

Social Equality in Education

“Through a scholarly analysis of English and French education policies over 150 years, Ann Doyle clearly demonstrates that national approaches to social equality develop in radically different ways. As well as providing information for academics and students of comparative education, this book affords vital background reading for politicians and citizens endeavouring to reduce social inequality in education.”

—Professor Peter Mortimore – *Director, Institute of Education, University of London 1994–2000 and author of Education under siege (2014)*

Ann Margaret Doyle

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France and England 1789–1939

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Ann Margaret Doyle
UCL Institute of Education
University College London
London, UK

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*This book is dedicated to Tony Beaumont, and in memory of my mother,
Bridie Doyle.*

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

Égalité is a theme which resonates throughout French social, political and cultural life leaving an indelible mark on its institutions. Alexis de Toqueville, the renowned social and political analyst, wrote in 1856 that the deeply rooted and long-standing passion of the French people was “an intense and indomitable hatred of inequality.” The influence of egalitarianism linked with French republicanism on politics and education has been acknowledged by many historians and social commentators. Similarly, liberal values and a love of freedom have been acknowledged by scholars as having an important impact on politics and education in England. This underlying variation between both countries has provided an interesting tension and underlying theme for comparative study in different areas. However, the linking of egalitarianism and liberalism and their influence on French and English education respectively has not been tested in a systematic way. The desire to fill this gap and test the validity of these distinctions through comparative analysis, has been an inspiration for this book and for the years of research spent preparing the thesis on which it is based.

Another inspiration was my serendipitous discovery of a book on the library shelf entitled *Quelle école pour la République?* (What school for the Republic?). The blurb on the cover stated the author’s wish to re-establish the values of equality and solidarity at the centre of the French educational project. He proposed to defend the connection between the school

and the republic through affirming the shared educational project around the values of secularism. According to the author, Eric Ferrand, republicanism is a state of permanent revolution with secularism at the heart of this combat. But which republic was M. Ferrand referring to? The sentiments are evocative of the 1880s when the 'free, compulsory and secular' republican school was established. Yet Ferrand was the Assistant Mayor of Paris in 2007. The enemy today, over a century later, he asserts, is not the Catholic Church, the old rival, but an array of contenders from globalizing neo-liberals to various forms of fundamentalism and communitarianism which conspire to undermine the one and indivisible republican model of education. The sentiments expressed, encapsulate in its most emphatic form, the myth of the republican school and the sublime optimism of its goal of civilisation, social integration and equality for all. The continuity of this discourse of equality and secularism and its material manifestations in French education over 150 years constitute one half of the subject of this book. The other half compares and contrasts with this, the continuity of the discourse of liberalism in English education. The book also provides an explanation for the variation.

I'd like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Andy Green for his guidance and encouragement particularly while writing the original thesis on which it is based. I am also grateful to Dr. Susanne Wiborg for her valuable support for my thesis and whose book on comprehensive schooling in Europe, *Education and Social Integration*, was a further inspiration for my writing. I'd also like to thank Dr. Jan Germen Janmaat for his helpful comments on the first three chapters of this book. None of the above, of course, is responsible for any errors in the book. The responsibility for these is all mine.

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