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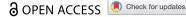
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ARTICLE





The social nature of New Education: an affiliation network analysis of the movement's evolution, 1875–1935

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ABSTRACT

The New Education movement was a remarkable coalition of national reform movements that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. As a heterogeneous movement that was united only in its opposition to the schooling system at the time, its structure and boundaries in the UK have remained a matter of academic debate. This article implements the previously proposed idea of treating New Education as a social movement and analysing the networks between reformers. A social network analysis of the central 58 reformers suggests that the movement was initially divided into two ideologically separate subgroups, but that from ca. 1905 onwards the reformers were strongly interconnected despite their different interests. Thus, by focusing on the social structure of the movement's core rather than its educational thought, the article challenges the assumption that the New Education movement was fragmented and characterised by tensions. It also furthers the discussion on the feasibility of social network analysis for studying educational reforms.

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Introduction

In a tent erected in the yard of the pioneering progressive school Abbotsholme, the guardians of the school convened for lunch at the first parents' gathering in June 1895. After reading aloud the school inspector's favourable report on the school's first semesters, the founding rector, Cecil Reddie, proposed a final toast to "the New Education, the New Generation, and the long-expected Regeneration". 1

Reddie and his staff had every reason to be satisfied, since Abbotsholme, located in Derbyshire, UK, had begun to attract imitators and followers from across Europe. Even so, scholars writing on the subject have interpreted its legacy in various ways. Some classic texts aligned with the perspective of the Abbotsholme founders, who advertised it as the "original school of the New Education movement". In contrast, in his pre-1914 work on the movement, Richard Selleck ignores Abbotsholme and its followers, concentrating instead on societal changes.³

CONTACT Lauri Luoto 🔯 laeflu@utu.fi 🔁 Department of Education, University of Turku, Turku, Fl-20014, Finland Cecil Reddie, *Abbotsholme* (London: George Allen, 1900), 235–40.

²"Original School of the New Education Movement", Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal, 9 October 1914. For interpretations of the legacy of Abbotsholme, see William Stewart, Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750-1950 (London: Macmillan, 1972), 378-401; and Robert Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969),

³Richard Selleck, *The New Education. The English Background 1870–1914* (Melbourne: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1968).

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A certain vagueness has surrounded New Education ever since. This also applies to terminology; the terms "radical", "new school", "progressive" and "new education" are sometimes used interchangeably. In this article, the term "New Education" is used instead of "progressivism", which is in keeping with the terminology used in recent works. Established at the turn of the twentieth century, the movement spread across the world to address the changing educational needs of societies and to accommodate new moral doctrines and discoveries in the field of child study. The ideas and practices of New Education included both a reformist attitude and an interest in experimental curricula and pedagogies. The necessity of creating a new type of education that would be more responsive to the requirements of a changing world was most famously theorised by the American philosopher John Dewey. The content of the reform varied in accordance with the political and cultural context of each country and, in Britain, included measures such as offering public schooling for more children. Pedagogically, one of the central concerns of the New Education was the personality of the child. This interest was powered by the rise of psychological studies and the ideas presented by prestigious scholars such as C. G. Jung and Jean Piaget.⁵

Though international in character, the New Education movement had national manifestations that were somewhat distinct from each other. In recent years, most studies of the movement have been transnational or comparative in nature, concentrating on networks through which the new ideas attracted new audiences from across national borders. By returning to its British roots, which have been less frequently discussed in the recent literature, the present article contributes to ongoing discussions about the movement in two ways. It demonstrates a novel yet well-founded method for analysing the emergence and dissemination of the educational reform. It also complements previous findings on the role of transnational influences and large pioneering organisations in spreading the New Education ideas by showing how the movement spread at the national level through the collective action of individual reformers.

The article continues the line of enquiry initiated by Kevin Brehony, who, drawing on the works of Mario Diani, proposed that New Education should be treated as a social movement rather than a paradigm. Methodologically, the article responds to Eckhardt Fuchs's and Peter Cunningham's calls for a wider application of the network approach to studying educational phenomena, especially progressive education. Given that the movement emerged in an age that witnessed such phenomena as "new psychology" and "new unionism", this article places New Education in the broad context of social

⁴Rita Hofstetter and Bernard Schneuwly, "Contrasted Views of New Education and its Transformation. Anticipation of a New Mode or Ambivalence?", *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 4–5 (2009): 453–4; and Alessandra Arce Hai et al., *Reimagining Teaching in Early 20th Century Experimental Schools* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 1–2.

⁵Hai et al., *Reimaging Teaching*, 2; and Kevin J. Brehony, "A New Education for a New Era: The Contribution of the Conferences of the New Education Fellowship to the Disciplinary Field of Education 1921–1938", *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2004): 734.

⁶Kevin J. Brehony, "From the Particular to the General, the Continuous to the Discontinuous: Progressive Education Revisited", *History of Education* 30, no. 5 (2001): 414.

⁷Hai et al., *Reimagining Teaching*; Brehony, "New Education"; and Sue C. Middleton, "New Zealand Theosophists in "New Education" Networks, 1880s–1938", *History of Education Review* 46, no. 1 (2017): 42–57.

⁸Brehony, "New Education", 742–4.

⁹Eckhardt Fuchs, "Networks and the History of Education", *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007): 185–197; and Peter Cunningham, "Innovators, Networks and Structures: Towards a Prosopography of Progressivism", *History of Education* 30, no. 5 (2001): 433.

reforms and the networks through which these reforms emerged. 10 By combining social movement theory and social network analysis, the present work follows the path Diani took in his recent work.11

Given its non-precise borders and lack of a set of guiding theories, even the movement's contemporaries appear to have found it difficult to situate. In 1914, Edmond Holmes, a central disseminator himself, wanted to keep some distance from the

supporters of the "new education," as it is sometimes called, who seem to think that to give freedom to children is to allow them to do whatever they please, leaving them not merely without restraint, but also without help or guidance. 12

This article discusses how the boundaries of the movement can be drawn based on the involvement of actors and alliance-building rather than on retrospectively trying to identify similarities and dissimilarities in their thought or assess whether the alliances they built can be considered progressive.

The article addresses three questions. First, was New Education a homogeneous movement or rather, as has been argued, a set of separate initiatives bound together largely by their opposition to the existing situation? Second, what kind of subgroups based on social interaction existed within the movement, and do these correspond to the groupings described in the literature? Third, how has the structure of the New Education movement evolved over time? These questions are approached through social network analysis and, where applicable, the conclusions are supported with documentary evidence.

