A long way to the history of education finance

The funding of education (primary, secondary, technical or higher education) has been a divisive issue in European welfare states in recent decades, against a background of reduced economic growth, tightening budgetary constraints, the surge of neo-liberalism and a new rise in social inequalities, all trends whose precise characterisation is, in itself, a matter of debate.¹ Education expenditure is described both as a form of “social investment”, and as a component of redistributive policies, a rationale used to justify increases in spending.² At the same time, attempts to “rationalise” public spending in education, linked with the expansion of New Public Management tools and policies, have bloomed; this trend is often decried as a threatening thrust

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of neo-liberalism and criticised for its everyday consequences. On these topics, the intertwining of technical and political dimensions is a breeding ground for controversies, that have local, national and also international dimensions. Efficiency and equity in the allocation of educational resources are questioned by international organisations, such as the OECD, and foreign examples are frequently invoked to promote changes.

Sweden and France are no exception to this rule, and in those countries too, debates on school finance have been raging. Two examples will suffice. In Sweden, the introduction of school vouchers in the early 1990s raised numerous discussions. With this internationally unique system of government funded school vouchers—where government funded school vouchers follow children either to public or private schools, where schools are not allowed to charge fees, and where private companies are allowed to make a healthy profit from the school vouchers—the role of private schools and private school companies in the school sector has remained high on the political agenda. In France, the funding of higher education has been a very sensitive issue for several years. The budgetary autonomy of the universities, decided in 2007, stirred up the debate. In 2022, an ambiguous statement by the President of the Republic about the low cost of education for students immediately sparked controversy in an academic community traditionally hostile to any tuition fee increase. Education finance thus encompasses a variety of questions that are of interest to diverse academic fields: public policy, economy, law, sociology, political science, and history.

Early promotors of historical approaches towards education finance were economic historians, following the rise of education economics on American campuses at the end of the 1950s. Researchers in this field have addressed a wide variety of topics, from the relationship between human capital and economic growth, to the


6 The economics of education is characterised in particular by the attention paid to the measurement of the effects of education, an issue that is also present in other fields of research (history, sociology, political science, psychology), but in a more diffuse manner. Christian Baudelot et al., *Les Effets de l’éducation: rapport à l’intention du PIREF* (La documentation française, 2005), https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00174936 (accessed February 23, 2022).
effects of education on social mobility, productivity, and the labour market. To that intent, they mobilised a wide range of quantitative series (number of schools, enrolment rates, average years of schooling etc.), that sometimes included data related to educational expenditure, usually used as a proxy for investment in human capital. Today, the interest among economic historians in education and human capital remains strong.

In history of education, questions of educational finance have, however, only received intermittent attention. In the 1970s and 1980s, several works addressing the social history of schooling have made extensive use of financial elements. These include the pioneering publications of, for example, Norman Morris on public educational spending in England during the 1860s, Mary Jo Maynes comparative local histories on schooling in France and Germany, and Ben Eklof’s studies on schooling in Russia. Studies examining the generation of revenues, the allocation and utilisation of resources in education from a historical perspective have, however, remained scarce. The reasons for this are varying, and may be explored further. These nevertheless include the normative ideal that education should not be determined by economic issues and the distance that sometimes is created between education and its social and economic context. This may also be linked, at least in some academic contexts, to certain strands of research in history and education that, following the linguistic turn, have paid less attention to realities, practices and contexts of schooling and to a larger degree have focused on the meaning of educational phenomena. Finally, in France at least, this lack of interest in economic and financial issues is not specific to history of education but is also reflected, more broadly, in the themes dealt with by historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who, after the dawn of a

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14 For such research after the linguistic turn, see, e.g., Lynn Fendler, “New Cultural Histories,” in Handbook of Historical Studies in Education, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald (Singapore: Springer, 2019).
certain type of a social and economic history, have rather focused on political, social and cultural issues.\textsuperscript{15}

There are, nevertheless, good reasons for historians of education to study the history of educational finance. Since most decisions are, by extension, financial decisions, studies into funding, spending and distribution enable us to examine educational policies and practices in greater depth, including the goals that are sought after, the aims policies have been less concerned with, but also those matters that could not be funded. Educational expenditure can thus provide vital measurements on the development of the educational system, but also deepen our understanding of the visions and intentions of those who funded it.\textsuperscript{16}

This is the rationale behind monographs or edited volumes, published during the last 10–15 years, that draw extensively on school finance. These include Nancy Beadie’s monograph \textit{Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic} (2010), R.D. Gidney’s and W.P.J. Millar’s chapter on school finance in \textit{How Schools Worked} (2012), Ingrid Brühwiler’s dissertation \textit{Finanzierung des Bildungswesens in der Helvetischen Republik} (2014), and the special issue of \textit{Paedagogica Historica}, edited by Michael Geiss and Carla Aubry Kradolfer, on the “entangled histories of funding and educational administration” (2016).\textsuperscript{17}

Neither in Sweden nor in France are we the first to point out these crucial stakes among historians of education. In Sweden, early historical studies of school finance found a basis in the 1970s in social history addressing local cases. These include Bodil Wallin’s study of political debate and the organisation and funding of the Swedish school system, which was part of a broader project on ideology and social policy.\textsuperscript{18} Almost twenty years later, Mats Sjöberg’s thesis on local conflicts over schooling in the south-west of Sweden, featured sections on school spending as well as revenues. Both studies may be compared, in the themes and theoretical approach,
with research addressing issues on school finance published elsewhere in this vein of social history research. However, the main efforts to examine the history of school finance were done starting in the 2010s. In 2015, the third issue of the *Nordic Journal of Educational History* was dedicated to the History of Educational Finance. Far from being an isolated initiative, it preceded the publications of several books, addressing various aspects of school finance. This special issue is part of this emerging field of research. In France, financial data—teacher salaries, cities’ budgets, school fees—was commonly used in the first thorough studies in educational history, published in the 1960s and 1970s. The aim was the development of a social history of education, that did not exist as a constituted field of research at that time.

