history from below focuses on the local and regional levels that are below the national, international, and supranational levels. In line with social historians and transnational historians, such a perspective questions the use of national frameworks in order to understand schooling, and instead examines entities such as school districts, municipalities, zemstvos, counties, or *départements*. Instead of studying the international history of schooling from the viewpoint of either international organizations, journals, and conferences, or national politics, national school acts, national curricula, and state school inspectors, such a perspective from below examines the international rise of mass schooling from the viewpoint of local school politics, school boards, municipal councils, teachers, children, and classrooms. What I propose is, in other words, to study the international rise of mass schooling from a comparative perspective on local and regional phenomena.

The local and regional history of schooling is fundamental since local and regional variations were a defining feature of nineteenth century school systems, as shown in a previous section. Referring to the English case, W. B. Stephens even claimed that it was difficult to talk about national conditions before 1870 (Stephens 1987, 2). There is, consequently, a great need for putting a stronger emphasis on the local and regional level in the international history of schooling: if it is difficult to talk about national conditions, it surely is important to examine regional and local levels.

Local and regional histories of schooling are also important since nineteenth century schooling was, as mentioned above, often largely funded and organized at the

local level in Europe and North America. The decisions taken by local school districts were consequently of vital importance compared to national political debate in parliament or press, or the processes of isomorphism, borrowing, and lending on an international level. There are also good reasons to assume that local studies may produce results that differ from studies of the national or international level, with respect to, for example, the arguments for schooling. Neither rhetoric about nation building, nor discourses on social control, seem to have been as important on the local level as in national politics (Beadie 2010b; Westberg 2017, chap. 2). As a result, the need for further studies of the political economy of schooling, and in particular the local decision-making process, has already been noted (Go and Lindert 2010).

Furthermore, the nineteenth century was marked by a long distance between what politicians aspired to, and what they achieved. School acts are an example of this fact. While the issuing of school acts certainly was linked to processes of state formation, school acts did not necessarily imply that a functioning school system was established. The nineteenth century school acts of Finland and Turkey are excellent examples of this gap between policy and reality, and how state formation may have affected school policy while having a lesser impact on the practices of schooling. In Finland, ruled by the Russian Empire, the school act of 1866 was, in part, the result of Russia's loss in the Crimean War of 1853-1856. Similarly, the Regulations of General Education of 1869 in Turkey was a result of the previous defeats suffered by the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, neither Finland nor Turkey experienced significant growth of enrollment rates during the nineteenth century (Westberg et al. 2018).

Secondly, other topics will be addressed due to the shift of perspective that a comparative history from below implies. Studies addressing education and state formation, world models of the nation state, and processes of transfer, dissemination, and borrowing have tended to place their emphasis on the policies, ideas, discourses, and languages of schooling. These are, obviously, vital topics that require examination. By focusing on the realities of schooling on a local and regional level, however, the object of the comparative analysis will inevitably widen to include issues of local school politics, local taxation, teacher salaries, absenteeism, teachers' social status, and the content and form of the teaching actually performed in classrooms.

Consequently, the character of the research topics changes almost by default. By tending to local and regional levels, the investigations will cover the less famous and less successful individuals, the less well-formulated ideas, and events that neither by contemporaries nor by posterity have been deemed worth remembering. Instead, the researcher will investigate common people, their common ideas, common schools, common teachers, and common school buildings. Although such a comparative history from below does not necessarily highlight the history of the poor, the oppressed, or the marginalized—topics stressed in the social history from below—it would be a history that focuses on the ordinary people, the mundane practices, and the everyday history of schooling. In this respect, such studies would examine what, using a phrase from Paul Veyne, may be called the "non-eventworthy history" of education (Veyne 1984, 216, 220). Rather than the likes of Pestalozzi, Froebel, or Rousseau, the inves-

tigations will address low-salaried teachers; moderately qualified school board members; parents including the poor, the workers, the shop owners, and the farmers; and the instruction of often-absent schoolchildren in buildings not only (or even mainly) designed to fit the needs of children. In this respect, this study would also certainly entail what Eric Hobsbawm calls "grassroots history" (Hobsbawm 1988, 13).

There are certainly inspiring studies that have dealt with such phenomena from an international perspective. These include Lindert's investigations of nineteenth century local school organization that led him to stress the importance of local organizational and financial powers in the rise of mass schooling (Lindert 2004, chap. 5; see also Go and Lindert 2010), and Mary Jo Maynes's impressive comparative study of schooling in a French and a German region (Maynes 1985) that addresses issues such as local school politics and family economy. Another study in this strand of research is Bruce Curtis's quite original article on resistance to public education in England, Ireland, and Canada West (present day Ontario). Without any further reflections over the comparative perspective utilized in his study, Curtis shows how local resistance to state sanctioned schooling was an international phenomenon affected by local conditions, such as the religious conflicts in Ireland (Curtis 1988).