Social network analysis as a tool for studying the history of education

Fifteen years ago, a special issue of Paedagogica Historica addressed the question of how network theories could be applied to research on the history of education. The approach taken by the issue's authors was intended to draw attention to agents who tend to be neglected, cover spaces beyond nation states and profit from network methods developed in other disciplines.¹³ Since then, interest in networks has grown. The network metaphor has occasionally been applied in the field of education history to explain the transnational spread of movements such as the monitorial system and the project method. 14 Several works have explored the role of individual and professional networks of educationalists in the dissemination of

¹⁰Richard Aldrich, "The New Education and the Institute of Education, University of London, 1919–1945", Paedagogica Historica 45, no. 4-5 (2009): 492, 487; and Selleck, New Education, 102.

¹¹Mario Diani, *The Cement of Civil Society: Studying Networks in Localities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). ¹²Edmond Holmes, In Defence of What Might Be (London: Constable, 1914), 128.

¹³Fuchs, "Networks", 185–97.

¹⁴Marcelo Caruso, "Disruptive Dynamics: The Spatial Dimensions of the Spanish Networks in the Spread of Monitorial Schooling (1815-1825)", Paedagogica Historica 43, no. 2 (2017): 271-82; María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, "The Transnational and National Dimensions of Pedagogical Ideas: The Case of the Project Method, 1918–1939", Paedagogica Historica 45, no. 4-5 (2009): 561-84; Jeroen J. H. Dekker, "Philanthropic Networks for Children at Risk in Nineteenth-century Europe", Paedagogica Historica 43, no. 2 (2017): 235–244; and Deirdre Raftery, "Teaching Sisters and transnational networks: recruitment and education expansion in the long nineteenth century", History of Education 44, no. 6 (2015): 717-28.

new ideas.¹⁵ While interest in the approach has grown, the idea of borrowing methods from other fields has only been partially implemented. Studies that apply formal social network analysis methods are rare.¹⁶

While social network analysis has been criticised for disregarding actors' wills, beliefs and values, given the diversity of views on the dynamics of the educational reforms, the method may help to advance discussions on the topic.¹⁷ The journey can then be continued using other approaches. In the present study, the social network approach is combined with documentary evidence, which validates and illustrates the networks identified and helps prevent over-deterministic interpretations.

The starting point for the analysis conducted in this study was Cunningham's widely cited 2001 article calling for an examination of the networks and structures through which individual progressives operated to understand why the competing and even contradictory interests they promoted were often perceived as a homogeneous movement. A two-mode network approach is used to study both the relationships between these individuals and the organisations through which they met, such as progressive schools and societies. The focus is not on the direct connections between individuals but on their associations with organisations, which created opportunities for the formation of social relationships and the transmission of ideas. One pioneering work that adopted such an approach was Naomi Rosenthal and colleagues' study of nineteenth-century women's reform in New York State, for which the authors compiled a list of women mentioned in three biographical dictionaries and then collected their organisational affiliations from biographies.

Most of the existing literature on the role of organisations in spreading the movement's ideas has focused on single organisations, such as the New Education Fellowship, New Ideals in Education and the London Day Training College.²⁰ In-depth studies have been conducted on the networks and communities that facilitated the spread of Froebel education and the Dalton Plan.²¹ The focus on single organisations further strengthens, albeit unintentionally, the narrative of competing organisations. However, studies of social movements indicate that activism often takes place across various organisations,

¹⁵Catherine Burke, "Humanism, Modernism and Designing Education: Exploring Progressive Relations between Australia, New Zealand and the West Riding of Yorkshire 1930s–1970s", *History of Education* 47, no. 2 (2018): 257–68; Kay Whitehead, "Women Educators and Transnational Networking in the Twentieth-Century Nursery School Movement", *Women's History Review* 23, no. 6 (2014): 957–75; Eckhardt Fuchs, "The Creation of New International Networks in Education: The League of Nations and Educational Organizations in the 1920s", *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2017): 199–209; and Michael Omolewa, "UNESCO as a Network", *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2017): 211–221.

¹⁶E.g. Gary McCullogh and Steven Cowan, *A Social History of Educational Studies and Research* (London: Routledge, 2018), 65–93.

¹⁷Marcelo Caruso, "Disruptive Dynamics", 272.

¹⁸Cunningham, "Innovators, Networks and Structures", 433.

¹⁹Naomi Rosenthal et al., "Social Movements and Network Analysis: A Case Study of Nineteenth-Century Women's Reform in New York State", *American Journal of Sociology* 90, no. 5 (1985): 1022–54.

²⁰Celia Jenkins, "New Education and its Emancipatory Interests (1920–1950)", *History of Education* 29, no. 2 (2000): 139–51; John Howlett, "The Formation, Development and Contribution of the New Ideals in Education Conferences, 1914–1937", *History of Education* 46, no. 4 (2017): 475; and Aldrich, "New Education", 485–502. Where not otherwise indicated, the New Education Fellowship refers, in this article, to the English section of the worldwide organisation.

²¹Amy Palmer and Jane Read, eds., *British Froebelian Women from the Mid-Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century: A Community of Progressive Educators* (London: Routledge, 2021); María del Mar del Pozo Andrés and Sjaak Braster, "The Power of Networks in the Marketing of Pedagogical Ideals: The Dalton Plan in Great Britain (1920–1925)", *History of Education* 47, no. 6 (2018): 840–64; Jane Read, "Froebelian women: networking to promote professional status and educational change in the nineteenth century", *History of Education* 32, no. 1 (2003): 17–33; and Kerry Bethell, "To Bring into Play: Miss Mary Richmond's Utilization of Kindred Networks in the Diffusion of Kindergarten Ideals into Practice", *History of Education* 35, no. 2 (2006): 225–244.

either in parallel or successively. Activism, once initiated, can find new targets that have few or no substantial connections to the original cause. The discussion presented here builds on the work of Alessandra Arce Hai and colleagues, who analysed various New Education experiments and explored how educational ideas travelled across boundaries and were adapted to different contexts. This kind of analysis involves consideration of the spaces in which ideas travelled (which are not limited to particular times and locations), the frontiers of the reformatory groups, and the governing structures that were resistant to change. The context of the reformatory groups are the governing structures are the change.

The present analysis builds partly on the decade-long research tradition on board interlocks, that is, individuals who sit on the boards of several organisations and who can, thus, disseminate information between those organisations.²⁴ It also follows a stream of research on shared editorial board members that has identified clusters of like-minded journals.²⁵ Focusing on the long-term development of the reform, the analysis does not track the exchange of ideas between individual reformers, which has been the focus of some earlier studies, but instead investigates more general grouping patterns that occurred at the network level.

