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Entanglement and Transnational Transfer in the History of Infant Schools in Great Britain and *Salles d'Asile* in France, 1816 - 1881

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Abstract

The historical developments of infant schools in Great Britain and *salles d'asile* in France—both precursors of present-day preschools—were interconnected. However, historians have not yet analysed specifically how transnational exchange influenced the growth and nature of these institutions. Drawing on archival data and secondary sources, and using a combined comparative and transnational approach, this study aims to remedy this omission. It traces the evolutions of British infant schools and French *salles d'asile* from their beginnings to their affiliation with the education systems in their respective countries—i.e. from 1816, when Robert Owen founded the first infant school in Britain, to 1881, when the *salle d'asile* was incorporated as an integral part of the French education system (renamed *école maternelle*). The study also shows how ideas about infant education and the motives and experiences of educators and social reformers spread across British borders and influenced the development of *salles d'asile*.

Keywords: education; childhood; infant schools; comparative-historical and transnational analysis; Great Britain and France.

Introduction

Beginning in 1816, infant schools emerged in different parts of Great Britain. They provided education and protection for children from working-class families below the age of school enrollment. Ten years later, the first *salle d'asile* was set up in France, an institution which fulfilled virtually the same functions as infant schools in Britain. This study examines whether British infant schools had served as models for the creation of *salles d'asile* in France. As Britain

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and France share a similar industrial past, scholars have studied them in tandem on other related topics (e.g., with regard to public schools and cultural relations).¹ But whether their respective infant education movements were interconnected remains underexplored. The present study addresses this question. It analyses the origins and historical trajectories of 19th-century infant schools in Britain and considers whether the motives and pedagogical ideas of British educators and social reformers influenced the evolution and character of *salles d'asile* in France. The period under review is from 1816 to 1881. This is the period of growth of infant education from the inception of the first private institutions (1816 in Britain and 1826 in France) to their incorporation into the public education system (1871 and 1881, respectively).² As this paper will show, the *salles d'asile* in France evolved within transnational context, British infant schools being their precursors and inspiring examples. Cross-border transfer of information laid the foundation for the establishment of *salles d'asile*. However, sponsors, staff, and supervisors of *salles d'asile* did not always approve of the educational concepts that had been developed across the Channel. As a consequence, individual *salles d'asile* developed both transnational and regional character, depending on the convictions and attitudes of key decision makers and personnel of *salles d'asile*, among other factors.

Method

The study relies on a combined comparative and transnational historical approach. While the comparative approach attempts to isolate the historical developments in each country to capture their specificities relative to each other, the transnational approach is used to study intersocietal relations, transfer, and influences between Britain and France.³ In particular, the comparative approach serves to analyse the historical developments of infant education with regard to equivalences and discrepancies in the two countries' experiences.⁴ However, to treat the historical developments in each country as autonomous is to ignore the connections between them. The *salles d'asile* might not have been invented if the infant schools across the Channel had not set an example for them. For instance, elements of an infant school pedagogy developed in Britain were imported to France when infant school manuals were translated into French. For this reason, the study adopts a transnational approach in addition to the comparative approach to

¹ Félix Narjoux, *Les Écoles Publiques en France et en Angleterre: Construction et Installation* (Paris: V.A. Morel et Cie., 1877); Ceri Crossley and Ian Small, eds., *Studies in Anglo-French Cultural Relations: Imagining France* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).

² Jill Shefrin, 'Adapted for and Used in Infants' Schools, Nurseries, &c.': Booksellers and the Infant School Market', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 163-80; Eric Plaisance and Sylvia Rayna, 'Early Childhood Schooling and Socialization at French Nursery School', *Prospects* XXXIV, no. 4 (2004): 436.

³ Micol Seigel, 'Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn', *Radical History Review* 91 (2005): 62-90; Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, eds., *Transferts. Les Relations Interculturelles dans l'Espace Franco-Allemand, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988); Pernilla Jonsson and Silke Neunsinger, 'Comparison and Transfer – A Fruitful Approach to National History?', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 32, no. 3 (2007): 258-80.

⁴ Christel Adick, *Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008).

look at developments that spill over British borders to France.⁵ Specifically, the transnational approach focuses on the migrations of infant education advocates, social reformers, and pedagogical concepts across national boundaries, as well as on the connections between *infant schools* in Britain and *salles d'asile* in France.

Comparative and transnational approaches are compatible and can be used to complement each other. While the comparative approach can show that infant schools and *salles d'asile* are distinctive in some respects, the transnational approach examines the extent to which these institutions are interrelated and share a common history. The transnational approach thus helps explain why Britain and France converged or diverged with regard to particular developments in infant education.⁶

Review of the literature

Previous research has analysed a number of questions relating to 19th-century infant education mostly in nation-specific contexts.⁷ Historical studies about early childhood education in Great Britain have considered the type of care and education offered to children of pauper and working classes in Owen's community in New Lanark, Scotland;⁸ examined traditions and policies of early childhood education formed in several European countries in the wake of Owen's creation of the first infant school; and focused on the founding of infant schools in London.⁹ They have reconstructed how an infant school system was created in Britain after the founding of the infant school in Westminster under the guidance of Samuel Wilderspin, who was first an infant teacher, then superintendent of the London Infant School Society, and later the director of the Society of Infant Schools, an association which aimed to establish infant schools across Britain.¹⁰ In addition, research has highlighted how pioneers of teacher training contributed to the dissemination of pedagogical ideas on infant education across Britain.¹¹

In France, scholars have analysed the objectives, the gradual professionalisation, and the increasing expansion of *salles d'asile*¹² as well as their character as precursors of the *école*

⁵ Cf. Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, 'Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History', in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, ed. H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 1-32.

⁶ Ian Tyrrell, 'Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice', *Journal of Global History* 4, no. 3 (2009): 453-74; Mark B. Ginsburg, 'The Limitations and Possibilities of Comparative Analysis of Education in Global Context', in *Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft. Herausforderung – Vermittlung – Praxis*, ed. C. Kodron et al. (Frankfurt: Böhlau, 1997), 46-51.

⁷ Cf. Kirsten Scheiwe and Harry Willekens, eds., *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave, 2009).

⁸ Helen L. Carlson, 'Care and Education of Young Children of Pauper and Working Classes: New Lanark, Scotland, 1790-1825', *Paedagogica Historica* 28, no. 1 (1992): 8-34.

⁹ Jeffrey G. Machin, 'The Westminster Free Day Infant Asylum: The Origins of the First English Infant School', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 20, no. 2 (1988): 43-56.

¹⁰ W. P. McCann, 'Samuel Wilderspin and the Early Infant Schools', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 14, no. 2 (1966): 188-204; Sheldon H. White and Stephen L. Buka, 'Early Education: Programs, Traditions, and Policies', *Review of Research in Education* 14 (1987): 47.

¹¹ E.g., Marjorie Cruickshank, 'David Stow, Scottish Pioneer of Teacher Training in Britain', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 14, no. 2 (1966): 205-15.

¹² Jean-Noël Luc, *L'Invention du Jeune Enfant au XIXe Siècle. De la Salle d'Asile à l'École Maternelle* (Paris: Belin, 1997); M.L. Caron, *De la Salle d'Asile à l'École Maternelle* (Besançon: CRDP, 1982).

maternelle.¹³ They have explored the pedagogy of play¹⁴ and the didactics utilised in *salles d'asile*.¹⁵ In addition, the history of individual institutions in particular places has been examined as well as the history of the schooling of young children in general.¹⁶

But research has not only looked at historical developments within countries. Another type of research has focused on international links between educational institutions for young children, considering how endeavours to promote early childhood education emerged in one country and were taken up in other countries; how ideas about early education were shared between countries at the same stage of implementation; and how these ideas were changed and adapted in new contexts. For instance, one account shows how British and American early childhood professionals formed an 'Anglo-American kindergarten network' of informal but persistent personal and professional ties.¹⁷ Other research explored the process by which elements of Friedrich Froebel's kindergarten pedagogy—which emphasises education through games and play activities as well as first-hand experience with materials and natural objects¹⁸—became transmuted when taken over by London's infant schools¹⁹ and Swedish preschools²⁰, and how pedagogical concepts from the English infant school appeared and took root in Hungary when a translation of Wilderspin's book 'On the importance of educating the infant poor' was published there.²¹ Research has also looked at younger children—from birth to about three years of age—and how the institution of the *crèche* originated in France and was adopted by Americans.²²

However, so far, no study has focused specifically on the transnational connections between early childhood education in Britain and France. The present study therefore traces significant relationships in infant education between these countries, examining the intertwined histories of infant education and, in particular, the influence of transnational exchange on the spread and character of *salles d'asile* in France.

Infant schools: The historical beginnings of early childhood education in Britain

In Britain, the ills of industrialisation ranked among the major catalysts for the creation of infant schools. In the 18th century, industry—including manufacturing, mining, and building—expanded

¹³ Frédéric Dajez, *Les Origines de l'École Maternelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1994).

¹⁴ Gilles Brougère, *Jeu et Éducation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 129-44.

¹⁵ Bruno Klein, 'La Leçon de Choses selon Marie Pape-Carpantier', *Recherches en Education*, no. 8 (2010): 145-54.

¹⁶ Jean-Noël Luc, "'Je suis petit mais important": La scolarisation des jeunes enfants en France du XIX^e siècle à nos jours', *Carrefours de l'éducation* 2, no. 30 (2010): 9-22.

¹⁷ Kristen Nawrotzki, "'Like Sending Coals to Newcastle:" Impressions From and of the Anglo-American Kindergarten Movements', *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007): 227.

¹⁸ Jean-Noël Luc, 'Salle d'Asile contre Jardin d'Enfants. Les Vicissitudes de la Méthode Fröbel en France, 1855-1887', *Paedagogica Historica* 29, no. 2 (1993): 433-58.

¹⁹ Jane Read, 'Free Play with Froebel: Use and Abuse of Progressive Pedagogy in London's Infant Schools, 1870 - c. 1904', *Paedagogica Historica* 42, no. 3 (2006): 299-323.