School finance was just one aspect of a vast territory that had yet to be methodically explored by historians, and as such, attracted only limited attention. However, the subsequent development of history of education, and the relative specialisation of the research topics created a context more favourable to specialised studies.

As far back as 1993, Philippe Savoie—by then a researcher at the Service d’histoire de l’éducation (Institut National de Recherche pédagogique, Paris)—published a directory entitled *Un nouveau champ pour l’histoire: économie et finances de l’éducation*. His purpose was “to identify researchers, and through them the work of this type currently (or recently) conducted in France, in order to reveal the landscape of this composite and multidisciplinary research sector.” The aim of the publication was also to foster contacts and interdisciplinary exchanges between historians and economists—who counted for more than half of the researchers referenced. At that time, in relation with public debates about education governance, several local case

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19 See, e.g., Maynes (1985); Eklof (1986).
studies in history or sociology shed light on the financial involvement of the cities in the development of various forms of schooling.  

Despite this early initiative, individual books in history of education that draw heavily on financial data have remained rare in France, compared with other countries. In 2010 and 2011, the historian Jean-François Condette organised two conferences on the financial and economic aspects of education. The first one addressed “the cost of education and its academic, social and political implications.” The second one raised the question of education as a “good business”, a set of profit-making activities. The contributions eventually published cover a large variety of situations (from the sixteenth to the twentieth century), but for the majority of the authors, this plunge into education economics was an excursus from their main area of research. Other contributors drew on previously published work. Confirmed by an informal survey of colleagues specialised in different fields of educational history, a general pattern emerges: elements of funding or economic issues are found scattered throughout the research literature, but systematic studies are lacking. However, ongoing research—the 2019 conference about philanthropic activity in research and education, the works of Clémence Cardon-Quint, about the making of the French education state budget, or of Stéphane Lembré, about the funding of the apprenticeship—as well as this joint issue signal a new commitment to exploring this field.


It echoes a growing interest, among historians, economic historians and political scientists, in the history of the management of public finance and its implications for sectoral policies.30

**Crossing national and disciplinary borders**

This special issue—published in cooperation between *Nordic Journal of Educational History* and *Histoire de l’éducation*—is intended to fill out the gap in our respective historiographies, but also to further research into the history of educational finance, by promoting methodological debates, beyond disciplines and national boundaries. In this sensitive area, it does not pretend to close scientific and political controversies, but rather to contribute to a more detailed understanding of the phenomena at stake, thanks to the plurality of perspectives.

Educational finance is questioned in history of education as well as in economic history, both fields of research having their own dynamics, structuring debates, key references and national developments. With a large variety of topics in common, history of education and economic history certainly have the potential to be “good neighbours”, as Michael Sanderson suggests.31 However, that is not always the case. Interdisciplinary dialogue comes up against methodological differences: the use of qualitative evidence, the crafting and analysis of descriptive statistics, or the econometric treatment of already available statistical series are not necessarily incompatible, but they rely on different know-how. While these differences in methods can also be observed within each disciplinary field, when they cut across disciplinary boundaries they can lead to a total misunderstanding.

In the Swedish setting, the situation is certainly quite neighbourly. Although historians of education do not publish in economic history journals, it is not unusual that economic historians publish in educational history reviews and attend conferences in history as well as economic history.32 This relationship might partly be explained by the strong tradition of historical methods within economic history in Sweden.33 In the French context, however, the relationship between a certain type

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31 Sanderson (2007).


of quantitative economic history (written by economists) and the history written by historians has long been marked by misunderstanding or mutual ignorance.34 Moreover, the debate on the proper use of quantitative history has been particularly intense in the history of education. The conception and reception of Grew and Harrigan’s analyses on primary schooling in nineteenth-century France provides a good illustration of the difficulties raised by these questions back in the 1980s.35 The reliability of the data used for regression analyses was at the heart of the controversy. This episode may thus be related to the collective effort made by French historians at that time to construct reliable statistical retrospective series on school attendance.36 However, in the long term, the study of the production of statistics or of their use by the government and the authorities usually prevailed over the direct exploitation of statistical series by historians of education.37 The combination of the two approaches, as implemented by Jean-Michel Chapoulie in various studies, remains the exception.38 Finally, while a new generation of historians has been turning to the use of econometric methods applied to different subjects, this trend is still rather exceptional in history of education.39 In this context, the inclusion of a cliometric article written by economists in this special issue is not self-evident.

We nonetheless consider this exchange between cliometric economic history and the history of education to be of vital importance. At a time when the internationalisation of research pushes toward the hyperspecialisation of methods, fields of investigation and the bibliographical references mobilised, this effort seems highly justified. Cliometrics—defined as “the quantitative projection of social sciences in the past”—is surely of interest to historians of education. It provides estimates of volumes, variations and trends that provide important historical context both to

studies of educational policy and local case studies. In addition, such research helps formulate, question and test general assumptions that often underly qualitative analyses. In this respect, the significant interest in education among economic historians of education is certainly great news for qualitatively oriented historians of education.

Economic historians also have a lot to gain from increasing exchanges with historians of education. Culture and institutions matter to economic historians, and studies into the history of education provides a wealth of insights into the policies, organisation and local realities of education. By exploring such features, historians of education offer economic historians plenty of hypotheses to be tested and insights into dimensions of educational systems that are difficult to quantify, including the role of in-kind benefits and social networks in the funding of primary schooling. So, while interdisciplinary work requires efforts when communicating research design and results, such cooperation certainly has a range of benefits.