Research data and approach

Most of the texts that address the trajectories discussed here refer to five main sourcebooks. Therefore, reputational sampling was applied, and persons mentioned in these books were identified for closer analysis. This selection method, whereby multiple sources are examined in parallel, facilitates a balancing of authors' viewpoints. William Boyd and Wyatt Rawson's background in the New Education Fellowship influenced the selection of persons included in their study *The Story of New Education*, whereas William Stewart's religious leanings led him to highlight the contributions of Quakers and Theosophists in *Progressives and Radicals in English Education*. Selleck has contributed two reference works: *The New Education*, 1870–1914, which is ordered according to ideas, and *English Primary Education and the Progressives*, 1914–1939, which is arranged by chronological phases. Chronological ordering is also applied in the last sourcebook, *English Progressive Schools* by Robert Skidelsky.

²²Florence Passy, "Social Networks Matter. But How?", in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, ed. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21–2.

²³Hai et al., *Reimagining Teaching*, 2–6.

²⁴Matthew Smith and Yasaman Sarabi, "'What do interlocks do' Revisited – A Bibliometrics Analysis", *Management Research Review* 44, no. 4 (2021): 642.

²⁵E.g. Manuel Goyanes and Luis de-Marcos, "Academic Influence and Invisible Colleges through Editorial Board Interlocking in Communication Sciences: A Social Network Analysis of Leading Journals", *Scientometrics* 123 (2020): 791–811.

²⁶The sourcebooks consulted include Selleck, *New Education*; Skidelsky, *English Progressive Schools*; Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*; William Boyd and Wyatt Rawson, *Story of the New Education* (London: Heinemann, 1965) and Richard Selleck, *English Primary Education and the Progressives*, 1914–1939 (London: Routledge, 1972).

²⁷The books are mentioned as seminal in John Howlett, *Progressive Education* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8–9; Cunningham, "Innovators, Networks and Structures", 437–8; Brehony, "From the Particular", 415; and Aldrich, "New Education", 487–9.

²⁸For the background to the book, see Cunningham, "Innovators, Networks and Structures", 438; and Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, ix. The book is an updated and refocused version of his two-volume study *The Educational Innovators I–II*, co-authored with W. P. McCann.

These reference books mention 948 individuals who were active during the period covered in this study. The lack of agreement on the most important persons in the movement is exemplified by the fact that 79 per cent of those individuals are mentioned in one book only. All persons mentioned in the sourcebooks were listed, and the list was shortened using cascading criteria. Excluding individuals who contributed mainly before or after the period covered or who were not presented as relevant eliminates 781 persons. Some of them were mentioned as prominent in one source, but their significance was not confirmed in any other source. Another 36 persons contributed primarily in a country other than the UK. Investigating their domestic and transnational networks would not only significantly increase the scope of the study but would also be unnecessary for the purpose of uncovering the structure of the British movement. However, since transnational influences clearly shaped the movement in many respects, the contribution of these people is discussed in the text, where applicable.²⁹ Twenty-two persons, such as the socialist poet William Morris, were not so much part of the movement but rather inspired it through their texts. Finally, 51 persons made contributions that were considered local or momentary. As principals or board members of single organisations, their influence hardly extended beyond the walls of their institutions. After these exclusions, the final list consisted of 58 persons.

Some of the individuals introduced in books were inspirers of others or embodiments of the reform rather than actual forerunners. Homer Lane is the only person mentioned in all five sourcebooks. Having moved to Britain from the USA, he ran a school for delinquent children called Little Commonwealth between 1913 and 1918 in Dorsetshire before returning to the USA. Lane's idea of allowing pupils more freedom attracted supporters and followers, even though his own network was small. Others, such as Beatrice Ensor, founder of the New Education Fellowship, played a more practical role in bringing people together and creating new forums for reform.

In addition to the reference books identified above, biographies, histories, the *Dictionary of National Biography* and Aldrich and Gordon's *Dictionary of British Educationists* were consulted to identify the organisations in which individuals participated. The analysis was performed until no new connections were found. This approach meant that the selection was not limited to organisations mentioned in the initial sourcebooks nor any, inevitably vague, criteria limited to progressive organisations. The educators sometimes gathered in organisations that were neither progressive nor related to education per se but that were nevertheless forums where educational thought was disseminated and contacts made. The number of affiliations gathered from secondary sources was 203, which constitutes an average of 3.5 affiliations per person. The high number of affiliations identified validates this method for revealing how the New Education influencers grouped together based on their interests.

²⁹The networking of Theosophists across the British Commonwealth has been well-documented in Middleton, "New Zealand Theosophists", whereas the role of the international New Education Fellowship is described in detail in Brehony, "New Education". This article only refers to the English sections of these two organisations. The present research data are not suitable for assessing the social structure of other national sections or the extent to which, if at all, they co-operated with their English colleagues. If any of the organisations studied other than those named above had reputational members from abroad, this is indicated in the text.



The source material had a dual role. It was analysed for insights into the individuals and organisations involved and was also the source from which the quantitative dataset of educators' affiliations was derived. Personal narratives and historical events documented in the sourcebooks provided a frame for analysing the significance of the observations from the social network analysis.

Identification of phases from the perspective of institutionalisation

The New Education movement covers a long period. While numerous remarkable events took place in the 1910s and 1920s, many authors start their discussion from the founding of the first progressive schools at the end of the nineteenth century or even from previous societal events. The emergence of important new forums ended in the mid-1930s. The temporal boundaries of this analysis were drawn from those of the sourcebooks. As will be discussed in detail later in the article, some of the reformers devoted their life's work to the reform, which created continuity across the decades.

Clearly such a long period had different stages. Skidelsky presented a three-stage model of progressive schooling. According to this model, the pioneering schools constituted the first wave, and a more libertarian second wave of schools emerged after the First World War. The third wave, which sought to take pupils outside the school community into the world of real problems, took place in the 1930s. 30 Although each wave introduced its own accents, the classification is relatively imprecise and limited to the activities conducted in schools. Howlett noted that this model does not allow for the inherent ideological and temporal untidiness that inevitably results when the historian attempts to delineate and pinpoint the origin and spread of ideas.³¹

An apparent temporal shift occurred in relation to how reform was pursued rather than to the agenda itself. During the first decades of the twentieth century, educational reformers who had been on the periphery of institutionalised agencies launched their own editorial vehicles and social and scientific events as a means of acquiring influence and testing theories and, thus, became institutionalised.³² Views on when this institutionalisation took place vary somewhat. In their comparative examination, Rita Hofstetter and Bernard Schneuwly referred to the first decades of the twentieth century as the start of institutionalisation, while Selleck considered 1914 a turning point marking the end of the first phase of the movement in the UK.³³ At that time, many remarkable organisations were founded, such as the Montessori Society in 1912 and New Ideals in Education in 1916, and others dismantled. In a social sense, the shift took place in several ways. New organisations were formed, and individuals were asked to join the boards. Some organisations merged with others and had to decide what to keep from legacy organisations and which traditions should be revised. As the new forums emerged, the individuals involved mixed with each other, and ideas travelled.