²⁰ Johannes Fredriksson, 'A Changing Concept of Childhood? The Introduction of Froebelian Practices into Swedish Pre-Schools' (paper presented at the Second Biennial Conference of the International Froebel Society, Dublin, June 29-30, 2006).

²¹ Otto Vag, 'The Influence of the English Infant School in Hungary', *International Journal of Early Childhood* 7, no. 1 (1975): 132-36.

²² Kaspar Burger, 'A Social History of Ideas pertaining to Childcare in France and in the United States', *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 4 (2012): 1005-25.

relative to other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and the service sector, and many factories and industrial towns sprang up (figure 1).²³ The formation of the factory system brought about a growing need for labor in large centralised establishments. The introduction of coke furnaces to smelt iron ore and silk factories in the early 18th century resulted in the employment of women and children as cheap industrial labor, a practice which continued for more than a century in an increasing number of towns.²⁴ Over the course of industrialisation, differences among social strata widened and social inequalities increased. Frequently, parents employed in factories had to work long hours for low pay, so that it became difficult for them to take care of their children appropriately. In addition, as factories began to utilise child labor, a growing need for protection of children emerged. Into the breach came infant schools, providing large-scale education and protection for young children.²⁵

Owenite infant schools

Robert Owen—entrepreneur, reformer and ‘social visionary’²⁶—opened the first infant school within his ‘Institution for the Formation of Character’ in New Lanark, Scotland, in 1816 (see figure 2).²⁷ Owen’s infant school marked the beginning of a movement which arose from a desire to rescue young children of the lower classes from the squalor thought to result from industrialisation and accompanying societal and familial changes. Soon, Owen’s idea of creating an educational institution for children from labouring-class families below the age of school enrollment would spread to other parts of Britain and later to France, where similar institutions were established by social reformers, philanthropists, and later, education authorities.

In 1800, Owen had become the managing director of his father-in-law’s cotton mill in New Lanark. Realising that the children and families employed in the mills experienced very poor housing and that they had little access to education, he attempted to turn New Lanark into an experimental utopian community (see figure 3).²⁸ Owen envisioned a social order based on a rational system of education and cooperation rather than competition, and he tried to humanise the factory system by mitigating its negative consequences for the health and welfare of the working class. The ‘new moral world’ he intended to create (and about which he wrote an eponymous book) abolished the employment of children in the cotton mills so that children ages two to ten could acquire health and education at school while their parents worked in the mills. However, the idea of protecting and educating young children did not originate exclusively from a purely charitable impulse and compassion for children from working-class families. Owen also

²³ Charles More, *Understanding the Industrial Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3-4.

²⁴ Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Frédérique Leprince, ‘Day Care for Young Children in France’, in *Day Care for Young Children: International Perspectives*, ed. Edward C. Melhuish and Peter Moss (London: Routledge, 1991), 10-26.

²⁵ Shefrin, ‘Adapted for and Used’, 167.

²⁶ Ian Donnachie, *Robert Owen: Social Visionary*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005).

²⁷ Earlier, undocumented infant schools might have existed. However, the idea of establishing specially equipped schools for young children only began to take root in Scotland when Robert Owen had launched his experiment at New Lanark, cf. W.A.C. Stewart and W.P. McCann, *The Educational Innovators, 1750-1880* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1967), 242.

²⁸ Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

saw the connection between early education and preparation for a specific job—including factory work. His affinity for efficiency and utilitarianism gave rise to large class sizes. For this reason, historians have characterised his infant school not only as a communitarian experiment but also as a factory-like establishment.²⁹ However, Owenite pedagogy did not necessarily reflect this utility-oriented philosophy.

Owenite pedagogy. Owen’s infant school pedagogy was in part influenced by the method of the Swiss pedagogue Pestalozzi,³⁰ who triggered an educational movement in several European countries (including Britain and France) which had led to a reorganisation of schools and supplied many educators with new methods of teaching. One of the most famous Pestalozzian principles of pedagogy was the principle of ‘learning by head, hand, and heart’.³¹ Children were supposed to learn during natural conversations, without coercion, guided by their curiosity and questions in a stimulating environment. Owenite pedagogy was not a straightforward imitation of the Pestalozzian approach, but it borrowed particular pedagogical concepts from Pestalozzi. Jill Shefrin noted that it marked the first instance of ‘pictures and play...as part of a conscious educational philosophy’³² with poor children. Robert Dale Owen, Robert Owen’s son, described what this pedagogy looked like in practice: ‘No attempt was made to teach them reading or writing, not even their letters; nor had they any set lessons at all....They were trained to habits of order and cleanliness; they were taught to abstain from quarrels, to be kind to each other. They were amused with childish games, and with stories suited to their capacity’.³³ For this purpose, a room was ‘furnished with paintings, chiefly of animals, and a few maps. It was also supplied with natural objects from the gardens, fields, and woods. These suggested themes for conversation, and brief familiar lectures; but there was nothing formal, no tasks to be learned, no readings from books’.³⁴ Overall, Owenite infant school pedagogy, such as it was, favored morals and interpersonal skills over academic learning or practical exercises that would prepare children for work. However, the nature of the morals to be conveyed was an open question in 1830s infant schools. While evangelicals such as the members of the Home and Colonial Infant School Society favored a Christian perspective, others preferred a non-denominational approach to early education. For example, Samuel Wilderspin, who played a central role in the infant school movement, saw moral education largely in secular terms.³⁵

Samuel Wilderspin and the infant schools’ moralising function

²⁹ Ibid., 18.

³⁰ David Crook, ‘L’Éducation Collective des Jeunes Enfants en Grande-Bretagne: Une Perspective Historique’, *Histoire de l’Éducation* 82 (1999), 23-42.

³¹ Arthur Brühlmeier, *Head, Heart, and Hand: Education in the Spirit of Pestalozzi* (Cambridge: Sophia Books, 2010).

³² Shefrin, ‘Adapted for and Used’, 180.

³³ Robert Dale Owen, *Twenty-Seven Years of Autobiography: Threading my Way* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1874), 114.

³⁴ Ibid., 114.

³⁵ Phillip McCann and Francis A. Young, *Samuel Wilderspin and the Infant School Movement* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1982), 197.

A few years after the inception of Owen's school at New Lanark, a number of liberals and nonconformists began to found infant schools in the poorest urban areas of Britain. On July 16, 1824 the Anglican bishop of Chester organised a congregation in London, in the course of which he founded the Society of Infant Schools, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of the new institution across the country. Samuel Wilderspin, who became the director of the Society, 'enjoyed a great reputation in his own lifetime as the self-styled originator of the Infant School System and the founder of a countrywide network of infant schools'.³⁶ He wrote some of the first and most widely circulated monographs on infant education and his Society helped found approximately 200 new infant schools. By the time of Wilderspin's retirement in 1847, over 2,000 infant schools had been established and infant education was a relatively well-known element of British society.

Wilderspin was backed by politicians and public figures, including Lord Henry Brougham, M.P., a 'political radical'³⁷ whose objectives and social philosophy differed from the goals that Owen sought to pursue with the infant school. Owen, 'like Plato and the makers of dream worlds in the past ... saw that an ideal society could be created only by capturing the youth and training it in the way it should go'.³⁸ Wilderspin and his supporters, on the other hand, were concerned not so much with transforming the social system and creating an ideal society as with solving problems that threatened social stability in the present.³⁹ During the early years of enthusiasm for infant education, the crime rate either increased or was perceived to have increased because crimes and criminals were increasingly subject to classification and reporting.⁴⁰ Historian A. F. B. Roberts paints an evocative picture: 'Shops, pockets, windows were not safe from the urchins who swarmed the city streets, free of any religious or even parental influence, as mothers increasingly joined their husbands and older children in the factories'.⁴¹ The opening sentence of Wilderspin's book on infant education also explicitly concerned crime rather than education: 'It has long been a subject of deep regret to many pious and well disposed that, notwithstanding the numerous charitable institutions which abound in this country, our prisons should still remain crowded'.⁴² Brougham, for his part, observed that 'the moral discipline was the great consideration' in educating the infant poor.⁴³ He corroborated the views of Quaker Thomas Pole—one of the first writers on infant schools besides Wilderspin—who stated that the new schools were to be concerned with the cultivation of children's morals, the promotion of 'social harmony, [...] becoming manners and due subordination'.⁴⁴ To infant school advocates such as

³⁶ McCann, 'Samuel Wilderspin', 188.

³⁷ Ilse Forest, *Preschool Education: A Historical and Critical Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 48.

³⁸ Rowland H. Harvey, *Robert Owen: Social Idealist* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1949), 36.

³⁹ Stewart and McCann, *The Educational Innovators*, 244.

⁴⁰ Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, 178; Heather Shore, 'Crime, Policing and Punishment', in *A Companion to Nineteenth-century Britain*, ed. C. Williams (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 381-95.

⁴¹ A. F. B. Roberts, 'A New View of the Infant School Movement', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 20, no. 2 (1972): 155.

⁴² Samuel Wilderspin, *On the Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, 2nd ed. (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1824), 13.

⁴³ In Stewart and McCann, *The Educational Innovators*, 242.

⁴⁴ Thomas Pole, *Observations Relative to Infant Schools, designed to point out their Usefulness to the Children of the Poor, to their Parents, and to Society at large* (Bristol: D. G. Goyder, 1823), 22.

Wilderspin, Brougham, Pole, and their ilk, existing civilising means seemed insufficient to prevent crime and guarantee social order. They reasoned that the severity of the problem called for new, unconventional solutions such as infant education. Thus, many infant schools began to devote themselves to disciplining children from poor families by teaching the principles of middle class morality, and they sought to combat tendencies toward disorder which threatened good order in civil society. Although it would be inaccurate to state that all philanthropic undertakings related to infant schools were hypocritical or paternalistic, the creation of these new schools was at least partially a response by the propertied classes to lower-class criminality.⁴⁵

Wilderspinian pedagogy. Wilderspin's conception of infant school pedagogy differed from Owenite pedagogy. While Owen emphasised informal learning as well as the interests of the group, Wilderspinian pedagogy consisted of more 'mechanical methods of teaching'⁴⁶ and of systematic but judicious attempts to discipline the children. In a book entitled 'Early discipline', Wilderspin declared: 'The mind must be enlightened and disciplined; and if this be neglected, the man rises but little in character above the beasts that perish, and is wholly unprepared for that state to which he ought to have aspired'.⁴⁷ This conviction corresponded to Wilderspin's idea of using infant schools as a means of social rehabilitation. He stressed the usefulness of strict enforcement of morals: 'If habits of forced obedience and regularity can do something for the amelioration of corrupt character even in mature life, what might not a system of gentle and benevolent coercion have effected in infancy?'⁴⁸ Consequently, Wilderspinian pedagogy encompassed rigorous measures which were supposed to transform the character of the individual child as necessary and to prevent delinquency on a larger scale.

