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Examining “The Mormon Puzzle”: Progressive Education and Mormon Educational Ideas in Late Nineteenth-Century Utah

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Abstract

This article describes the multifaceted origins and dynamics of pedagogic progressive educational ideas among Mormon educators in the Utah Territory during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We propose four principal avenues through which progressive educational ideas reached these Mormon educators. These include the exigencies of desert frontier living that predisposed early Utah Mormons to progressivism's focus on practical education; the arrival of denominational schools sponsored by the New West Education Commission (NWEC), which sparked educative improvement within Mormon communities; the Pestalozzian teachings of Karl Maeser via the Brigham Young Academy's Normal School; and the visits of eastern progressive educationalists through Benjamin Cluff's leadership at the BYA Summer Institutes. We additionally situate nineteenth-century national perceptions of Mormon educational ideas within this more nuanced backdrop of the migration of progressive ideas to Utah. We describe unique dimensions of Mormon educational progressivism that might set it apart from educational progressivisms elsewhere, including tensions within Utah's Mormon educative community.

Keywords: Mormon history; progressive education; Mormon education; religious education

At the end of the nineteenth century, a number of manuscripts spoke about “the Mormon Problem” or “the Mormon Puzzle,” a reference to a broadly held perception among the eastern states of education in what was at that time the Utah Territory.¹ One facet of this perception was that the ideas upon which education in Utah was

¹ See J. C. Hartzell, ed., *Christian Educators in Council: Sixty Addresses by American Educators* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883), 147; Rev. R. W. Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle; and How to Solve It* (Chicago: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887), 103; T. W. Curtis, *The Mormon Problem: The Nation's Dilemma* (New Haven, CT: Hoggson & Robinson, 1885); C. P. Lyford, *The Mormon Problem: An Appeal to the American People* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1886); Walter M. Barrows, *The Mormon Problem* (Boston: The Home Missionary, 1878).

founded (including those influenced by Mormon theology) were seen as educationally detrimental to the children enrolled in Utah's schools. Inasmuch as the term *progressive* was often used synonymously with *quality* in nineteenth-century educative rhetoric, such perceptions painted Mormon educational ideas in Utah as far from progressive.² Yet, as we outline in the pages that follow, the picture of Mormon education and its relation to progressive educationalist trends in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Utah was much more nuanced than such perceptions may suggest. Between the New West Education Commission's (NWEC's) negative rhetoric regarding the dangers of Mormonism on the educable minds of Utah's youth and the polite yet favorable assessments of the ideas of Mormon educators in Utah about schooling made by such progressive educationalists as Francis Parker, Joseph Baldwin, Burke Aaron Hinsdale, Edward Griggs, G. Stanley Hall, James Hughes, John Dewey, and others lies a more complex story about the migration of progressive educational ideas to Utah's Mormon educators.

Rather than engage either in support or refutation of nineteenth-century America's popularly pejorative characterizations of Utah's Mormon educative ideas, in the pages that follow, we present a more measured recasting of the migration of progressive educational ideas to Utah via four noteworthy sources. The first of these, hereafter referred to as Source 1, consists of the exigencies of frontier living, which inclined Mormon educators in Utah to look favorably on progressivism's focus on practical education. Source 2 was the arrival of NWEC-sponsored denominational schools whose quality, though far from accomplishing their stated purpose of the en masse religious conversion of Utah's Mormon youth, catalyzed the improvement of Mormon schools in the area. A third source of progressive educative ideas' arrival in Utah was through Karl G. Maeser, a German educator whose conversion to Mormonism and subsequent immigration to Utah brought the educative ideas of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and his bold student Friedrich Froebel (a foundational contributor to what would become various threads of later American pedagogic progressive educational thought) to the attention of Utah Mormons. Finally, Source 4 consists of the ideas brought to Utah's Mormon educators via progressive American educationalists through the matriculation of Mormon students in eastern universities and the visits of eastern educationalists to Brigham Young Academy's Summer Teaching Institute beginning in 1892. We propose to outline the emergence of progressive educational ideas among Utah's Mormon communities through these four sources as well as the dynamics whereby these sources interacted with one another within and across these communities. We further unpack the puzzle of Mormon educational progressivism by exploring the ways in which Mormon communities, educators, and ecclesiastical leaders interpreted the aims of education differently and how such varying interpretations came into conflict with one another in relation to key historic developments in Utah's relationship with the rest of the nation in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In illustrating these dynamics, we will further detail those dimensions of Mormonism's interpretation of progressive educationalist ideas that might set them apart from educational progressivism elsewhere in the nation and the world.

²Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893–1958* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004), 189–90.

Situating Extant Literature

While there is robust scholarly conversation surrounding various aspects of schooling among Mormons in Utah's early history, this conversation has yet to illustrate the complexity of the various means by which progressive educational ideas came to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Mormon educators in Utah. Extant research in this vein instead tends to focus on either specific facets of Mormon education or elements of the relationship between Mormons and the NWEA. Research in the first category includes Leukel's dissertation on the transition from ward schools to free public schools, specifically in Heber City, Utah, and Ivins's similar exploration of the history of free schools in the Utah Territory, although this exploration is centered more on Mormon schools' finances than the ideas of the educators who taught in them.³ Peterson focused on the gradual arrival of qualified and dedicated educators to Mormon schools.⁴ Among the second category are Riess, who detailed the experiences of Protestant women working for the NWEA, and Darling, whose dissertation describes the cultural conflict that developed among the NWEA schools as well as between the NWEA and Mormon schools.⁵ Hough similarly outlined the volatile relationship between Protestant and Mormon schools, while Lyon focused more specifically on the efforts of Protestant teachers to convert young Mormon children.⁶ Brackenridge showcased instances of exaggerated storytelling on the part of Protestants who came to Utah with the NWEA.⁷ While these studies highlight key figures, provide logistical details of the operation of Utah's schools, and outline relevant historical context, they again in large part do not address the breadth and dynamic of the migration of pedagogical progressivism's ideas to Utah Mormons at that time.

More specifically, within *History of Education Quarterly*, there are only a few scholarly works that explore the state of education in Utah's early history. These include Buchanan's study, which is focused on the educational experience and thought of Brigham Young, a prominent nineteenth-century Mormon leader, and Dunn's exploration of the NWEA, including the general attitude of Protestant groups toward the Mormons in Utah, the goals of NWEA, and the role of women within the organization.⁸ Other works in *History of Education Quarterly* that touch upon this topic do

³Joyce G. W. Leukel, "Pioneering Public Schooling in Rural Utah. Factors Contributing to Utah's Transition from Ward Schools to Public Schools: Heber, Utah, 1859–1896" (EdD diss., Brigham Young University, 2001); Stanley S. Ivins, "Free Schools Come to Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Oct. 1954), 321–42.

⁴Charles S. Peterson, "A New Community: Mormon Teachers and the Separation of Church and State in Utah's Territorial Schools," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1980), 293–312.

⁵Jana K. Riess, "'Heathen in Our Fair Land': Presbyterian Women Missionaries in Utah, 1870–90," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (Aug. 2000), 165–95; Dee Richard Darling, "Cultures in Conflict: Congregationalism, Mormonism and Schooling in Utah, 1880–1893" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1991).

⁶C. Merrill Hough, "Two School Systems in Conflict: 1867–1890," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (April 1960), 112–28; T. Edgar Lyon, "Religious Activities and Development in Utah, 1847–1910," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Fall 1967), 292–306.

⁷R. Douglas Brackenridge, "'Are You That Damned Presbyterian Devil?' The Evolution of an Anti-Mormon Story," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 80–105.

⁸Frederick S. Buchanan, "Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah," *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1982), 435–59; Joe P. Dunn, "A Mission on the Frontier: Edward

so only peripherally. In their reviews of various books, Urbiel outlined the development of recreation and sports programs in nineteenth-century Utah, and Johnson and Johnson detail the impact of American universities on Mormonism, though it seems the book and their review are more focused on the twentieth century and the ideas within these universities rather than the educational ideas of Mormon teachers in the nineteenth century.⁹ Howe's review of Lawrence Cremin's work touches on the subject of Mormonism only to make a concise nod to the government's "persistent harrying" of Mormon communities.¹⁰ In discussing the relationship between Congregationalists and American education, Findlay briefly noted the cultural clash between the NWEA and the Mormons in Utah.¹¹ None of these publications, however, details the migration of progressive educational ideas to Mormon educators in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Utah or describe the dynamics of those ideas as they were shared and contested among Utah's Mormon population. The study that comes closest to addressing the Mormon reception of pedagogic progressivist ideas is Payne's 1977 dissertation. However, while Payne's treatment of this issue is thorough, its scope is limited to 1892–1920, focusing primarily on Source 4—Utah Mormonism's encounter with progressivism—while only making peripheral reference to Sources 1–3. Especially absent is a detailed discussion of Maeser's influence on the spread of pedagogic progressive ideas in Utah prior to the arrival of progressivist ideas through Cluff's BYA after 1892. This is significant in light of more recent literature on this topic.¹² In the present study, we seek to add further detail to the migration of pedagogic progressive ideas to Utah Mormons from a broader historical perspective, including the period from their arrival in Utah in 1847 to the turn of the century.

Progressive Education in Later Nineteenth-Century America

Before focusing more specifically on the unique dimensions of Mormon progressive educational ideas, we first explore the multifaceted meaning of educational progressivism more broadly conceived. Literature that describes progressive education is fraught with complexity, as identifying a precise, unifying definition of what constitutes "progressive education" has proven difficult for historians. While Cremin, for instance, tacitly presupposed an underlying unity to the concept of progressive education (at least in late nineteenth-century America), his three-part definition of the reform efforts it included was so expansive that it did little to delimit the definition of

P. Tenney, Colorado College, the New West Education Commission, and the School Movement for Mormons and 'Mexicans,' *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (Fall 2012), 535–58.

⁹Alexander Urbiel, review of *Sports in Zion: Mormon Recreation, 1890–1940*, by Richard Ian Kimball, *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Fall 2004), 621–22; Benjamin A. Johnson and G. Wesley Johnson, review of *American Universities and the Birth of Modern Mormonism, 1867–1940*, by Thomas W. Simpson, *History of Education Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (May 2018), 307–10.

¹⁰Daniel W. Howe, "The History of Education as Cultural History," *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1982), 208.

¹¹James Findlay, "The Congregationalists and American Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1977), 451.

¹²Allan Dean Payne, "The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education, 1892–1920" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1977).

the term itself.¹³ In his preface, however, Cremin admits that “the reader will search these pages in vain for any capsule definition of progressive education. None exists, and none ever will; for throughout its history progressive education meant different things to different people.”¹⁴

Indeed, that the umbrella of progressive education has included a myriad of ideas is apparent when one considers that, as Lagemann described, such divergent educational thinkers as Dewey and Thorndike “both spoke and wrote in the ‘progressive’ idiom.”¹⁵ Historian of pedagogy Larry Cuban agreed, noting, “The ideas nested in ‘progressivism’ were diverse and ambiguous.”¹⁶ Kliebard made an even more disparaging assessment, calling progressive education “either an inchoate mixture of diverse and often contradictory reforms or simply a historical fiction.”¹⁷ Yet, despite such critiques that a monolithic conceptualization of progressive educational ideas would be overly simplistic, significant threads of historical research have found at least some unifying dimensions to this idea, especially in the early stages of its development in late nineteenth-century America.

One such unifying dimension is its ideological opposition to what was at that time termed “traditional” education. This particular conceptualization of “traditional” education was characterized in large part by authoritarianism, rote memorization, and coercive threats of corporal punishment. Nineteenth-century American progressive educational ideas, on the other hand, tended toward a philosophically grounded, optimistic view of human nature that aimed to inspire teaching informed by the natural drives and interests of students and that emphasized practical skills and problem-solving.¹⁸ This general focus on the practical dimensions of education will be particularly important in exploring the migration of progressive educational ideas to Mormon educators in nineteenth-century Utah. Referring to “the medley of doctrines that ... claim some affinity to progressivism,” Kliebard asserted that “the tenuous common cause that held them together was their disillusionment and, in some cases, outright antagonism to the traditional course of study.”¹⁹ In short, one interpretation of late nineteenth-century American progressive educational thought might begin in its ideological orientation toward educational reform and a departure from the teacher-centered curriculum and rigid, bookish practices of what was painted as a more traditional approach to education.

¹³For an explanation of Cremin’s three-part definition, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), xiii–ix.

¹⁴Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, x.

¹⁵Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, “The Plural Worlds of Educational Research,” *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (May 1989), 185.

¹⁶Larry Cuban, “Teacher as Leader and Captive: Continuity and Change in American Classrooms. 1890–1980,” National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., USA, 50.

¹⁷Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 27.

¹⁸For a more thorough treatment of late nineteenth-century American conceptualizations of progressive education as characterized by its opposition to “traditional” education, see Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*. See also Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, and David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

¹⁹Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 190–91.

Another broad characterization of progressive education that several scholars have adopted, including David Tyack, Robert Church, and Michael Sedlack, is the distinction between administrative (or conservative, in the terminology of Church and Sedlack) and pedagogic (or liberal) progressivism.²⁰ Administrative progressives, Tyack describes, “were primarily concerned with organizational behavior and the linkage of school and external control, with aggregate goals rather than individual development of students.”²¹ In other words, they were concerned with productivity and control, imposing a corporate structure upon education that might provide “quantitative administrative efficiency” via a more scientific, managerial approach to education. In contrast, pedagogic progressives tended to focus on the “qualitative educational goals” and needs of individual students.²² While pedagogic progressives certainly hoped such lofty ideas would find a practical home in the practice of teachers in American classrooms, much of their legacy remains more ideological than practical, as there is little evidence of how those ideas took shape in American classrooms.²³ Nevertheless, the spread of pedagogic progressivism’s educational ideals constitutes a significant thread in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century education in North America that shaped the trajectory of educational ideas well into the twentieth century and beyond.