The demarcation of the two phases was based on the identification of two periods across which the continuation of connections was minimal, indicating a shift in terms of both the actors and the focus. The first phase is 1875–1905, and the second is 1905–1935.

³⁰Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools, 13, 22.

³¹Howlett, *Progressive Education*, 146.

³²Brehony, "New Education", 734–5; Selleck, *English Primary Education*, 75, 84.
³³Hofstetter and Schneuwly, "Contrasted Views", 453; and Selleck, *New Education*, xi.

The social shift was caused by the retirement of pioneering reformers and the establishment of new organisations. Only 20 of the 203 affiliations identified (ten per cent) persisted from the first phase into the second phase. All the others either had ended by the start of the second phase or arose thereafter. Given the emergence of new organisations to disseminate ideas and the fact that the organisations that emerged during the first phase were merely small pilot organisations, the first period is termed the preinstitutional phase, and the second is taken as the institutional phase.

Evidently, the shift was also related to social changes. As a result of pressure from the reformists, the 1902 Education Act attempted to widen access to and increase state control over schools by establishing a system of local educational authorities. The Act, although it facilitated the growth of secondary schools, has also been blamed for consolidating an unequal education system based on social class differences and for failing to alleviate the tensions in educational debates. The general election of 1906, when educational questions were high on the agenda, returned the Liberals to office after a long period of continuous Conservative rule. This led to social reforms commonly known as the Children's Charter. However, calls for reform persisted until some stability returned to educational discussion and practice in the late 1930s. As some of the demands of the reformers were echoed by the government, attention was redirected to new questions.

Subgroups within the movement

³⁶Selleck, New Education, 335–6.

Although the New Education movement has been perceived as heterogeneous, there is no consensus on how it can be divided into thematic subgroups. The divisions used by the sourcebooks referred to in this study have received mixed receptions. Stewart has been criticised for grouping thinkers and educators who have little in common with one another into a single chapter, while Skidelsky's emphasis on a sharp tension between romanticism and rationalism in child-centred ideology has been questioned. Doubts have been raised as to whether it is possible to distinguish progressive schools from traditional ones other than by arbitrary criteria.³⁵

In his seminal work, Richard Selleck identified six subgroups that emerged during the first decades of New Education: practical educationalists, social reformers, naturalists, Herbartianists, scientific educationalists and moral educationists. Selleck's list of six groups is not exhaustive. Since some of the educationalists are mentioned in connection with several of the groups, they should be considered as representing schools of thought rather than social groups. Sir John Adams, who became the first professor of education at the University of London in 1902, is discussed in relation to all six groups, which illustrates the overlapping nature of the groupings. In his subsequent book on progressive schools after 1914, Selleck gave up trying to define the movement and concluded as follows:

³⁴Gary McCulloch, ed., *Educational Reform Legislation in the 20th Century* (London: Routledge, 2019), 2–3; Selleck, *English Primary Education*, 150, 129; Hofstetter and Schneuwly, "Contrasted Views", 453; and Howlett, *Progressive Education*, 234–6

³⁵Kevin J. Brehony, "What's Left of Progressive Primary Education", in *Rethinking Radical Education*, ed. Ali Rattansi and David Reeder (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1992): 214; and Howlett, *Progressive Education*, 9.

It should be clear, therefore, that if the progressives are considered not as theorists but as missionaries, as people determined to convert others to a new educational life, some of the defects in their ideas (which have, correctly, disturbed educational philosophers) become advantages.³⁷

For the present analysis, subgroups were defined based on interlocking memberships. It is evident that some individuals involved themselves more deeply in the activity of the movement than others. The affiliations included here were either mentioned in biographies or histories of the organisations or derived from the individuals occupying significant roles in those organisations, such as serving as board members. Both are signs of some importance. No further grading of the strength of the ties was performed, as the practical significance of a connection cannot always be inferred from the position the individual held. Instead, the focus of the analysis is on the wider collectives the organisations formed through shared members.

Decisions on whom to ask to occupy influential positions in an organisation and whether such requests were accepted are signs of the direction in which the organisation was moving and how it was seen from the outside. Hence, in 1906, when Lord Avebury was considered for the role of president of the Moral Instruction League, his main concern, which led to his refusal, was related to the question of whether the League did "oppose Bible teaching, or only endeavour to secure Moral teaching". While he supported moral education, it seemed to him "a mistake to mix up the two questions". During the following two decades, the League followed lines closer to those articulated by Lord Avebury. It became increasingly focused on civics, adult education and regional surveys and made several name changes to reflect these shifts in emphasis. The correspondence between Lord Avebury and the League officials can therefore be seen as part of a process whereby the League redefined its mission.

The case of the King Alfred School Society, which ran a progressive school of the same name and was a powerful pressure group, reflects a similar pattern. In the early 1920s, the school moved to a rustic environment at Manor Wood to become an advocate of openair education. Thus, it was not surprising that after the move, Margaret Macmillan, one of Britain's chief supporters of the cause, joined its council in 1924.⁴¹

To identify subgroups during the pre-institutional phase, a two-mode faction procedure was performed using the UCINET software package. Factioning refers to the use of an optimisation algorithm that assigns the individuals and organisations to two clusters, or factions, to maximise a fit criterion. In an idealised pattern, all the people within a faction would be connected to organisations within the same faction and would have no connections to the organisations of another faction. In this theoretical situation, within-faction density would be 100 per cent and cross-factional density would be 0 per cent. However, real-life social networks are seldom close to this theoretical ideal.

³⁷Selleck, English Primary Education, 84.

³⁸Horace Gordon Hutchinson, *Life of Sir John Lubbock Lord Avebury*, Vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1914), 226.

³⁹lbid.

⁴⁰ Selleck, New Education, 311; Susannah Wright, "Educating the Secular Citizen in English Schools, 1897–1938", Cultural and Social History 15, no. 2 (2018): 220.