The topics that deserve further study from the comparative perspective presented above include the feminization of teaching during the nineteenth century. Although this fundamental pattern was seen in country after country, the process had varying paces and features, which raises several questions regarding the role of factors such as economic conditions, laws, religions, traditions, and so forth. As James Albisetti has shown in his international overview, the feminization of the teacher profession could consist of the reduced number of male teachers, as in Italy in 1863–1907, or in a in an increase in both male and female teachers. In England 1875–1914, the 292 percent rise in male teachers was surpassed only by a staggering 800 percent increase in female teachers (Albisetti 1993, 256). Similarly, the effect of salary levels, the introduction of certification for women teachers, and marriage bans seem to have varied not only across countries but also across regions. Such a complex history would certainly benefit from a comparative history from below, investigating the history of everyday female teachers on a local and regional level.

The purposes of the comparative history from below

In addition to addressing the local, regional and mundane history of education, comparative history from below have, thirdly, particular analytical purposes. As may be evident from above, the main aim of such studies is not to determine the impact of transnational contacts. The focus is not on how phenomena are transferred between societies or cultures, which transfer studies in a broad sense has addressed, or the reciprocity of such interactions examined by researchers in the tradition of *histoire croisée* (Werner and Zimmermann 2006; Collins and Allender 2013). Instead, following the logic of comparative history (Sewell 2005), comparative histories from below are in-

tended to examine international patterns of similarities and differences with regard to local and regional phenomena.

A fundamental purpose of these studies is to determine to what extent the phenomena under study were unique to a region, or if they were part of a more general development. As Marc Bloch remarked, one cannot understand the development in a French region without studying the development in France, but also in Europe (Sewell 2005, 2010). Such investigations may have different aims. In cases where narratives of national, regional, or local idiosyncrasies are dominant, these comparisons may be used to question such narratives. An example of this is the assumption that the decentralized bottom-up character of nineteenth century US public education was unique in the western world (see, for example, Link 1986, 4). The international studies of Lindert (2004) have thereafter questioned this thesis but further comparative studies of local school organizations termed school districts, townships, municipalities, and zemstvos are still required. Although it is, for example, evident that local level funding matters, the similarities and differences between these local governing bodies (in terms of organization, political and economic culture, funding etc.) remain obscure.

Such comparisons may also be used to nuance descriptions of general patterns. The design of school buildings has, for example, been studied from an international perspective, examining how school design has been disseminated, borrowed, and received (see, for example, Godinho Lima 2005; Burke and Grosvenor 2008). In the Swedish case, both English and French school buildings were used as reference points, and US school buildings were perceived as exemplary (Westberg 2015b). In this context, the role of world exhibitions in such diffusion processes has also been analyzed (Lundahl and Lawn 2015).

From the point of view of these processes between or above nation states, the national, regional, and local differences in school building design is obvious, since it is often discussed in the sources created on those levels. From such a perspective, it is, however, more difficult to identify the differences in the school building process. As a result, researchers have noted that, in contrast to school design, «the actual process of building a school followed a general pattern» (Burke and Grosvenor 2008, 55). In such cases, a comparative history from below may be able to indicate significant local, regional, and national patterns in the use of architects and professional building workers, and the use of day work, piecework, and contract work in organizing the building process (cf. Westberg 2015a).

Another example in which comparative studies from below may address assumptions of general patterns is the case of monetary taxation in the rise of mass schooling. The main narrative here has been that the rise of mass schooling was built on taxation in monies. Researchers have claimed that public education was built on "dollars and cents" (Gidney and Millar 2012, 151) and have explained the low levels of school enrollment in Latin American countries by an inability to fund schooling with tax money (Lindert 2010).

A comparative history from below will map the extent to which such assumptions hold, when studying local school systems in several countries. Further studies are ob-

viously required, but my own research has shown that schooling in rural nineteenth century Sweden was not built on monies alone. In addition to cash, teachers' minimum salary in Sweden contained eight barrels of grain, suitable housing, fuel, summer grazing and cow fodder. Consequently, an estimated 68 percent of the minimum salary was in kind. In-kind items were consequently a vital part of the school districts' economy. Judging from source materials from 11 school districts, an average of 61 percent of the districts' total operational expenditure was in kind from 1850 to 1854 (Westberg 2017, 92-94).