Generally seen as a champion of the ideas of pedagogic progressivism specifically, Dewey argued for a cooperative and democratic system in which increased autonomy for both students and teachers would allow for, among other reforms, a student-centered approach to teaching and learning.²⁴ This facet of pedagogic progressivism—namely, its focus on the child—received particular emphasis among Mormon educators of the time as it dovetailed with their noteworthy strong doctrinal focus on children and their upbringing. Within the broader frame of student- and child-centric ideology, wrote Cuban, “child-centered advocates ... sought content and skills that would respond to the needs of the whole child and youth, not treating students as brains on a stick.” In other words, “they drank from the well of John Dewey.”²⁵ This child-centered ideology of autonomy, however, if implemented indiscriminately, might well have hindered the efficiency so crucial to an administrative progressive cause.²⁶ Accordingly, as noted by Cuban, Labaree, Zilversmit, and Tyack, administrative progressives, along with their managerial and political allies, leveraged existing hierarchical organization to increase the administrative regulation of “new education” ideas. At the same time, the expansive nature of pedagogic progressive ideology made its theoretical cohesion and, consequently, its practical implementation, unwieldy for

²⁰David F. Labaree, “Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no. 1–2 (2005), 275–88.

²¹Tyack, *The One Best System*, 196.

²²Tyack, *The One Best System*, 198.

²³See Lagemann, “The Plural Worlds of Educational Research.”

²⁴While many of Dewey’s works touch upon these themes, perhaps the most fundamental and well known is his *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

²⁵Larry Cuban, “Education Researchers, AERA Presidents, and Reforming the Practice of Schooling, 1916–2016,” *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 2 (March 2016), 136.

²⁶For Dewey’s treatment of this dilemma, see his *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

educators at the time.²⁷ In Labaree's words, the administrative progressives "won" in terms of practical application, while the impact of pedagogic progressive ideology remained influential though largely limited to the realm of educational rhetoric and philosophy.²⁸ It is in part for this reason that we have chosen to primarily focus on the migration of such ideas to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Mormonism in Utah, as well as the unique dynamics of the application of such ideas within this context. It is within this framing of pedagogic progressive education as an ideological shift from a traditional, authoritarian approach toward a practically oriented, student-centered education of the whole child that we situate our investigation regarding the migration of such ideas to Mormon educators in Utah and the unique dynamics of those ideas within a Mormon context.

While several key tributary sources contributed to the Mormon exposure to and adoption of progressive educational ideas in this context, prominent among them was that many of Utah's Mormon educators had studied with Maeser as the superintendent of Church schools, who, as we will detail at a later point, had inherited his ideas from those of foundational progressive educationalists such as Froebel and Pestalozzi. Therefore, through Maeser, late nineteenth-century Utah Mormon educators could trace their educational genealogy, as it were, to roots similar to those of Francis Parker, who studied *Pädagogik* at the University of Berlin in 1872. In Germany, Parker was brought into intimate contact with the ideas that Karl Maeser had studied more than twenty-five years earlier and had been teaching Utah teachers since 1860, including those of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Johann Friedrich Herbart.²⁹ Although they were taught progressive educational ideas by visiting educationalists from the eastern US in the BYA Summer Teaching Institute nearer the turn of the century, records point to the possibility that Utah's Mormon educators were exposed to similar ideas beginning in 1860. That the foundational progressive educational ideas of Maeser's Pestalozzianism were taught among Utah educators prior to Parker's arrival as the BYA's first guest speaker on progressivism in 1892 is noteworthy in light of Cremin's assessment that North American progressive education did not begin to be propagated in earnest until 1892. Seen in this light, the story of how educational progressivism came to Utah's Mormon educators appears more nuanced than prior research may have suggested.

Early Utah Schools

The hands-on stresses of living in the western desert had a significant impact on education in Utah. Escaping the persecution they faced in the eastern states, Latter-day

²⁷See Cuban, "Education Researchers"; Labaree, "Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education"; Tyack, *The One Best System*; and Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²⁸Labaree states, "First, this form of progressivism has had an enormous impact on educational rhetoric but very little impact on educational practice. This is the conclusion reached by historians of pedagogy, such as Larry Cuban and Arthur Zilversmit, and by contemporary scholars of teaching practice, such as John Goodlad and David Cohen." Labaree, "Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education," 278.

²⁹A. LeGrand Richards, *Called to Teach: The Legacy of Karl G. Maeser* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2014). These ideas in Germany inspired the educational movement *Reformpädagogik*. See Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 134.

Saints, under the leadership of their president, Brigham Young, sought refuge in the valleys of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. Utah's desert landscape required keen survival skills and a practical ability to solve concrete problems as they emerged. The exigencies of such an environment affected many aspects of Mormon life in early Utah, education not least among them. Later BYA professor N. L. Nelson quoted Francis Parker as having said that "Utah's high standard of education depended not so much upon her schools as upon the ruggedness of her environments."³⁰

But Latter-day Saint doctrine also emphasized teaching the practical informed by the spiritual. Brigham Young encouraged members to "gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanism of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found."³¹ Young's focus on the importance of learning went beyond the academic, extending to practicable skills for self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Perhaps in part because of the persecutions from which the Mormons had fled in the eastern states, Young was adamant that the people of Utah should become and remain as self-reliant and independent from the rest of the world as possible. "We want you henceforth to be a self-sustaining people," he instructed.³² "Produce everything you need to eat, drink or wear; and if you cannot obtain all you wish for today, learn to do without."³³

Young's focus on the practical dimensions of education's purpose led Latter-day Saints in late nineteenth-century Utah to adopt their own approach to education in parallel to American pedagogic progressivism's emphasis on the practical in education. "Let us make mechanics of our boys," he wrote, "and educate them in every useful branch of science and in the history and laws of kingdoms and nations, that they may be fitted to fill any station in life, from a ploughman to a philosopher."³⁴ While he also advocated that girls learn what he termed *mechanical ingenuity*, Young did not intend such pursuits to come at the expense of other forms of learning. Indeed, Young's description of education for women in Utah included the study of law, religion, geography, climate, commerce, and politics. An 1893 poem by Mormon educator J. L. Townsend exemplifies not only the shared importance of practical and theoretical education in late nineteenth-century Mormon thought, but their fundamental unity within Mormons' unique framing of educative progressivism. It reads:

Let brawn and brain together train
Each helping aye the other,
I wot ye'll see a man there'll be
Esteemed by foe and brother.

For brain and brawn too oft have gone
Along to school together,
Where brain hath got a heap o' thought
And brawn was left to wither.

³⁰N. L. Nelson, "The Evolution of the Teacher in Utah," *Journal of Pedagogy* 1 (Feb. 1895), 70.

³¹Brigham Young, "Intelligence, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 7 (1859), 283.

³²Brigham Young, "Salvation Temporal and Spiritual, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 12 (1868), 285.

³³Brigham Young, "The Object of Gathering, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 12 (1868), 231.

³⁴Brigham Young, "Our Relationship to God, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 10 (1863), 270–71.

Let brawn and brain together train
 Ye'll see a generation
 Where skill and health will make the wealth
 To found a nobler nation.³⁵

While such sentiments dovetail with Dewey's pedagogic progressivist ideas regarding the unity of practical and theoretical learning, this articulation of Mormonism's approach to progressivist education continues to focus on such unity's ability to inculcate "skill," "health" and "wealth" in students for the practical purpose of building an independent community. Oriented toward this same practical teleology, Brigham Young advocated for a thorough, rigorous balance between the practical and the theoretical in education when he said, "In fine, let our boys and girls be thoroughly instructed in every useful branch of physical and mental education."³⁶

Despite the curricular breadth of such a pronouncement, the teleological bent of Young's description of education seems again primarily oriented around the concepts of utility and practicality. While this bears a resemblance to what later progressive educationalists (especially Dewey) would outline as pedagogic progressivism's focus on the practical in education, nineteenth-century Mormon approaches to practical learning in their schools differed from the mainstream in several ways. Unlike the practical orientation of more mainstream American pedagogical progressivism as a set of ideas inspired by the exigencies of industrialization, Mormon educative progressivism drew upon what Mormon educators saw as a prophetically inspired mandate to establish an independent community through the propagation of practical skills among their students. Yet, there seems at least some connective thread between these approaches in what Catton, Link, and Mann saw as the religiously inspired roots of pedagogic progressivism stemming from several fundamentally American sources such as democratic values, Judeo-Christian ethics, and a Protestant perspective on the value of practical work.³⁷ Importantly, to the idea of the sanctity of work Latter-day Saint doctrine added the principle that both practical and theoretical knowledge were themselves transformationally salvific. "A man is a better farmer or a better carpenter," wrote DeVoto, "when he believes that by plowing an acre or shingling an outhouse he is making himself into an archangel."³⁸ Even as this religiously inflected focus on the practical in education paralleled more mainstream American pedagogic progressivism, some Mormon epistemological perspectives took a different view. While some saw distinctions between practical and theoretical knowledge as primarily artificial and fitting co-equally within the broader categorization of "sacred," others (especially later in the nineteenth century) favored what they saw as the more scholarly, theoretical dimensions of the so-called "traditional" educative approach against which much of progressivism stood in opposition. Tension between these two approaches became a salient issue among Mormon educators in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

³⁵ J. L. Townsend, "The Trained Muscles," *Normal* 34 (Oct. 16, 1893), 19.

³⁶ Brigham Young, "Call for Teams, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 9 (1862), 189.

³⁷ Arthur S. Link and William B. Catton, *American Epoch: A History of the United States since the 1890's* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963); see also Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

³⁸ Bernard DeVoto, "The Centennial of Mormonism," *American Mercury* 19 (Jan. 1930), 11.

Utah, especially as it shaped their particular approach to the pedagogic progressivist ideas they taught. We will return to detail this dynamic later on after laying out more situating context.

Returning to the discussion of early Utah schools, with their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Latter-day Saints brought the basic educational organization they established in Nauvoo, Illinois, with a university that would serve as a “parent” school to supervise ward and district schools. In 1850, they founded the University of Deseret with a board of regents and Orson Spencer as its chancellor. Among other things, it took up the charge to “qualify teachers for all common schools and academies.”³⁹ Importantly, it was not to exclude anyone “for want of pecuniary means.”⁴⁰ In another illustration of Source 1 of Utah Mormonism’s adoption of progressive educationalist ideas, the vision for the University of Deseret was also a departure from what might be considered the traditional university in nineteenth-century North America and Europe because of its noteworthy holistic emphasis on practical as well as academic dimensions of learning. Again, this orientation arose from an interplay between the practical demands of surviving Utah’s harsh environment and Brigham Young’s doctrinal focus on building Utah’s Mormon population into an independent community—what he termed “building Zion.”

Against this backdrop, the German journalist Moritz Busch, who inadvertently and unintentionally participated in Karl Maeser’s conversion to Mormonism in 1855, questioned Utah Mormons’ capacity to establish an academically rigorous university while maintaining their allegiance to the practical in education. This focus that led Mormon educators to offer training in what Busch called “ridiculous and unacademic” subjects such as engineering, farming, surveying, and mining, however, paralleled pedagogic progressive educationalist ideas.⁴¹ Such scholars, Busch wrote, erroneously supposed they could depart from traditional educational models and improve physics, mathematics, and geology by utilizing the sciences to produce “competent potters, locksmiths and clockmakers.”⁴² He predicted that by stressing such practicality in education, however, these Mormon educators would only “be educating an enemy, that sooner or later their entire house of cards will collapse.”⁴³ While this integration of the practical into education remained a departure from what was a traditional higher education experience during that time, it again coincided with what would later become facets of American pedagogic progressivism.

Yet, schools in the Utah Territory struggled in their early operation. Although the first schools were “founded within the first year” after the earliest Mormon settlements,

³⁹Willard Richards, *Address: Willard Richards, Secretary of State, to the Chancellor and Regents of the University of Deseret* (Salt Lake City, UT, April 17, 1850), 12, <https://archive.org/details/addresswillardi01rich>.

⁴⁰Andrew Love Neff, *History of Utah, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1940).

⁴¹Moritz Busch, *Die Mormonen: Ihr Prophet, ihr Staat, und ihr Glaube* (The Mormons: Their prophet, their state, and their faith), trans. A. LeGrand Richards (Leipzig: Carl B. Lorck Verlag, 1855), 66. It is ironic that this almost anti-Mormon book became an important part of Karl G. Maeser’s conversion to Mormonism. See A. LeGrand Richards, “Moritz Busch’s *Die Mormonen* and the Conversion of Karl G. Maeser,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006), 46–67.

⁴²Busch, “*Die Mormonen*,” 70.

