

Final Report: The Bishops and the Board Schools: the hierarchy of the Church of England, the Forster Education Act of 1870, and the shaping and founding of state-funded education

I want to thank the SES for funding this project. I am pleased to report below upon its successes over the past year. Moreover, I believe that establishing a significant database of archival sources, a review of secondary literature, and a more thoroughgoing knowledge of nineteenth century educational, ecclesiastical and political history which this funding has enabled will have long-term benefits to the research team. Two publications already bear the marks of the research undertaken. One, an article submitted for consideration to the editor of BJES in January we hope will be published in a special issue to mark the 150 years of the 1870 Education Act. Two, a chapter to be published in a volume on the Church of England and British political life in the twentieth century was most certainly influenced by having a knowledge of the preceding century this project enabled development of. We anticipate further research and publications resulting from the generous support of the Society.

Initial Aims of the Project and Final Reported Progress:

<p>1. To provide an exhaustive survey of the historiography on the Church of England and education in the nineteenth century, scope out archival holdings in relation to key (arch)bishops on the subject of the 1870 Education Act, engaging in preliminary analysis of primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p>Relevant primary source archival evidence has been collected from Lambeth Palace Library, the Church of England Record Centre, Gladstone’s Library for the most senior bishops of the Church of England, particularly focused upon the views of these and other senior clerics and parachurch organisations in relation to the mooted Education Act, which became the 1870 legislation. This primary source evidence has already been utilised to author two conference papers and a submission to the <i>British Journal of Educational Studies</i>.</p>
<p>2. To investigate the views and influences of leading Anglican (arch)bishops on education* in the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century (at least the (arch)bishops of Canterbury, York, Durham and London), in particular in the lead up to and passage of the 1870 Forster Education Act and its aftermath.</p>	<p>An exhaustive investigation has been undertaken in relation to the most senior bishops of the Church of England, but research has also be undertaken in relation to the activities of the principal Anglican educational society, the National Society and its leadership. Analysis of this archive has already resulted in one journal article, but it has also fed into work on a book chapter to be published in 2020 in an edited volume on the Church of England and British politics in the twentieth century.</p>

<p>3. To consider how the views of (arch)bishops on the Education Act and its outworking broke down according to social background and Church tradition.</p>	<p>What has become apparent from this research is that it was church tradition rather more than social background per se which was influential in shaping the educational philosophies of senior clerics. This is covered in part in the paper submitted for consideration to BJES.</p>
<p>4. To examine the modus operandi of the (arch)bishops in relation to their politicking on the passage of the Bill, in particular their actions and rhetoric in relation to leading church organisations, other ecclesiastics and politicians of the period.</p>	<p>Analysis of this is ongoing, but it is apparent that the wider concerns of the Church surrounding its felt decline of social influence that was of pre-eminent importance at the time. This drove the feeling that in order to remain relevant the Church must permit a certain loss of direct influence. Preserving its influence through means of ‘soft power’ was chosen strategy.</p>
<p>5. To provide an analysis of the rhetoric of leading (arch)bishops on the Education Act and its aftermath in the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century.</p>	<p>The direct rhetoric of senior leaders was more muted in favour of a ‘liberal compromise’ in order to protect the longer-term influence of the Church. Work done by the project team on this later period has aided a longer view.</p>
<p>6. To utilise this historical case study to inform wider debates on the historical and contemporary role of the churches and other faith groups in (religious) educational policy formation, building towards large-scale research in this area.</p>	<p>The work undertaken on this project has undoubtedly assisted our understanding of developments into the twentieth century. The longer term strategy of the Church has enabled a preservation of a wide and continuing influence within education. This is something we have written of in the submitted paper and our to be published book chapter. We intend to explore how these strategies penetrated at a micro-level and their influence as strategies internationally. Moreover the wider question of the relationship between Church and State and the role of faith in education policy are lines of research and analysis we intend to pursue further.</p>

PLANNED PHASES AND PROGRESS:

1. The project was undertaken in three phases over the course of the 2019. Upon the appointment of Sophie Allen as Research Assistant systematic archival research was undertaken by her and Prof Parker, focusing particularly upon the Church’s central archives in

London. Prof. Parker research archival sources in the book collection of Prime Minister William Gladstone, an unanticipated source of evidence, which led him to focus upon the importance of Church tradition in shaping educational philosophy. Moreover, it led to a focus upon activists amongst senior clerics, revealing that those of most influence were not necessarily the archbishops – who were forced into playing high politics.

2. An exhaustive historiographical literature review on the subject of the Church of England and education in the nineteenth century was undertaken. This resulted in a useable database which summarized the key aspects of the literature and led to the journal article submitted. A detailed biographical database for each arch/bishop was created, including their educational and social background, ecclesiology and a summary of their educational views.

3. Two outcomes were aimed at: an article for the British Journal of Educational Studies and the Journal of Church and State and a bid to the AHRC for further research on the wider matter of the ‘Faiths and Education’. An article has been submitted for consideration to BJES. The further article – initially intended for the Journal of Church and State – is now intended to for the Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and Education series. Pending a decision on follow-on funding, a bid to the AHRC on ‘faith and education’ is still planned. We consider the possibility of receiving funding for such a project is more likely as we accrue attention for the research we are undertaking about the wider dynamics in relation to faith and its influence in education policymaking, which this initial project has enabled. We consider such a project to have international resonance and relevance, and we believe that the research team are well-placed to lead in research on this. Undoubtedly, this SES award has given impetus to our research in this area.

SUMMARY

- The project has been most successful. It has enabled the accrual of a significant volume of archival sources, which are ripe for further analysis beyond the period of the research. The appointment of a Research Assistant helped enormously in enabling archival research. Regular meetings between the RA and PI took place and a co-authored journal article resulted from this.
- The research also directly influenced the analysis towards the publication of a REF-able book chapter on the Church of England and education in the twentieth century. It has additionally pointed to the significant part played by the faiths and faith perspectives in the shaping of educational policy in Britain, which is often a hidden dimension of policymaking.
- A paper on the research was presented at the SES conference in September 2019. Further, this paper was also presented at a University of Worcester research seminar.
- An abstract was submitted and accepted for the Ecclesiastical History Society conference in July, but unfortunately funding could not be secured to present this.
- The PI and Prof Freathy plan to write a follow-on paper for submission the Brill research perspectives series on the faith and education policy in England.
- Prof Freathy was active in a consultancy on this research and is a co-author of the paper submitted to BJES.
- The budget was all but expended, the slight underspend being due to efficient archival research over slightly fewer days than anticipated.

Prof Stephen Parker, February 2020