In terms of the internationalisation of research, this special issue promotes a specific international cooperation by highlighting two cases—France and Sweden. While quantitative approaches allow for large cross-national comparisons—thanks to the progressive standardisation of statistical categories—qualitative case studies require an effort in order to grasp the specificity of each national context. By restricting the issue to two countries, we had the opportunity—through a series of online workshops in preparing this special issue—to question and compare the national specificities.

The challenge of approaching the cases of France and Sweden is partly an issue of the publishing languages. In Nordic countries, the use of English as a standard language of scientific communication is a recent practice. In France, this move towards English exists too, but it is still heavily discussed and far from being generalised: in the humanities, the native language is commonly considered as an irreplaceable resource for nuance and precisions. That is one of the reasons why most French historians of education still favour writing in their native language.

The consequence of this language policy is that international research tends to be based on Anglo-Saxon publications, and that our knowledge of the history of education of a foreign country is often filtered through such books and reviews. The international success of Grew and Harrigan’s analyses on the French case give a good illustration of this phenomenon, as does the impact of John Boli’s monograph on the historiography of Swedish primary schooling. These distortions may in turn lead to an impoverishment of the analyses, damageable to the dynamism and diversity of knowledge. There is no reason to believe that the most interesting studies on France or Sweden are necessarily those that are already available in English. This bilateral initiative is a result of these observations.

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As part of the affluent and influential global North, France and Sweden also offer two examples of European welfare states that faced very similar challenges at the crossroads of education and political economy dynamics. In that perspective, it is certainly interesting to note the overall convergence of the transformations experienced by these two educational systems in relation to their economic, political and social surroundings: the development of a dual educational system (for the people and the elite) in the nineteenth century, the rise of technical education in relation to industrialisation, and the profound organisational changes made to the school structure in the second half of the twentieth century in order to achieve school democratisation.\footnote{Fritz K. Ringer, \textit{Education and Society in Modern Europe} (Bloomington, 1979); Detlef K Müller, Fritz K Ringer, and Brian Simon, \textit{The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Reproduction, 1870–1920} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).} This is of course does not minimise the differences that exist. This concerns not the least the radical introduction of a comprehensive school system in Sweden in the 1960s, when detracking in middle schools was implemented in France following the reform of 1975 (\textit{collège unique}).

These complex similarities and differences are certainly part of the point with special issues such as this one. We agree with Thomas Piketty that “we must take seriously the ideological and institutional diversity of human society,” and that “we must carefully study in detail the institutional arrangements and legal, fiscal and educational systems of other countries, for it is these details that determine whether cooperation succeeds or fail.”\footnote{Thomas Piketty, \textit{Capital and Ideology} (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2020), 12. Original quote: Piketty (2019), 26.} In that perspective, hamlet schools in Savoie or progressive schools in Göteborg are not just anecdotic declinations of an imaginary international standard case, but provide new and important contributions to our understanding of the history of education in its complex relationship with economic, political and social dynamics.

Our call for proposals focused on changes in educational finance. Times of changes usually coincide with an intense production of studies, data, analyses that offer a rich material to understand the complex rationale that justifies the changes, the variety of stakeholders and also the immediate or more durable consequences of the new financial arrangements. It is therefore an entry that leads the researchers to examine the avowed objectives, the technical dispositions, and the effective results of the changes. However, to fully understand the significance of these studies, it is necessary to get a broader view of the context, and of the structural characteristics of each system. This is the purpose of the historiographical overview that follows.

This literature review cannot be exhaustive. The history of educational finance is not a structured field of research: financial issues are addressed or mentioned in a wide range of books and articles. As they often provide strikingly different perspectives, and sometimes express a very miniscule interest in financial issues themselves, they would be artificial to group together. The discrepancy in size of both academic communities is another source of difficulty when it comes to bibliographic synthesis. We have therefore chosen to focus here on the research findings that are necessary to make sense of the case studies discussed in this volume, as well as on the studies that draw heavily—and not occasionally—on financial data. Our purpose here is there-
fore methodological: to give an idea of the various uses made of financial sources, and of the way they have affected the interpretation of the past.

**Education expenditure and educational statistics**

For economic historians, as well as for researchers in comparative public policy and some historians of education, statistical aggregates on education expenditure constitute a fundamental material for scientific investigations. A good understanding of these sources, their origin and limits, is therefore a prerequisite to any interdisciplinary dialogue on educational finance.

The development of coherent systems of statistical data on various aspects of western societies dates back to the nineteenth century, in what Ian Hacking termed the “avalanche of printed numbers.” Along with national promoters of statistics, international congresses of statisticians contributed to the formulation of methodological guidelines intended to strengthen the comparability of the data retrieved. Statistics on school attendance, imbued with high political stakes, flourished pretty early on: series on primary school students started in the 1830s in France. Financial data were occasionally published in the statistical compendiums of the French Ministry of Public Instruction/National Education (*Statistique de l’enseignement primaire; Statistique de l’enseignement secondaire*). In Sweden, local educational data were collected regularly from the 1840s, but were not published regularly before the 1880s. Statistics on education enrolment and educational finance were compiled by different actors. During the nineteenth century, the ministry of education and ecclesiastical affairs (*Ecklesiastikdepartmementet*) regularly collected such data. In the period 1920–1960, educational statistics were produced by the Swedish National Board of Education (*Skolöverstyrelsen*), and thereafter by Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska centralbyrån*, SCB).

However, the efforts to build standardised statistical series on financial aspects of the education system faced major methodological challenges. The plurality of public and private funders was definitely an issue, but even the financial contributions of public authorities were not easy to quantify in consistent series. Among the difficulties to be addressed: the classification of various and changing types of education expenditure, or the elimination of double counting occurring for example in France when the *départements* subsidised education in various municipalities. The use of financial data occasionally published in the nineteenth century therefore requires significant methodological precautions. These challenges were also discussed on an

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international level. In 1929, the International Statistical Institute addressed the topic of state financial statistics, and identified methodological prerequisites and general guidelines that needed to be applied to document the financial circuits linked to the social actions of states, in particular education. But the implementation took a few more decades.