⁴³Busch, “*Die Mormonen*,” 70.

the Church “took no responsibility for their support” and the difficulties of life on the frontier plagued their development.⁴⁴ Indeed, practical demands for basic survival caused the University of Deseret to suspend classes after only three terms, with regular coursework not resuming until 1867.⁴⁵ Because of financial strains, even those settlers who were educated and qualified to teach “either could not afford to teach or were diverted from it by pioneering, concern with salvation, or the conviction that the great teachers ... were life’s experiences.”⁴⁶ Given the circumstances at that time, Ivins noted, “anyone who thought that he was qualified might open a school.”⁴⁷ Early schooling in the Utah Territory occurred in “makeshift facilities” or “churches that doubled as public buildings” and “ran spasmodically.”⁴⁸ Despite such challenges, Brigham Young and other Church leaders spoke against free schools supported by government taxation. Instead, schools were “usually semiprivate fee schools.” There is no record in these schools of compulsory attendance, teacher certification standards, or regulated school year length.⁴⁹

Describing the earliest days of Mormon settlement in Utah, one student later recalled, “The principal qualifications of a teacher in those days were well-developed biceps, long fingernails, square-toed shoes and the ability to hold a spelling book right side up.”⁵⁰ One school in St. George was founded by a Martha Cox, who, seeing a group of small boys in the street, “rented a hall, borrowed planks and blocks to improvise seats, found a kitchen table for a desk, and painted a large breadboard for a blackboard.”⁵¹ Indeed, the NWEAC’s assessment of education among the Mormons in early nineteenth-century Utah as underdeveloped was not entirely unfounded. Upon visiting a Mormon school in Utah in 1883, Philip Robinson, an English journalist, commented on “the curious, happy-go-lucky style in which ‘schooling’ is carried on and ... was sorry to see it.”⁵² As a counterpoint to this assessment, early Mormon prophet George Albert Smith said that “in the early days of the Territory the first house built in every settlement, as a general rule, was a schoolhouse.”⁵³ This statement is indicative of at least a rhetorical prioritization of education, however rudimentary the early realizations of this effort may have seemed to visitors.

Importantly, such characterizations of Mormon schools in Utah primarily describe their incipient, developmental stage rather than offering a broader view of the Mormon educative endeavor through the remainder of the late nineteenth and early twentieth

⁴⁴Hough, “Two School Systems in Conflict,” 114.

⁴⁵“Education: Change of Tastes,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 4, 1867, 4.

⁴⁶Peterson, “A New Community,” 295.

⁴⁷Ivins, “Free Schools Come to Utah,” 323.

⁴⁸Peterson, “A New Community,” 295.

⁴⁹Lyon, “Religious Activities and Development in Utah,” 295.

⁵⁰“Surprise and Banquet,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 19, 1891, BYU Library Digital Collections. This statement was made by B. W. Ashton at a banquet celebrating Professor William Stewart. Ashton’s toast was intended to provide commentary on the growth of schools in Utah and compare them in their current state with the difficult circumstances of school operation in the early days of Utah’s history.

⁵¹Charles S. Peterson, “The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah,” *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983), 67.

⁵²Philip Robinson, *Sinners and Saints: A Tour across the States, and Round Them with Three Months among the Mormons* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 188–89.

⁵³George Albert Smith, “Faith without Works Is Dead, Etc.,” *Journal of Discourses* 17 (1874), 257.

centuries. While there were significant challenges to establishing a functional school system in the early years of Mormon settlement in the Utah Territory beginning in 1847, the arrival of Karl Maeser and other early Mormon convert educationalists (e.g., the Dusenberry brothers, Henry Schultz, Joshua Reuben Clark, Francis Marion Bishop, the Cook sisters, John Rockey Park, and Louis Frederick Moench) in subsequent years, together with the arrival of the NWEA's denominational schools, instigated a "new interest in education," which, according to Buchanan, "seems to have set the stage for the emergence of a 'progressive' emphasis in Utah schools at the turn of the century."⁵⁴ While the arrival of the NWEA's denominational schools acted as a catalyst for educational improvement among Utah's Mormon population, it is unclear whether their educative ideas were Mormonism's first exposure to educational progressivism generally. One possibility is that early Mormon converts from Europe and the American Midwest (particularly Maeser) brought with them pedagogic progressive ideas prior to the establishment of Protestant mission schools in 1867, as well as the visits from eastern educationalists to the BYA Summer Institute beginning in 1892. Such denominational schools (including those sponsored by the NWEA beginning in 1880) constitute Source 2 of early Utah Mormonism's encounter with educational progressivism, which we will discuss in more depth below.

However, opposition toward free education and public schools as possible solutions to the problems that seemed to plague Mormon-led education early on in nineteenth-century Utah seems to have centered on Latter-day Saint settlers' fear that curriculum in tax-supported schools would necessarily exclude elements of religiosity, such as the use of their sacred books of scripture or teachings concerning the doctrines of their faith. In doing so, Brigham Young and others warned, these schools might serve only to separate their children from their religion.⁵⁵ Emergent ideas of the value of practical learning that paralleled pedagogic progressivism may have prepared Mormon communities to welcome the practical benefits that such an increase in schooling's quality might bring. Their religiously influenced conceptualization of that very practicality, however, may have also led them, at first, to shy away from learning from those whom they saw as outsiders. In short, the enduring question of the quality of Mormon schooling, along with the substantial Mormon influence in Utah's schools themselves, preluded a tension between Mormon and non-Mormon settlers, as well as the attention of interested parties across the nation. These dynamics, in turn, further shaped Mormonism's encounter with pedagogic progressivism's ideas. We outline these dynamics in the sections that follow.

National Campaign to Support Protestant Schools

The 1860s and 1870s brought an end to Utah's relative isolation from the rest of the country, especially with the completion of the intercontinental railroad and conclusion of the Civil War. With access to transportation came a marked increase in the

⁵⁴Buchanan, "Education among the Mormons," 453.

⁵⁵For a more thorough discussion of the perspectives and statements of early Church leaders regarding public and government-supported education, see Ivins, "Free Schools Come to Utah"; Peterson, "A New Community"; Hough, "Two School Systems in Conflict"; and Buchanan, "Education among the Mormons."

movement of ideas, and “American evangelical churches turned their zeal for service into ... renewed missionary work.”⁵⁶ This allowed for further attention toward what the Republican Party called the second “twin relic of barbarism”: polygamy and the “deluded Mormons.”⁵⁷ Slavery, the first relic, had been politically defeated by a bloody Civil War, and now the country could turn its focus to Utah and conquering the other twin that resided there. Indeed, a number of leaders believed that the defeat of the “barbaric Mormons” might also require bloodshed. John Philip Newman, for example, chaplain of the US Senate, boldly warned that if the leaders and citizens of the United States allowed the trends of Latter-day Saint settlements and growth to continue, “the next bloody battle ... will be fought west of the Missouri River with those fanatical deluded foreigners [Mormons] who have no love for our institutions.”⁵⁸ In short, many viewed Mormonism as an abomination that needed to be “exterminated.”

The national rhetoric continued to represent Utah in ways like that expressed by the National Convention of American Home Missionary Society, which met in Chicago in 1881 and dedicated a large portion of its time to “the great and fearful problem which Mormonism presents.” The society petitioned the president, Senate, and House of Representatives “to take prompt measures for the utter overthrow of this iniquitous combination against the government of the land and social morality.”⁵⁹ In 1883, the annual conference of the National Education Assembly also spent a full day on what it termed the “Mormon Problem,” passing a resolution stating that “it is the duty of the American nation to wipe out as speedily as possible that damning spot which curses Utah and adjacent Territories known as ... Mormonism.”⁶⁰ In the press, authors referred to Mormonism as “priestly despotism,” a “monstrosity,” “organized treason,” a “virus of ignorance,” “religious harlotism,” and “vampire-like.”⁶¹ They further attributed to followers of Mormonism “ignorance and superstition.”⁶² One author in particular, a Reverend C. L. Goodell, called Mormonism a “decaying carcass to which the buzzards gather from every land.”⁶³

⁵⁶Lyon, “Religious Activities and Development in Utah,” 294–95.

⁵⁷Lyon, “Religious Activities and Development in Utah,” 294–95. See also Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, eds., *National Party Platforms, 1840–1956* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 27. A similar statement was made by the NWEA, referring to Mormonism and Jesuitism as relics of barbarism that are so anti-American that “under these systems the American free-school is an impossibility and a free ballot becomes hopeless.” New West Education Commission, *First Annual Report of the New West Education Commission* (Chicago, 1881), 6.

⁵⁸John Phillip Newman, *Christianity Triumphant: Its Defensive and Aggressive Victories* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 72.

⁵⁹“The Mormon Memorial,” *Weekly Inter-Ocean* (Chicago, IL), June 9, 1881, 10.

⁶⁰Hartzell, *Christian Educators in Council*, 147.

⁶¹These pejoratives appear respectively in Reverend C. P. Lyford, *The Mormon Problem: An Appeal to the American People* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1886), 68; John McCutchen Coyner, *Letters on Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1879), 2; Reverend R. W. Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle, And How to Solve It* (Chicago: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887), 72; Walter M. Barrows, *The Mormon Problem* (Boston: Home Missionary, 1878), 13; and Coyner, *Letters on Mormonism*, 6 and 136, respectively.

⁶²Lyford, *Mormon Problem*, 181; see also Barrows, *Mormon Problem*, 13; Beers, *Mormon Puzzle*, 100; and Reverend A. J. Kynett, “The Utah Problem,” in *Christian Educators in Council*, 129.

⁶³Reverend C. L. Goodell, *Second Annual Report of the New West Education Commission* (Chicago, 1882), 13.

Before proceeding further, it is important at this juncture to situate the present narrative within the broader context of long-established historical research regarding anti-Mormon sentiment in nineteenth-century America. Though well-known among historians, such research has done less to explore such anti-Mormon sentiment and rhetoric through the specific lens of educational ideas. Historians have considered various aspects of the response to Mormonism in the nineteenth century, including the presentation of Mormons in popular fiction, melodrama, and British pamphlets, the role of anti-Mormon sentiment in post-Civil War reconciliation, and the interplay between polygamy and constitutional law.⁶⁴ Yet, even Fluhman's detailed and over-arching analysis of anti-Mormonism in the nineteenth century only peripherally addresses virulent statements targeted specifically at the educational ideas and intellectual capacity of Mormons.⁶⁵ In this study, we present a more focused treatment of stated opinions and sentiments regarding the educative dimension of such anti-Mormon thought. We further explore the progressive educational ideas disseminated among Mormon educators and draw a contrast between the forward-looking nature of these ideas and America's accusations that painted Utah's educative capacity as less than adequate. In doing so, we additionally hope to make a unique contribution to established literature outlining diverse aspects of anti-Mormon sentiment in nineteenth-century America.

Looking at this anti-Mormon trend through the lens of education, then, reveals what seems to be, among many who were committed to defeating Mormonism, a willingness to consider an additional strategy: correcting the education of Latter-day Saints to facilitate their abandonment of the Mormon faith. Indeed, Buchanan noted a "typically American penchant to blame deviations from the norm," such as Mormon adherence to polygamy, "on lack of education."⁶⁶ Reverend Joseph Cook of Boston, for example, delivered a fiery speech in 1878 in which he declared that "Mormonism recruits itself from an often illiterate emigrant population, and it forbids any but the most inefficient parochial schools... The Mormon problem, I, for one, do not expect to see settled, unless by the school or by the sword."⁶⁷ Many Protestants, however, presumed that the adults in the Utah Territory were beyond the aid of educational interventions

⁶⁴For discussion on the general representation of Mormonism in literature, see Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Megan Sanborn Jones, *Performing American Identity in Anti-Mormon Melodrama* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Craig L. Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837–1860* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2002). For anti-Mormon sentiment following the Civil War, see Patrick Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and for a legal exploration of polygamy, see Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁶⁵J. Spencer Fluhman, "A Peculiar People": *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁶⁶Buchanan, "Education among the Mormons," 444.

⁶⁷Rev. Joseph Cook, cited in "Boston Monday Lectures," *Boston Daily Advertiser* 125 (1878); this article was also printed in the *New York Daily Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1878.

and instead focused their efforts on the schools in which their young children were matriculated.⁶⁸

That same year, Walter Barrows, pastor of the Congregational Church in Salt Lake City, published a book entitled *The Mormon Problem*, in which he claimed that Mormon leadership stood in opposition to all schools. “They may have been obliged to open some in self-defense, to keep their children from flocking to the Gentile schools,” he wrote, “but most of these are of a very inferior order, and are used to propagate the peculiar tenets of Mormonism.”⁶⁹ In 1879, J. M. Coyner, principal of the Salt Lake Collegiate Institute, claimed that, as “the recognized opponent of free education,” the Church was responsible for the ignorance of the people of Utah. He further suggested that the Church “persistently refused to give [its members] that education that is necessary to entitle them to become worthy citizens of a free country,” maintaining “ignorance to enable [the Church] to control them.”⁷⁰

The following year, the Congregational national hierarchy organized the NWEC in Chicago with the express purpose of “reducing the evils of Mormonism” and redeeming Utah and the adjacent territories through education. In its second Annual Report, the NWEC explicitly named “the Mormon Problem”:

Another foe; one not less deadly and hostile than those in the past, and combining some of the most dangerous and destructive features of them all—*Mormonism*, polygamous Mormonism, a second Gomorrah; the house of abominations; Sodom, in the brimstone of Salt Lake. Heaven blast it, and save its deluded followers! The lusts and passions of this monstrous uncleanness heave like the wintry sea with which our fathers strove... . It is slavery, hard as death and the grave, a plague spot hotter than the breath of demon-working Africa, and foul as the gilded halls of Turkey, without the splendor. Out of the slums and cesspools of society come miasmas that poison life; come leprosies that waste communities; come disease and pestilence that kill republics. Mormonism is rife with all of these.⁷¹

In their Fourth Annual Report, the NWEC additionally addressed the schools in Utah, claiming that they were “rudimentary, short, and poorly taught,” and ultimately “totally inadequate.”⁷² Two years later, the commission summarized these opinions and its intentions, declaring Mormons to be “an ignorant, fanatical, misled, ill-balanced, but in the main sincere and honest, people; a people who, without education, will become more fanatical, more closely wedded to their superstitions, and at last a permanently

⁶⁸Rev. Joseph Cook cited in “Boston Monday Lectures,” Boston Daily Advertiser 125, (1878); this article was also printed in the New York Daily Tribune, Dec 27, 1878.

