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Education as Lived Welfare: A History of Experience Perspective on Children and the Welfare State

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Abstract • Drawing on recent research on lived welfare state from a history of experience perspective, this article aims to contribute to the further exploration of the education-welfare state nexus. First, experience as a historical concept is discussed in a historiographical context from the 1960s onwards. Second, the concept of lived welfare and the conceptualization of education as lived welfare are explicated. Third, concrete examples of education as lived welfare elucidate the history of experience approach to children and the welfare state. Children's encounters with their educators and the school system shape their individual and collective ways of experiencing the welfare state. Examples from historical research presented in the article suggest that the conceptualization of education as lived welfare contributes to a better understanding of citizenship, belonging, trust in society (or lack thereof) and the general formation of individual-society relationship.

Keywords • lived welfare state, history of experience, education, childhood, citizenship

Introduction

In the Nordic countries, children and young people encounter the welfare state in their daily lives in daycare, at school or through various child welfare measures. Education and child welfare institutions produce, regulate and constitute children's experiences of the welfare state. The historiography of the welfare state, however, sometimes ignores the educational system or leaves it to scholars of education or scholars of children and youth. Daycare, schools and child welfare institutions can be seen as constitutive arenas of children's and young people's experiences of society; consequently, education is a crucial part of the lived welfare state.[1] The prefix "lived" implies that the societal reality of the welfare state is reflected and made through experiences.

History of experiences has in recent years gained increasing attention in historical research. One example is the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences, which has been hosted by Tampere University since 2018.[2] The centre, called HEX, studies the role and place of experiences in society and in explaining history. Its goal is to present a novel approach, the history of experience, to explore how people's experiences are constructed, how they are interpreted and shared and

1 Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola, and Heli Valtonen, "Introduction: Education and the Making of the Nordic Welfare States," in *Education, State and Citizenship*, ed. Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola and Heli Valtonen (Helsinki: Nordwel, 2013); See also, Christian Ydesen and Mette Buchardt, "Citizen Ideals and Education in Nordic Welfare State School Reforms," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

2 Based on an international evaluation, the centre was granted eight-year funding by the National Research Council in 2018–2025. For the CoE in the History of Experiences, see HEX website https://research.tuni.fi/hex/ (accessed January 23, 2023).

how they are institutionalized and structured. The centre explores how these processes of experiencing influence people's relationships with their community and society at large. One of the three main research themes of HEX is the lived welfare state.[3] The title of my article, *Education as Lived Welfare*, thus reflects the theme. Drawing on recent research on the lived welfare state from a history of experience perspective, this article aims to contribute to the further exploration of the education-welfare state nexus.

This article investigates three interrelated questions: What is the history of experience, what is the lived welfare state and what is the history of education as lived welfare? I argue that history of experience is a fruitful approach not only to the multidisciplinary research of welfare states but also to the research of educational institutions. My approach to the history of experience perspective as well as to education and welfare is historiographical. It means that I use historiographical analysis as my method to explore the history of experience. First, I will discuss the historiographical context in which the history of experience has evolved since the 1960s. How was experience as a historical concept introduced, applied and criticized? More recently, the history of emotions has played a crucial role in the recent interest in the conceptualizations of experience. Second, I will turn my attention to the lived welfare state and discuss education as lived welfare. Third, I will conclude with some concrete examples of education as lived welfare and explicate the history of experience approach to children and the welfare state.

History of experience in a historiographical context

Following the general patterns of historiography, the history of experiences builds on previous research and its criticism. The word "experience" has a long and complex history since the Age of Antiquity, as the American historian Martin Jay points out.[4] As an academic concept, experience has given rise to a rich variety of philosophical, psychological, sociological, literary and historical interpretations.[5] In this article, I am mainly interested in the ways in which historians have conceptualized experience and incorporated theoretical aspects of experience in their scholarly work.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called new social history relied on experience as an important concept. The history of experience, and especially the politics of experience, are most often associated with the British New Left, and more precisely with the cultural

3 Two other major themes are Lived Religion and Lived Nation. For recent publications, see Rob Boddice and Mark Smith, *Emotion, Sense, Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, *Lived Religion and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021); Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari, eds., *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, eds., *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Pertti Haapala, Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko, eds., *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*, several entries.