In France, the interest in statistical data on education expenditure took shape in the 1960s at the crossroads of three different strands. First, the rapid increase in education public expenditure—linked both to the baby-boom and to school massification—drew the attention of several French economists. At that time, the planning process offered a public forum to discuss the distribution of public investments, and the development of education economics in the US aroused the hope that economists might contribute to the making of sound choices as regards education expenditure. At the end of the 1960s, Pierre Daumard, Jean-Claude Eicher and Jean-Charles Asselain each tried to quantify education expenditure, adopting varying approaches. The latter focused on the state budget, scrutinised from 1952 to 1967; Eicher and Daumard included other funders. At the same time, statisticians in the INSEE (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques) considered the possibility of expanding the statistical system of national accounts to new sectors that were not correctly described by series primarily focused on market economy sectors. The initiative seriously took hold in 1974, with the first education satellite account published in 1976. Similar initiatives have taken place, since then, in other countries (Australia, Netherlands, Italy) but until now, no conceptual framework has been officially developed and internationally agreed upon for satellite accounts on education and human capital. To this day, the Swedish national accounts, just like in many other countries, do not include an education satellite account.


53 Odile Carrère and Roland Daumont, “Le Compte de l’éducation et des formations: méthode et premiers résultats,” Économie et statistique 75, no. 1 (1976), 39–53. Generally speaking, satellite accounts are intended to cover accounts specific to given fields. They are based on the concepts of the system of national accounts, but they differ from the standard system as they encompass a larger variety of elements for the sectors of interest. Each satellite account is therefore consistent with the central system, but different satellite accounts may not always be consistent with each other. European Commission, International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations, World Bank, System of National Accounts 2008 (New York, 2009), 523.

A third contribution to the study of educational expenditure came from economic historians and from the new interest in quantitative history. Inspired by the works of the American economist Simon Kuznets, in 1961 Jean Marczewski and Jean-Claude Toutain launched a vast program of quantitative history, led by the Institut de science économique appliquée. The products of agriculture and industry, artisanal and industrial income were at the focus of their historical inquiries. A shift occurred in the 1970s with Louis Fontvieille’s series addressing the contribution of central and local administrations to the formation of national income, thus providing a first series of retrospective data on education expenditure. At the same time, Christine André and Robert Delorme studied the expansion of public expenditure in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and also offered a sectoral breakdown. These statistical compilations were intended to shed light on the relationships between the state and the economy.

The interest of Louis Fontvieille for statistical series on education expenditure—both at national and departmental level—gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s. As a professor at the University of Montpellier, he directed several PhDs which included the elaboration of historical series on education expenditure, both in France and in other countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and Algeria. For the French case, Alain Carry—who, at that time, was working as a research engineer in Montpellier—transposed the methods and categories of the education satellite account to build a whole set of retrospective series on French education expenditure from 1820 to 1996. This was published in the Cahiers de l’ISMEA in 1999. To date, these represent the most detailed series on national aggregates related to education expenditure for the French case.

These financial data were used—in the team built around Louis Fontvieille—to document the relationship between economic growth and education expenditure. Fontvieille’s framework of analysis combined the regulation theory of the

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Marxist economist Paul Boccara with the theory of economic cycles developed by Kondratieff. Louis Fontvieille opposed two different stages: before the Second World War, public education expenditure followed a contra-cyclical pattern, rising more rapidly during economic slowdowns; this pattern changes after the war into a pro-cyclical one, first in a context of rapid economic expansion and then during the economic slowdown that followed the oil crisis in the 1970s. This articulation between the study of education expenditure and a broader reflection on the interdependence of public spending and economic growth constitutes a specificity in this area compared to the dominant approaches in education economics.

Claude Diebolt, a promoter of cliometrics in the French academic field, also made extensive use of education expenditure, along with other statistical data, to study both the impact of human capital on economic growth and the various factors, including fertility and politics, that may affect the development of human capital. Along with Bruno Théret he also contributed to the statistical reappraisal of the consequences of the Ferry laws (1881–1882) on school public expenditure and primary school expansion. In this issue, the article written by Claude Diebolt, Magali Jaoul-Grammare and Faustine Perrin offers an illustration of the innovative methods that may be used to examine the relationship between education expenditure, economic growth and school enrolment: they confirm the central impulse given by political decisions to school expansion at the end of the nineteenth century. Recently, in a PhD defended in 2019, Adrien Montalbo made a decisive contribution to the field by studying the relationship between schooling and economic development in nineteenth century at municipal level, making intensive use of data related to local school fees and school subsidies. He shows the contrasting effects of industrialisation; while it is true that industrialisation generates resources that can be used by the municipalities to develop education, the development of certain industrial sectors—especially textile and mining activities—is negatively correlated to lower school enrolment at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Historical series on education expenditure have sometimes been used by economists in other perspectives, for example to document the concentration of education public expenditure on specific populations. In a master’s thesis, Stéphane Zuber...
underlined both the progressive equalisation of education expenditure per capita in France over the twentieth century, as well as the extent of remaining inequalities. However, among French education economists, the use of historical series on educational expenditure remains rare.

In Sweden, the research setting is quite different. Statistical data drew the attention of economic historians quite early on. The first attempts to create historical national accounts date back to the 1930s. New work on these accounts was carried out in the 1950s, the 1970s and the 1980s-90s, with the most recent historical national account 1560–2010 published in 2015. Interest in historical national accounts is thus an old and persistent feature of economic history. This data included both central and local government spending, and the estimates published in 1987 included statistics on primary school teachers’ wages, building maintenance and the purchase of goods and services. However, these historical accounts do not include exhaustive series on the financing of education, that would include both public and private funding.