The main purposes of infant schools

On the whole, whatever the pedagogy in individual institutions, the infant schools that emerged in the wake of Owen's and Wilderspin's pioneering examples frequently had several missions. Typically, they took care of children while their parents were at work and thus unable to attend to their children's needs. They also were initiatory schools that supported the acquisition of rudimentary reading, writing, and arithmetic, although their didactic methods differed from those used in elementary schools. Furthermore, infant schools were supposed to benefit children's health and physical well-being by providing favourable conditions for child development. In addition, they emphasised moral education. In particular, the infant schools modeled on the Wilderspinian example focused on the formation of good social habits.⁴⁹ Frequently, their missions encompassed not only social and moral rescue but also reduction of petty crime.⁵⁰ For

⁴⁵ Roberts, 'A new view', 155.

⁴⁶ Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools, *The Hadow Report: Infant and Nursery Schools* (London: His Majesty Stationery Office, 1933), 7.

⁴⁷ Samuel Wilderspin, *Early Discipline Illustrated; or, the Infant System Progressing and Successful* (London: Westley and Davis, 1832), 186.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁹ Consultative Committee, *The Hadow Report*, 11-2.

⁵⁰ Whitbread, *Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School: A History of Infant and Nursery Education in Britain, 1800-1970* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 8.

these reasons, some proponents saw in them the advent of a new civil society. However, in light of the different pedagogical approaches of Owenite and Wilderspinian institutions, it is important to emphasise that *the* British infant school—in the sense of a single, uniform model—did not exist. Nonetheless, the infant schools developed in Britain originated in the pioneering examples described above and consequently shared important characteristics with them.

The spread of infant schools and their incorporation in the education system

During the 1820s and 1830s, infant schools and infant school societies began to burgeon.⁵¹ In 1837, it was estimated that there were about 150 infant schools in England and about 70 in Scotland, each with about 100 pupils. Hence approximately 22,000 children attended the new schools.⁵² When the state began allocating grants to elementary day schools after 1839, infant classes or departments frequently existed already as adjuncts to many schools.⁵³ Infant schools thus partially came under public control simply by virtue of their attachment to elementary day schools.

Infant school teachers. In 1843, the Home and Colonial Infant School Society created a school for the training of infant school teachers in London.⁵⁴ Every year, the school trained around 100 teachers.⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that both men and women attended this school because initially many infant school teachers were men.⁵⁶ However, preschool education became one of the very early female professions. By 1838, already, a book on model lessons for infant schools and nurseries explicitly addressed women as educators.⁵⁷ This indicates that women increasingly took on public roles and responsibilities in infant schools toward the end of the 1830s. However, there had been forerunners to these women as of mid-18th century: intellectual women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth who had expressed their views about education for young children. Expanding print culture had allowed them to go public and influence popular opinion.⁵⁸ Hence a number of women already had status as public figures in educational thought, and the early female infant school teachers may have benefitted from that.

During the mid-19th century, formal teacher training gained importance both for men and women. For instance, the state acknowledged the significance of the teacher training school set up by the Home and Colonial Infant School Society by granting it a subsidy.⁵⁹ However, there

⁵¹ Cruickshank, 'David Stow', 205-15.

⁵² Reprint of a paper published in the *Annals of Education*: Anonymous, 'Infant schools in Great Britain', *Common School Assistant* 2, no. 8 (1837): 67-8.

⁵³ Consultative Committee, *The Hadow Report*, 19.

⁵⁴ This Society was founded in 1836 by a group of teachers and schoolmasters, some of whom were admirers of Pestalozzi.

⁵⁵ Whitbread, *Evolution*, 21-2.

⁵⁶ E.g., the first infant school teacher on the British Isles was James Buchanan, a former weaver, employed at first by Owen, then by Wilderspin; McCann and Young, *Samuel Wilderspin*, 12.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Mayo, *Model Lessons for Infant School Teachers and Nursery Governesses* (London: Seeley and Seeley, 1838).

⁵⁸ Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-2.

were no official regulations in terms of teacher qualifications; hence many infant schools continued using untrained personnel.

Praise and criticism of infant schools. To reformers concerned with the inhuman aspects of industrialisation, the fact that philanthropy could be combined with the usual economic motives of a business concern such as that in New Lanark was a novel and compelling idea. To those who feared moral decline among the working class, infant schools were a tool to form the moral character of children. But establishing infant schools across Great Britain took time, just like establishing elementary schools did, a movement which occurred during the same time period.⁶⁰ Despite the efforts of infant school advocates, criticism temporarily hampered the development of new institutions.⁶¹ Major criticisms seemed to take two forms: that educating poor children was inadvisable (for fear they would become discontent with their lot), and that separating children from their parents for such a long time every day was inadvisable—to which infant school proponents countered, providing a place for young children to go while their parents were at work was precisely the point, and that separation should draw them closer together during the remaining hours of the day.

Froebelian influences on infant schools. In the 1850s, Froebel's kindergarten began to infiltrate into Great Britain. This marked the beginning of a long-lasting controversy over the application of Froebelian methods in infant schools.⁶² Some infant school teachers hailed Froebel's pedagogy as the beginning of a new era because relative to the pedagogy of many infant schools it attached greater weight on children's play and encouraged children to think on their own rather than to insist on rigid intellectual training.⁶³ Others were skeptical and feared that the infant schools would lose their specific character if they modified their traditional practice. In addition, among those who advocated the use of Froebelian methods in infant schools, opinions sometimes diverged as to how exactly these methods were to be implemented.⁶⁴ Either way, Froebelian pedagogy was introduced in infant schools in many regions, although it was typically introduced

⁶⁰ At mid-century children aged three to twelve therefore had only irregular education; cf. Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, 106.

⁶¹ Forest, *Preschool Education*, 78-9.

⁶² Kevin J. Brehony, 'The Froebel Movement in England 1850-1911: Texts, Readings and Readers', in *Perspektiven der Fröbelforschung*, ed. H. Heiland, M. Gebel, and K. Neumann (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 49-64; Kevin J. Brehony, *The Origins of Nursery Education: Friedrich Froebel and the English System, vol. 3, Friedrich Froebel's Pedagogics of the Kindergarten* (London: Routledge, 2001); Emily Shirreff, 'Infant-Schools and the Kindergarten', *Science* 9, no. 223 (May 13, 1887): 472-73; Kevin J. Brehony, 'English Revisionist Froebelians and the Schooling of the Urban Poor', in *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress, 1790-1930*, ed. Mary Hilton and Pam Hirsch (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 183-99; Elsie R. Murray and Henrietta B. Smith, *The Child under Eight* (London: E. Arnold, 1919).

⁶³ Robert R. Rusk, *A History of Infant Education* (London: University of London Press, 1933), 177-79.

⁶⁴ In the late 19th century, when the School Board for London administered state-funded infant education in London following the 1870 Elementary Education Act, infant school practitioners sometimes disagreed with the School Board policy on how the Froebelian gifts (play toys) and occupations (activities) were to be used; cf. Read, 'Free Play with Froebel', 313-23.

as a supplement to the traditional curriculum rather than as a substitute.⁶⁵ By the end of the 19th century colleges for teacher training would give special lectures on Froebel's doctrines as well as on their application to the work of the infant school.⁶⁶ Interestingly, however, while Froebelian methods became increasingly important in infant schools, Froebel's kindergarten itself ultimately would not gain a foothold in great numbers in Britain. This was due in particular to the fact that infant schools had already been well established.⁶⁷

A legal basis for infant schools. Over time, infant schools were also increasingly officially recognised. The 1861 report of the Royal Commission under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle, which sought to promulgate universal elementary education, marked an important milestone in the evolution of infant education. The commissioners officially acknowledged the importance of infant schools as part of a national system of education and, as a consequence, raised the public's awareness of the merits of infant schools. Although a revised code of 1862 only defined children ages six and older as pupils, the code had an important indirect effect on infant schools and departments since it created a need to prepare younger children to pass into standard I, the first grade of elementary education. Frequently, infant schools were used to prepare children for elementary school. They 'received children up to the age of seven, beginning with the earliest age at which they were able to walk alone and to speak'.⁶⁸ However, they were not compulsory. In spite of that, infant education gained acceptance. This was due to the evolving economy, among other factors. As industrialisation progressed, families' real income rose, which decreased the need for child labor as a source of family income. In addition, technological upgrades in silk and textile factories such as the self-acting mule also led to a decline in child labor.⁶⁹ Families could therefore increasingly send their children to infant schools. By 1870 infant schools began to form part of the core of English primary education.⁷⁰ In particular, Forster's Elementary Education Act of 1870 acknowledged for the first time the difficulties in getting all children to show up at school and authorised school boards to frame bylaws that made school attendance compulsory as of age five. Although such bylaws were subject to many exceptions, one consequence of this Act was that infant schools became an integral part of the new system of public elementary schools both in towns and rural areas. Subsequently, infant schools typically were organised as relatively independent departments. In practice, they frequently continued to admit children below the age of five years as well.⁷¹ Henrietta Brown Smith noticed that 'the practice of sending to school children under five was fairly universal'⁷² until the beginning of the

⁶⁵ J. P. Slight, 'Froebel and the English Primary School of Today', in *Friedrich Froebel and English Education*, ed. Evelyn Lawrence (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 112.

⁶⁶ James L. Hughes, *Froebel's Educational Laws* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1897), X.

⁶⁷ Kevin J. Brehony, 'The Kindergarten in England, 1851-1918', in *Kindergartens and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*, ed. Roberta Wollons (Yale: University Press, 2000), 59-86.