⁶⁹Barrows, *Mormon Problem*, 14.

⁷⁰Coyner, *Letters on Mormonism*, 12.

⁷¹*Second Annual Report of the New West Education Commission* (Chicago: New West Education Commission, 1882), 13.

⁷²*Fourth Annual Report of the New West Education Commission* (Chicago: New West Education Commission, 1884), 24.

embittered and rebellious people.” It then restated its plan to wage a conflict against these evils on behalf of the young people of Utah.⁷³

In 1887, Reverend R. W. Beers, a Presbyterian pastor from Maryland, published a book entitled *The Mormon Puzzle; and How to Solve It*. In it, he argued that even though the world has not seen a greater despotism, “it will not cost as much to buy books and pay salaries of competent teachers as it would to dig graves in a war of extermination.”⁷⁴ Of course, to make this argument effective, it was necessary to articulate that the ignorant and uneducated people in Utah needed “proper” schools. Beers continued by describing the “appalling” ignorance of the Mormons, claiming, “The main object of the Mormon school system seems to be to prevent the people from learning to think and acquiring information.”⁷⁵ In the September 21, 1888, issue of the *Congressional Record*, Senator George Edmunds presented the same argument: “I am told by those who have had large experience, it seems impossible to carry the pupils beyond the crudest elementary knowledge. The brain capacity seems to exhaust itself at given points. They have had an ancestry of illiterates for three or four generations, and mental limitations are the sequence.”⁷⁶

These statements from the NWEAC and numerous pastors from the more than two thousand churches that supported the organization’s cause expose a nuanced argument regarding the inadequate education of children in Utah schools. It seems that the NWEAC and the aforementioned pastors founded their negative views of Utah schools on a disdain for the doctrine and practices of the Latter-day Saints. On this view, because their doctrine was so distasteful, their schools could not teach children effectively or provide them with skills that might be valuable for either their freedom and well-being or that of the nation. Although some made references to teachers who had come to work with Mormon students, these teachers did not corroborate their claims regarding the state of education in Utah with data or documentation. While early Utah schools struggled with challenges common across western territories (such as funding and the demands of frontier life), little evidence exists to suggest that these challenges were either because students had no capacity to learn or the Church prohibited the education of its members.

Regardless, the NWEAC facilitated sending missionaries from numerous religious denominations to Utah in order to establish schools with the hope of converting young Latter-day Saints away from the faith of their parents. The Episcopal Church established the first Protestant school in Salt Lake City in 1867. Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle, who founded this school, described his first meeting with Brigham Young. Though the meeting was cordial, he sensed that Young knew “if not in will yet in reality, by our services and our school, we are putting our clutches to his very throat.”⁷⁷ Other denominational schools soon followed, including those sponsored by Congregationalists,

⁷³*Sixth Annual Report of the New West Education Commission* (Chicago: New West Education Commission, 1886), 14.

⁷⁴Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle*, 103.

⁷⁵Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle*, 115–16.

⁷⁶“Prayer by the Chaplain, Rev. J. D. Butler,” *Congressional Record—Senate* 19, part 9, Sept. 21, 1888, 8796, <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1888/09/21/senate-section>.

⁷⁷Daniel S. Tuttle, *Reminiscences of a Missionary Bishop* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1906), 114.

Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics. Bishop Tuttle recalled that the US secretary of state at the time, William H. Seward, believed these schools “would do more to solve the Mormon problem than the army and Congress of the United States combined.”⁷⁸

Speaking to the Christian Educators in Council in 1883, Reverend Henry Kendall summarized the history of this Protestant effort in Utah and openly proclaimed, “These schools are all in reality, though not obtrusively, Christian schools. All their teachers are really missionaries... The preachers and the teachers constitute one consecrated and harmonious band engaged in undermining the whole system of Mormonism.”⁷⁹ In order to acquire greater funding from the east, some Christian school advocates told exaggerated stories of how heroic it was to take on such a “dangerous” assignment, describing “noble Christian men and women who have faced the insults and sometimes death itself in battling with the errors of Mormonism.”⁸⁰

While “the evangelization role was significant enough that records were kept about the religious background of students,” Dunn claimed of these Protestant schools, “the teachers generally believed that their purpose was to teach rather than to proselytize.”⁸¹ Teachers’ hesitation to proselytize during school time and missionaries’ insistence on conversion as the superlative purpose of these schools often led to tension among those running the mission schools.⁸² Despite the focus of teachers in the mission schools on the education of their students, it is clear that the founders of these schools had an express aim to “unsettle the faith of the children in Mormonism.”⁸³ They hoped “through education to bring American and Christian culture to those deprived of it.”⁸⁴ The female teachers running schools played a significant role in this mission, as “Protestant churches working on the frontier believed that highly educated single women would be worthy models for Mormon women suffering under polygamy.”⁸⁵ It seems that the NWEA and its supporting churches hoped that “teachers could get a foothold where the preacher would not be given a hearing.”⁸⁶ In doing so, they might “accomplish more than the wisdom of law givers.”⁸⁷

While initially welcoming and tolerant of these schools, Church leaders soon became concerned that they were “a subtle means of weaning children away from the

⁷⁸Daniel S. Tuttle, *Missionary to the Mountain West: Reminiscences of Episcopal Bishop Daniel S Tuttle, 1866–1886* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987).

⁷⁹Henry Kendall, “Mormonism: Efforts of Christian Churches,” 135.

⁸⁰Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle*, 188; see also Brackenridge, “Are You That Damned Presbyterian Devil?,” 85.

⁸¹Dunn, “A Mission on the Frontier,” 550.

⁸²Thomas Edgar Lyon, *Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1865–1900* (Utah: The University of Utah, 1962), 172–98.

⁸³United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, vol. 6 (New York: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1881), 533.

⁸⁴Davies, as cited by Lyon, *Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas*, 116.

⁸⁵Dunn, “Mission on the Frontier,” 549.

⁸⁶Edmund Lyman Hood, *The New West Education Commission 1880–1893* (Florida: H. & WB Drew Company, 1905), 2.

⁸⁷Chester A. Arthur in an address to Congress May 6, 1884, as cited by Milton L. Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Utah: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939).

family faith.”⁸⁸ Accordingly, they counseled members to “send their children only to the Mormon schools.”⁸⁹ The mission schools had a distinct practical advantage, however, as “no free public school system existed in Utah and most small-town schools were understaffed and ill equipped.”⁹⁰ Because of this, many parents “determined that the [New West] schools provided a better educational opportunity for their children.”⁹¹ Importantly, it seems that the choice of Mormon families to send their children to these NWECC-sponsored schools at this early stage was motivated more by the “ill-equipped” organization of Mormon schools than any substantive deficiency in the educational ideas espoused therein.

Working with NWECC Schools and the Founding of Kindergarten in Utah

Although there may have been a certain degree of animosity and suspicion between the NWECC’s denominational schools and Mormon schools, there were some instances in which these groups worked together to improve educational quality in the territory. One significant example of this kind of cooperation, which characterized Source 2 of progressive ideas in Utah, is the efforts of numerous women to support the founding of kindergarten programs in the territory. While the claims regarding the founding of kindergartens in Utah vary somewhat, the existing accounts tend to depict a noteworthy “unified effort” between the Mormon settlers and eastern visitors with the NWECC to institute these kindergarten programs.⁹²

One such account, recorded by Elizabeth A. Parsons, a teacher affiliated with the Presbyterian Collegiate Institute, submits the claim that the Presbyterian Church opened the first Froebelian kindergarten in Utah with Elizabeth Dickey in 1883. This school ran for four years until Dickey’s poor health necessitated its closure. Other accounts instead extend this attribution to Camilla Cobb, a Mormon immigrant from Germany. After attending training school in New Jersey with Dr. Adolph Douai, a fellow German immigrant and proponent of Froebel and the kindergarten, Cobb opened a Utah kindergarten in 1874.⁹³ This kindergarten was held in the home of Brigham Young for two years before Cobb received a Church assignment to teach older children. As there was no other qualified kindergarten teacher, this school, too, closed for a time. Various other denominations opened kindergartens in the Utah Territory following the closure of both Dickey’s and Cobb’s schools, but these were in large part either short-lived or private institutions requiring tuition fees.⁹⁴ The arrival of several other women to the state acted as further catalyst for the spread of kindergarten programs across the territory more generally. Alice Chapin from the Boston Kindergarten Training School came to the territory and began to hold training courses

⁸⁸ Brackenridge, “Are You That Damned Presbyterian Devil?” 85.

⁸⁹ Peterson, “A New Community,” 297.

⁹⁰ Brackenridge, “Are You That Damned Presbyterian Devil?” 84.

⁹¹ Dunn, “Mission on the Frontier,” 551.

⁹² Andrea Ventilla, “Women and the Kindergarten Movement in Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (Spring 2013), 133–48.

⁹³ Adolph Douai, *The Kindergarten: A Manual for the Introduction of Fröebel’s System of Primary Education into Public Schools; and for the Use of Mothers and Private Teachers* (New York: Steiger, 1871).

⁹⁴ Ventilla, “Women and the Kindergarten Movement in Utah.”

in 1894. Women from various denominations, including several Mormon leaders of the Primary Association, attended these training sessions.⁹⁵ Mary C. May, a graduate of the Free Kindergarten Association in Chicago and experienced kindergarten teacher, came west and began teaching at the University of Utah. With the approval and written support of both Francis Parker and John Dewey, May worked to link kindergarten and primary education methods.⁹⁶ In these efforts, it seems that kindergarten advocates from various religious backgrounds collaborated together to provide increased access to kindergarten across the territory.

Elizabeth Parsons wrote that she “had learned of the new educational ideal and methods of Pestalozzi and Froebel” and “was deeply impressed with the importance these two great educators laid upon spiritual development in their educational system.” She felt that the methods of these European educational philosophers would assist “the efforts in general that were being made by the Home Missions among the Mormon youth of the territory.”⁹⁷ As early as 1892, with the organization of the Presbyterian Church’s Salt Lake Kindergarten Association, “the women’s priorities shifted from converting the LDS population of the territory to making kindergarten education free and available to the general public.”⁹⁸ The Salt Lake Kindergarten Association, together with the Free Kindergarten Association, additionally ran campaigns for kindergartens to be included in free public education systems by 1895, resulting in a provision included in the state’s constitution.⁹⁹

Mormon women established the Utah Kindergarten Association in 1895 to support Mormon kindergartens and advocate for “the usefulness of kindergarten education among Mormon mothers.”¹⁰⁰ This association opened five Mormon-run kindergartens. Upon receiving requests from non-Mormons, however, the leaders of the association voted to accept students outside of the Church. Seen in this light, movements to support the growth of kindergartens in Utah were mostly championed by women but were not isolated to a single group or denomination. Rather, women from various religious and educational backgrounds worked together to establish kindergarten schools as well as to train female teachers in the philosophies of Froebel and progressive American educators in order to ensure the schools’ quality. Such cooperation is especially salient against the backdrop of Mormonism’s penchant for treating non-Mormon educators and their ideas with at least some degree of suspicion in the early years after their arrival in 1847. It is possible that the cooperative efforts of Mormon and non-Mormon women to establish kindergartens in Utah softened the isolationist tendencies of Mormon educators and in part prepared them for the arrival of additional progressivist educative ideas from other sources in the years to come.

⁹⁵Ventilla, “Women and the Kindergarten Movement in Utah.”

⁹⁶Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 115.

⁹⁷“Reminiscences of the Beginning of Kindergartens in Salt Lake City, Utah.” Anne Marie Fox Felt papers, box 1, folder 4, p. 1, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁹⁸Ventilla, “Women and the Kindergarten Movement in Utah,” 137.

⁹⁹Utah Const. of 1895, art. X § 2 states, “The Public School system shall include kindergarten schools, common schools, consisting of primary and grammar grades, high schools, an Agricultural College, a University, and such other schools as the Legislature may establish.”

¹⁰⁰Ventilla, “Women and the Kindergarten Movement in Utah,” 139.

A Mormon Reaction to the NWEA Catalyst: Improving Schools through Maeser's Pestalozzianism toward a Mormon Progressivism

A secondary Mormon response to the arrival of Protestant schools was to increase their efforts to improve their own schools. "Mormons were stimulated in scholastic endeavor by the Protestant schools," Bennion explained.¹⁰¹ The mission schools' significant success in procuring enrollment, Bancroft agreed, caused it to "become necessary for the Mormons to bestir themselves in the matter and there was afterward more efficiency" in the educational institutions founded and run by the Church and its members.¹⁰² "Those who oppose us are well aware of the importance of education in shaping the minds of the rising generation," George Q. Cannon warned, speaking against the Protestant mission schools and their intentions. "If they could only take from us the education of our children, they think they would deal us one of the most deadly blows ever aimed at us."¹⁰³ Accordingly, the Latter-day Saints found themselves in need of improving the quality of their schools in order to compete with the mission schools for the enrollment of children in Utah. This rivalry "was not based solely on educational excellence," Hough described. "The respective tuitions and the religious views of the schools were also important."¹⁰⁴ In response to these educational pressures, Latter-day Saints placed greater emphasis on teacher training.