Although restricted, my research review into this matter indicates that rural Sweden was not unique, but that non-monetary funding was widespread in the nineteenth century (Table 1). Using local sources, studies have shown that teachers were remunerated with grains and pork in the United States, milk and butter in France, grains in Russia, and turf, butter, eggs, and meat in Ireland. Although further studies are required, international comparisons do, in this case, indicate that measuring money inputs is insufficient, suggesting that nineteenth century schooling was not built on monies alone.

Table 1. In-kind elements in nineteenth century teacher salaries.

Country	**Items mentioned in research literature**	**Period**
Denmark	Housing, cow fodder, fuel, grains	1810s
France	Milk, butter, eggs, grain, wine, pork	1850s
Germany	Wheat, firewood, housing, loaf of bread, land plot, wine, meat	Late 18th century
Ireland	Turf, butter, eggs, meat	1820s
Russia	Grains	1860s, 1870s
Scotland	Housing, garden, fuel, cow's grass, garden	1840s
Spain	Housing, food, a plot of land	19th century
Sweden	Housing, grains, fuel, cow fodder, land plot	1840s
Switzerland	Grains, wine, firewood, land plot, bread etc.	1790s
USA	Grains, pork, firewood, boarding	1810s, 1820s

Sources: Nørr 1981, 98; Day 1983, 38-39; Maynes 1979, 616; Dowling 1968, 83; Eklof 1986, 261; Young 2016, 71; Beltrán Tapia 2013, 499; Beltrán Tapia and Martinez-Galarraga 2015, 7; Westberg 2017, 94; Brühwiler 2012, 73; Beadie 2010a, 143.

In addition to providing analyses of similarities and differences, comparative histories from below have the potential to formulate and test hypotheses. Using a quantitative approach, data can be amassed on local and regional levels to put various hypotheses under scrutiny. An example of this is Lindert's above mentioned claim that a decentralized organization of national school systems generally stimulated the rise of mass schooling, since decisions on increased educational expenditure were possible to make on the local level that could not be made on a national level (Lindert 2004,

105). Lindert argues that the cases of France (where decentralization allowed the northeast regions of the country to spearhead the expansion of schooling), the United States (where the decentralized setting allowed the northern states to push ahead), and Prussia are examples that support this argument. Similarly, the Swedish case may be used as an example of the blessings of decentralization. Although the Swedish parliament was not prepared to allow the central government to fund a national school system (for the debate the preceded the school act of 1842, see Westberg 2011), the decentralized character of the school system enabled the local school districts in the resource rich areas in the south of Sweden to establish schools and abandon the previous system of home instruction (see Figure 2).

There is, however, evidence that may lead to a reformulation of Lindert's hypothesis. In Italy, marked by extensive regional differences, some areas fell into what Gabriele Cappelli calls a human capital trap: poor rural areas did not have the resources to fund an expansion of schooling, which in turn hampered the economic development of the area (Cappelli 2015, 49). On the basis of such findings, Cappelli formulates an, hitherto largely unexplored, hypothesis that school systems marked by significant regional differences may, at a later stage, benefit from centralization that stimulates the development of schooling in poor and rural areas (Cappelli 2015, 63). However, to investigate such a hypothesis requires further comparative studies of regional differences in several countries.

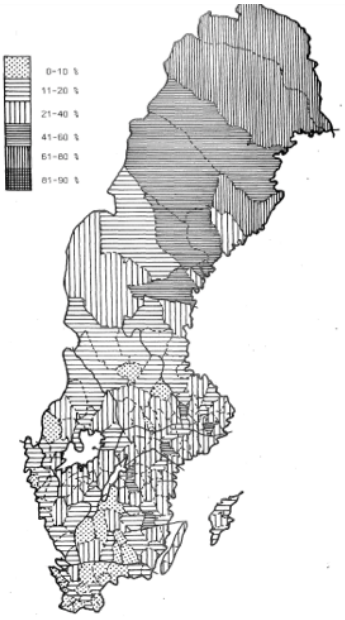

Figure 2. The share of school-aged children receiving household instruction (instead of schooling) in 1862 in Sweden. *Source:* Schelin 1978, 394.