⁶⁸ Consultative Committee, *The Hadow Report*, 17.

⁶⁹ Clark Nardinelli, 'Child Labor and the Factory Acts', *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 4 (1980): 739-55.

⁷⁰ Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: University Press, 1994), 252.

⁷¹ In 1872 the Education Department established three as the minimum age at which children attending school counted for grant, cf. Consultative Committee, *The Hadow Report*, 21-2.

⁷² Henrietta Brown Smith, 'The School Attendance of Children under Five', *The Journal of Education* (1908): 804.

20th century. However, it was not until 1870 that most children aged five and older attended public schools.

Over the previous decades, authorities had become increasingly persuaded that early education was important for children, families, and society. Froebel's kindergarten movement may have played a role in this regard as it had raised public awareness for the importance of early education. However, Froebel emphasised the importance of play and discouraged the use of traditional teaching methods. He believed that children were innately responsive to nature⁷³ and that kindergarten pedagogy should therefore rely on children's self-determination and self-education rather than on methods borrowed from elementary schools.⁷⁴ Albeit popular in several regions of Britain, Froebel's kindergarten and its educational theory eventually did not gain acceptance widely enough to supplant infant schools and their pedagogy. It certainly impacted on public opinion and discourse about early education as well as on the theories taught during training for future teachers of young children.⁷⁵ However, when the state assumed responsibility for the schooling of young children in 1870, it favored infant schools as the first grade of the education system partly because infant schools taught children to read, write, and count whereas kindergartens did not.⁷⁶ In the preceding decades, many infant school teachers had attempted to start formal instruction as early as possible because schooling had frequently been 'cut short by juvenile employment at eight or nine',⁷⁷ in particular where parents depended on their children's earnings. In addition, there was another reason why infant schools were not superseded by kindergartens. Infant schools were already firmly established in society. They had for long been supported by societies which established and maintained not only infant schools but also infant teacher training.⁷⁸ Consequently, they had developed into institutions with a distinctive character. Over the course of time, many infant schools had become initiatory to public elementary schools and their educational mission was increasingly consolidated to the effect that in 1870, when infant schools became a part of the public education system, they no longer operated as childcare institutions for children from working-class families, but rather as universal education programs. Children in infant schools 'received such an amount of positive instruction as greatly facilitated their progress in more advanced schools'⁷⁹ and those planning to teach children under seven increasingly attended distinct training courses which prepared them for their specific educational responsibility and role as teachers.⁸⁰

The rise of infant education in France

⁷³ Helen Penn, 'Public and Private: the History of Early Education and Care Institutions in the United Kingdom', in *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives*, ed. K. Scheiwe and H. Willekens (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 107.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Froebel, *Education by Development*, trans. Josephine Jarvis (London: Edward Arnold, 1899), 15-8.

⁷⁵ Brehony, *The Kindergarten in England*, 59-86.

⁷⁶ Murray and Smith, *The Child under Eight*, 35.

⁷⁷ Whitbread, *Evolution*, 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-38.

⁷⁹ Consultative Committee, *The Hadow Report*, 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

Well before their institutionalisation in Britain, infant schools received wide publicity and attracted distinguished visitors from other countries. For example, the number of visitors at New Lanark during Owen's residence on site sometimes amounted to thirty per day for months at a time.⁸¹ Visitors also inspected infant schools in London, educators and philanthropists corresponded with Wilderspin for literature and advice, and books, including those of Wilderspin, were circulated and translated into other languages.⁸² Early on, the infant schools' reputation also spread to France, where it stimulated the creation of *salles d'asile*, the French equivalent of the infant schools.⁸³

The salle d'asile: Influences from Great Britain

In France, the elites who would eventually establish *salles d'asile* had a history of interest in English educational institutions, such as monitorial schools, established in France as *écoles mutuelles*.⁸⁴ Consequently, they were also interested in the efforts of their colleagues across the Channel to serve disadvantaged young children. In 1819, a French translation of an address by Robert Owen to the inhabitants of New Lanark was published⁸⁵ which allowed the French to familiarise themselves with Owen's experiences and knowledge. The translator, a Count who did not disclose his name, outlined in his foreword that Owen's views and principles were rational and conducive to the public good. In particular, he praised the infant school's moralising function, emphasising that it eradicated 'typical working-class vices' such as alcoholism. He also asserted that the inhabitants of New Lanark lived together in perfect harmony, that they worked constantly, and that they did not commit any act of injustice. 'Any foreigner who visited the infant school speaks of it as of a spectacle ... touching by the advantageous results that it has produced'.⁸⁶ In 1821, another book on infant education was made accessible to a French readership when the former assemblyman of the Gironde and Seine departments, André-Daniel Laffon de Ladébat, published a translation of Henry Grey Macnab's book on Owen's views and educational institutions in New Lanark.⁸⁷ Two years later, Marc-Antoine Jullien, who is considered today as one of the founders of the comparative education discipline, described his impressions of a visit of New Lanark in September 1822. He spoke in high terms of Owen's

⁸¹ John F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for a New Moral World* (Oxford: Alden, 1969).

⁸² McCann and Young, *Samuel Wilderspin*, 138.

⁸³ There was a precursor of the *salles d'asile* in France in the form of the knitting schools that Pastor Jean Frédéric Oberlin (1740-1826) created in Ban-de-la-Roche, Alsace, beginning in 1770. But Oberlin's model did not influence the creation of the *salles d'asile* whereas the infant schools did; Loïc Chalmel, 'Jean-Frédéric Oberlin, Pédagogue Révolutionnaire?' *Revue Française de Pédagogie* 116, no. 1 (1996): 105-18.

⁸⁴ In monitorial schools, each teacher appointed his best pupils as supervisors who were responsible for teaching classmates but remained under the control of the teacher; Joseph Maréchal, *Histoire des Premières Ecoles Maternelles ou Salles d'Asile* (Lyon: Bellier, 1999); Robert-Raymond Tronchot, *L'Enseignement Mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833. Les Luites Politiques et Religieuses autour de la Question Scolaire* (Lille: Université, 1973).

⁸⁵ Robert Owen, *Institution pour Améliorer le Caractère Moral du Peuple, ou Adresse aux Habitants de New-Lanark en Écosse*, trad. Comte De L... (Paris: Chez Louis Colas, 1819).

⁸⁶ [Tous les étrangers qui ont examiné cet établissement en parlent comme d'un spectacle ... touchant par les résultats avantageux qu'il a produits.] Owen, *Institution*, x.

⁸⁷ Henry G. Macnab, *Examen Impartial des Nouvelles Vues de M. Robert Owen et de ses Établissements à New-Lanark en Écosse* (Paris: Treuttel & Würtz, 1821).

achievement in the *Revue Encyclopédique*, founded by him in 1819 and published regularly until 1835.⁸⁸ Moreover, Robert Owen's 'Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark' was translated and published in France in 1825.⁸⁹

Such books and reports must have aroused the interest of public-spirited individuals in France. For instance, Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando, an advocate for elementary education and one of the founders of the *Société pour l'instruction élémentaire* in 1815, began to take an interest in infant education (figure 4). He would soon become influential in the infant education movement. On an 1825 tour of England, he visited infant schools and supported the educational innovation at once.⁹⁰ Back in France, he praised infant schools in a meeting of Parisian philanthropists at the salon of Madame Gautier-Delessert, administrator of the Society for Maternal Charity—a Society dedicated to fighting the neglect of newborns.⁹¹ Among the guests was Marquise Adélaïde de Pastoret, who had founded a small-scale and short-lived *salle d'hospitalité*, an institution for neglected infants, in 1801. De Gérando's endorsement incited de Pastoret to create a charitable establishment in Paris patterned on the Londonian infant schools.⁹² To support her efforts, a priest, abbot des Genettes, created a committee which was comprised primarily of Marquises, Countesses, and Duchesses. Marquise de Pastoret was appointed president and the daughter of the industrialist Christophe-Philippe Oberkampf, Émilie Mallet, became the secretary.⁹³ On April 1, 1826 the committee opened the first *salle d'asile* with 80 children. Literally, the name meant 'room of asylum' or 'refuge', but in point of fact, it was a school for children modeled on the British infant schools, as de Gérando had observed them and as two English infant school manuals belonging to the committee described. The committee had delegated direction of the new institution to nuns of the Providence order. However, the nuns only had the committee's two English manuals, translated into French, to guide them in the practical matters of running an infant school on the English model. This lack of information made it difficult to replicate the British model accurately. Ultimately, the first *salle d'asile* failed—according to one collaborator, 'because it was not backed by sufficient knowledge'⁹⁴—but efforts to establish *salles d'asile* continued. However, new knowledge had to be imported from Britain.

Study trips to London and spread of new knowledge in France. Upon the recommendation of Jean-Denys Cochin, mayor of the 12th arrondissement of Paris, the committee sent Madame Eugénie Millet to London in 1827 to study the organisation and pedagogical approaches of infant

⁸⁸ Marc Antoine Jullien, 'Notice sur la Colonie Industrielle de New Lanark', *Revue Encyclopédique* XVIII, no. 23 (1823): 5-25.

⁸⁹ Robert D. Owen, *Esquisse du Système d'Éducation suivi dans les Écoles de New-Lanark*, trad. M. Desfontaines (Paris : Lugan, 1825).

⁹⁰ McCann and Young, *Samuel Wilderspin*, 139.

⁹¹ Christine Adams, *Poverty, Charity, and Motherhood: Maternal Societies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

⁹² Albert Durand, 'Maternelles (écoles)', in *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction Primaire*, ed. Ferdinand Buisson (Paris: Hachette, 1882), 1863.

⁹³ Jean-Noël Luc, 'Madame Jules Mallet, née Émilie Oberkampf (1794-1856), ou les Combats de la Pionnière de l'École Maternelle Française', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 146, no. 1 (2000): 15-47.