Alfred School and the Progressive Movement, 1898–1998 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 76.
 P. Borgatti, M. G. Everett and L. C. Freeman, UCINET 6 for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis (Harvard: Analytic Technologies, 2002). https://sites.google.com/site/ucinetsoftware (accessed 12 December 2021).

In the present analysis, it would require all the people considered to have more than ten active memberships. However, the greater the difference between the densities, the more explanatory is the grouping created by the algorithm.

The division of these connections into two factions is depicted as a bipartite network in Figure 1, where individuals are represented by circles and organisations by squares. For the upper faction, within-faction density is 22 per cent and cross-factional density is 3 per cent. For the lower faction, the densities are 19 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively. The results indicate that there was a clear tendency among the people considered to affiliate with organisations within the same faction. As will be discussed later, this might be explained by both ideological similarities between the organisations and personal bonds between the people.

The factioning algorithm assigns all persons to one of the factions, even if their preference is not entirely clear. Therefore, regarding the people who are on the edge of a faction, the intention is not to take a position on their leanings but rather to identify wider collectives among New Education reformers.

There are several other methods for dividing affiliation networks into clusters. 43 The factions could be divided into even smaller units using more sophisticated network methods. However, this might reproduce the selection bias of the biographers or grant too much weight to single memberships, the practical importance of which, in terms of

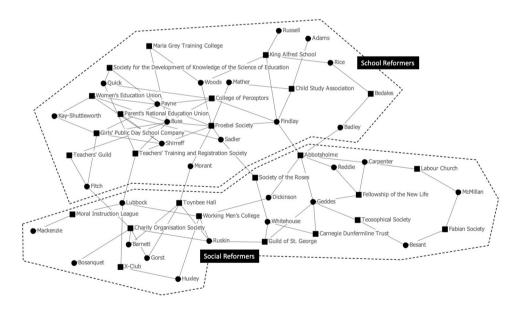


Figure 1. Shared memberships of societies and schools among individuals who influenced the New Education movement during the pre-institutional phase (ca. 1875-ca. 1905). The division into two factions is the result of maximising the density of the relationships within the factions.

⁴³A comparison of some methods is available in L. C. Freeman, "Finding Social Groups: A Meta-analysis of the Southern Women Data", in Dynamic Social Network Modelling and Analysis, ed. R. Breiger, K. Carley and P. Pattison (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003), 21-5.

disseminating ideas, is not easily traceable. By aggregating people who tend to convene in the same societies, the factioning method offers a systematic and objective way of identifying subgroups. This allows the groupings to be validated using historical sources, as will be done in the following sections.

The lower faction comprises social reformers and socialists who gathered in organisations such as the Charity Organisation Society and Toynbee Hall and were behind the founding of the first progressive school, Abbotsholme. This faction's closest counterpart in Selleck's classification is the one termed social reformers. Therefore, the group is given that name. The upper faction focused on the promotion of girls' schooling and the teaching profession. The name given to this group, which does not have a clear counterpart in Selleck's classification, is school reformers.

Social reformers of the pre-institutional phase

This group of social reformers began to form even before the period covered here and had different manifestations across time. Some of them participated in the Working Men's College, founded in 1854, before joining other initiatives. The intention of the founders, who felt that teachers had as much, if not more, to learn from working men as students had from teachers, was to hire staff from among its alumni. 44 The prominent art critic John Ruskin, who was involved as an art teacher from the very beginning, described his work at the College as providing a liberal education: "My efforts are directed not to making a carpenter an artist, but to making him happier as carpenter". 45 Later, Ruskin inspired the founders of Toynbee Hall, another initiative aimed at improving the conditions of working-class men. Through the Guild of St George, which he had founded in 1871, Ruskin attracted followers who further united the members of the faction with respect to their social and educational aspirations.⁴⁶

John Lubbock (later Lord Avebury), another Working Men's College activist, served as the College's principal from 1883 to 1899. During his later career, Lubbock was involved in so many initiatives that his daughter recalled later that his family thought he had an annual general meeting of some society every evening.⁴⁷ As the founders gradually retreated from the daily business of the College, it fell out of favour with New Educationalists. Another organisation, the Workers' Education Association, was founded in 1903 to provide education on a larger scale than that offered by the Working Men's College. It was built on different principles, and several recognised educationalists, such as Susan Isaacs and Margaret Macmillan, joined as officials.

The most central connector within the social reformers was Patrick Geddes. He was involved in Ruskin's Guild of St George, and his interests were also directed at primary education. While Geddes's role in building personal networks has been described well elsewhere, his contribution to the New Education movement has not been discussed in detail.⁴⁸ Geddes was a Scottish biologist who, for most of his career, held academic

⁴⁴J. F. C. Harrison, A History of the Working Men's College 1854–1954 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 28–9, 70–1. ⁴⁵lbid., 31–2, 66.

⁴⁶Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 52-5.

⁴⁷Harrison, Working Men's College, 115.

⁴⁸John Scott and Ray Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014).

positions in this field. However, he is better known for his contributions to the development of sociology and town planning. Geddes's importance in this context lay in his ability to connect people. Cecil Reddie, the founding rector of Abbotsholme, worked for Geddes in Edinburgh and was inspired by his thought. Through their association, Reddie was introduced to the Fellowship of the New Life, the organisation behind the founding of Abbotsholme. Geddes was a long-term friend of progressive schools. He served as a member of the Abbotsholme council and was president of King Alfred School until the 1920s 49

Other long-time friends of Geddes included Annie Besant, the remarkable Theosophy leader who introduced Geddes to Indian Theosophists, and John Howard Whitehouse, a future parliamentarian.⁵⁰ Whitehouse befriended Geddes when working for the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust in 1903-1904, and they continued their cooperation through Ruskin's Guild of St George. Between 1910 and 1918, Whitehouse served as a Liberal member of parliament and demanded universal secondary education across class lines. After failing to win a seat in the 1918 election, Whitehouse founded Bembridge School, which he operated along Ruskinian lines.⁵¹

This article focuses on the building of a social movement around New Education in a domestic context rather than on the cross-border connections that brought the ideas to Britain in the first place. However, it is useful to bear in mind Geddes's international connections, When visiting the USA in 1900, Geddes met G. S. Hall, whose pioneering works on child study had inspired the founders of the British Child Study Association a few years earlier. The two men continued their communication and have been referred to as friends. 52 When Hall paid a visit to the UK in 1906, his schedule included a stay with Patrick Geddes in Scotland.⁵³ During his American tour of 1900, Patrick Geddes also visited the experimental school of John Dewey, who was just beginning to receive wider attention in the USA after the publication of School and Society. Geddes also had a connection to Hall and Dewey through the International Association for the Advancement of Science, Arts and Education, where he served as co-secretary.⁵⁴ Dewey had noticed Geddes's work even before the visit and wrote to him to express his "very great indebtedness to you for your new ideas, inspiration and courage" and to say that he would be "grateful to you if you would put me on the track of your 'Interpreter'". 55 Despite their occasional contact, their thoughts on education differed in certain respects. Whereas Dewey developed the practice of crafts within his school, Geddes thought that children should mainly learn in an apprenticeship fashion in the real world.56

⁴⁹lbid., 148; Brooks, King Alfred School, 76; Stewart, Progressives and Radicals, 233, 384; and Peter Searby, "The New School and the New Life: Cecil Reddie (1858–1932) and the Early Years of Abbotsholme School", History of Education 18, no. 1 (1989): 5-6.