4 Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 9–13.

5 Jay (2005), 222–34. The notion of *Erlebnis* as lived experience by the German historian and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) is worth mentioning. Some historians were inspired by his attempts to reach lived experiences in the past whereas others rejected his theories as too psychological. In 1905, Dilthey published *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (in English Poetry and Experience). Dilthey is also known for his contribution to the development of hermeneutics and his conceptualization of human sciences vs. natural sciences.

theorist Raymond Williams (1921–1988) and historian E. P. Thompson (1924–1993).[6] In his *Culture and Society* Williams criticized the elitist understanding of culture and proposed the alternative notion of culture as a whole way of life that is embedded in everyday experiences. For Thompson, who explored the experiences of the working classes, experience was a social fact that explained social relations and social power. Or as Thompson famously puts it in his often cited *The Making of the English Working Class*:

> Class is not a thing; it is a happening. And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.[7]

Thompson emphasized the agency of ordinary people and underlined the culturally and historically specific experience of class formation, thus paving the way for new approaches in social history and labour history.

Writing the history of experiences gained ground with new social history and produced several *histories from below* as an alternative to general historiography. The new social historians linked experience, social identity and politics together and allied with grassroot movements.[8] The *histories from below* explored not only the experiences of the working classes but also the histories of minorities and forgotten majorities. However, as early as in the 1960s, the younger generation of British Marxists turned to the writings of Louis Althusser and his structuralist Marxism. The concept of experience was heavily criticized for a lack of analytical value in historical and cultural studies.[9]

Thompson and his followers were also criticized by feminist historians, who argued that class was not the only defining category among the working classes and minorities. Gender, ethnicity and other categories were introduced to the history from below approach. Some feminist historians added gender to the analysis of working-class formation whereas some others sought to deconstruct the category of class. The US historian Joan W. Scott concluded Thompson's point of view: "Class consciousness was the cultural expression of men's experience of productive relations and … it was an identifiable phenomenon."[10] Instead of consciousness, Scott suggested attention to discourse to understand how conceptions of class organized social experience and how representations and meanings given to material life were constructed.[11]

In the 1990s, poststructuralist critique and the linguistic turn successfully challenged attempts to ground historical explanations in the authenticity of experiences.

6 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960, original 1958); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Penguin books, 1973, original 1963); For Williams' and Thompson's contributions, see. e.g., Jay (2005), 190–199; Stuart Middleton, "The Concept of 'Experience' and the Making of the English Working Class, 1924–1963," *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 1 (2016).

7 Thompson (1973/1963), 9.

8 Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004), 30–31.

9 Jay (2005), 199–205; Middleton (2016), 180.

10 Joan W. Scott, "Women in *The Making of the English Working Class,*" in Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 88.

11 Scott (1988), 88–89.

Poststructuralism emphasized the fundamental role of language, knowledge premises and social relations in shaping experience. The category of experience, as the historian Laura Lee Downs has noted, was dismissed as part of outdated social history.[12] In 1991, Joan W. Scott published a seminal article "The Evidence of Experience" in which she criticized the unproblematized uses of experience.[13] She argued convincingly that social historians had failed in their search for authentic experiences and especially in their attempts to use experience as evidence. Scott suggested that historians should rather analyse how experiences were produced discursively. According to her, discourses and ideologies produced knowledge of experience. Instead of taking experience as a starting point, experience should be something that needs to be explained.