In 1869, John Rockey Park reconstituted the University of Deseret and began the work of organizing a teacher-training course under its auspices. The Territorial Teachers Association also provided a training seminar whereby educators could "become acquainted with each other."¹⁰⁵ As part of this training, teachers worked to develop a system that might unify their instruction.¹⁰⁶ Karl Maeser "was selected to direct the association's constitution committee."¹⁰⁷ In addition to this committee and his work at the University of Deseret, Maeser also ran a teacher-training course in conjunction with his 20th Ward school. In 1874, Maeser helped establish the Teachers Institute in Salt Lake City, which met every Saturday to train the teachers in the county to infuse "new life and new modes of thinking" into Mormon educators in Utah.¹⁰⁸ This institute met in a different school each week to demonstrate and discuss ways to increase teacher effectiveness. The only theorist mentioned in the reports of this institute was Friedrich Froebel.

Building on Sobe's argument for the necessity of exploring transnational connections and relationships that have facilitated the spread of ideas and philosophies in the US, we consider here some of the connections that guided the spread of Pestalozzian

¹⁰¹ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 137.

¹⁰² Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah*, vol. 26, 1540–1887 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), 707–8.

¹⁰³ George Q. Cannon, "Our Educational Facilities," *Juvenile Instructor* 25, no. 8 (1890), 243.

¹⁰⁴ Hough, "Two School Systems in Conflict," 118–19.

¹⁰⁵ "Teachers' Convention," *Deseret News*, April 17, 1872, 7.

¹⁰⁶ "The School Question," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1874, 2. The author of this article makes the claim that "at present, our schools are taught on the old dame principle. Each teacher has his own method, he has no plan to work to, he is responsible to no one, and his labors are interrupted by constantly recurring fasts, festivals, and funerals. We want a system introduced."

¹⁰⁷ Richards, *Called to Teach*.

¹⁰⁸ "Teachers' Institute," *Deseret News Weekly*, Dec. 2, 1874, BYU Library Digital Collections, 11.

ideas throughout the country.¹⁰⁹ It seems that the various American educators who disseminated Pestalozzi's educational theories came in contact with these ideas in one of two broad ways: either by encountering them while traveling in Europe or receiving them from former students, disciples, or admirers of Pestalozzi. Among this first group was William Maclure, a native Scot who, upon becoming invested in the interests of the American Republic, joined an investigative commission to post-revolutionary France. In his spare time there, he studied various educational systems in Europe and became enamored with Pestalozzi's efforts and the enthusiasm he saw among his students. On recommendation from Pestalozzi, Maclure brought Joseph Neef, one of Pestalozzi's associate teachers, with him upon his return to the United States to aid in the creation of a new school in Philadelphia.¹¹⁰ Another point of primary contact between the US and Pestalozzian ideas was Louis Agassiz. Agassiz attended Swiss schools in his youth, which, while not directly tied to Pestalozzi himself, embraced several concepts and practices Pestalozzi advanced.¹¹¹ Also among these initial investigators of Pestalozzianism was Horace Mann, who observed Pestalozzi's ideas in practice in Germany and Prussia while on a wedding trip in Europe. These ideas had such an impact on him that he included them in several of his annual reports regarding the state of education in Massachusetts, most notably the Seventh and Ninth Annual Reports.¹¹²

Other influential American thinkers received introductions to Pestalozzi's educational ideas secondhand from individuals like those above who had acquired them in Europe from Pestalozzi or his students. For example, Henry Barnard, a contemporary of Mann, first encountered Pestalozzian ideas as a student at Yale. After being temporarily sent home as punishment for his participation in a student rebellion, Barnard met Eli Todd, a physician who had learned about Pestalozzi's ideas and schools from William Maclure. Barnard then traveled to Switzerland to see these schools for himself. He later published several works regarding Pestalozzi's educational philosophy in the *American Journal of Education*.¹¹³ Similarly, Lowell Mason, an American music educator, began to incorporate Pestalozzian ideas after meeting William C. Woodbridge, who had traveled to Europe and seen these ideas in practice in Switzerland. Mason and Woodbridge collaborated on the development of a music curriculum that utilized the methods of Pestalozzi, adapted for the specific application of music instruction. Mason was a key figure in spreading these ideas and putting them into practice in the Boston Public School system.¹¹⁴ Edward A. Sheldon, the superintendent of schools in Oswego, New York, advanced Pestalozzi's ideas in the United States when he hired Margaret Jones to train Oswego educators. Jones had attended schools in England that students

¹⁰⁹Noah W. Sobe, "Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education," in *Rethinking the History of Education: Transnational Perspectives on Its Questions, Methods, and Knowledge*, ed. Thomas K. Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 93–107.

¹¹⁰Will S. Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (New York: Arno Press & the New York Times, 1969), 39–44.

¹¹¹Thomas A. Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education* (Boulder, CO: Este Es Press, 1977), 115.

¹¹²Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education*, 57–66.

¹¹³Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education*, 74–84.

¹¹⁴Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education*, 117–22.

of Pestalozzi, namely Charles Mayo and James Greaves, had established to incorporate Pestalozzi's methods and theories there.¹¹⁵ Greaves further aided the spread of Pestalozzian ideas in the United States through a pamphlet that reached Amos Bronson Alcott. Alcott, a teacher and writer, became such a dedicated follower of Pestalozzi that he earned the appellation "the American Pestalozzi."¹¹⁶ His dedication to Pestalozzi's philosophies additionally led Greaves to name his school in Surrey in honor of Alcott.

While extant scholarship has illustrated the dynamic introduction of Pestalozzian educative thought across various centers of nineteenth-century North America, these have not included Karl G. Maeser, the Mormon educator in Utah, as among the educationalists who spread these ideas across their respective regions. It seems the historical assumption has been that Utah's inheritance of progressive educational ideas more closely follows the second trend, arriving to Utah schools secondhand through a chain of American thinkers. We propose in this study, however, to consider an additional source through which to trace Utah's inheritance of progressive Pestalozzian ideas, namely that of Karl Maeser. Similar to the individuals noted in the first group, Maeser encountered Pestalozzi's theories as part of his training as a teacher directly from students of the Pestalozzian tradition in Europe.

While attending the prestigious Kreuzschule in Dresden, Maeser became disillusioned with the "traditional" methods of instruction and educational philosophy he encountered there. Instead, he was drawn to the ideas of his Latin teacher, Herman Köchly, who advocated for appropriate personal relationships between students and teachers and the inclusion of newer, practical sciences in education.¹¹⁷ The influence of this teacher led Maeser to attend the teacher-training college in Friedrichstadt, where, under the direction of Christian Otto, he became formally acquainted with Pestalozzi's educational theories. These ideas included the inherent ability of all children to learn, the importance of moral growth and physical ability along with intellectual development, and love as motivation for both teaching and learning.

After receiving additional training from E. A. E. Calinich and Friedrich Reinicke and completing an apprenticeship in Bohemia, Maeser taught one year at the First District School in Dresden. He then transferred to the Budich Institute, where he taught until he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Moritz Budich, director of the institute, had worked with Friedrich Froebel and ran a private school in Dresden. Attached to the school was the first teacher-training program for women in Saxony. This background gave Maeser grounding in several of the theories and practices that would influence future movements in progressive educational thought in the United States.

¹¹⁵ Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education*, 92–97.

¹¹⁶ Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement*, 151.

¹¹⁷ As the oldest school in Dresden and one of the oldest schools in Germany, Kreuzschule had a long-standing reputation. The school was referred to as the "famous Dresden *gymnasium illustre*" in the *Germanic Review* ("An Unpublished Letter by Johann Joachim Winckelmann Communicated by Heinrich Schneider," *Germanic Review* 18, no. 3 [1943], 172–75), and is known for the attendance of students such as Richard Wagner (J. Verey, "Wagner as a Poet," *Monthly Musical Record* 33, no. 388 [1903], 64–65). Its methods "had been developed over centuries and were accepted as the standard way to prepare university students" (Richards, *Called to Teach*, 7). These methods, however, were built upon educational philosophies that stood in opposition to the newer ideas of Pestalozzi.

As we will outline later in this paper, Maeser brought these ideas with him to Utah following his conversion to Mormonism and incorporated them in the schools he ran there.¹¹⁸ Indeed, John T. Miller labeled Maeser “the Pestalozzi of the Rocky Mountains,” signifying his appreciation of Maeser’s dedication to incorporating Pestalozzi’s ideas in his education efforts in Utah.¹¹⁹ The similarity between this appellation and that of Alcott as “the American Pestalozzi,” further supports our proposed inclusion of Karl G. Maeser as among the educational thinkers who promoted the propagation of Pestalozzian educative ideas in the nineteenth-century United States. While we do not make the argument that the progressive educationalist ideas of Pestalozzi arrived in Utah before arriving to other areas in the country, it is clear that Mormon educators in nineteenth-century Utah and the Utah Territory perceived Maeser as having introduced progressive educational thought to Utah “a score of years ere it began to revolutionize the East.”¹²⁰

Meanwhile, Brigham Young was alert to the educational efforts of the NWEA and others to undercut the faith of young Latter-day Saints. In this context, it became obvious to him that the Church would need to create an alternative educational model. Because the University of Deseret was dependent upon government funding, pressures to secularize the curriculum seemed unavoidable. At the same time, turning to religious schools intent on undermining the faith of Latter-day Saint children seemed an equally unacceptable alternative. Amid severe accusations that he was anti-education because he did not want to endorse a government-sponsored educational system of “free schools” when the government had sworn its opposition to Mormonism, Young began making plans to establish a college on a different foundation. In August 1873, for example, he tasked his secretary to request from a number of colleges in the United States the form of endowment, charter, and system of governance necessary to found a college.¹²¹

Then, in 1875, when the territorial legislature refused to fund the Southern Branch of the University of Deseret in Provo, Utah, Young decided it was time to implement his plan. The Southern Branch had been meeting without charge in a building Young owned in Provo, so it was a natural place to organize the new Brigham Young Academy. The charter was signed October 1875 with the intent to establish an institution where “the children of the Latter-day Saints can receive a good education unmixed with the pernicious, atheistic influences that are to be found in so many of the higher schools of the country.”¹²² The charter stipulated that along with all the religious doctrines of the Church and the branches of learning usually taught in an academy, “some branch of mechanism ... suitable to ... [the students] ... taste and capacity” should be included.¹²³

¹¹⁸ A. LeGrand Richards, “Maeser at the Crossroads,” *Y Magazine* (Summer 2015), 26–32.

¹¹⁹ John T. Miller, “The Pestalozzi of the Rocky Mountains,” *Character Builder* 40, no. 8 (1927), 1.

¹²⁰ “Editorials,” *Journal of Pedagogy* 1 (Dec. 1894), 9.

¹²¹ D. McKenzie to McKendree College, Aug. 20, 1873, CR 1234 1_13_544, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter LDS Archives]. A note on the copy sent to McKendree College says it was sent to twelve colleges.

¹²² Brigham Young to Alphaes Young, Oct. 20, 1875, CR 1234 1_13_1038-9, LDS Archives.

¹²³ Deed of Trust for the Brigham Young Academy, folder 1, item 2, BYU Special Collections, Provo, UT.

In the spring of 1876, Brigham Young recruited Karl Maeser to direct the new academy and to propose an educational program where “not even the alphabet or the multiplication tables” would be taught without the spirit of God.¹²⁴ Almost immediately, Maeser began a normal department to prepare teachers in Utah. At the same time, he also began teacher training every other Saturday for the district teachers. By 1884, 73 percent of the district schoolteachers in Utah County were graduates of BYA, and all the teachers in the county had received training from Karl Maeser in foundational progressive educational ideas.¹²⁵

Again, Maeser built his approach to education on the principles of Pestalozzi, which included, in addition to those principles noted earlier, that education should be connected to practical application, corporal punishment was to be replaced by love, and observation of nature was basic to learning. Furthermore, nineteenth-century Mormon educators in Utah advocated the implementation of some of Pestalozzi’s fundamental approaches to teaching.¹²⁶ These include that students were to be led from concrete to abstract ideas (often through object lessons), learning was built on self-activity, rote memorization was to be minimal, play was an inherent part of learning, and education was to be of the whole child: head, heart, and hand.¹²⁷ Pestalozzian ideas additionally informed those of Francis W. Parker, to whom Dewey gave credit as the founder of progressive education in the US.¹²⁸ In light of Maeser’s connection to Pestalozzian methods and ideas from his training in Europe, it seems that Utah’s Mormon schools, through Maeser’s leadership, had likely been exposed to some of these same ideals before the visits of educationalists from the eastern states to Utah.

The ideas that Maeser expressed in his book *School and Fireside* provide insight into the training that Utah teachers might have received from him and unique facets of the Mormon treatment of progressive educational thought. These facets seem to center on the role of religiosity and spiritual development in education. Maeser not only expressed that education “finds its crowning glory in the attainment of the divine attributes” but also attributed to religion “the most effective motive power” for

¹²⁴This was the charge Brigham Young gave to Karl Maeser: “‘I want you,’ said President Young, ‘to remember that you ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication table without the Spirit of God. That is all. God bless you. Goodbye.’” Recounted in Karl G. Maeser, *School and Fireside* (Provo, UT: Skelton, Maeser & Co., 1897), 189.