⁹⁴ Jean D. M. Cochin, *Manuel des Salles d'Asile*, 1853, p. xvii, in Forest, *Preschool Education*, 65.

schools.⁹⁵ Madame Millet wrote an illustrative report of her mission. She summarised the essentials of the innovative pedagogy, the equipment, and the organisation of infant schools.⁹⁶ Her newly-acquired knowledge helped the committee organise two new *salles d'asile* in 1828.⁹⁷ Cochin, for his part, also visited infant schools in London that year, consulting their manuals and noting their regulations and methods. Back in Paris, he opened a comprehensive education facility with a *salle d'asile* as its first educational level. It was designed to accommodate up to 1,000 young children and enrolled 400 in its first day of operation.⁹⁸ In a manual for *salles d'asile*, Cochin described the need he saw for this institution and advocated its further propagation.⁹⁹ Cochin's institution became famous as the first official model institution in France that trained schoolmasters for *salles d'asile*.¹⁰⁰ Fifteen months later, the municipality acquired the institution. Cochin, for his part, continued to popularise the *salles d'asile*. He published a manual for *salles d'asile* in 1833 and a manual for founders and directors of *salles d'asile* in 1834. As of 1835 he oversaw the journal *L'Ami de l'Enfance, Journal des Salles d'Asile* which had been launched by Louis Hachette and published articles about the organisation, pedagogy, and philanthropy of *salles d'asile*. Furthermore, Cochin chaired the examination board of the *Salles d'asile de la Seine* as of 1838.¹⁰¹

From 1835 to 1840, the journal *L'Ami de l'Enfance* played an important role in the diffusion of information on British infant education as it dedicated numerous articles to the history and functioning of infant schools. During that period, French infant education pioneers attempted to propagandise the *salles d'asile* and demonstrate their benefits by referring to the British examples. For instance, *l'Ami de l'Enfance* published administrative documents such as the first circular letter of the *Infant School Society*, unsigned letters about the model infant schools of Glasgow and Chelsea, an excerpt of a report from a French school inspector, Eugène Berger, on English education societies, and historical notes on infant schools (e.g., by Zachary Macaulay).¹⁰² However, the journal gave less attention to British institutions in its subsequent series, published as of 1846. By then, the *salles d'asile* were mostly well-supported by administrative authorities as well as by congregations.¹⁰³ Consequently, it may have been less necessary for the French to

⁹⁵ Charles Defodon, 'Mallet (Mme Jules)', in *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction Primaire*, ed. Ferdinand Buisson (Paris: Hachette, 1882), 1802-14.

⁹⁶ Eugénie Millet, *Observations sur le Système des Écoles d'Angleterre pour la Première Enfance, établies en France sous le Nom de Salles d'Asyle* (Paris: Henry Servier, 1828).

⁹⁷ Luc, *L'Invention*, 20.

⁹⁸ Denison Deasey, *Education under Six* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 21.

⁹⁹ Jean D. M. Cochin, *Manuel des Fondateurs et des Directeurs des Premières Écoles de l'Enfance connues sous le nom de Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette, 1834), 71.

¹⁰⁰ Maréchal, *Histoire*, 25.

¹⁰¹ Luc, *L'Invention*, 20; Augustin Cochin, 'Asile (Salle d')', in *Complément de l'Encyclopédie Moderne, Dictionnaire Abrégé des Sciences, des Lettres, des Arts, de l'Industrie, de l'Agriculture et du Commerce*, ed. Noel des Vergers, Léon Renier et M. Edouard Carteron (Paris: Firmin Diderot Frères, Fils et Cie, 1858), 269-83.

¹⁰² Cf. Jean-Noël Luc, 'La Diffusion des Modèles de Préscolarisation en Europe dans la Première Moitié du XIXe siècle', *Histoire de l'Éducation*, no. 82 (1999): 201-2.

¹⁰³ Kimberly J. Morgan, 'Forging the Frontiers between State, Church, and Family: Religious Cleavages and the Origins of Early Childhood Education and Care Policies in France, Sweden, and Germany', *Politics & Society* 30, no. 1 (2002): 113-48.

focus on the experiences of their British counterparts around the mid-19th century.¹⁰⁴ Henceforth, although the French continued to import information on British infant schools, the extent to which they sought inspiration across the Channel decreased gradually. For instance, a French translation of Owen's book 'A new moral world' appeared in 1847.¹⁰⁵ One year later, Owen travelled to Paris to debate on the question of how to develop and introduce a rational social system. But he only mentioned the infant school very briefly.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, an English book on model lessons for infant schools was translated into French and published in 1855.¹⁰⁷ But on the whole, founders and organisers of *salles d'asile* in France no longer relied on British knowledge to the same extent as they did in the period of the creation of the first establishments. Instead, they increasingly drew on their own experiences to develop new institutions and pedagogical approaches.

Women's active roles in infant education. Women also had a major importance in the development of early childhood education in France. Early on, the Parisian women pioneers sought to obtain subsidies and legal status for the *salles d'asile*. In 1828 their efforts were rewarded when the general council of the hospices approved a regulation that entrusted the direction of *salles d'asile* to committees of arrondissements and a *Société des dames* was commissioned to propagate *salles d'asile* throughout the country. In 1829 the general council of the hospices took the Parisian *salles d'asile* under its wing, recognising them as *utilité publique*—that is, establishments of common public interest. In 1830 this same council instituted a committee, chaired by Madame de Pastoret, to oversee the establishments' budget, solicit donations and subscriptions, appoint personnel, and supervise teachers and teaching. Finally, the committee named a general inspector of the Parisian *salles d'asile* and thus contributed greatly to the professionalisation of the new facilities.¹⁰⁸

Émilie Mallet, the secretary of the founding committee of the first *salle d'asile*, also played a decisive role during the first decades of the history of *salles d'asile*. Inspired by the journey of Marquis de Gérando, she went to England and brought back literature in order to learn more about the functioning of these schools and to familiarise her friends with the infant school concept. She administered the first Parisian institutions and became deputy secretary of the *Commission supérieure des salles d'asile*, a position which she would hold until 1848. She also received many visitors in these *salles d'asile* and corresponded with colleagues from Britain such as the Rev. Charles Mayo, a follower of Pestalozzi and a famous advocate of infant schooling.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Luc, 'La Diffusion', 202.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Owen, *Le Livre du Nouveau Monde Moral, Contenant le Système Social Rationnel Basé sur les Lois de la Nature Humaine*, trans. T.W. Thornton (Paris: Paulin, 1848).

¹⁰⁶ Maximilien Rubel, 'Robert Owen à Paris en 1848', *L'Actualité de l'Histoire*, no. 30 (1960): 10; Robert Owen, *Courte Exposition du Système Social Rationnel* (Paris: Marc-Aurel, 1848).

¹⁰⁷ Eugène Rendu, *Modèles de Leçons pour les Salles d'Asile et les Écoles Élémentaires ou Premiers Exercices pour le Développement des Facultés Intellectuelles et Morales de l'Enfance* (Paris: Hachette et Cie., 1855).

¹⁰⁸ Luc, *L'Invention*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, a letter of Charles Mayo of 14 September 1837 to Mallet, cf. Luc, 'La Diffusion des Modèles de Préscolarisation', 201-202; Jean-Noël Luc, 'Madame Jules Mallet, née Emilie Oberkampf (1794-1856), ou les Combats de la Pionnière de l'École Maternelle Française', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, no. 146 (2000) : 15-47.

As of 1835 Mallet cooperated regularly with the journal *L'Ami de l'Enfance* to stimulate public debate about *salles d'asile*.¹¹⁰ In addition, she became a member of the *Commission d'examen du département de la Seine* as well as of the *Commission supérieure* which was established under the auspices of the minister of public instruction. As a result, she and her female colleagues were soon considered the key originators of the *salles d'asile* in France.¹¹¹

Their work was continued by Marie Pape-Carpantier who published '*Conseils sur la direction des salles d'asile*' in 1846,¹¹² a book that was awarded a prize by the *Académie française*. Émilie Mallet had for long planned to establish a school for teachers for the *salles d'asile*. When she made the acquaintance of Pape-Carpantier, she convinced her nephew, the education minister Baron Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy, that Pape-Carpantier should become the director of this school. The school was opened in 1847 and Pape-Carpantier did become its director. This position made Pape-Carpantier an influential actor. Not only did she publish numerous books about infant education, she was also committed to changing the status of *salles d'asile* from a center dedicated primarily to the care of young children to an institution devoted to both the care and education of young children.¹¹³

Yet Pape-Carpantier, Mallet, and their female colleagues were not the only women involved in infant education. As of the 1820s, others had also engaged actively in the education of young children. In so doing, women broadened their field of activity and increasingly entered public life. They also paved the way for other women to take on an active role in the emerging professional field of infant education. In particular, women began to serve as teachers, as inspectresses of *salles d'asile*, and on committees that certified teachers, thus defining a new 'feminine sphere of action'.¹¹⁴ They gained special authority in infant education and the growth of facilities increasingly offered them professional opportunities.¹¹⁵ In addition, women who advocated infant education sometimes became involved in wider efforts on behalf of mothers and children which challenged traditional boundaries between private and public realms. Insofar, the history of infant education was also related to broader social reform movements as it facilitated women's emancipation from the home as well as women's access to important public functions.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Jean-Noël Luc, 'Pour une Histoire Européenne, Nationale et Locale de la Préscolarisation', *Histoire de l'Éducation* 82, no. 82 (1999) : 5-22.

¹¹¹ Defodon, 'Mallet (Mme Jules)', 1806-11.

¹¹² Marie Pape-Carpantier, *Conseils sur la Direction des Salles d'Asile*, 3^{ème} éd. (1^{ère} éd. 1846) (Paris: Hachette, 1856).

¹¹³ Colette Cosnier, *Marie Pape-Carpantier - Fondatrice de l'École Maternelle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

¹¹⁴ Linda L. Clark, *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 12.

¹¹⁵ Rebecca Rogers, 'Learning to be Good Girls and Women: Education, Training, and Schools', in *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, ed. Deborah Simonon (London: Routledge, 2006), 93-133. Note that women took on new social roles during that period.

¹¹⁶ Corinne Belliard, *L'Émancipation des Femmes à l'Épreuve de la Philanthropie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 201; Loïc Chalmel, *La Petite École dans l'École. Origine Piétiste-Morave de l'École Maternelle Française*, 3^{ème} éd. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 283.