The linguistic turn and poststructuralist theories turned the general attention of historians towards discourse analysis, in which material experiences were not interesting. The role of language was emphasized over the bodily experiences of the people in the past. Quite recently, two historians of emotions and experiences, Rob Boddice and Mark Smith, argued that "Scott was unable to see how to include the body and the brain, the feelings and the senses, unable to see beyond discourse, while retaining a grip on the historicization of everything."[14] In 1991, discourse was seen as a solution, as "the root of everything" as Boddice and Smith have stated. However, Joan W. Scott's critical point, that experiences are socially and culturally constructed, remains central for the later understanding of the history of experience.[15]

In the German-speaking countries, historiography advanced differently. The concept of experience was theorized to meet the challenges of the linguistic turn. The German *Erfahrungsgeschichte* utilized the potential of the German language to distinguish between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, something that the English language cannot easily express. *Erlebnis* refers to perceptions and pre-discursive experiences (often translated as lived experience) whereas *Erfahrung* refers to socially shared experiences. This distinction is possible in many languages, including the Scandinavian languages. In Swedish and Danish, we can talk about *upplevelse* / *oplevelse* and *erfarenhet* / *erfaring*, in Finnish *elämys* and *kokemus*. Experiences are formed in longitudinal processes in which "experiences pile up to form stocks of knowledge, which are transmitted between individuals, social groups, institutions, and even generations."[16] The process of turning *Erlebnisse* into *Erfahrungen*, is also dependent on the person's linguistic, social, political and cultural background, among others. As the Finnish historians Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari point out, experience is understood "as a process in

12 Downs (2004), 95. Downs also writes about "the individual-experience-to-social-identity link on which many narratives of social history rested."

13 Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, 17, no. 4 (1991).

14 Boddice and Smith (2020), 19. In 2004, Downs' reading of Lyndal Roper (1994) pointed to the lack of histories that problematize the relationship between psychic and physical (mental life and bodily experience). Downs (2004), 173.

15 See especially Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari, "Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism," in Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 11; Boddice and Smith (2020), 19.

16 Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 11; Ville Kivimäki, "Sodan kokemushistoria: Uusi saksalainen sotahistoria ja kokemushistorian sovellusmahdollisuudet Suomessa," in *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta*, ed. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki (Helsinki: Minerva, 2006), 74–76.

which events and perceptions are shaped into socially shareable meanings."[17] They summarize one of the key points of the history of experiences. Experiences are socially and culturally constructed and shared. Moreover, experiences form layers of collective and institutionalized knowledge. Therefore, the history of experience does not locate experiences within individual minds; instead, experiences are perceived as strongly cultural, social and societal phenomena.

Many scholars developing the history of experience approach are familiar with the history of emotions, which explores emotions as social and cultural phenomena.[18] For the history of emotions, the constitutive role of language has been crucial. Concepts such as emotive (by William Reddy) or emotional communities (by Barbara Rosenwein) offer conceptualizations applicable to the history of experience. For example, the concept of emotional communities has inspired reflections on the "communities of experience."[19] However, the historians Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen and Ville Vuolanto suggest one major difference between Rosenwein's emotional communities and their own understanding of communities of experience. While emotional communities are discovered and named as research results, communities of experience are recognized and shared (but not necessarily named) by historical actors themselves. Moreover, belonging to the same communities of experience does not exclude disputes and differing interpretations of the meanings given to experiences. As a concept, communities of experience may help to understand "how subjective experiences turn into action, social relations and organizations, new identities, norms and attitudes, into political programmes and agendas."[20]

Experiences as cultural, social and societal phenomena operate on many levels. Three levels of experience – everyday experience, experience as process and experience as structure – have been distinguished by the historians Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo.[21] Their conceptualizations inform my understanding of the concepts of experience. First and foremost, experience is not only what happens to an individual: it is also a social process. Second, experiences become social when they are acknowledged, reflected on and shared. Third, when reflected experiences are shared and confirmed, they constitute collective resources, a social stock of knowledge, and accumulate in social institutions.[22]

Moreover, Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, among others, point to the temporal aspect of experiences as social structures and refer to the famous conceptualization of

17 Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari (2021), 12.

18 E.g. Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Stephanie Olsen, ed., *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2015); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Reetta Eiranen, "Emotional and Social Ties in the Construction of Nationalism: A Group Biographical Approach to the Tengström Family in Nineteenth-Century Finland," *Studies on National Movements* 4 (2019), 1–38.

19 Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

20 Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen, and Ville Vuolanto, "Communities of Experience," in *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience* (HEX Handbook). https://doi.org/10.58077/PXX2-ER19.