Instead, the main contributions of economic historians to the study of education and economic growth in Sweden were not primarily based on historical series of education expenditure. The relationship between economic growth and education was addressed on a different basis, as illustrated by the so-called Sandberg debate. While economic historians such as Lars Sandberg, Carlo Cipolla and David Mitch reasoned that literacy was of little use in early nineteenth-century agriculture, Anders Nilsson et al. argued the opposite. During this period, marked among other things by the partitioning and redistribution of land, literacy was an asset for literate farmers. Another important contribution concerned the first estimate of long-term human capital development in Sweden. Based on analyses of enrolments, Ljungberg and Nilsson used this dataset to argue that human capital was a causal factor in Swedish economic growth since industrialisation. Through these efforts, a firm foundation for further explorations into the economic history of education was thereby laid down. At Lund University, these have more recently included new

72 Ljungberg and Nilsson (2009).
detailed measurements of human capital using student grades, and explorations into the role of technical secondary schools for regional industrial development. While the literature on human capital did not draw primarily on financial data, the interest in the economic history of education was at times translated into studies addressing the history of education finance and educational expenditure. In the context of comparative education, Florian Waldow made a rare interdisciplinary contribution by discussing the challenges researchers face when using public statistics on educational expenditure in Sweden. This critical examination later formed the background for his work on the relationship between economic growth and the politics of education. Within the discipline of economic history, Anders Nilsson examined the relationship between social recruitment and the systems of student funding in higher education. In Patrick Svensson's research, farmers' investments in schooling—including teacher wages and school building—were explored in terms of entrepreneurship. Gunilla Klose's two-year thesis (1992, published in 2011)—mapping the funding of primary schools from 1768 to 1839 based on government reports—was an important result of this research context. More lately Jens Andersson and Thor Berger have examined the role of elites in educational expansion using data on school districts' educational expenditure, and Erik Bengtsson and Svante Prado used data on teacher wages in Stockholm to study the rise of the middle classes. Of particular interest in this respect is the extremely rich dataset on Swedish local governments 1860–1950 that Per Pettersson-Lidbom and his associates have compiled. Starting from this data, Pettersson-Lidbom and his co-authors have, for example, been able to examine the impact of direct democracy on public welfare.

spending, and the causal effect of a weighted voting system on spending on primary education.\textsuperscript{80}

In the field of economic history, financial data on education have thus been mobilised, in France as in Sweden, both by means of consolidated statistical series and by means of series, often of more restricted scope, reconstructed from the sources for the needs of a particular piece of research. The existence of a retrospective satellite account of education is specific to France but has had little impact on French work on the history of education.

**Primary schooling and popular education: economy and politics**

Historians of education have paid specific attention to local regional and governmental funding of primary schooling and popular education, trying to identify the main factors at work in school expansion. This line of research, which has solid foundations in social history research, has been sparse in Sweden. Apart from being addressed by the investigations of Sjöberg and Wallin, mentioned above, it was only during the last 10–15 years that some research has been done on this topic. Starting from the work done by the historians of education mentioned above—including Nancy Beadie, Carla Aubry and Ingrid Brühwiler—Johannes Westberg published investigations that addressed how nineteenth-century primary schools were funded as well as how this was motivated and understood by local and national government. The results indicate the wide range of reasons why populations were taxed and agreed to be taxed for schooling, and how the mobilisation and distribution of resources were understood in terms of the pursuit of a fair and reasonable school funding structure. Particular emphasis was placed on the role of in-kind funding. By using a wide set of source materials, Westberg can show that nineteenth-century schooling was not only built on monetary taxes, but on a wide range of in-kind items including grains, cow fodder and firewood.\textsuperscript{81}

Other contributions to this line of research also include Madeleine Michaëlsson’s dissertation on the private funding of primary schooling. With a focus on the contributions made by iron mills in rural areas, Michaëlsson provides a national statistical perspective on this issue as well as case studies which shed light both on the schools


run by iron mills, but also the support iron mills gave to other primary schools, including provision in the form of gifts and donations. 82 In this respect, Michaëls-
on’s research is linked to the vast French historiography addressing the “industrial paternalism” that has underlined the efforts made by some employers to provide workers’ children with schools. However, the quantification and economic appreciation of this effort is not central to an analysis driven mostly by social and political considerations.83

In France, in contrast, there is an abundant literature addressing primary schools in the eighteen and nineteenth century, before the Republican laws of the 1880s transferred most of the primary school costs to the state budget. Researchers have scrutinised teachers’ contracts and communal archives and have revealed great disparities in the material situation of schools and schoolteachers throughout the country.84 For example, the recent study by Côme Simien gives us a clear picture of the maître d’école within rural communities in the second half of the eighteenth century. When there were fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, the local communities did not have the means to pay specialised staff. So, the maître d’école was generally the only employee of the commune, apart from the messenger guard (or shepherd). He was therefore made to cumulate several functions, both sacred as well as secular, and sometimes also receiving in-kind payment. This was analyzed by Côme Simien as an element of the “empreinte domestique” which weighed on the function of the village schoolmaster.85 The multi-tasking of school teachers in rural areas persisted in the nineteenth century, long after the central state became directly involved in the organisation of primary schools for boys—with the Guizot law of 1833—and the introduction of legal minima for teachers’ salaries. But this multi-faceted activity—progressively restricted to providing a town hall secretariat and land surveying—has received less attention for its economic dimensions than for what it reveals about the low status of schoolteachers before the Republican legislation of the 1880s.86 In the French historiography, the economic perspectives of the families—examined for


example by Pierre Caspard for the Swiss canton of Neuchatel—have rarely been at the heart of the discussion.87

In this issue, Jean-Yves Julliard studies the financial regime of the hamlet schools of Savoie, before and after the annexation of this territory by France, in 1860. The attention given to the population’s habits and expectations, as opposed to the new requirements of the French government, offers an original vision of the families’ appreciation of what was worth financing or not in this mountain area, and also demonstrates how the government was made to comply with these local financial habits. It thus contributes to the knowledge of an under-researched question in the French historical field.