Purposes of salles d'asile. Circular letters to prefects, ordinances and decrees of councils, and reports of committees and ministries attest to the fact that the purposes of infant education in France were largely identical with those in Britain,¹¹⁷ although the exact extent to which the purposes of the *salles d'asile* mirrored those of British infant schools in practice cannot be determined. Four objectives were predominant. First, *salles d'asile* were shelters for children of working-class families—and also of destitute families who depended on charity. Second, the *salle d'asile* was an educational institution with a pedagogical mission. While the administrative authority's position on the educational purpose vacillated, particularly before 1848, alternately emphasising the educational and charitable functions, the authority consistently dedicated a good deal of education to what might be called 'character education', filial piety, good morals, etc. Third, physicians and administrative authorities emphasised the importance of children's health, physical exercise, and the cultivation of sane souls in robust bodies. The publication of booklets for parents and *salles d'asile* containing information on hygiene and medicine reflected this concern for children's health.¹¹⁸ Some of these publications made reference to the British infant schools. Dr. Laurent Cerise, for instance, had written a medical guide for *salles d'asile* in the wake of the success of infant schools in countries like England.¹¹⁹ Fourth, the *salles d'asile* prepared children for future labor. Instructing children meant teaching them skills that they would need at work later on and—according to a widespread belief in the 19th century—preparing them for the social status that corresponded to their origins.

While most of the scopes of infant education were comparable on both sides of the Channel, the *salles d'asile* in France gave more importance to religious education. More explicitly than many British infant schools, *salles d'asile* were to catechise and evangelise children. This is documented, for instance, in a book by Vicomte Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont, a French politician and early theorist of the welfare state,¹²⁰ and in the correspondence of two women superintendents of the *salle d'asile*,¹²¹ who regarded the institution as a substitute for families that did not provide their children the religious moral guidance they needed. Many others also propagated the spread of *salles d'asile* as a means to teach the Christian doctrine.¹²² The *Archives du Christianisme* as well as the *Gazette Évangélique* and the *Annales de la Société d'Émulation du Département des Vosges* provide evidence that the Protestant Church established and maintained *salles d'asile* as a way to disseminate Christian beliefs.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Jean-Noël Luc, ed., *La Petite Enfance à l'École, XIXe-XXe Siècles* (Paris: INRP, 1982).

¹¹⁸ Mauricheau Beaupré, *Salle d'Asile. Instruction Hygiénique adressée par le Médecin de la Salle d'Asile aux Parents dont les Enfants y sont admis* (Calais: A. Leleux, 1839), 3.

¹¹⁹ Laurent Cerise, *Le Médecin des Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette, 1836). Note that the second edition of the book appeared in 1857 and still reminded the French of the English infant schools.

¹²⁰ Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemont, *Économie Politique Chrétienne* (Paris: Paulin, 1834), 358.

¹²¹ Cécile and Louise, *Histoire d'une Salle d'Asile: Lettres de Deux Dames Inspectrices* (Paris: Libraire Ecclésiastique et Classique de Ch. Fouraut, 1851), 2.

¹²² E.g., M. Edom, *Considérations sur les Salles d'Asile* (Le Mans: C. Richelet, 1840); Cerise, *Le Médecin*, 192.

¹²³ E.g., M. Risler, 'Avis', *Archives Du Christianisme au Dix-Neuvième Siècle* 19, no. 2 (1834): 164; Anon., 'France', *Gazette Évangélique* 4, no. 1 (1836): 3; M. Mathieu, *Annales de la Société d'Émulation du Département des Vosges* (Epinal: Gley, 1837).

Pedagogy of the salles d'asile. A number of curriculum and management manuals for *salles d'asile* were published, some of which explicitly referred to the infant school methods adopted in Britain.¹²⁴ They typically emphasised both custodial care and early education which encompassed physical, moral, and intellectual instruction. In particular, these manuals called for different types of physical exercises, singing, and the rudiments of academic learning, as well as for an early religious education in the form of catechism classes. However, the main focus of the pedagogy of *salles d'asile* began to shift slightly in the mid-1850s as a consequence of the spread of Froebelian methods in France. Froebel's educational theory was developed for kindergarten, but it formed the basis of an international movement which also affected the *salles d'asile*. Froebelian pedagogy stressed learning through play, games, and self-activity and, on the whole, attached less importance to direct intellectual instruction than the *salles d'asile* because it was based on the assumption that play may be instructive. Frequently, Froebel's play materials and activities found their way into the *salles d'asile* and provided teachers with new approaches to teaching.¹²⁵

The spread of salles d'asile – from experiment to institution

In the 1830s, the French administrative authority became increasingly aware that the *salle d'asile* was an important educational institution and considered putting it under its purview. In a circular letter of March 1833, Louis Adolphe Thiers, the Secretary to the Minister of Commerce and Public Works, spurred the prefects to establish *salles d'asile* in all departments of France, characterising them as the first grade of elementary education and naming them 'little schools' and 'infancy schools' to be run on behalf of children of poor families. Albeit not a binding official mandate, the circular letter put pressure on the prefects. It emphasised that the propagation of the new infrastructure accommodating children of working-class parents (who could not dedicate sufficient time to both work and family responsibilities) was desirable in all French departments.¹²⁶ The Guizot Law of June 1833 required that each municipality open and maintain a primary school for boys and subsidise the teachers' salaries,¹²⁷ but it did not mention the *salle d'asile*. However, a circular letter of July 1833 which concerned the application of the Guizot Law asked the prefects to propagate them.¹²⁸

In 1835, the education Minister, François Guizot, placed the *salles d'asile* under the Ministry of Public Instruction and entrusted its supervision to the departmental primary school

¹²⁴ Eugénie Chevreau-Lemercier, *Chants pour les Enfants des Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette, 1846); Marie Pape-Carpantier, *Enseignement Pratique dans les Salles d'Asile ou Premières Leçons à donner aux Petits Enfants* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1859); Camille Jubé de la Perrelle, *Guide des Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1853); Eugène Rendu, *Guide des Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette et Cie., 1860); Rendu, *Modèles de Leçons*; Une Sœur Directrice de Salle d'Asile, *Nouveau Manuel des Salles d'Asile à l'Usage des Filles de la Charité de Saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris: Dezobry, E. Magdeleine et Cie, 1860); Henriette D'Argy, *Chants pour les Salles d'Asile* (Paris: Hachette, 1837).

¹²⁵ Nathalie Duval, 'L'Éducation Nouvelle dans les Sociétés Européennes à la fin du XIX siècle', *Histoire, Économie et Société* 21, no. 1 (2002): 74.

¹²⁶ Louis A. Thiers, 'Circulaire aux Préfets Accompagnant l'Envoi d'une Brochure sur la Formation et la Tenue des Salles d'Asile', in *La Petite Enfance*, 56–7.

¹²⁷ René Grevet, *L'Avènement de l'École Contemporaine en France (1789-1835)* (Paris: Septentrion, 2001).

¹²⁸ Cf. Luc, *L'Invention*, 28.

inspectors.¹²⁹ As a result, the *salle d'asile* gradually came under municipal auspices. Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy's ordinance of December 1837 officially recognised the *salles d'asile*. This ordinance constituted the 'charter of *salles d'asile*'. It provided standard regulations and described recommended curriculum, staff qualifications, and supervisory practices.¹³⁰ In addition, the royal enactment of December 1837 recognised the double function of the new facilities as charitable and educational institutions, referring to them as *schools* for young children although the very name *salles d'asile* still conveyed a charitable focus. Overall supervision, as stipulated by the Guizot Law of 1833, was subject to committees of primary education, whereas voluntary inspectors—usually women, who supervised anything related to education, hygiene, and charity—monitored the institutions locally. A superior commission consisting of women under the direction of a member of the Royal Council of Public Education determined the curricula and teaching methods and selected appropriate textbooks.¹³¹

Along with increasing involvement of the administrative authority in the elementary education sector, the number of *salles d'asile* grew. By 1836, there were 24 in Paris and 102 in all of France. At mid-century, there were 1,735 with 160,244 children enrolled.¹³² The enactment of new decrees in 1848 and 1855 accompanied the expansion of communally and municipally administered institutions. For instance, the city of Boulogne invested 85,000 francs in the maintenance of its *salles d'asile* in 1855, and the prefect of the Côtes-du-Nord department, Count Rivaux, insisted that three local committees be instituted in each municipality to take the local *salles d'asile* under their wings.

Froebelian influences on salles d'asile. Over time, the *salles d'asile* became increasingly accepted and more widely used. However, their pedagogy underwent a change as of 1855 when the Baroness Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülow propagated Froebelian methods in France. Marenholtz-Bülow had become acquainted with Friedrich Froebel in Bad Liebenstein, Thuringia, where she had the opportunity to visit Froebel's institution for the training of kindergarten teachers in 1849.¹³³ She was immediately enthused with Froebelian methods and became an ambassador of these methods in many European countries, including Britain and France. Upon her arrival in Paris in 1855, she succeeded in familiarising several key figures with the Froebelian approach. Among them were Émilie Mallet (one of the founders of the first *salles d'asile*), Jean-Baptiste-Firmin Marbeau (the originator of the first *crèche* in France in 1844), and Jules Delbruck (who launched the *Revue de l'Education nouvelle* in 1848). Committed to improve the lives of young children, they began to circulate their new knowledge. As a result, some *salles d'asile* set out to experiment with Froebelian methods.¹³⁴ In addition, the *Comité Central de patronage des salles d'asile* tested them in the training of supervisors of *salles d'asile* and the

¹²⁹ Maréchal, *Histoire*, 32.

¹³⁰ Linda L. Clark, 'Feminist Maternalists and the French State: Two Inspectresses General in the Pre-World War I Third Republic', *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 15–7.

¹³¹ Luc, *La Petite Enfance*, 39; Luc, *L'Invention*, 33–8.

¹³² Durand, 'Maternelles (écoles)', 1869.

¹³³ Berta von Marenholtz-Bülow, *Reminiscences of Friedrich Froebel*, trans. Horace Mann (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1877), 2–4.