21 Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, "Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience," in Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 10–11.

22 Pirjo Markkola, "Working-Class Women Living Religion in Finland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 222; See also Kivimäki, Suodenjoki, and Vahtikari (2021), 11.

temporality by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck. Experiences as social structures "are formed based on communal memories of past experiences, and they shape both present interpretations of the world and the future expectations of individuals and entire societies."[23] In general, the Koselleckian understanding of historical time as constructed in tensions between the space of experience and the horizon of expectations is shared by many historians of experience. The Finnish historians Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko have developed "scene of experience" as their key conceptual tool to examine the social history of experiences, including the lived welfare state. For Harjula and Kokko, the scene of experience represents "the situational moment in which experiences emerge in social interaction."[24] Harjula, in particular, has focused on the lived welfare state. She has analysed encounters between citizens and welfare state institutions as space, practices and societal solutions and their outcome.[25]

In the new history of experience,[26] as Rob Boddice and Mark Smith call it, many scholars are focusing on "lived histories." Lived religion has had a relatively well-established historiographical tradition since the 1990s, when scholars of religion sought new concepts to bridge the gap between theological dogma and religious practices. Instead of relying on dichotomous concepts such as popular vs. official religion or informal vs. formal religion, they coined the concept of lived religion.[27] For HEX, the concepts of lived nation and lived welfare state were inspired by the promising research on lived religion. To avoid simple causalities and top-down hierarchies between people and society, the concepts of lived nation and lived welfare state connect individual, social, societal and structural experiences of the nation and the welfare state.

Education as lived welfare

The concept of *lived welfare state* aims at seeing the building, legitimation, success and failures of the welfare state from a wider perspective combining micro-level approaches from below and a macro analysis of society.[28] Welfare states are constructed in both political decision-making and in the everyday practices of welfare state institutions,

23 Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo (2022), 13.

24 Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko, "The Scene of Experience," in *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience* (HEX Handbook). https://doi.org/10.58077/SSXN-4N37; Heikki Kokko and Minna Harjula, "Social History of Experiences: A Theoretical-Methodological Approach," in Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023).

25 Minna Harjula, "Framing the Clients' Agency: Generational Layers of Lived Social Work in Finland, 1940-2000," in Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023); Minna Harjula, "Encountering Benefits for Families: Layers of Lived Social Citizenship in Finland in the 1930–40s," in *Lived Institutions as History of Experience*, ed. Johanna Annola, Hanna Lindberg and Pirjo Markkola (Cham: Palgrave, forthcoming 2023).

26 Boddice and Smith (2020), 1, 18, 22; New history of experience, also in Josephine Hoegaerts and Stephanie Olsen, "The History of Experience: Afterword," in Kivimäki, Suodenjoki, and Vahtikari (2021), 378–379.

27 E.g., Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Towards a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nancy T, Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

28 See Haapala, Harjula, and Kokko (2023), 2, 8–11.

such as the educational system and people's encounters with those institutions. In daily life, the welfare state is lived through various social benefits, services and institutions, some of which date back to earlier periods. The institutions and structures of welfare provision are based on shifting constructions of the "social" and generate experiences of the individual-society relationship.[29] Thus, focus on the lived welfare state is not an attempt to re-introduce the history from below approach; instead, it aims to apply a more comprehensive perspective in which micro and macro analyses are integrated.

As mentioned earlier, not all published histories of the welfare state cover education and schooling. For example, when the seminal publication on Danish welfare history excluded education from welfare policies, the omission was explained by an ongoing project on the history of education.[30] It must be noted, however, that Nordic scholars generally recognize interconnections between education and welfare policy. For example, an edited collection of essays *Education, State and Citizenship* explicated education as part of welfare policies.[31] Moreover, scholars of education have pointed out certain features of the Nordic welfare model that also apply to the educational system. Four cornerstones have been highlighted by the Finnish scholars Ari Antikainen and Risto Rinne. First, citizens' equal social rights (also to education); second, public responsibility for the welfare of all citizens (also with the help of education); third, attempts to achieve economic and gender equality (also in education); and fourth, full employment as a goal (also by educational means).[32]