In addition to quantitative studies, comparative histories from below allow for local case studies of so-called *contingencies*. This concept describes a research practice among historians, not focused on establishing mono-causal links, but instead making contextual explanations that emphasize «complexity, eventfulness, and causal heterogeneity» (Sewell 2005, 280; cf. Foucault 2000). Such studies are not investigations of general causal links, but are instead intended to examine specific historical sequences. Despite the fact that the expansion of schooling is marked by general patterns, each example of this pattern is unique to a certain extent (cf. Sewell 2005, 280). These unique features also mean, as will be evident below, that comparative studies of individual cases of schooling can enable us to question or formulate new hypotheses about the general mechanisms of the rise of mass schooling.

An illustration of the possibilities of such an approach are the process of school building. This process was, as my studies have shown, highly adapted to the local context, and deeply dependent on the social, economic, and cultural context of the local community. In the nineteenth century, it certainly took a village not only to raise a child, but also to build a school. In the Sundsvall region, located in northern Sweden, school buildings presupposed a developing market economy, a modernized credit market, a liberalization of the real property market, and not the least, school districts that had the rights, the ability, and the legitimacy to collect school taxes in monies and in-kind goods (Westberg 2014a; Westberg 2015a).

Such a case study raises questions that can be studied from a comparative perspective using qualitative and quantitative methods. My study of school building above indicates, for example, the vital role of the credit market in the expansion of schooling. In the Sundsvall region, as much as 52 percent of the monetary costs of school building projects was covered by loans either from individuals, church funds, parish granaries, or banks (Westberg 2015a, 434). This fact obviously raises questions regarding the role of school districts' ability to raise loans in the expansion of mass schooling. We know that the credit market was important to the process of nineteenth century industrialization (Magnusson 2000, 115-17), but to what extent did nineteenth century school systems rely on loans? A review of existing research suggests that this might be a fruitful question, as local school districts used the credit market to fund their expanding school systems in various parts of the world. Bonds and bank loans played a role when building schools in the United States and Canada (Fuller 1982, 65; Gidney and Millar 2012, 153). In the Dutch Republic the investment society of the king lent money to the construction of school buildings; in Italy there were interest-free loans for school building, and in England government loans were supplied for new schools (Gijlswijk 2016, 371; Cappelli 2015, 54; Morris 2003, 44)[2].

Apart from addressing the role of the credit market, such investigations could ex-

[2] It should, however, be noted that such qualitative case studies are not intended to provide causal explanations in a strict sense. Instead, such empirical research is intended to formulate, test, and retest hypotheses until explanations that appear convincing and correct are achieved (cf. Sewell 1967, 209).

amine the role of non-monetary resources in the rise of mass schooling. Judging from existing studies, non-monetary resources seem to have promoted the rise of mass schooling, at least in an early phase. My local case study of Swedish school districts has shown that such resources lowered the monetary expenditure on schooling while enabling the school districts to adapt their expenditure to the local economy and the wishes of individuals and groups (Westberg 2017, 163-64).

Published international comparisons seem to confirm these roles of non-monetary resources. Mary Jo Maynes's comparison between the German territory of Baden and the French department of Vaucluse has, for example, shown that the use of traditional non-monetary resources in Baden facilitated the creation of schools and the remuneration of teachers, while the early monetarization of school funding in Vaucluse hampered the development of schooling in that region (Maynes 1979, 622). Similarly, the reliance on monetary funding created difficulties in some US and Canadian regions during periods of recession, when the cash shortage disabled school districts from remunerating teachers and procuring firewood and building materials (Gidney and Millar 2012, 184; Link 1986, 127). There is, on the contrary, evidence from Spain indicating that the existence of common lands, which for example could provide teachers with a land plot, promoted schooling (Beltrán Tapia 2013, 499), and examples from Russia where teachers were paid in grains to reduce monetary expenditure (Eklof 1986, 261). Such observations remain, however, only an introduction to such a comparative history of school finance from below.

In conclusion

In this article, I have given a short presentation of the rise of mass schooling in Europe and North America, and the main international perspectives on this development. Against the background of this research, I have thereafter discussed how investigations into nineteenth century schooling may be developed in the direction of a comparative history from below. Such a perspective, as outlined in this article, would address the regional and local levels, investigating the international history of schooling from below, focusing on the ordinary and mundane history of teacher salaries, school buildings, local school politics, and school taxes. Where an inaccurate generalization of local phenomena exists, a comparative history from below might highlight local and regional variations, and where merely local analyses have been conducted, a comparative history from below provides analyses of more general patterns. These studies may include both quantitative studies of correlations on the local and regional levels, as well as qualitative studies of so-called contingencies. Regardless, such a comparative history from below is a well-needed complement to the comparative analyses of national politics or transnational studies of policies, ideas, discourses, or languages of schooling.

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