¹²⁵“Education in Utah County,” *Deseret News*, July 2, 1884, 13, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹²⁶The major works in which Pestalozzi outlines his philosophy of education include Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Leonard and Gertrude: A Popular Story, Written Originally in German, Translated Into French, and Now Attempted in English, with the Hope of Its Being Useful to All Classes of Society*, trans. J. Groff (Philadelphia: Robert Carr, 1801); and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1915). For a discussion of Pestalozzi’s influence on Dewey’s philosophy of education and progressive educational ideas, see Randall A. Colvin and Kelley M. King, “Dewey’s Educational Heritage: The Influence of Pestalozzi,” *Journal of Philosophy & History of Education* 68, no. 1 (2018), 45–54.

¹²⁷Respectively, “The Kindergarten,” *Juvenile Instructor* 8, no. 2 (Jan. 1873), 10; “The New Education,” *Juvenile Instructor* 43, no. 8 (Aug. 1908), 312; “Science Teaching,” *Journal of Pedagogy* 1 (Dec. 1894), 21–25; Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 106; “The New Education,” *Juvenile Instructor* 43, no. 8 (1908), 312.

¹²⁸John Dewey, “How Much Freedom in New Schools?,” *New Republic*, July 9, 1930, 204–05.

learning.¹²⁹ Maeser thus considered intellectual, practical, and spiritual education as inseparable.¹³⁰ This focus matches what Bennion noted of Church leaders as well, who “looked upon the tendency to differentiate between the religious and the secular in education as most unfortunate.”¹³¹

The relationship between educational progressivism and religion more generally is fraught, and it spans from the overtly religious overtones in Pestalozzi’s and Froebel’s theorizing to Smith’s analysis of later progressive educationalists “combining popular religious feeling with new scientific and social philosophies.”¹³² Importantly, the combination of religion with intellectual and practical education described by Maeser functions not as the application of worshipful feeling to scientific philosophies that Smith outlined. Instead, it more closely aligns with Bennion’s statement that “the religious sanction given by the Mormons to education has tended to integrate the secular studies and to some degree prevented the general tendency to make education ‘a series of relatively unrelated specialties.’”¹³³ Indeed, Maeser warned that the substitution of ethics for religious belief was insufficient and that, “with the abandonment of religion, education has lost its safe anchorage, is drifting into the unknown currents of experimentalism.”¹³⁴

Inherent in much of the Church’s rhetoric regarding the importance of including spirituality and religion in education is an elevated estimation of human nature and doctrines that outline humanity’s potential for a divine destiny generally. The *Juvenile Instructor*, an official periodical of the Church, highlighted the implications of such doctrine on education in 1908: “‘To go where God is you must be like God, or possess the principle which he possesses.’ In a general way that defines the kind of education every man should strive to get.”¹³⁵ The article continues to express that under the “old education,” individuals were unable to apply their learning in order to help their society or improve their quality of life. “Surely those are not the principles that God possesses,” the article argues. Rather, God, as a possessor of theoretical and practical knowledge, “has learned to apply the principles of science to honorable toil,” “has learned to do by doing,” and “has trained the intelligence, which is not in the head alone, but in the hand and the heart as well.” It is this kind of learning that the article attributed to the “new education” and that bears a resemblance to Pestalozzian progressive language.¹³⁶

To this end, articles in the *Juvenile Instructor* as early as 1873 made claims that “nothing ... is more contrary to nature than to forbid a child the use of its hands.”¹³⁷ From its earliest editions in 1866, the *Juvenile Instructor* introduced object lessons and observations of natural phenomena.¹³⁸ Maeser himself wrote about specific teaching methods,

¹²⁹ Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 55–56.

¹³⁰ Maeser, *School and Fireside*, preface.

¹³¹ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 125.

¹³² Timothy L. Smith, “Progressivism in American Education, 1880–1900,” *Harvard Educational Review* 31 (Spring 1961), 192.

¹³³ Bennion, *Mormonism and Education*, 125.

¹³⁴ Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 57.

¹³⁵ “The New Education,” *Juvenile Instructor* 43, no. 8 (Aug. 1908), 312.

¹³⁶ “The New Education,” 312.

¹³⁷ “The Kindergarten,” *Juvenile Instructor* 8, no. 2 (Jan. 1873), 10.

¹³⁸ *Juvenile Instructor* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1866).

declaring recitation to be “most reprehensible.”¹³⁹ He designated physical punishments such as blows to the head as deserving of “severest censure without mitigation.”¹⁴⁰ Instead, he recommended that teachers repeatedly prepare, reviewing the best methods for teaching, develop quality of their own character, and foster “mutual confidence and affection” with their students.¹⁴¹ “As nothing can grow without sunlight,” he taught, “so nothing can prosper in school or fireside without love.”¹⁴²

Student editors of the *BYA Student*, a weekly newsletter of Brigham Young Academy, expressed similar ideas regarding teachers. “Teachers should love the work, love children, be punctual and exemplary... The teacher should not think of appearing before his class without having previously laid out a plan for the day’s lesson. The Natural Sciences must invariably be taught by objects and experiments.”¹⁴³ Speaking for his fellow students, one editor of the newsletter wrote that they wanted teachers “who can originate methods, principles, etc., and not those who, parrot-like, transmit to their pupils knowledge just as they themselves learned it.”¹⁴⁴ Another wrote that teachers must “keep pace with the times” in order to be successful.¹⁴⁵ On the subject of classroom rules, another suggested, “Pupils should learn rules as they should learn everything else, by experiencing the necessity for them, and by putting them into practice as they learn them.” This author further argued, “The rules that will be best learned, and most consistently obeyed, are those that are not spoken or written or printed, but regularly acted by the pupils under the guidance of a wise teacher.”¹⁴⁶

Thus, even as progressive educational ideas spread across nineteenth-century America, Utah educators were being trained in some of the same Pestalozzian educative ideas that influenced aspects of various progressive education movements in the East. Many Utah teachers, then, combined a unique commitment to progressive educational ideas while sustaining suspicion of ideologies coming from the eastern states as a result of their religious history. Not all Mormon educators shared this suspicion, however. As we will show in the following sections, some Utah teachers, such as Benjamin Cluff, advocated for increased interaction with eastern educators and educational ideologies as a means to both learn from those ideologies and attempt to legitimize Utah’s own educative approach in the eyes of eastern educators.

In short, one facet of the Latter-day Saint response to the growing numbers of Protestant mission schools included a heightened focus on education and improving the quality of schools in the territory. Supporters of the mission schools eventually noted, “The direct results of mission work in Utah as measured by converts from Mormonism were so slight as to be almost negligible; the indirect results as shown by modifications in the teachings and practices of the Latter-day Saints ... were much

¹³⁹ Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 80.

¹⁴⁰ Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 106–07.

¹⁴¹ Respectively, Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 80–81, 84, and 85.

¹⁴² Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 85.

¹⁴³ O. W. Andelin, “Qualification of Officers,” *B.Y.A. Student* 1, no. 6 (March 1891), 3.

¹⁴⁴ O. W. Andelin, “Teaching,” *B.Y.A. Student* 1, no. 10 (March 1891), 1.

¹⁴⁵ *B.Y.A. Student* 1, no. 10 (March 1891), 2.

¹⁴⁶ “Rules in a School,” *B.Y.A. Student* 1, no. 10 (March 1891), 3.

more apparent.”¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the NWEC ultimately concluded that, even in the case of students who remained enrolled in the Protestant mission schools, their conversion efforts had largely proved fruitless. Colonel Charles Hammond, the organizer of the NWEC, recorded, “The major result of the Utah Christian schools appears to be that we are training Mormons to serve as Sunday School teachers, young folk leaders, and bishops in the Mormon church. They take our proffered education, but not our religion, and use it to strengthen their own institutions.”¹⁴⁸

A Shift in Utah Schools and the Spread of Eastern Educative Progressivism

Cities throughout the Utah Territory recognized the success of the BYA and several wanted to establish their own academies with Maeser’s help. Maeser drafted a proposal to the presidency of the Church, which was approved in 1887 with the establishment of the Church Educational System and Maeser as its first superintendent in 1888. In this role, he was to oversee the establishment of academies in every stake of the Church in the territory from Mexico to Canada, providing teachers trained in the BYA at the Church’s teachers college.¹⁴⁹ Of course, Church leaders recognized that not all the young people of the Church could attend one of these academies, so they developed religion courses to supplement the instruction they would receive in the district schools.

What followed then was the development of three competing educational systems in Utah: a system of Church academies, non-denominational public district schools, and the non-LDS denominational schools. The Church was actively involved in the preparation of teachers for both Church academies and non-denominational public district school systems, perhaps in part as a response to what was often interpreted as an educational attack on Mormonism posed by the denominational schools in Utah. Church leaders believed that faithful Latter-day Saint teachers in non-denominational district schools would not seek to undercut Mormonism, so the preparation of teachers for both the academies and public schools became of particular interest to the Church. The Territorial Teacher Association also placed greater emphasis on the ongoing training of teachers, sponsoring summer institutes, conventions, and symposia. By the 1890s, the competition between these three systems had become one of the defining characteristics of education in the Utah Territory.

This decade demonstrated a dramatic shift in education in Utah. Clark estimated that in 1890, 65 percent of the secondary school students in Utah were enrolled in non-Mormon denominational schools, 27 percent in Latter-day Saint schools, and only 8 percent in public schools. Five years later, only 28 percent were in non-Mormon denominational schools, 49 percent in Mormon schools, and 23 percent in public

¹⁴⁷ Collin B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier* (Calwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1939), 315.

¹⁴⁸ Found in the papers of Col. Hammond in the Hammond Library of the Chicago Theological Seminary in July 1940, cited by Lyon, *Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Area*, 251.

¹⁴⁹ Richards, *Called to Teach*. A stake in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a district consisting of a number of wards, similar to the composition of a diocese.

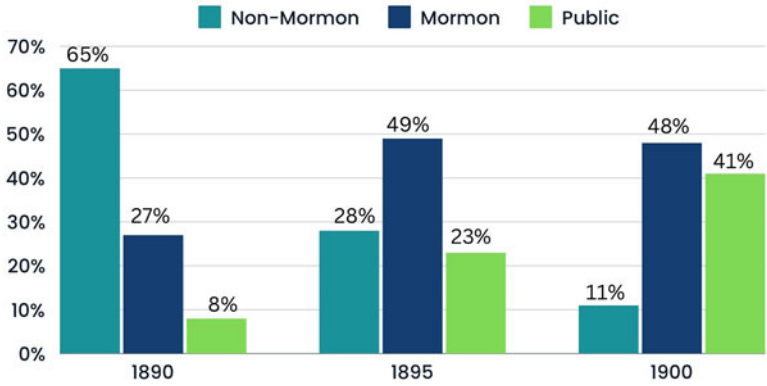


Figure 1. The change in distribution of Utah students attending Mormon schools, non-Mormon schools, and public schools between 1890 and 1900.

schools. By 1900, 11 percent were in non-Mormon denominational schools, 48 percent in Mormon schools, and 41 percent in public schools. The figure below illustrates these trends of matriculation in all three systems.¹⁵⁰

Again, the Protestant mission schools’ designs to convert young Latter-day Saints away from the faith of their parents seemed less successful than originally planned. Protestant missionaries like Francis S. Beggs complained that the millions of dollars spent on converting Mormons had been largely wasted. “If two hundred real Mormons have been changed and made into earnest evangelical Christians during that time,” he said in 1896, “we have not been able to discover them.”¹⁵¹ As the public school system expanded, many of the denominational schools whose purpose was the eradication of the “Mormon problem” from Utah eventually dissolved.

The transcontinental railroad that facilitated non-Mormon immigration to Utah also made it easier for young Latter-day Saints to travel to the eastern states for higher education. Given the continued animosity toward Mormonism, Church leaders met the prospect of sending young men and women east with understandable concern. Without family and cultural support, some college students may not have had sufficient grounding to withstand the challenges to their faith they would face there. This gave extra incentive to improve the educational experience at the University of Utah. The Church even proposed the establishment of its own university in Salt Lake City, only to abandon the idea because of the financial and political challenges of the 1890s.¹⁵² A few Latter-day Saint students pursued further learning in the east prior to Utah’s statehood. Fellow students and faculty in the east often treated them with suspicion

¹⁵⁰ Figure 1 is created from data in James R. Clark, “Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah” (EdD diss., Utah State University, 1858), 280.

¹⁵¹ Reverend Francis S. Beggs, “The Mormon Problem in the West,” *Methodist Review* 12 (Sept. 1896), 755–56.

¹⁵² Brian Ricks, “Closing the Church University in 1894: Embracing or Accommodating Secularized Education” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2012).

and curiosity. News of Utah had been so sparse and prejudicial that eastern college campus communities often viewed Mormon students as novelties.

Benjamin Cluff was particularly notable among these students. Payne has argued that Cluff was the most influential in bringing progressive educational ideas to Utah.¹⁵³ Cluff did play a significant role in bringing key progressive educationalist figures to Utah but, as illustrated previously, some of the ideas of progressive education had already preceded the visits of these prominent individuals by decades through the influence of Sources 1–3. Cluff graduated from the Brigham Young normal department and was teaching at BYA when he decided to seek further education at the University of Michigan. He began his studies in 1887 with a few other young men from Utah and completed his degree in 1890. Cluff was an energetic student and fierce defender of the Church. While he was there, the Law Society sponsored a debate on whether Utah should be allowed into the Union. Cluff participated on the winning “affirmative” team. He also wrote a newspaper article responding to the misrepresentations he identified in a speech by a professed expert on Mormonism. Cluff did not share the concerns of some other Mormons regarding the faith-destructing potential of eastern education; rather, he reveled in his experience in Michigan and recommended that more BYA faculty have a similar experience.¹⁵⁴

There is some evidence to suggest the possibility that some dimensions of the “new education” offered at the University of Michigan, however, were not entirely new to Cluff. He reassured Maeser in Utah, “My studies in this University have only tended to increase my confidence in your methods of discipline and instruction.”¹⁵⁵ While in the east, Cluff met with and learned from a number of progressive educationalists (including Charles Eliot, William James, James Burrill Angell, G. Stanley Hall, Burke Aaron Hinsdale, John Dewey, Francis W. Parker, James Baldwin, George Herbert Mead) and believed that nothing but good would occur from bringing Utahns in contact with these men and women. This became more likely when polygamy was officially denounced by the Church in 1890. The visits of Mormon students to universities in the eastern states, as well as the efforts of Cluff to invite eastern educators to Utah, opened the door for the fourth source of progressive educational ideas and their propagation in Utah.