Equality has been one of the most important goals of Nordic welfare policies, but the Nordic educational systems remained strongly segregated until the comprehensive school reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. The old dual systems with their elementary schools and grammar schools were replaced by compulsory schooling lasting nine years. In Finland, for example, the former system compelled children – or their parents – to choose between a lower and a higher level of education at the age of eleven, twelve or thirteen.[33] Comprehensive schools provided similar basic education for the whole age group, often followed by upper secondary education. However, many elements of

29 Minna Harjula, "Eletty sosiaalityö kahden sukupolven murroskokemuksena 1940–2000," in *Sosiaalityön käänteet*, ed. Johanna Moilanen, Johanna Annola, and Mirja Satka (Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 2020); Harjula (2023); Harjula (forthcoming 2023).

30 The Danish welfare history in seven volumes excludes education, health, and housing policies. *Dansk velfærdshistorie* I–VII, ed. Jørn Henrik Petersen, Klaus Petersen, and Niels Finn Christiansen (Odense: Syddansk universitetsforlag, 2010–2014); Five volumes of Danish educational history were simultaneously in process. *Dansk skolehistorie 1–5: Hverdag, vilkår og visioner gennem 500 år*, ed. Charlotte Appel and Ning de Conick-Smith (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2013–2015).

31 Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013). Other examples, e.g. Arild Tjedvoll, ed., *Education and the Scandinavian Welfare State in the Year 2000* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998); Trine Øland, Christian Ydesen, Marta Padovan-Özdemir, and Bolette Moldenhawer, *State-Crafting on the Fringes – Studies of Welfare Work Addressing the Other* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2019); Mette Buchardt, "The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular-Religious Ambitions When Modernizing Sweden and France," in *The Nordic Education Model in Context. Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler, Bernadette Hörmann, Sverre Tveit, and Inga Bostad (New York and London: Routledge, 2023).

32 Ari Antikainen and Risto Rinne, "Ylikansalliset paineet, pohjoismainen malli ja suomalainen koulutus," in *Tiedon ja osaamisen Suomi. Kasvatus ja koulutus Suomessa 1960-luvulta 2000-luvulle*, ed. Pauli Kettunen and Hannu Simola (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), 444.

33 Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013), 14.

discriminatory practices and exclusions continued in the new equal educational system.

A good quality of mass education is an integral part of equal citizenship in all democratic societies.[34] Albeit education, schooling and knowledge production are crucial aspects of the Nordic welfare states, it has to be stressed that the welfare state need not be a necessary part of education. In relation to state and citizenship, education has elements of lived welfare, also in countries without a welfare state or before the era of the welfare state. If citizenship is understood as "a set of practices—juridical, political, economic and cultural—which define a person or through which persons define themselves as competent members of society," as Bryan S. Turner has suggested[35], schools and other educational institutions become vital arenas on which citizenship is constructed. With this in mind, we can study how competence was defined, constructed and constituted in the daily practices of education not only in the Nordic welfare states but also in other historical or geographical contexts.

Moreover, educational systems are tied to the implementation of social justice and education policy can be executed as a tool of social change.[36] Studies in the history of education and knowledge production contribute to a better understanding of the multi-layered historicity of welfare states and welfare policies.[37] Education policies are not constructed in a societal vacuum. As changes in educational systems are linked to citizenship, equality and justice, those changes turn issues of citizenship, equality and justice into daily encounters on the grassroots level of education. Various understandings of citizenship and competence were intertwined in the classroom. That was the level on which children and their educators interacted and communicated. Scholars may ask how citizenship was communicated to children and between children and how they understood citizenship in the making of modern societies and gradually expanding welfare policies. Further, they may ask what the role of the educators in developing democracy and in schooling citizens has been and how the grassroots levels of the educational systems have seen democracy and citizenship.[38]

The triangle of experience, education and the welfare state is further highlighted by the Polish scholars Magdalena Slusarczyk and Agnieszka Malek. In a recent book on experiences of the welfare-migration nexus they discuss children's education and migration.[39] Slusarczyk and Malek address the role of educational systems and the

34 Ibid., 20–21.

35 Bryan S. Turner, "Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship," in *Citizenship and Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage Publications, 1993).