What has thus far attracted the attention of French researchers has rather been the political dimension of the decisions regarding primary school funding at the beginning of the Third Republic.88 In 1889, eight years after the generalisation of free education in public elementary schools (1881), school teachers’ salaries were included in the central state budget. This centralisation certainly allowed for an overall increase in expenditure, and, as a result, an expansion of the schooling provided, as well as an improvement in attendance and in the quality of teaching. But this also made sense in the context of a struggle against denominational primary schools, deprived of any public subsidy since the Goblet law of 1886. This financial reorganisation was part of a school policy that aimed to establish the fledgling Republic through the school, and to counter the influence of the Catholic Church.89 In her Ph.D dedicated to the study of Lyon’s education policy regarding its elementary schools (1870–1914), Marianne Thivend has renewed an analysis traditionally focused on the policy led by the central government.90 Studying the municipal expenditure and the debates raised by the budget, she convincingly shows how the secularisation policy began at the local level with financial decisions taken by municipalities in large cities like Lyon and Paris, even before governmental decisions. However, the increasing interventions of the central state—which set constraints, imposed expenses, and controlled the fiscal policy—reduced the room for maneuver of large cities and forced them to adapt to government decisions, whereas the financial support from the state budget was much more limited than for rural villages, or even small and medium-sized cities.

Let us note that seventy years later, in 1959, the Debré law authorising and regulating the public financing of private schools under contract to the state also owed little to economists’ considerations of the supposed efficiency of market mechanisms. It was above all a political decision, a compromise with the defenders of educational freedom, facilitated by the change of political regime that occurred in 1958 and by the growth crisis that the French education system was experiencing at that time.91

In Sweden, this political stake of educational finance has also been pointed out, but mainly for the sector of popular education. Anne Berg and Samuel Edquist

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Clémence Cardon-Quint & Johannes Westberg have investigated how the Swedish government used government funding schemes, 1870–1991, to shape a sector of popular education (folkbildning)—including open lectures, folk high schools, study circles and libraries organised by associations and based on voluntary efforts. By analyzing educational funding, they are thereby able to go beyond traditional ways of understanding popular education as an independent sector based on self-improvement and empowerment, to show how popular education in fact was also a phenomenon constructed by the Swedish government.92 In comparison, financial support for popular education by the state in France remained relatively limited until the financial measures decided upon by the anti-republican Vichy regime, then reorganised and extended after the Second World War.93

The complex intricacy of finance and teaching methods
Among all the sensitive issues surrounding educational finance, the relation between funding and the content and form of teaching is perhaps the most delicate. In France, the cost of educational renewal has been a tricky subject since the end of the 1960s, and the evolution of spending per pupil is often questioned. In the 1990s, the American economist Eric Hanushek was keen to demonstrate that the solution to the school’s problems would not come from increased spending.94 The unequal efficiency of school expenditure across countries is one of the targets of international comparisons.95 Saying that more money does not necessarily translate into quality learning does not mean that finance does not matter to pedagogics, but rather that both the amount of money spent and the provisions that determine how the money is spent should be included in the analysis.

Studies that explore the financial conditions of pedagogic transformations are still rare, both in France and Sweden. One exception is the original work on the French secondary education in the nineteenth century by Philippe Savoie who studied the interdependence of finance and pedagogy in the lycées (relying on national grants) and the collèges (relying on local subsidies).96 Using a precise knowledge of the salaries and careers of teachers, as well as a thorough analysis of the lycées and collèges’ budgets and of the state’s expenditure, he argues that the construction, then the transformation of the economic model of secondary education played a major role in its pedagogical and administrative changes.97 At the beginning of that cen-

95 Lindert (2009).
tury, the tradition inherited from the humanist colleges of the pre-Revolution era, characterised by the predominance of Latin and Greek, the alternation of classe and étude, and the role of boarding schools, seemed strong, even if it had been heavily discussed by the Enlightenment philosophers. It was indeed attractive for the paying students that were necessary to the financial viability of the lycées, along with the state-funded scholarship recipients. This economic model could progressively accommodate additions made to the cursus and the specialisation of teachers, albeit with great diversity in local situations especially in the locally funded collèges. After 1880, the massive financial investment by the republican state and the homogenisation of pedagogical norms contributed to the abandonment of this economic model, as did the discrediting of boarding schools and the competition of private and upper elementary schools. This is the background of the major reform—both pedagogic and administrative—that took place in 1902, and which marks the definitive abandonment of an age-old pedagogical tradition.