⁵⁰Scott and Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology*, 50–1.

⁵¹James S. Dearden, "Whitehouse, Ruskin, and Bembridge", in Keeper of the Flame: John Howard Whitehouse 1873–1955 (Ruskin Library, 2005), 16-19; and Scott and Bromley, Envisioning Sociology, 148.

⁵²Paddy Kitchen, A Most Unsettling Person (London: Victor Gollancz, 1975), 186.

⁵³J. C. Hudson to Patrick Geddes, 12 September 1906, University of Strathclyde Archives and Special Collections, Glasgow, United Kingdom (hereafter USASC), T-GED/9/702; G. S. Hall to Patrick Geddes, 21 June 1911, USASC, T-GED/9/1016.

⁵⁴Kitchen, *Most Unsettling Person*, 185.

⁵⁵John Dewey to Patrick Geddes, 13 April 1889, USASC, T-GED/9/214.

⁵⁶Kitchen, Most Unsettling Person, 185–6.

Geddes's staunch commitment to learning through communal work later brought him in contact with youth work, especially within the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, where he served as a board member. Due to its popularity among progressivists, the Order has received much attention in the literature despite its marginal membership. Echoing the tones of some critiques that emerged in the 1910s, discussions have largely focused on the Order's opposition to the militaristic tones of Robert Baden-Powell's Scouts.⁵⁷ However, Geddes's concerns had rather to do with the learning environment. While adopting a favourable attitude towards both the Scouts and the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, he repeatedly pushed Scouting in the direction of exploring and occupationally relevant training. This direction is exemplified in one of his letters, which refers to an experimental practice in Edinburgh where the schoolboys "get out with the herring fishers week by week as Ship's cooks".⁵⁸

The school reformers' group takes shape

The second faction was led by early advocates of raising the status of teaching as a profession and promoters of schooling opportunities for girls. The group included remarkable women, such as the energetic sisters Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff. In 1871, they launched the Women's Education Union, which in turn spawned the Girls' Public Day School Company, an organisation that ran schools preparing girls for further studies. Based on the experiences of her earlier fundraising efforts, Grey decided that the new schools could not depend on endowments for their success but had to be launched as commercial ventures.⁵⁹ The shareholders she attracted included noted educationalists, such as Joseph Payne, a founding member, and Mary Buss, the first woman fellow of the College of Preceptors, an early professional association and learned society for teachers.

The same formula was applied to teacher training, which had proved difficult to advance. R.H. Quick of the College of Preceptors described the situation in 1876: "The fates seem against the training of teachers. Our committee today was too large; when so many have to discuss a document they never agree". 60 Two years later, the Maria Grey Training College was founded as a private venture. It was the first institute to prepare students professionally for secondary-school teaching. These developments, complemented by the introduction of compulsory education, created room for the Shirreff sisters' final project, the founding of the Froebel Society. Emily Shirreff was the second president of the Society and supported it both financially and through her papers on the theory and practice of kindergarten teaching.⁶¹

Links were also established with the progressive school movement. The independent progressive school King Alfred, founded in 1898, was successful in attracting national leaders of the progressive movement to its council. Around the turn of the century, it established links to other organisations within the school reformers group, such as the Parents' National Educational Union, the Child Study Association, the Froebel Society

⁵⁷Scott and Bromley, *Envisioning Sociology*, 152–7.

⁵⁸Patrick Geddes to Macdonald, 13 March 1908, USASC, T-GED/9/824.

⁵⁹Edward Ellsworth, *Liberators of the Female Mind* (London: Greenwood Press, 1979), 184–5; and Laurie Magnus, *The* Jubilee Book of the Girls' Public Day School Trust 1873-1923 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 16.

⁶⁰Ellsworth, *Liberators*, 214, 216, 221.

⁶¹Josephine Kamm, Indicative Past: A Hundred Years of The Girls' Public Day School Trust (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), 87.

and the Teacher's Guild, inviting several of them to have representation on its council.⁶² The school recruited its first rector, C.E. Rice from Bedales, whose founding rector, John Badley, recalled as "the first of a dozen members of our Staff who had gone from their experience at Bedales to become Heads of schools of their own, and thus helped to diffuse more widely the new educational ideal".63

Towards the end of the first phase, the affiliation networks described in this section dissolved. This was partly due to generational change among the reformers and partly the result of social changes. Over the course of the late nineteenth century, gradual improvements were made in women's education and teacher training.⁶⁴ In some cases, new organisations, either public or private, were founded to address the same issues that had initiated activism some decades earlier. The legacy of the phase lies in the younger generation of disciples who had participated in key organisations and would play significant roles in the next phase, especially in the field of educational scholarship.

Michael Sadler, who had served briefly as the president of the Froebel Society, resigned from the Board of Education in 1903 and became professor of education at the University of Leeds. 65 In the same year, J. J. Findlay accepted a professorship in education at the University of Manchester. He had acted as a link between the early progressive schools Abbotsholme and King Alfred School. 66 John Adams of the Child Study Association became the first professor of education at the University of London, while Alice Woods, a friend of Sadler's and Adam's, was appointed principal of the Maria Grey Training College to promote secondary education.⁶⁷ This was a concern Adams and Woods shared with Sadler, whose interests had shifted from working-class adult education to education for younger generations.⁶⁸

As the pioneers of the movement were ready to pass on the torch, the successors took over and rearranged the field. Millicent Mackenzie, who had followed in her husband's footsteps to become a member of the Moral Education League, was appointed as associate professor of education in 1904, making her one of the first female professors in the United Kingdom. The transfer of key actors to universities and teacher training colleges prefigured the beginning of a new era. The new roles facilitated the spreading of the new ideas to even larger audiences, and the academics acted as catalysts for institutionalisation.