36 Arild Tjedvoll, "'Quality of Equality': Scandinavian Education Towards the Year 2000," in *Education and the Scandinavian Welfare State in the Year 2000*, ed. Arild Tjedvoll (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 3–4; Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala, "Introduction: Norden's Present to the World," in *Nordic Lights: Education for Nation and Civic Society in the Nordic Countries, 1850–2000*, ed. Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2001), 11; Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013), 21.

37 On the multi-layered historicity of the welfare states, see Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen, "Introduction: Rethinking Welfare State Models," in *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy*, ed. Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 3–9.

38 Some of these questions were already addressed in Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen (2013).

39 Magdalena Slusarczyk and Agnieszka Malek, "'He Has a Better Chance Here, So We Stay': Children's Education and Parental Migration Decisions," in *Migration to and from Welfare States: Lived Experiences of the Welfare-Migration Nexus in a Globalised World*, ed. Oleksandr Ryndyk, Brigitte Suter and Gunhild Odden (Cham: Springer, 2021), 87–104; Education and migration is also discussed by Jin Hui Li and Mette Buchardt, "'Feeling Strange': Oral Histories of Newly Arrived

quality of education in parents' decisions to migrate, stay in or return to a country. Parents' future expectations vis-à-vis their children's opportunities are crucial factors in decision-making within the families. In the parents' view, school is an important element of the welfare state.

Lived welfare state in the classroom

The grassroots level of education includes children, young people, teachers, other adults, the material settings of school buildings and infrastructure as well as the implementation of the curriculum. In other words, it means the daily practices through which people encounter the welfare state. How have various schools and institutions shaped children's citizenship, identities and competence in the modernizing states? This question, among others, is addressed by the historian Antti Malinen and the science journalist Tuomo Tamminen in their comprehensive study on children's friendship in twentieth-century Finland. The book is based on oral histories, written memories and other documents such as school essays. Another rich study of children's experiences of school and education in the 1920s and 1930s is Saara Tuomaala's doctoral dissertation of 2004.[40] Many adults recall their teachers and assign them a major role in their own individual-society relationship. A fair and understanding teacher could change the future prospects of a child coming from disadvantaged circumstances. For some children, school even constituted a safe haven from risks of violence and parental abuse. Support from the educator opened wider horizons and pushed working-class children forward to better positions. Likewise, an arrogant, sarcastic, or abusive teacher could feed and foster their pupils' bitterness and negative societal attitudes.[41] According to oral histories, it seemed to be easy to convince a rural smallholder's son or daughter to accept their inferior role in society.

In Finland, the introduction of compulsory education in the early 1920s started to convert working hands into writing hands as the historian Saara Tuomaala has argued. Cleanliness, diligence and obedience were made the new virtues of children coming from rural and urban working-class homes. Children were also taught to control and express their emotions in civilized and gendered manners.[42] On the basis of documents and oral histories from working-class communities Tuomaala shows how the state entered children's daily lives. Some children were receptive to the new values represented by the educational system and enjoyed their schooldays, whereas some other children remained skeptical and even unreceptive. Moreover, Roma and Sámi children were often beyond the reach of educators and their attempts to construct a modern Finnish childhood. In her analysis, Tuomaala highlights the processual nature

Migrant Children's Experiences of Schooling in Denmark from the 1970s," *Paedagogica Historica*, online first (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2022.2065641.

40 Antti Malinen and Tuomo Tamminen, *Leikitäänkö? Lasten kaverisuhteet 1900-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2022); Saara Tuomaala, *Työtätekevistä käsistä puhtaiksi ja kirjoittaviksi: Suomalaisen oppivelvollisuuskoulun ja maalaislasten kohtaaminen 1921–1939* (Helsinki: SKS, 2004).