¹³⁴ Luc, 'Salles d'Asile', 436–41.

journal *L'Ami de l'Enfance* published several articles about Froebel's system.¹³⁵ In the 1860s, Pauline Kergomard became the director of the journal *L'Ami de l'Enfance* and she encouraged the adoption of Froebelian elements in *salles d'asile*. Kergomard criticised the *salles d'asile* as she deemed their pedagogical approach too strict and insufficiently adapted to young children's needs. To her, Froebelian pedagogy seemed suitable to eradicate this flaw. Eventually, the principles of Froebel's pedagogy began to influence the pedagogy of *salles d'asile* inasmuch as it stimulated the valorisation of organised play and reduced the amount of intellectual instruction in the curriculum. Even Marie Pape-Carpantier, one of the very fervent advocates of *salles d'asile* and at first a critic of Froebelian methods, began to adapt Froebel's methods to the pedagogy of *salles d'asile*.¹³⁶

Transformation of salles d'asile into écoles maternelles. Although progress in the development of *salles d'asile* was far from steady and was dependent on local policies, the number of *salles d'asile* increased during the first decades of their existence to the effect that 3,951 *salles d'asile* existed by 1868, with 465,712 children enrolled.¹³⁷ The child labour legislation of 1874, which introduced a minimum working age of twelve (although it allowed for exemptions) probably contributed to this growth.¹³⁸ Then a decree of August 2, 1881 discontinued the *salles d'asile* in favor of its successor, the *école maternelle*.¹³⁹ The *école maternelle* was in part influenced by Froebel's methods which emphasised children's play and self-activity. However, Froebel's pedagogy had not become accepted widely enough to prevail definitely over the pedagogy which had been developed in *salles d'asile*. That is, the *école maternelle* was not a French version of the Froebelian *kindergarten*. According to Pauline Kergomard—who was the central figure in the establishment of the *école maternelle* as she became its general inspector from 1881 to 1917 (appointed by Jules Ferry)¹⁴⁰—the *école maternelle* had to accompany and facilitate a child's transition from the family to the primary school.¹⁴¹ It was supposed not only to place value on children's play, but also to lay the foundations for academic learning and prepare children for school.¹⁴² The change of name of the institution reflected the shift of the objectives from social welfare and assistance ('*asile*'—i.e., asylum) to education and instruction ('*école*'—i.e., school). Ultimately, the *école maternelle* became firmly established as the first stage of the French educational system; today, it enrolls virtually all children aged three to five and is still concerned with children's learning both in social and intellectual domains.¹⁴³

¹³⁵ Gilles Brougère, *Jeu et Éducation* (Paris: Harmattan, 1995), 140-1.

¹³⁶ Colette Cosnier, *Marie Pape-Carpantier. De l'École Maternelle à l'École des Filles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1993), 128.

¹³⁷ Durand, 'Maternelles (écoles)', 1876.

¹³⁸ Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, 171. Colin Heywood, *Childhood in Nineteenth-century France: Work, Health and Education among the 'Classes Populaires'* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 273-4.

¹³⁹ Suzy Cohen, *L'École des Bébés* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ Elise Terdjman, 'Le Système Pré-scolaire selon Pauline Kergomard (1838-1925)', *Communications* 54 (1992): 135-48.

¹⁴¹ Pauline Kergomard, *Les Écoles Maternelles de 1837 jusqu'en 1910. Aperçu Rapide* (Paris: Nathan, 1910).

¹⁴² Pauline Kergomard, *L'Éducation Maternelle dans l'École* (Paris: Hachette, 1886), 18-34.

¹⁴³ OECD, *Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD, 2006), 328.

Comparative and transnational synopsis

This study has traced the beginnings of institutional infant education in Great Britain and France, outlining the respective evolutions of infant education from private to public control as well as the establishment of infant education as part of the national educational systems. Particular attention was paid to transnational exchange, notably the mechanisms of information transmission from Britain to France. The following synopsis summarises major similarities and disparities as well as intersocietal connections in these developments.

Similarities and differences in 19th-century early childhood education in Britain and France

Originally shelters for children of laboring-class mothers driven by necessity to contribute to the family income and launched mostly by private initiative, facilities for the education of young children gradually began to grow into public institutions by the 1830s. The fact that the French visited infant schools across the Channel and translated English books and manuals about infant education suggests that the British schools and methods were a direct source of inspiration for sponsors of *salles d'asile*. Indeed, they fulfilled several very similar functions in Britain and France.

Moral citizens in a new society. In each country, the new facilities aimed to improve children's living conditions by providing them with a favourable environment—physically, morally, and intellectually. Typically, patrons and reformers who founded the first institutions focused on rescuing young children from the social and moral evils of the unhealthy environments that resulted from industrialisation and increasing use of child labor.¹⁴⁴ Through infant schools, they sought to reduce human misery, combat the exploitation of innocent, defenseless children, and regenerate the population's morals. In both countries, a number of influential educators, politicians, and ministers believed that infant education could improve society by banishing poverty with all of its ill effects. Hence the popularity of the institutions stemmed from wider endeavors to tackle critical social problems. Concern about the well-being and safety of deprived children had certainly been a motive behind the founding of infant education facilities. However, desires for social control complemented this concern and considerations of social order were added to genuinely humanitarian motivations in both countries. Insofar, the new institutions were also a vehicle for inculcating obedience as well as moral values in children.¹⁴⁵

Pedagogical objectives. The pedagogical objectives of infant schools and *salles d'asile* varied somewhat over time and across regions, but one of the key objects endorsed by most institutions was to support children's development and offer moral instruction rather than to impose premature academic education.¹⁴⁶ In fact, rigorous intellectual education was frequently discouraged, whereas learning through play was more widely accepted, in particular after Froebel's pedagogy had arrived in Britain and France. Hence the pedagogy encompassed

¹⁴⁴ Whitbread, *Evolution*, 25–6.

¹⁴⁵ Clark, 'Feminist Maternalists', 12–3.

¹⁴⁶ Luc, *La Petite Enfance à l'École*, 53-348.

informal learning, interpersonal skills, practical experiences, and emotional understanding. However, it is important to note that over the course of time some institutions were set up specifically for children from poor families whereas others were established for all children, regardless of their social origins. The former often had a primarily social function whereas the latter tended to be oriented towards educational purposes and children's early learning.¹⁴⁷

Religious instruction. Many infant education promoters stressed the religious potential of the new institutions, either a specific denomination or generally Christian.¹⁴⁸ They feared a lack of moral guidance of children in families whom they considered incapable of properly bringing up their children. Frequently, infant education was carried out under religious auspices with missionary aims, and infant educators taught obedience and respect for authority as well as religious devotion. However, religious education was more prominent in France than in Britain. One reason for this was that the political events of 1830—which culminated in the July Revolution and ended the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830) to bring Louis-Philippe to the throne of France—had hit both the monarchy and the Church, its ally, and thus led to increasing religious skepticism in a considerable proportion of the French population. The Church aimed to counteract this loss of authority and sought to recreate the society that had existed before the Revolution, among others by conferring the task of evangelisation of children on the *salles d'asile*.¹⁴⁹ It seemed opportune to target young children whose minds were still malleable for evangelisation. For this purpose, ecclesiastics collaborated, for instance, with members of the *Commission supérieure des salles d'asile*, which largely inspired the contents of official laws, decrees, acts, and circular letters from ministries or guardianship authorities on the subject of *salles d'asile*. In so doing, they aimed to facilitate a Catholic renaissance at the end of the 1830s.¹⁵⁰

During the Second French Empire, beginning in 1851/1852 with President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte becoming Napoleon III, Emperor of France, Roman Catholicism was the state religion. Clerics worked as officials and propagated Christianity on behalf of the state. During that period, the Empire still used the *salles d'asile* to evangelise children. Yet the Third Republic—beginning in 1870 as the result of France's loss in the Franco-Prussian War and the downfall of Napoleon III—did no longer use *salles d'asile* as a means of missionary work. In official documents such as decrees and acts, the term 'religious education' disappeared. Only the term 'moral education' persisted. These documents stated that the child was supposed to learn right and wrong in the *salle d'asile*, but there was no reference to the Bible.¹⁵¹ The turning away from religious education in *salles d'asile* occurred against the background of endeavours to secularise the Third

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Michael Warren, *L'École à Deux Ans en France: Un Mode Nouveau de Gestion de la Chose Publique Éducative* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 23-50.

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Elizabeth Mayo, *Religious Instruction in a Graded Series of Lessons for Young Children* (London: Seeley, 1845).

¹⁴⁹ Athanase Coquerel, 'Société Chrétienne Protestante de France', *Le Libre Examen: Journal Religieux, Philosophique et Littéraire* 5, no. 14 (1835): 106 ; Michèle Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras: l'Antiprottestantisme en France de 1814 à 1870* (Paris: Chartes, 1998).

¹⁵⁰ Luc, *La Petite Enfance*, 15-21.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15-21.

Republic. The struggle to deconsecrate education also affected the *salles d'asile* which, by the 1870s, were increasingly maintained by the state although they were not a constituent part of the official education system. Ultimately, this struggle for secularisation set the stage for the enactment of the Ferry Laws of 1881-1882 which made primary education compulsory and, in public institutions, free and secular.¹⁵²

Infant schools and salles d'asile: Between transnational and regional characters

Infant schools in Britain attracted visitors from France, English books about infant education were translated into French, and French social reformers promulgated their knowledge about the British institutions in France. As a consequence, several infant schools served as models for the creation and organisation of many *salles d'asile*. From the beginning, the *salles d'asile* had a transnational character inasmuch as their patrons were inspired by pedagogical and organisational concepts from across the Channel. While there were no stable transnational networks of infant education actors in the manner of the informal Anglo-American kindergarten network,¹⁵³ there was nonetheless cross-border exchange which left a trace in French infant education.