Evolution of the movement during the institutional phase

Towards the end of the century, the social structure of the movement began to evolve. Some individuals resigned from posts to redirect their thoughts. Annie Besant, who would become a Theosophy leader, resigned from the Fabian Society in the early 1890s,

⁶²Brooks, King Alfred School, 61, 89.

⁶³John Badley, *Memoirs and Reflections* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), 128.

⁶⁴Mary Hilton and Pam Hirsch, Introduction to *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790–1930*, ed. Mary Hilton and Pam Hirsch (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 9-14.

⁶⁵Roy Lowe, "Sadler, Sir Michael Ernest", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Published 4 October 2007. https://doi. org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35905 (accessed 12 December 2021).

⁶⁶Ron Brookes, "Findlay, Joseph John", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Published 23 September 2004. https://doi. org/10.1093/ref:odnb/46690 (accessed 12 December 2021).

⁶⁷P. B. Ballard, "Adams, Sir John", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Published 4 October 2007. https://doi.org/10. 1093/ref:odnb/30334 (accessed 12 December 2021); and Margaret Bryant, "Woods, Alice Augusta", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Published 26 May 2005. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48574 (accessed 12 December 2021). ⁶⁸Lynda Grier, Achievement in Education. The Work of Michael Ernest Sadler (London: Constable, 1952), 29.

a move recorded in the membership list of the Society by a laconic note: "Gone to Theosophy". 69 More often, changes in the network structure were due to organisational renewal. Some organisations, such as the Fellowship of the New Life, were short-lived. Having backed the founding of Abbotsholme, the fellowship was split into the Fabian Society and the original branch, which was disbanded by 1898. Other organisations, such as the Girls Public Day School Company, continued in operation but no longer received attention from notable educational reformers, who instead joined newly founded organisations addressing the same issues. One such organisation was the London Day Training College, which was founded in 1902 to provide training for teachers. At around the same time, John Ruskin's disciples gathered to coordinate their work in organisations, such as the National League of Workers with Boys, founded in 1906.⁷⁰

Even larger movements emerged after the rapid spread of Montessori education. The Montessori Society of the United Kingdom was incorporated in 1912 and had many recognised educationalists on its original committee. Maria Montessori herself acted as its president. Other major organisations included New Ideals in Education, an umbrella organisation founded in 1916 that was loosely associated with the Montessori Society, and the New Education Fellowship, which gathered members, especially individuals with Theosophical leanings, from 1925. While organisations of the pre-institutional phase tended to be small-scale experiments aimed at influencing society mostly through their own followers and exchanges between staff members, the newly founded organisations aimed to have a more direct impact.

Although these organisations had less in common in terms of their aims, their memberships were interconnected. An affiliation network of connections in the institutional phase is presented in Figure 2. There were 33 organisations with at least two recognised persons among their officials. Even though the numbers of both people and organisations increased compared with the pre-institutional phase, the networks are almost equally dense. A certain distribution can be observed in Figure 2, with supporters of Theosophy occupying the top right corner. Those on the left side of Figure 2 leaned more towards child study and novel classroom practices. Unlike the pre-institutional phase, the institutional phase does not have a stable factional structure. Even though some smaller alliances can be observed, some of the educationalists served on the boards or committees of organisations that were apparently distant from each other.

Since this study deals with the most interconnected members of the movement, dominant organisations did not emerge in the same way as they probably would have in an analysis of full membership lists. For instance, the Child Study Association had at best over 1400 members, including scholars and interested amateurs. Even though the Association obtained support from reformists such as Margaret Macmillan, it played a lesser role among the elite than it did among teachers and others generally interested in educational matters.71

⁶⁹Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 255.

⁷⁰Eagles, After Ruskin, 238.

⁷¹The London branch of the Child Study Association amalgamated with the Childhood Society in 1907 to form the Child Study Society. In 1923, the Association was dissolved and the Child Study Society, as its most successful branch, preserved its tradition. The organisation is referred to as the Child Study Association throughout the article. See Adrian Wooldridge, Measuring the Mind: Education and Psychology in England c.1860-c.1990 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 40-1; and Selleck, New Education, 278-9.

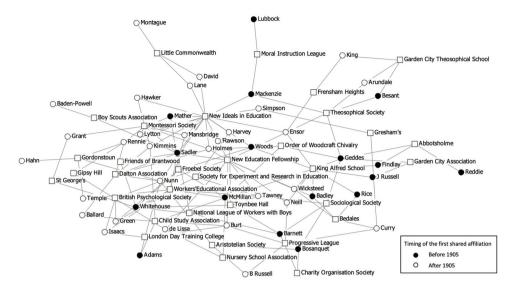


Figure 2. Shared memberships of societies and schools among individuals who influenced the New Education movement during the institutional phase (ca. 1905-ca. 1935). Shared memberships that persist from the previous phase of the movement are emphasised.

The relevance of the connections is further validated by the fact that the board-linked organisations sometimes sought cooperation. The Society for Research in Education and the National League of Workers with Boys, both served by J. H. Whitehouse, merged in the 1920s. 72 When the Froebel Society sought to amalgamate with a like-minded organisation, it turned to the Nursery School Association and the Child Study Association, both of which were board-linked with the Froebel Society through Margaret Macmillan.

Individuals whose involvement in the network continued after 1905 are emphasised in Figure 2, which indicates how ideas spread. Pioneers, such as Whitehouse and Badley, who had founded their first organisations in their mid-twenties, were still accepting new prestigious positions in the field a quarter of a century later. Badley, though not a natural joiner, became vice president of the newly founded New Education Fellowship in the 1920s, and Whitehouse, then aged 59, took on the presidency of the Froebel Society in 1932. Therefore, as the reform matured and became socially accepted, so did the reformers. Michael Sadler, who was president of the New Education Fellowship and campaigned at the time for various issues ranging from Montessori education to the Dalton Plan, was close to being nominated as education secretary in David Lloyd George's government and was knighted for his services in 1922.

To assess how much the cohesiveness of the movement, illustrated in Figure 2, was caused by individual brokers being active in various organisations, a further analysis was performed. Figure 3 shows a projection of the network, whereby connections between organisations caused by a single person only were omitted. By concentrating on strong connections, it is possible to discern close-knit groups whose cohesion was built on multiple overlapping members and officials. Instead of being fragmented into small competing persuasions, the structure is composed of two components. Some organisations remained

⁷²Keeper of the Flame, 4.