41 Malinen and Tamminen (2022); Tuomaala (2004), 316–33.

42 Tuomaala (2004), 271–73; Cleanliness was introduced in primary schools throughout the Nordic countries. See e.g., Kapitel 12 "Krop og sundhed," in Anne Katrine Gjerløff, Anette Faye Jacobsen, Ellen Nørgaard, and Christian Ydesen, *Dansk skolehistorie: Da skolen blev sin egen, 1920–1970* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2014).

of children's experiences, as both preconditions and outcomes of cultural and political processes in which past, present and future were activated.[43]

The nascent welfare state entered the schools in the form of material aid during the interwar period. Usually, the aid was distributed by teachers. In the 1920s in Finland, primary schools were instructed to provide meals for poor children.[44] The aim was to improve public health and children's wellbeing. However, sometimes the well-meant portion of watery soup or porridge highlighted class-based inequalities between children. Three separate categories of children were formed: the poorest children who were served food, other hungry children who were not considered sufficiently poor to receive aid, and better-off children bringing their own sandwiches and milk bottles to school. Food aid recipients were either envied as privileged or labelled as paupers by other groups. Distribution of clothes and shoes was another ambiguous element of poor relief that was brought to the classroom. Good shoes and warm coats facilitated school attendance; nevertheless, shoes given to poor children were often wooden clogs or clumsy, squeaky boots made of inferior leather.[45] The sensory elements of poverty were present in the daily practices of education as everyone was able to hear when a poor child approached the others.

Teachers were not the only representatives of the welfare state whom children met at school. Municipal physicians or district nurses – sometimes deaconesses – inspected primary school children, in urban schools more regularly than in rural schools. In 1937 school health care was made the responsibility of the National Board of Education. Visits by physicians or district nurses were recalled as exciting, but they could also be humiliating.[46] One boy recalls a lice inspection in the 1920s. A pauper boy was brought to the fore, and he had to hand over his clothes to the visiting nurse, who picked out the lice, counted and killed them. When the boy stripped down to his underwear, everyone saw that he was wearing several layers of his parent's torn clothes under his pullover.[47] It is also a common memory that rural children or urban working-class children were ridiculed for their dirty hands and faces. Other children and teachers also reacted to the smell of pupils' dirty clothes and dirty bodies. Poverty could be seen and heard, but it was also smelt.

Education as lived welfare gets more nuances if we look at boarding schools for deaf children, studied by the historian Hanna Lindberg.[48] Boarding schools for deaf people have both facilitated and repressed the agency of the group in question. The

43 Tuomaala (2004), 35, 307–8; Saara Tuomaala, "Maalaislasten ja – nuorten moninaiset koulutiet," *Kasvatus & Aika* 1, no. 1 (2007), 57.

44 Tuomaala (2004), 283–87. For similar examples from England and Wales, see Laura Tisdall, "'The School That I'd Like': Children and Teenagers Write About Education in England and Wales, 1945–79," in *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain*, ed. Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor (London: University of London Press, 2021), 198–99.

45 Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 126–27.

46 Tuomaala (2004), 264, 267–68, 274–75.

47 Tuomaala (2004), 275–76; Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 129.

48 Hanna Lindberg, "National Belonging through Signed and Spoken Languages: The Case of Finland-Swedish Deaf People in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000*, ed. Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari. (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021); Lauri Julkunen has studied Eino Karlsberg's youth in Kuopio deaf school. Lauri Julkunen, "Ääni ja kansalaisuus: Eino Karlsbergin nuoruus kuurona 1894–1902," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 119, no. 2 (2021), 165–79.

schools founded throughout Europe and America in the 18th and 19th centuries were the foundations of deaf communities, and the origin of deaf people's political agency. Through the concentration of deaf children in these physical places, national sign languages were developed. The schools were also the foundation for the political activity of the deaf community. Children continued to socialize with each other and formed local deaf clubs. The clubs gave rise to national associations (in Finland 1905), who worked for the rights of deaf people. Schools for deaf children, however, have also been seen as the main repressive institution of the agency of deaf people. Through the introduction of oralist education, i.e., instruction in speech and lip-reading, in the late 19th century, sign language was repressed, and would only be re-introduced in deaf schools in the late 20th century.

