

Anglo-saxon education and French education

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One way of looking at the differences

national cultural traditions are a major determinant and influence on education systems in general, on national curricula, and on teachers' pedagogies in schools.

Underpinning philosophies

- traditions which permeate through to schools.
- McLean (1990) proposes three main European school knowledge traditions:
 - encyclopaedism,
 - humanism
 - naturalism.

England

- **Humanism** : associated principles of individualism and morality
- child-centred and **individualistic**, and the interaction between teacher and pupil is greatly emphasised.
- **morality**, the belief that education (originally only for the elite) should develop qualities such as fairness and integrity, and teachers have traditionally had a **pastoral** as well as an academic function.

As a result....

- The teacher has traditionally been responsible not only for the academic but also for the moral development of the child.
- individualism and moral purpose of education are two of the traditional signposts for the philosophical underpinning
- England has in the past given 'little weight in education to rational, methodical and systematic knowledge objectives' (Holmes and McLean 1989).

- Inductive
- Observation first
- Do
- And deduce.

France

- **encyclopaedism,**
- main principles of **rationality** and **universality**
- the associated principle of ***égalité***, transforming society in the interests of the majority of its members.

Which means :

- **rationality** encourages the teaching of subjects which are perceived to encourage the development of rational faculties (for example, mathematics).
- **universality** means that students study broadly the same curriculum (at broadly the same time).
- **equality** aspires to remove social inequalities through education and promote equal opportunities for all pupils.
- **laïcité** traditionally leaves the social and moral education for the home environment, whereas intellectual and academic work is expected to be placed in school.

- A deductive system the Cartesian tradition
- Children are given what they need to learn with demonstrations

As a result

- traditionally teachers have been responsible for the academic development of the child, the parents and the church for their moral development.
- however, this has been changing in the sense that changes in the social role of families have transferred a socialising function to schools.

And didactics in all that?

- in England there has been no real tradition of 'didactics' in teaching and learning
- the development of teaching as a science was prevented because the humanistic perspective rejects the idea that learning can be systematic and standardised

Classroom practices

whole-class teaching

- ENGLAND
- attend to the needs of the individual child.
- FRANCE
- efforts to keep the whole class together.

Principles of teaching

In England :

- the major aim was to convey a concept and let pupils get as much practice as possible. The emphasis was on the skill side of the subject and results

- **In France :**
- teachers focused on developing thinking which included exploring, developing and understanding concepts, and reasoning.
- they tried to forge links between skills and 'cognitive activities' (small investigations) on the one hand, and concepts on the other. The emphasis was on process and not the result ...

But this is changing 14

Some facts

In France

- children start school generally at the age of 3.
- Nursery School

In England :

- Nursery - from 3 years old – between 2 ½ and 3 hours per day (a.m. or p.m.)
- Reception - from 4 years old – whole days from 9 a.m. to 3.30 (timings vary)

- **Primary School**
- 6 years old -
Reading and writing
are taught from this
age

- **Primary School
(Junior School^o)**
Key Stage 1 : Year 1
& Year 2
Key Stage 2 : from
Year 3 to Year 6
- Year 1 - from 5
years old – the pupil
learns to read and
write

Collège

- 3ème - Brevet national tests at end of year

Lycée

- 2nde - Pupils choose between Literature, Economics or Sciences for the Baccalauréat
- 1ère - 1st part of Baccalauréat exams
- Terminale - Baccalauréat

Lower Secondary

school (Middle School, High School)

- Year 11 - from 15 years old– GCSE “O” levels national examinations in up to 11 subjects

Upper Secondary School

- Year 14 – from 18 years « A levels » in 3 or 4 subjects

A little more about England

- ***National curriculum core subjects – 11 to 14 year olds (Key stage 3):***
- English, Maths, Science, Design and technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), History, Geography, Modern foreign languages, Art and design, Music, Citizenship, Physical education.
- Schools also have to provide: Careers education and guidance (during Year 9), Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), Religious education.
- routine Standard Assessment Tests (SATs)

The national curriculum

The targets for learning for all children aged 5-16 in each Key Stage are defined in the National Curriculum established in 1989 to ensure the same standards of teaching and learning across the nation.

It sets out :

- the knowledge, skills and understanding a child should achieve in each subject (according to the child's age)
- targets - so teachers can measure how well a child is doing in each subject
- how information on the child's progress should be passed on to the parents

And it provides General teaching requirements

- A. Setting suitable learning challenges
- B. Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- C. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

Key stage 4 – GCSE

- At GCSE level, students have to take English, maths, science, IT, citizenship and physical education.
- The GCSE is a single-subject examination set and marked by independent examination boards. Students usually take up to ten (there is no upper or lower limit) GCSE examinations in different subjects, including mathematics and English language.

Examination boards

- 5 GCE Examining Groups and Boards. originally based on the major UK universities but now : AQA, OCR, Edexcel, WJEC and CCEA.
- Some of these boards also offer A-levels to international students, specifically Edexcel. Another large organization which offers GCE qualifications for international students only is CIE. OCR and CIE are both branches of the parent organization, Cambridge Assessment.
- In the UK it is customary for schools to register with multiple examination boards and to "mix and match" A-levels to get a combined curriculum that fits the school profile.

- After taking GCSEs, students may leave secondary schooling;
- continue their education at vocational or technical colleges, take a higher level of secondary school examinations known as AS-Levels after an additional year of study.
- following two years of study, students may take A-Level (short for Advanced Level) examinations, which are required for university entrance in the UK.

Some other differences ...

- All French pupils study Philosophy in their last year of secondary school
- French secondary school teachers are not in school all day long
- In England philosophy is a pervading concept
- English teachers are in school all day

And again....

- The grading system goes from 0 to 20 with 20 being perfect
- Idea of “moyenne”
- Schools do not sponsor extra-curricular activities, or hardly any.
- The grading system goes from A to E
- Pass mark requires more (60%)
- Schools sponsor & encourage extra-curricular activities within the school itself

- the "carte scolaire"
- repeat a year
- Local Education Authority

European classes

- www.mobidic.org/.../SitBilUntFRSecEuro-UK.pdf
- **Original Objectives**
- These are summed up in the following passage of 1992:
- www.eduscol.education.fr/D0100/circ92-234.htm and especially in the following passage:

“The progression of European Integration, the increasing opening of the world economy and the extension of cultural exchange makes the knowledge of one or several foreign languages an inevitable priority. It is therefore desirable that as many pupils as possible have access to the highest bilingual competence, complemented by a knowledge of different cultures .”

Shift of original objective

“In addition to the linguistic dimension, which was the original idea aimed at a general educational renewal; the latest includes knowledge of the different cultures in various countries, an increase in exchanges and co-operation with schools abroad, and questions of European citizenship.”