However, the *salles d'asile* and their pedagogical concepts were not simply copies of their British predecessors. For instance, the methods used in *salles d'asile* sometimes differed from those adopted in Britain. Madame Millet disapproved of the rather mechanical exercises (e.g., the geography lessons) practiced in some Londonian infant schools¹⁵⁴ and she campaigned for a more diverse teaching approach which allowed for more flexible instruction and learning. Furthermore, in France, there had repeatedly been not only praise but also criticism of the British infant schools.¹⁵⁵ Critics feared, for instance, that the *salles d'asile* pursued inappropriate educational objectives such as teaching encyclopedic book knowledge.¹⁵⁶ In certain regions, such criticism must have influenced the missions and pedagogical approaches of *salles d'asile*. In 1839, for instance, Ambroise Rendu, the president of the *Commission supérieure des asiles*, visited *salles d'asile* in Rouen, Caen, and Rennes, and recommended that these institutions minimize their academic education to the greatest possible extent.¹⁵⁷ Thus, it can be assumed that different institutions developed their own distinctive characters depending on the criticisms with which they were faced.

It is necessary to stress that there was not only one model of infant education in Britain. Rather, different types of infant schools had been established and maintained. For instance, Owen objected to corporal punishment whereas Wilderspin endorsed it. Hence the notion of 'the British infant school' is too rigid as it masks disparities between facilities with diverse pedagogical underpinnings. The character of infant schools varied with the attitudes and convictions of their founders and educators, among other factors. Consequently, it is crucial to refrain from the

¹⁵² Warren, *L'École à Deux Ans*, 30-50 ; Linda L. Clark, 'Approaching the History of Modern French Education: Recent Surveys and Research Guides', *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 1 (1987): 157-65.

¹⁵³ Nawrotzki, 'Like Sending Coals', 223.

¹⁵⁴ Durand, 'Maternelles (écoles)', 1870.

¹⁵⁵ Marie Matrat et Pauline Kergomard, *Les Écoles Maternelles* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889).

¹⁵⁶ Colette Cosnier, 'Marie Pape-Carpantier, les Fées et l'Architecte', *Histoire de l'Éducation*, no. 82 (1999): 143-57.

¹⁵⁷ Durand, 'Maternelles (écoles)', 1867.

assumption that there is a pure British or a pure French model of institutional infant education. During the first decades of the new institutions' existence, there were neither uniform instructions for inspectors nor unambiguous national policies which would have defined clear directives for *salles d'asile*.¹⁵⁸ In France, it was not until 1837 that an ordinance for *salles d'asile* named a delegate for their annual inspection in the whole country.¹⁵⁹ In Britain, the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education, appointed in 1839, required the right of inspection of infant schools, and they were among the first to issue instructions for inspectors in 1840.¹⁶⁰ Thus infant education institutions must at times have developed regional character inasmuch as local patrons and educators shaped the identity of their facilities according to their own maxims.

Limitations of the study

As with any historical study, the present analysis is intentionally limited in scope. Three limitations need to be acknowledged: First, the study did not examine the historical developments of infant schools in Ireland although Ireland and Great Britain formed a political unit during the 19th century, constituting the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until the partitioning of Ireland in 1922. An analysis of such historical developments might have duplicated evidence provided recently by Maura O'Connor. She outlined how the infant school movement spread from Great Britain to Ireland in the 1820s and how Wilderspin helped establish the Model Infants' School in Dublin in 1824 and, in so doing, contributed to the propagation of his theories. Furthermore, she showed how voluntary societies subsequently supported the creation of new facilities in different parts of Ireland.¹⁶¹

A second limitation pertains to the fact that, in some instances, the study characterised the views of individual proponents of early childhood education as being representative of the perspectives of larger groups of people involved in the early education cause. Protagonists like Owen, Wilderspin, Cochin, and Pape-Carpantier certainly did speak for much of the infant education movement. However, considering their views valid for larger communities (e.g., the infant school advocates in general) still bears a risk of over-generalisation. For instance, in the mid-1830s, British Evangelicals adapted the Wilderspinian model of infant education in conformity with the imperatives of their ecclesiastical doctrine in the infant schools under their control.¹⁶² In France, different promoters and advocates of *salles d'asile* had diverging views on how the *salles d'asile* were to be run—e.g. whether *salles d'asile* had to separate boys and girls, how they were to ensure hygiene, to what extent they were to be charitable institutions, etcetera.¹⁶³ We must therefore abstain from interpreting that the views and attitudes of the infant education protagonists presented in this study were always uncontested.

¹⁵⁸ Luc, *La Petite Enfance*, 15; D.A. Turner, '1870: The State and the Infant School System', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 18, no. 2 (1970): 151-65.

¹⁵⁹ Luc, *La Petite Enfance*, 66-74.

¹⁶⁰ Robert R. Rusk, *A History of Infant Education* (London: University of London Press, 1933), 165.

¹⁶¹ Maura O'Connor, *The Development of Infant Education in Ireland, 1838-1948* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).

¹⁶² McCann and Young, *Samuel Wilderspin*, 183.

¹⁶³ For instance, diverse opinions on the functioning of *salles d'asile* were expressed in an international meeting on charity, held in Paris in 1855, as documented in a report in the *Annales de la Charité* (Paris: Adrien le Clere et C^e, 1855), 498-509.

A third limitation concerns a historiographical issue of a more general nature. Any study into the history of institutions and practices has to synthesise a variety of sources into more wide-ranging statements, but epistemological challenges are associated with the attempt to consider historical particularity and achieve theoretical generalisation at the same time. It is therefore important to keep in mind that this account provides a lens or framework—rather than an exhaustive review—to explain and interpret historical realities which were certainly more complex and varied than suggested here.

Prospects for future research

A research desideratum can be derived from this study. It seems important to further analyse the interdependence of local developments and transnational relations in the history of infant education, both in the countries under review and in other European countries. Future research could explore in depth how local institutions were embedded in transnational contexts and how foreign influences were either taken over, mutated, or rejected under specific local (to some extent varying cultural, political, and economic) circumstances. For example, Wilderspin's influence in countries such as France, Germany,¹⁶⁴ Austria,¹⁶⁵ Hungary,¹⁶⁶ Holland, Belgium, and others¹⁶⁷ is well-established. Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which Wilderspin's thinking was transmitted and the changes that his thinking underwent during the transmission processes as well as during implementation processes in different sites remain underexplored. In order to study connections between local and transnational developments, the transnational and entanglement paradigm would have to be complemented by a trans-boundary concept because relating micro-level aspects to macro-level contexts implies studying a variety of (imperceptible) boundaries within nations, including regions and municipalities.¹⁶⁸ This type of research may explore the extent to which local variations shed light on the nature of national and transnational movements and aspirations. It may also illustrate why local developments might have diverged in spite of a given degree of homogeneity in terms of (trans-) national concerns and objectives. In general, however, regardless of whether the focus of research will be local, national, or transnational, historians will have to situate the developments under review in their respective contexts at different levels and they need to ensure that the units of analysis and their interrelations are described accurately in order to prevent simplistic interpretations of complex historical phenomena.

Notes on contributor

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¹⁶⁴ Diana Franke-Meyer, *Kleinkindererziehung und Kindergarten im historischen Prozess: Ihre Rolle im Spannungsfeld zwischen Bildungspolitik, Familie und Schule* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2011), 24-5.

¹⁶⁵ Pirooska Benes, *Gräfin Therese Brunszvik und die Kleinkindererziehung ihrer Zeit* (Szeged: Városi Nyomda és Könyvkiadó, 1932).

¹⁶⁶ Vag, 'The Influence', 132.

¹⁶⁷ McCann and Young, *Samuel Wilderspin*, 142.

¹⁶⁸ Tyrrell, 'Reflections on the Transnational Turn', 460.

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Figure captions

Figure 1. England before and after the industrial revolution. Map reproduced from ‘Philips’ New Historical Atlas for Students’ by Ramsay Muir, 4th ed. (London, Liverpool: George Philip & Son, Ltd., 1920).

Figure 2. Robert Owen (lithograph). Reproduced with permission from the Robert Owen Museum, Newtown, Powys, U.K.

Figure 3. Town of Lanark by I. Clark, 1820-25 (lithograph). Reproduced with permission from the Robert Owen Museum, Newtown, Powys, U.K.

Figure 4. Baron Joseph Marie de Gérando (1772-1842). Reproduced with permission from the Austrian National Library, Picture Archives.

Figures

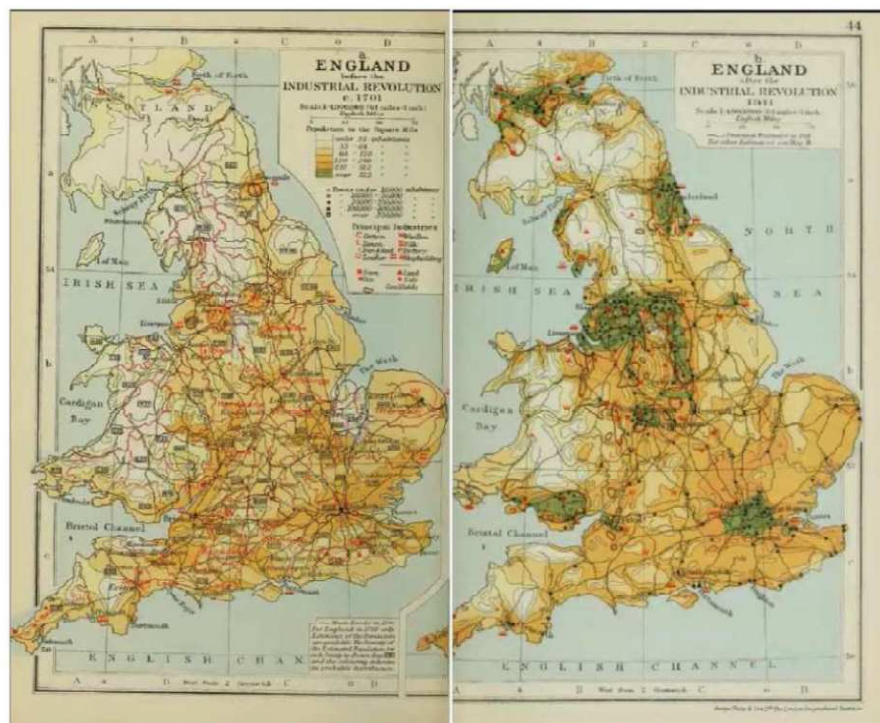


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4