Hierarchies between children were an obvious part of the daily life of schools. Antti Malinen's research, among others, reports that the worst-off children were often bullied, excluded from other children's play, and even battered by other children. Malinen has not found many reminiscences in which the weakest children sought support from each other and formed their own communities, but some memories reveal that it might happen. For example, two orphan Roma boys who were placed in a poorhouse, tried to protect themselves against other children's violence but were generally on the losing side. Children who had older brothers (sometimes sisters) available might be protected by their siblings, but siblings were seldom placed in the same foster families.[49] Therefore, foster children were without family protection.

Bullying as a concept was not used in the 1930s and 1940s, but based on school memories, bullying as a practice was condoned and sometimes even encouraged by teachers. It could be used as an educational method. Telling tales about others was considered bad behaviour by adults. If children tried to report bullying or violence occurring in the school context, they could be punished. Among children, telling tales was also wrong and equally reprehensible conduct. Children soon learned to run away or fight their fights, keep quiet and not tell tales about other children.[50] In this respect, children were raised to become self-sufficient citizens who did not complain about small matters and who would not betray their peers.

School represented the principal form of welfare provision for many children who spent their childhood without closer contact with benefits and services provided by the welfare state. In post-WWII Finland, children were entitled to child benefits paid to their parents, and since the 1960s and 1970s many children, mainly in urban areas, were placed in public day care before reaching school age, but rural children were beyond the reach of day care facilities. The most powerful representative of the welfare state was the educational system itself.

Conclusions

The history of experience was commonly launched by the new social history in the 1960s and 1970s. Experience as a historical concept was applied in the histories from below, but the linguistic turn in the 1980s and 1990s shifted the scholarly focus to discourse analysis. In German historiography, the concept of experience was theorized to meet the challenges of the linguistic turn. More recently, the history of emotions has strengthened interest in the conceptualizations of experience, and the new history of

49 Malinen and Tamminen (2022), 130–32.

50 Ibid., 143–48.

experience has been developed by several historians of lived religion, lived nation and the lived welfare state. Studies in the lived welfare state highlight the construction of welfare states not only in legislation, policies and administrative structures but also in the daily practices of welfare state institutions and people's encounters with those institutions. The institutions and structures of welfare provision generate experiences of the individual-society relationship.

In the Nordic countries, educational systems are part of the lived welfare state institutions. In the daily life of the educational systems, welfare states materialize through the ways in which children as well as their teachers, experience the school system. Experience refers to a theoretically and methodologically conceptualized study of human experiences, not to a study of authentic or essentialist experiences. Children's encounters with their teachers and the school system shape their individual and collective ways of experiencing the welfare state. At school, children share their experiences and individual encounters are turned into collective resources. Children experience society through their experiences of education. Varying material and immaterial circumstances, preconditions, factors and opportunities to shape and share experiences constitute the process of experiencing among children in the Nordic welfare states.

Experiencing welfare state education is a multilayered phenomenon. Experiencing is an inherent part of the grassroots level of the educational system in which children and young people experience circumstances, events, interactions, encounters and other aspects of their material, social and emotional surroundings. These experiences are not only intellectual. They are also physical, emotional and sensory, as well as conscious and unconscious. Experiences of the educational system become social when they are acknowledged, reflected on and shared. Experiences of education as lived welfare do not remain mere individual and social reflections. When shared, experiences constitute collective resources, a social stock of knowledge, and accumulate in social institutions.

The history of experience approach may help to see both continuities and breaks with the past in a more all-encompassing manner. School is an arena where children experience society as encounters with adults and other children, and it forms communities of experience where they share, reflect and confirm their experiences. These experiences – and previous layers of them – constitute institutions and structures which for their part define children's experiences. Experiencing can strengthen trust in society, which is a typical feature of the Nordic societies, but it can also undermine trust in society. Examples from the historical research presented in this article suggest that education as lived welfare contributes to citizenship, belonging, trust in society (or lack thereof) and the general formation of the individual-society relationship.

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