For primary schools, researchers studying the monitorial education system in the nineteenth century also attempted to make a precise link between pedagogical choices and financial conditions. By studying school finance records, Esbjörn Larsson is able to show that the stated purpose of monitorial education to reduce the costs of popular education—mirrored in research literature arguing that monitorial education was a cheap and efficient method of education—was not necessarily correct. In rural areas, the introduction of monitorial education could imply increased school spending instead, because of the new expectations placed on school premises and school supplies.98 This echoes the findings of Michel Chalopin, who noticed the same financial obstacles to the introduction of monitorial education in rural Brittany.99 Of course, this interpretation has to be compared with other analyses of the factors driving the transformation in the organisation of schooling in the nineteenth century.100

In France, studies addressing the economics of school materials have primarily focused on school books. Jean-Yves Mollier and Bruno Dubot have written monographs on two major French publishers, Hachette and Larousse, both established in the nineteenth century and still active today.101 Emmanuelle Chapron studied the functioning of schoolbook markets in various contexts in the eighteenth century.102

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98 Larsson (2015).
Similar comprehensive studies are still lacking for the following centuries, despite the development of this research field in France, following the pioneering work of Alain Choppin.\textsuperscript{103} The growing interest for the materiality of school culture has drawn attention to other teaching devices, but so far economic and financial approaches are marginal.\textsuperscript{104} As an exception, Johann-Günter Egginger studied the financial implications of agricultural, horticultural and science teaching in the North of France, for the schools but also for the companies involved.\textsuperscript{105}

Studies that would question the financial aspects of the pedagogic transformations promoted by progressive education (Éducation nouvelle; reformpedagogik) are still scarce. For the Ecole des Roches—one of the first new French schools for future elites—Nathalie Duval has shown the extent of the financial difficulties the school faced recurrently from the 1960s to the 1980s, which finally led it to accept, in 1992, the system of a contract with the state, guaranteeing it public subsidies in exchange for an alignment with the national education programmes.\textsuperscript{106} In this issue, the article of Samuelsson and Michaëllson offers an original contribution to this controversial topic by studying the funding of two progressive schools, sustained both by private contributions, and by government grants. It also shows the involvement of local urban actors in the development of new types of schooling, a topic of interest for historians of education in both countries.

Little is known, however, about the budgetary implications of state-orchestrated pedagogical changes at the level of an entire education system. The financial implications of the great Swedish school reform of the 1960s have not been thoroughly examined. For the French case, Clémence Cardon-Quint showed that the argument of the financial cost was a reasoning explicitly mobilised at the end of the sixties by those—in the government—who opposed the spirit and purpose of the renovation pédagogique.\textsuperscript{107} After 20 years of constant expansion, due to the baby-boom and school massification, they argued that the state education budget would not stand another increase justified by qualitative reasons. The slowdown in economic growth made subsequent pedagogic reforms even harder to fund.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{106} Nathalie Duval, L’École des Roches (Paris: Belin, 2009).


\textsuperscript{108} For a short overview of these dynamics see Clémence Cardon-Quint, “Finances publiques et éducation, des années 1870 au début du XXe siècle,” in Dynamique des dépenses publiques en France au XXe siècle, ed. Fabien Cardoni and Michel Margairaz (Paris: IGPDE, 2022).
Extended schooling: local resources and national policies

The development of schooling followed different patterns throughout national territories. The varied needs of local economic actors, as well as the abundance of available fiscal resources, played a specific role in the growth of extended schooling.

Several French researchers have explored the investment of local actors in the development of various forms of schooling in urban areas. This strand of research was particularly blooming in the 1990s, in the aftermath of a complex movement of devolution to administrative and local authorities in various sectors including education. While the work of Marianne Thivend on Lyon primary schools, mentioned above, is part of this line of research, this local approach first contributed to the study of intermediate forms of schooling with a modern, “realistic” or practical emphasis, including the enseignement primaire supérieur, vocational and technical education.  

By combining an analysis of the national policy with several in-depth local case studies, the history of upper primary schools (écoles primaires supérieures) published by Jean-Pierre Briand and Jean-Michel Chapoulie in 1992 has played a pioneering role in this field. In 1999, a sociologist, Marc Suteau published a thorough study of the school policy of Nantes from 1830 to 1940, in which he scrutinises the material conditions for the creation and financing of educational institutions by the municipality. Thus, he shows how, during the nineteenth century, the local elite tried to develop and sustain technical or higher education schools, not with a systematic view of what a school system should be, but to meet specific needs, linked with the local economy.  

In her Ph.D, defended in 2017, Solenn Huitric studied the process of transforming municipal secondary schools (collèges) into national secondary schools (lycées), which involved 45 collèges between 1830 and 1880. She examines the various issues, particularly financial, of a process seen as a “co-production of public action.”

On a different scale, Stéphane Lembré has studied the development of technical education in the industrial region of the North, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the 1940s. He showed the role and diversity of local initiatives, and then the gradual involvement of the state in a sector where the needs of the regional economy remained decisive in structuring the offer. However, he concluded that economic needs were not enough to explain why companies, the state and local authorities decided to commit themselves (including financially) to one school creation or another.

In the Swedish context, the history of intermediate and technical education has
received increasing attention. For example, Lars Edgren has examined the political argumentation of artisans on vocational education during the second half of the century; Jonas Olofsson and Sandra Hellstrand have explored apprenticeship training, and Åsa Broberg the educational debate on vocational training, 1918–1971. In this issue, the article by Fay Lundh Nilsson and Per-Olof Blomberg explores the interaction between municipal and central government in the setting up and funding of an intermediate level of technical schools between 1850–1920, during the Swedish industrial expansion. They show that these schools were not only supported by educationalists, but they were also promoted both on the local level by politicians, industrialists and individual stakeholders, as well as on a national level by members of parliament. In terms of educational funding, they indicate the importance of private funding during the initial phase of the establishment of these schools, and that government grants thereafter became the main source of funding. Since these grants remained low, they also affected the debate surrounding these schools, and the reforms that targeted them. In the latter, the teachers’ wages at these institutions became an important question.

In this special issue, Stephane Lembré explores the multiple reasons that led the French Parliament in 1925 to set up a new tax, the taxe d’apprentissage, in order to sustain the development of lower technical education. This new tax is interesting for two reasons. First, it clearly assigns the funding of technical education to the future employers, whereas ordinary fiscal revenues for the state and local authorities—as well as students’ fees—provide for other types of education. Second, the mechanism adopted at that time included tax exemptions for training expenses directly incurred by employers. Far from being the exception, the amounts disbursed through this channel still represent a significant proportion of expenditure. This original financial construction allows for a supple and deconcentrated coordination between administrative authorities and local economic stakeholders.