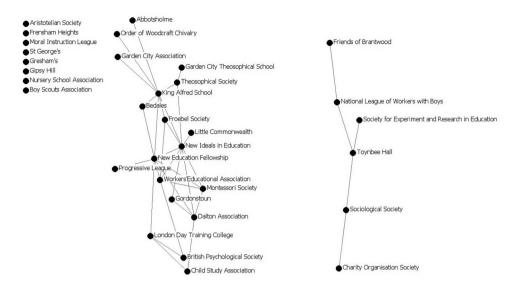


Figure 3. Strong connections between societies and schools as measured by multiple reputational members in common during the institutional phase of the New Education movement (ca. 1905–ca. 1935). Two components emerged, while some organisations remained isolates.

isolates and thus are not strongly connected to either core, but, for the most part, all the distinguished New Education organisations still form one core. Another core is formed around organisations that concentrated on social questions that went beyond education. While the latter group of organisations is not so well known as a group in this context, they did attract officials frequently mentioned in New Education sourcebooks. Besides Geddes, Sadler and Whitehouse, who have been discussed already, these included R. H. Tawney, who had once been vice president of the New Education Fellowship and was a friend of Sadler's and whose *Secondary Education for All* informed Labour policy for a generation.⁷³ In addition to confirming the interconnectedness of the New Education elite, this analysis shows the persistence of the two-group model that characterised the pre-institutional phase.

Based on previous scholarship, it can be assumed that individual umbrella organisations played an important role in bringing reformists together. Two of these were particularly significant. New Ideals in Education conferences were held between 1914 and 1937, with a few hundred participants comprising practising teachers and scholars. The New Education Fellowship began arranging international conferences in 1921, which attracted up to 2000 participants later in the decade, and founded national sections. These two organisations attracted the most participants from the persons included in this study, and, as a final part of the analysis, affiliations to them were excluded from the data set. Had the movement mostly cohered around these two organisations, the network should have been split into smaller fragments when they were removed from the analysis. However, only two structural changes emerged. Wyatt Rawson, an original member of New Ideals in Education who later served as an

⁷³John Cannon, ed., *The Oxford Companion to British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 909.

⁷⁴Howlett, "Formation, Development and Contribution", 459–60.

⁷⁵Ibid., 461; Brehony, "New Education", 734.

executive member of the board of the New Education Fellowship and had no other memberships, became an isolate. Little Commonwealth, which was identified above as a short-lived experiment, became another isolate. The conferences held by these organisations were undoubtedly important for the dissemination and institutionalisation of New Education. However, for prestigious educationalists who served on the boards or general committees of these gatherings, they appear not to have been the only forums for interaction.

Discussion

Both scholars and those directly involved in the New Education movement have observed that the movement comprised a variety of groups with imprecise boundaries. No consensus has been reached on the structure of the movement. The present article uses social movement and network perspectives to shed light on the structure and development of New Education. Regarding the institutionalisation of the reform, the article reveals that around 1905 several changes took place in the organisations involved and their membership profiles, which laid the ground for wider dissemination of ideas, thus initiating the institutional phase of the movement.

During the pre-institutional phase and, to some extent, even later, the movement was characterised by a division into two subgroups. The social reformers addressed topical social political issues on a more general level, while the school reformers addressed in more direct ways the development of novel classroom practices and the professionalisation of teaching. Although the two camps developed somewhat independently, they became mixed during the institutional phase, as the same persons were involved in several societies. These observations demonstrate the value of social network analysis for historical scholarship. While traceable influences between people can be best understood by close reading of historical documents, there is another level of influence that is often out of the reach of traditional historical methods. This occurs when individuals spread ideas between board-linked organisations and are introduced to new people with whom they became excited about the new ideas.

Some of the organisations involved in the pre-institutional phase were small-scale, short-lived pilots. However, the individuals involved established useful connections and shared understandings that they capitalised upon later. According to their biographers' observations, many of the reformers who participated in the movement for long periods established personal friendships with each other. Hence, despite their different thoughts and occasional tensions, the present analysis shows that these reformers formed a unified movement.

This study follows a line of research that focuses on the movement's elites. In a movement that touched thousands of people, limiting the analysis to 58 persons, several of whom were knighted or held professorships by the end of the period studied or were at least subjects of biographies, leaves many nuances unaddressed and much scope for further studies on the wider social structure of the movement.

Though elite-focused, it is not the aim of this study to place the individuals who influenced the thought and practice of New Education in order of importance. The focus on the networks that held the movement together means that individuals who were inspirers rather than joiners do not feature. Norman MacMunn, the author of the remarkable Child's Path to Freedom, who personified the pursuit of freedom in schools, is an instructive example. While some well-known agents are not included in this discussion, attention is drawn to other agents who might be less well known but who played important roles in bringing others together. Patrick Geddes, who is only briefly mentioned in the textbooks despite his extensive networks, best exemplifies this form of influence. Although the sourcebooks that were used to create the initial list of reformers for the study were published some time ago, their network connections were traced using the most recent texts available. Consulting the recent texts did not give reason to make additions to the list and no names were removed, even though it is possible that some people were seen as more relevant to the reform at the time of publication of the sourcebooks than they would be today. Providing the names of the reformers and their affiliations in Figures 1 and 2 allows readers to assess the kind of impact the inclusion of each person in the study may have had on the conclusions.

The vibrant transnational networks, which have been well studied in the past, were omitted from the scope of this study. This was mostly due to data availability reasons, but the domestic and transnational networks also seem to have served somewhat different roles. Foreign influencers inspired British reformers and provided them with examples and advice. Even though some reformers from overseas, most notably Maria Montessori, lent their faces to distribution campaigns, the task of aligning resources to attack the status quo and increase political capital for the fulfilment of the reform was usually left to their local followers.

Ultimately, for the present discussion, structures are more important than individuals. Given that previous research has failed to identify obvious leaders, common goals or subgroups of the New Education movement, an examination of the networks that formed appears to provide one of the most promising explanations for its progress. Although the intellectual influence that shaping figures such as C. G. Jung and John Dewey had on reformist thought cannot be denied, the well-interconnected core described in this article was the glue that held this ideologically fragmented movement together. Their shared visions were disseminated through communication channels such as journals, books and conferences and influenced the wider and more diverse circle of people involved. Seen this way, the central operating principle of the New Education movement was social.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributor

Lauri Luoto is currently preparing his PhD thesis for the Doctoral Programme on Educational Policy, Lifelong Learning and Comparative Education Research (KEVEKO) at the University of Turku. His research focuses on the application of formal social network analysis in the domain of the history of educational progressivism. His past research projects have examined higher education policy and curricula.

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