The Formation and Impact of the Brigham Young Academy Summer Institute

An annual two-week summer school for teachers had begun in 1886 at the Brigham Young Academy, where teachers throughout Utah gathered to be trained by Maeser and others. Cluff succeeded Maeser as principal of BYA in 1892 and made arrangements for a major change in the Summer Teacher Institute held at the Academy in Provo. Previously, teacher institutes had brought Utah teachers together to receive instruction from the most experienced teachers in the Church. Cluff’s intention for the Summer Teacher Institute was instead to invite educators from other areas of the country to teach side by side with Church educators. While Mormon educators had

¹⁵³ Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 19.

¹⁵⁴ A. LeGrand Richards, *Called to Teach*, 544.

¹⁵⁵ Cluff to Maeser, April 21, 1890, box 1, folder 6, series 2, item 7, BYU Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

certainly experienced at least some degree of contact with progressive educationalists from the east prior to this shift in the BYA Summer Institute, Cluff's focus on inviting these guests to introduce pedagogic progressivism ushered in the fourth source of Mormon Utah's contact with progressivism in earnest.

Maeser, like many of the Mormon settlers in Utah, was wary of educational rhetoric from the eastern United States. Indeed, despite Maeser's affinity for Pestalozzian pedagogic progressivism, Wilkinson described him as "staid," "conservative" and "classical."¹⁵⁶ With respect to his attitude toward eastern educational ideas, Payne explained simply that Maeser was "fearful of Eastern education."¹⁵⁷ It seems that, at least in some degree, his perspective mirrored that of Brigham Young, who spoke in favor of a more independent approach, sending students to the east so that they could receive the training necessary to return and teach others without needing to rely on the eastern states.¹⁵⁸ Brigham Young expressed distrust of the movement of educative ideas from such eastern schools to Utah's Mormons in a warning to his sons "about the corrupting intellectual influences of rationalistic skepticism, scientific naturalism and poisonous ... economic notions."¹⁵⁹ Cluff, however, saw a mutual benefit in increased exposure to eastern educators and educational ideology. He believed this cross-pollination of educational ideas would improve teaching in Utah as well as the reputation of the Church in the United States.

One of the principal dissonances among Mormon educators of this period stems in large part from their differing attitudes about the migration of progressive educational ideas from the east to their communities in Utah. Under the earlier direction of Maeser, the BYA tended to see the influence of educative ideas from eastern schools as unnecessary at best and dangerous at worst. This approach was largely aligned with the attitude of Church leadership in Salt Lake who, following Brigham Young's stance, looked at outside ideas with noteworthy caution. For instance, Joseph F. Smith, Mormon prophet from 1901 to 1918, said of new, progressivist educational ideas, "I may be a little skeptical in regard to some new-fangled ideas... . The spirit and principles of the gospel are very simple and direct, and are seldom improved by extraordinary methods and rules which men may adopt for their promulgation or induction."¹⁶⁰ Again, prominent Mormon educators at BYA prior to Cluff's principalship, including Maeser and Horace H. Cummings, adopted a similar stance, tending to "follow somewhat conservative courses which minimized the value of outside contacts." Indeed, Maeser even expressed the hope that not only would BYA students eventually no longer need to pursue schooling elsewhere, but that others from the rest of the country would one day recognize BYA as "an education mecca for students all across the country."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Earnest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 218.

¹⁵⁷ Payne, "The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education," 40.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas W. Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad': Brigham Young's Romance with American Higher Education, 1867–1877," *Church History* 76, no. 4 (Dec. 2007), 778–98.

¹⁵⁹ Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad,'" 796.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph F. Smith, "The Old and the New," *Improvement Era* 21 (April 1918), 540.

¹⁶¹ Payne, "The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education," 56.

When Cluff took up the principalship of BYA in 1892, however, he saw the Summer Institute “as an important way not only to reinforce a burgeoning educational system, but also as a means to reverse the abundant criticism leveled at Mormon education.”¹⁶² This perspective dovetailed with that of William H. Stewart, principal of the State Normal School in Salt Lake City, who “more completely and more enthusiastically accepted educational innovation” than his colleagues at BYA in nearby Provo.¹⁶³ Other Utah educators, such as Joseph E. McKnight, took a more moderate approach with regards to the migration of progressive educationalist ideas, urging “cautious acceptance of the new and judicious abandonment of the old” in their own communities.¹⁶⁴ With regard to this attitudinal spectrum, past commentators like Payne and Wilkinson have maintained that the greatest disparity and resultant tension existed between Maeser and Cluff, his successor to the principalship at BYA. However, while there was a marked difference between their approaches toward educative thinkers outside of Utah, they both remained deeply committed to the pedagogic progressive ideals of Pestalozzi that Maeser (who had been Cluff’s teacher) had brought to BYA.¹⁶⁵

It was against the backdrop of this complex panoply of attitudes toward the promulgation of eastern educational ideas in Utah that, in the summer of 1892, nine years before Dewey visited Utah, the progressive educator Francis Parker came to the Brigham Young Academy to participate in the annual, two-week Summer Institute for Utah teachers. His wife and two other teachers accompanied him from the Cook County Normal School in Chicago, considered a center of progressive educational thought at the time. These visiting educators joined local teachers Karl Maeser, Benjamin Cluff, George Brimhall, James Talmage, and William Stewart in presenting a seminar for Utah teachers.

At a reception for him in the Provo Tabernacle, Parker told the over four hundred teachers in attendance, “I can say that I have met with hundreds of teachers’ institutes, but I never before met so earnest and persistent a crowd of teachers. You have learned from the great teacher, necessity. I not only mention this here, but I shall mention it in Chicago and wherever I go.”¹⁶⁶ After Parker’s remarks, Karl Maeser spoke about the efforts and sacrifices made in Utah to establish schools. When he said, “I know you teachers. Oh! How many of you have been my students,” there was an “immediate outburst of applause that fairly made the Tabernacle shake,” according to the newspaper. When Colonel Parker declined to speak again, he mentioned that if he had been of assistance to the teachers, he was pleased, “but in the presence of Dr. Maeser, he must take his seat. Dr. Maeser had done a greater work.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 57.

¹⁶³ Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 42.

¹⁶⁴ Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education,” 47.

¹⁶⁵ See A. Legrand Richards, *Called to Teach*, 544.

¹⁶⁶ “The Reception,” *Daily Enquirer*, Aug. 4, 1892, 4, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁶⁷ “The Reception,” 4; in addition, journal entries from several individuals in attendance further offered description of the event. These perhaps embellished or apocryphal accounts report how after hearing a description of Maeser’s teaching legacy in Utah, Parker kissed Maeser on the cheek and said to the audience, “Why did you send for me? You have one whose shoes I am unworthy to unlatch.” “President Cluff’s Innovations,” p. 2, Faculty and Board of Trustees Files, Brigham Young University Archives, Provo, Utah. See also Miller, “The Pestalozzi of the Rocky Mountains”; and “Oral History Interview with Mrs. Eva Maeser

During the second week of the Summer Institute, Parker traveled to Salt Lake City to speak in the Tabernacle to an audience of over seven thousand. He later wrote Maeser, “I assure you again, that I never was more surprised and astonished in my association with you and your people. The earnestness and zeal of the teachers was very delightful to us both.”¹⁶⁸ Parker “expressed his appreciation of the attention and eager desire manifested by the class for knowledge,” and announced that he “would take pleasure in telling at home and abroad his very favorable impression of the teachers of Utah.”¹⁶⁹

Even prior to the BYA Summer Teacher Institute of 1892, Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University, made a short visit to Utah and BYA. He also spoke to a large audience in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, comparing the Mormon pioneers who settled Utah with the Puritan and pilgrim fathers who settled New England. He had taken note of young students from Utah that he had encountered and wanted to know more about the place that produced them. He told his audience, “It is a great privilege for any American to speak to such a friendly audience as this. I have never before spoke in my life to so large a gathering, except in open air.”¹⁷⁰ His comparison elicited the following response from the *New York Sun*: “It is an outrage to compare the beastly Mormons with the Pilgrim Fathers.... The most charitable way to look at it is that President Eliot’s brain was temporarily out of order.”¹⁷¹ The *Philadelphia Press* couldn’t believe that he would “go to the home of this Mormon leprosy and give aid and comfort.” It seems possible that at least some of the reasons Parker and Eliot expressed surprise at the response they received from Utah teachers lay in the representations of Utah schools in the media. Characterizations such as those included in the *New York Sun* and *Philadelphia Press* suggest that anti-Mormon sentiment in the nation remained staunch.

With these reports, curiosity for accurate accounts, especially among academics, was intense. After the proclamation to cease polygamy in 1890, the grounds for national hostility declined and people wanted to see Utah for themselves. Many Utahns, on the other hand, wanted the US to see its commitment to education and thus its worthiness to become a US state. When students such as Cluff personally invited a number of progressive educators to the territory, it was apparently an attractive offer.

The warmth of Parker’s reception facilitated the participation of other figures in future institutes. In 1893, Joseph Baldwin, a pioneer of the Normal School, participated in another Summer Teacher Institute. Baldwin had founded the first Normal College in Indiana, then helped establish a system of Normal schools in Missouri and after that the Sam Houston Normal Institute before taking a teaching position at the University of Texas.¹⁷² He had just accepted the position at the university as its first professor of pedagogy and had published his *Psychology Applied to the Art of Teaching* (1892) before

Crandall,” conducted by Hollis Scott, June 26, 1964, folder 5, volume 1, Brigham Young University Special Collections, Provo, Utah. A more detailed treatment of the event can be found in Payne, *The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education*.

¹⁶⁸ Francis W. Parker to Karl G. Maeser, Nov. 5, 1892, LDS Archives.

¹⁶⁹ Provo Teachers’ Institute, *Deseret Evening News*, Aug. 15, 1892, 7.

¹⁷⁰ *Deseret News*, March 26, 1892, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁷¹ Cited in “Eliot’s Aberrations,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 26, 1892, Utah Digital Newspapers, 1.

¹⁷² Jared Stallones believed that Baldwin’s career at the University of Texas was cut short because it was discovered that he had formed a company of students in Indiana that fought for the North in the Civil War. See Stallones, “Academic Freedom and the Lost Cause: The Short Career of Professor Joseph Baldwin

coming to Provo. Two more teachers from the Cook County schools, Zonia Baber and Flora J. Cooke, came to teach with William Stewart of the University of Utah Normal School, Benjamin Cluff of BYA, James Talmage, Karl Maeser, and other local educators.

At the institute, Baldwin emphasized the importance of non-coercion in teaching, explaining that it was a teacher's role to "lead learners to find out for themselves ... from the known to the unknown. All education is self-effort. You might as well eat a pupil's dinner for him as to attempt to do his work for him."¹⁷³ In one of his lectures, he predicted, "I see before Utah a great future. The intelligent direction of your great energies should be able to move the world. I would like to be here in the twentieth century."¹⁷⁴ Another paper quoted him as saying, "Utah would yet become the cyclone storm center of education; that if the teachers fulfilled the promises they were then making, Utah would be sending her teachers to the whole civilized world in ten years, instead of importing."¹⁷⁵

Cluff revisited the University of Michigan to complete a master's degree, and then returned to Provo with Professor Burke Aaron Hinsdale, who would later be elected president of the National Council of Education in 1897. In August 1894, Hinsdale focused his lectures at the Summer Institute on "Science and the Art of Teaching" and the methodology of teaching various subjects. He also gave a Sunday sermon in the Provo Tabernacle. In this talk, he noted the "honesty, integrity, energy, and earnest desire to improve" displayed by the Utah teachers in attendance who were primarily, if not exclusively, Mormon. He was reported as declaring that "if they were representatives of the teachers throughout Utah, then the formation and development of the educational system entrusted to them would result in placing the new state in the educational vanguard of the nation."¹⁷⁶

Upon his return to Michigan from the Summer Institute, Hinsdale wrote an article to calm fears that Utahns might not be sincere regarding their desire to comply with the law and renounce polygamy. He declared, "These modern Saints have all been taught to look carefully after the things of this world... The more enterprising men do not fail to see that the prosperity and development of the State would be seriously imperiled by a return to polygamy." He noted that even though the prohibition was coerced by the law, a new habit "tends to work inner conviction."¹⁷⁷ He was also in favor of supporting Utah's bid for statehood.

With the anticipation of statehood, the Summer Institute of 1895 invited local educators mostly from BYA under the direction of Benjamin Cluff and George Brimhall. To increase their credibility, however, Cluff extended the invitation to non-Mormon progressive educationalists from outside Utah, including Joseph Jensen of MIT, W. M. McKendrick of Harvard, and Alice Reynolds of Michigan. Also that year, nearly four hundred of Utah's teachers attended the National Education Association meeting in

at the University of Texas," *Vitae Scholasticae* 23 (2006), <https://go.gale.com/ps/anonymous?id=GALE%7CA173922135&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&tissn=07351909&p=AONE&sw=w>.