Free education, scholarships and loans
Educational finance is not only about the costs and benefits to society, but also includes how education affects the individual. In this respect, research has explored how in the public domain school fees became increasingly unusual during the nineteenth century in Europe, but also how the costs of secondary and tertiary education were addressed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In European welfare states, free provision of schools and scholarship systems are commonly associated with the political aim of achieving equality or equal opportunity among

114 For a recent overview, see Sandra Hellstrand, Lärlingsfrågan: institutionell förändring, ekonomiska föreställningar och historiska begrepp i den svenska debatten om lärlingsutbildningen, 1890–1917 (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2020), 15–22.
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various social groups in the schooling system. However, free education as well as scholarships already existed in various forms, and for various reasons, well before the clear formulation of this political aim.

On this issue, historians like Harvey Chisick first attempted, back in the 1970s, to document if and to what extent the scholarships were a lever of social mobility in the early modern period, in an academic context heavily influenced, in France, by the sociology of education. Later works tried to delineate the logics and functioning of the various systems of scholarships, whose purposes were not primarily related to social considerations. The collective work edited by Jean-François Condette in 2012 made a useful contribution to this topic with seven chapters addressing various scholarship systems, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, for different types of students (girls, boys, in private denominational schools as well as in publicly funded settings, in secondary or technical schools, as well as in higher education etc.).

Together with other books chapters and articles, this literature now covers a wide variety of cases, both in the pre-modern and the modern era. Studies addressing the twentieth century—like that of Stéphane Lembré on technical education scholarship holders—are particularly interesting as they show that the wide heterogeneity of end purposes persisted well into the twentieth century, at a time when, officially, meritocratic considerations and social justice were invoked.

In welfare states, the development of the state’s fiscal capacity was followed by targeted supports being replaced with free provision for all, at least for primary and secondary public schools (respectively in 1881 and 1933 in France). Free secondary education and its potential effects on student enrolment was a heavily politicised topic in the 1920s and 1930s. These effects have been scrutinised by Philippe Hugot, and more recently by Antoine Prost, thus correcting the too uniform vision of the role played by the secondary education as a mere tool of social reproduction before the organisational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s.


118 See the contributions of Véronique Castagnet, Dominique Picco, Jean-François Goubet, Arnaud Costechareire, Stéphane Lembré, Jean-François Condette and Philippe Rocher, in Condette (2012), 245–407.


Higher education is quite a different issue, as the funding models of higher education still diverge significantly among countries with similar levels of development, as highlighted by Julian Garritzmann.\textsuperscript{122} Moreover, the redistributive dimensions of higher education funding is a thorny question. In comparative political economy, Ben Ansell as well as Marius Busemeyer have underlined the complexity of a problem that encompasses the questions of access to higher education, but also the capacity to value one's training for the job market, which depends on the level of technological development and on the openness of the economy.\textsuperscript{123} Within some higher education systems—like the UK's, studied by Vincent Carpentier—a strong resource differentiation combined with mission and social differentiations tends to stratify social inequalities, in spite of a general expansion.\textsuperscript{124} While the subject also attracts several economists, Vincent Carpentier's work is distinctive in that it attempts to weave together the history of education, economics and political economy.

Today, the French system combines low tuition fees (at least in universities) with relatively modest support mechanisms (scholarships, accommodation, catering etc.).\textsuperscript{125} This increasingly controversial balance has not been fundamentally altered in response to the massification of higher education. In Sweden, higher education is free of charge, and students are supported by student aid, consisting of a grant and a repayable student loan. As Martin Gustavsson notes in this special issue, this system is often perceived in a positive light, as a generous Social Democratic reform that was unique at its introduction in the 1960s, and that remains one of the most successful post-war educational reforms. By examining the rise and fall of the student finance system that preceded it, he is, however, able to nuance such accounts. While the new student finance system was in line with other Social Democratic reforms, it was also compatible with the influential idea of the Chicago School that education was an investment in human capital. And although this system implies that the government certainly supports higher education, one of its main functions is that it transfers costs not only from students to the government, but from parents to their children.

**In conclusion**
The range of issues that can be analysed through the investigation of the economic aspects of education is obviously very broad. As is evident from above, these include not only the financial aspects of education or economic growth, but also the social, political and pedagogic aspects of education. Educational finance is therefore not only of interest to the economic historian, but also to social historians, cultural historians and, not least, historians of education.


\textsuperscript{123} Busemeyer (2014); Ansell (2010).


\textsuperscript{125} French higher education is dual. Schematically, one contrasts the *grandes écoles* – selective on an academic and/or financial level – with the universities, accessible to all holders of the baccalauréat.
Nonetheless, statistics produced by governments, archives containing financial data or statistical series “reconstructed” by researchers still remain underused in most historical research addressing education. As shown above, and in the various articles in this issue, the analysis of these financial data requires both good knowledge of their context of production, and also the ability to make sense of the figures themselves, in particular by relating them to other financial and economic data. As it is, the growing body of work on these financial aspects of education will hopefully provide the terms of comparison that are often still lacking for the interpretation of the quantitative data.

In this area, more regular collaborations between economists, economic historians and historians would certainly open up new perspectives. The interest of a new generation of historians and historians of education for quantitative methods and reconstructed statistics is certainly a favourable development in this context. Another is the increasing interest in education among economic historians, along with the cliometricians’ wide-ranging ambition to apply econometrics to historical settings. Finally, it is also likely that the “credibility revolution” that has reinforced the methodological precautions taken in econometrics in the analysis of causal imputation will facilitate dialogue with other fields of research.126 These various shifts in methods and research interests certainly create a terrain favourable to a more intensive exploration of educational finance.

References


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