¹⁷³ *Deseret Weekly News*, Aug. 12, 1893, 14, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁷⁴ *Deseret Weekly*, Aug. 19, 1893, 13, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁷⁵ *Daily Enquirer*, May 5, 1894, 4, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁷⁶ "Exchange Notes," *Journal of Pedagogy* (Dec. 1894), 31–32.

¹⁷⁷ "The State of Utah and Polygamy," *Independent* 46 (1894), 1368–69.

Denver. There they attended sessions provided by Parker, Hinsdale, and Baldwin. It was reported that while there, Parker ranked Utah as “a peer among her sister states.”¹⁷⁸ While this and similar citations remain insufficient evidentiary basis to establish the quality of progressive educational ideas among nineteenth-century Mormon communities, it is noteworthy that, unlike many previous statements, this one was delivered at an event sponsored not by Mormons, but a national association of educators.

In 1896, the BYA leadership invited Edward Howard Griggs, the chair of ethics at Stanford University, to the Summer Institute to speak on “Psychology and Ethics.” Griggs would become one of the most popular speakers and writers of the early twentieth century. He gave a lecture in the Provo Tabernacle on “The Ethics of Social Reconstruction.”

Not to be outdone, in 1897 Cluff brought G. Stanley Hall, the founding president of the American Psychological Association and first president of Clark College. Hall claimed to visit Cook County annually, “to set my educational watch.”¹⁷⁹ He praised “nature-teaching” and encouraged his audience not to fear science because most modern scientists are “earnest students alike of physical and spiritual phenomena.” He insisted that secular instruction should have a religious base.¹⁸⁰ He also criticized American schools for neglecting religion “because of the much-vaunted separation of church and state.”¹⁸¹ Later, Hall would write a two-volume treatise entitled *Jesus the Christ in Light of Psychology*.¹⁸² After the first week at BYA, Hall expressed being delighted by his visit and surprised by the “character, social customs, religion and philosophy of the Latter-day Saints.” In a public lecture, he expressed that the “boldness of thought” displayed by the participants of the institute had impressed him a great deal.¹⁸³

Compared with the original Summer Institutes, there are fewer extant primary sources describing the institutes in the years 1898–1900. Benjamin Cluff received an assignment to travel to Hawaii for several months in 1898 to survey Hawaiians’ feelings about annexation, as Cluff was fluent in their native tongue. In 1898, the Utah County Teachers Institute, which had normally been combined with the BYA Summer Institute, met for a week in American Fork Canyon. While a number of instructors from BYA presented, the program did not include a national figure that year.

The most prestigious visitor to the BYA Summer Institute came in 1901, when John Dewey offered a series of ten lectures as part of the institute, which were later published in the BYA newspaper, *White and Blue*. Both Benjamin Cluff and William Stewart had been Dewey’s students. As early as 1893, Dewey had expressed interest in coming to Utah while Cluff was studying at the University of Michigan.

¹⁷⁸“The National Educational Association of ’95,” *Journal of Pedagogy* (Sept. 1895), 3.

¹⁷⁹As reported to Francis Parker. See Cremin, *Transformation of the School*, 135.

¹⁸⁰“Joint Institute: Interesting Lectures of Dr. G. Stanley Hall,” *Enquirer*, Aug. 20, 1897, 4, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁸¹“From Childhood to Adolescence,” *Deseret Weekly News*, Oct. 23, 1897, 25, BYU Library Digital Collections.

¹⁸²G. Stanley Hall, *Jesus the Christ in Light of Psychology* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1917).

¹⁸³“Instinct and Heredity,” *Deseret News*, Aug. 28, 1897, 12, BYU Library Digital Collections.

Church leaders asked Dewey to speak in the afternoon session of the Stake Conference in Salt Lake City. Given that stake conferences were typically Mormon gatherings for the express purpose of receiving religious instruction from ecclesiastical leaders, that Dewey spoke in such a venue speaks to Utah Mormons' willingness to learn from Dewey and his educational ideas. In this setting, he expressed pleasure "to see the combining of the education of the hand and the brain and congratulated the people of Utah." The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported, "He thought in this respect Utah was ahead of most of the States he knew of and felt sure that the movement was bound to grow."¹⁸⁴ Because Benjamin Cluff was on an expedition to Mexico when Dewey came to BYA in 1901, it was acting president George Brimhall who made arrangements for Dewey that year. After touring the State Normal School at the University of Utah, Dewey expressed that "in all his travels he had never seen a State Normal School superior to this one in equipment and plan of operation, and few so good ... and of the best modern theories of education."¹⁸⁵ While it is likely that these guests spoke highly of Utah's educators and educational ideas at least in part out of an obligation to be respectful and complimentary of their hosts, the consistent positivity of their statements over the course of many visits suggests an observational thread that cannot be entirely dismissed, especially when juxtaposed against the primarily negative accounts of earlier visitors to Mormon educational institutions in Utah.

In addition to the statements made by these guest lecturers regarding Mormon educational ideas in Utah, we provide here comments from two additional individuals in order to further contextualize the perceptions held by non-Mormon educationalists regarding Mormon efforts to improve their schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first of these individuals, Albert Edward Winship, was not only the chief editor of the nationally circulated *Journal of Education* out of Boston, but also a Protestant pastor and the secretary of the NWEA. Therefore, one might expect Winship to promote the NWEA's negative perspective of the Mormons and embody an ideological antithesis to their approach to education. Instead, Winship described Mormon education as the "best and latest."¹⁸⁶ He declared that "no other state is within hailing distance of Utah in an efficient attempt to solve the civic, industrial, and educational problems from twelve to eighteen."¹⁸⁷ He additionally recounted that at the outset of Dr. Leonard P. Ayres's research on the educational standing of the then forty-eight states in the Union, Winship had predicted that Utah would lead the rest of the states. At the conclusion of his study, Ayres confirmed the accuracy of this prediction. Ultimately, Winship assured an audience of Mormon educators that his tribute did not arise from "the exuberance of a platform opportunity," a reference to a work he had published two years earlier that spoke in similarly glowing terms about the efforts and

¹⁸⁴"Injurious to Mormons," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 17, 1901, 8, Utah Digital Newspapers.

¹⁸⁵"The Normal School Highly Complimented," *University of Utah Chronicle*, Oct. 1, 1901, 11.

¹⁸⁶ Albert E. Winship, *Utah's Educational Leadership* (Chicago: International Harvester Company, 1920), 5.

¹⁸⁷ Albert E. Winship, "From Twelve to Eighteen in School and Out," *Journal of Education* 90, no. 17 (Nov. 1919), 458–60.

ideas of Mormon educators and was published by a non-Mormon outlet rather than an exclusively Mormon one.¹⁸⁸

A second individual who spoke of Mormon educational ideas in Utah was Charles A. Prosser, the president of the National Society for Vocational Education and federal director for vocational education. Though not a Mormon, Prosser wrote to an audience of Mormon educators in Utah, describing their efforts and ideas as “not equaled on this continent.” He placed Utah “foremost ... in the galaxy of states,” and outlined the state’s “distinct and lasting contribution to citizenship, efficiency, prosperity, and civilization,” namely that of establishing, “the most forward-looking program yet offered for the continued education of the school boy and girl.”¹⁸⁹

A Shift in National Perceptions of Utah and Its Educative Ideas

After Dewey’s first visit in 1901, the general opinion of education in Utah seems to have shifted. In 1913, for example, the National Education Association (NEA) held its annual meeting in Salt Lake City. It did not bring quite the anticipated crowd of ten thousand, yet both the quality of Utah schools they visited as well as the Utahns’ warm hospitality impressed those in attendance. The program included excursions, musical performances, and tours of local schools. The former president of the NEA, Charles Keyes, expressed that of the twenty annual conventions he had attended, “in none of these has the cordial and gracious timely hospitality of Salt Lake been surpassed... . We shall go back to our homes with better knowledge and truer appreciation of the schools, the homes, the churches and the people of Utah, and especially of its splendid capital.”¹⁹⁰ Delegate Margaret Haley added what many felt:

It seems to me no state in the union has been so little understood... . I have visited the school buildings and it seems to me it is a “children’s paradise.” We have nothing like them in my state of Illinois. The consolidated rural schools which we have seen might well furnish a model for the United States.¹⁹¹

The relationship of the public schools with the Latter-day Saint academies was particularly significant to W. H. Carothers from Kansas. “This experience has been a revelation to me,” he said. “I never saw anything like it. The wonderful correlation of the public schools and the Mormon Church schools, is little short of a miracle. I shall return to my home with a truer conception of Mormon institutions.”¹⁹² After conducting a comparative analysis of twenty-six states’ education systems in 1925, Bagley noted

¹⁸⁸ Albert E. Winship, “Response to the Address of Welcome, Salt Lake City, July 5, 1920,” *Journal of Education* 92, no. 6 (1920), 149–50.

¹⁸⁹ Charles A. Prosser, “The Mormon Program,” *Improvement Era* 23 (July 1920), 836–42.

¹⁹⁰ “Salt Lake and Utah Receive Praise from Guests at N.E.A. Convention,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, July 12, 1913, 1.

¹⁹¹ “Salt Lake and Utah Receive Praise from Guests,” 1.

¹⁹² “Salt Lake and Utah Receive Praise from Guests,” 1.

a significant difference between the apparent school conditions in Utah in the late nineteenth century and the time of his study. He “asserted that in actual fact ‘before 1890, Utah was educating its children, and educating them well.’”¹⁹³

Utah teachers often served with little financial compensation or much social respect. To hear compliments from any source was particularly gratifying, so much so that Church leaders began to express concern that the desire to be accepted by the world could make Church members particularly vulnerable. In 1914, for example, President Joseph F. Smith warned the Church of three dangers that could threaten it from within. One of these was the flattery of prominent men in the world; another was false educational ideas.¹⁹⁴

Animosity between the Mormon population of Utah and the rest of the country, especially those in eastern states, had typified previous decades. Nearly all the rhetoric was critical in both directions. Non-Mormons tended to be highly critical of the “depraved, religious fanatics” in Utah while the Mormons tended to be highly suspicious of ideas from the east. Nevertheless, both parties shared a common heritage of the progressive educational ideas that flourished in the nineteenth-century US. Indeed, without exception, the progressive educators who visited the BYA Summer Institutes seemed pleased with the reception they received from Latter-day Saint educators in Utah. Yet, perhaps because of the earlier influence of frontier life, Maeser, and the NWEC’s denominational schools, these visitors seem to have added to an already extant conversation surrounding progressive educational ideas among Utah’s Mormon educators rather than to have introduced an entirely “new” educational ideology to which they had not already been exposed.¹⁹⁵

Conclusion

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, North American educational and political discourse had painted education in Utah in a remarkably negative light. This characterization flowed, at least in part, out of the association of the Utah Territory’s educational ideas with early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the religious ideas they espoused. Yet, the story of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century educational ideas among Utah’s Mormon communities is more complex and nuanced than rhetoric during that time (e.g., speakers from the NWEC) might have suggested. The emergence of *pedagogic progressivism*, often used as a surrogate descriptor for forward-thinking education at the turn of the century in opposition to what

¹⁹³W. C. Bagley, *Determinism in Education: A Series of Papers on the Relative Influence of Inherited and Acquired Traits in Determining Intelligence, Achievement, and Character* (Baltimore: Warwick & York, 1925), 85.

¹⁹⁴Joseph F. Smith, “Three Threatening Dangers,” *Improvement Era* (March 1914), 476–77.

¹⁹⁵Adopting progressive educational ideas, however, needs to be distinguished from embracing the U.S. Progressive Education Association itself. Allan Payne has provided a careful review of how Mormons received American progressive education. He rightly noted how impressed many prominent thinkers of progressive education (e.g., Francis Parker, G. Stanley Hall, Charles Eliot, and John Dewey) had been with how progressive Utah schools had become. However, he seemed to overlook the possibility that Utah had already been influenced by the ideas that inspired progressive education in the first place (see Payne, “The Mormon Response to Early Progressive Education”).

was often termed *traditional education*, played a significant role in the development of Mormon Utah's landscape of educational ideas. The migration of pedagogic progressivist ideas to Utah includes four principal sources of encounter. These include an early Utah Mormon predilection for practical education, the arrival of denominational schools beginning in 1867, the introduction of Froebelian and Pestalozzian progressivism through European Mormon converts like Karl G. Maeser, and the introduction of American pedagogic progressivist ideas through Mormon students attending eastern schools as well as the visits of eastern educationalists to the BYA Summer Institute under the direction of Benjamin Cluff.

Owing in part to a theological framing of pedagogic progressivism's holistic approach to practical and theoretical knowledge, Mormon interpretations of these ideas fostered a tense balance between a pragmatic search for expertise outside their communities, on the one hand, and an almost isolationist intellectual protectionism of what they saw as the sacred process of teaching and learning from secular influence, on the other. This tension was further complicated by the Mormon Church's 1890 manifesto ending the practice of plural marriage and Utah's 1896 admission as a US state, as Mormon educators like Cluff and Stewart not only sought educative ideas from the east, but that such cooperation and intercourse might improve the national perception of Utah and Mormonism, which had theretofore been colored by the unflattering rhetoric of entities like the NWEA. Such contextual complexities suggest, in sum, that the migration of the ideas of pedagogic progressivism to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Utah, as well as Mormonism's interaction with such ideas, was more dynamic and multifaceted than some previous narratives may have suggested.

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