

# Education before and after french revolution history essay



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The French revolution enabled a major shift in the history of modern France, and it even affected the rest of the European communities. Indeed, such great incidents like the French revolution would change a lot in the systems of France, regarding to the educational system which was highly effected, In order to talk about the effect of the French revolution over the education in France, the state of the French education before the revolution must be well understood. I believe, The French revolution gave the education in France a great chance to start developing and spreading.

The educational facilities before the French revolution and under the Ancien regime were in a better position than any other European country. France had witnessed an improvement in the educational activities caused by the Renaissance, and that was in the middle of the 16th century. But yet the educational institutions were badly distributed, and needed to be reformed. Although France had witness a lot of religious conflicts, which concluded with the country being taken over effectively by the Catholic domination. We can say that the government involvement in the matters of education was not that great and the Catholic church had the huge part of taking control over the educational system. According to La Chalotais, “ in general, the King’s government left all matters pertaining to education in the hand of local bishop and the religious orders”(1971). In spite of the fact that the educational system was directly or indirectly under the control of the Church, but we can not pass by and not mention that the state has show concerns about the education in France in many ways, for example, in 1698 a decree was issued that children from the age of seven were to be obliged to attend Catholic schools up to the age of fourteen. One significant educational

development was the change of the scholars language from Latin to French. Reaching the period exactly before the revolution, the idea of a general education started to develop in France.

Since that, during the French revolution (1789-1799) The state of the country was not stable at all, most people would think that the education is the last thing French people would think about in such crises, but the truth was that the leaders of the revolution had the education in their priorities. And in the early stages of the revolution there was a lot of concerns about the revolution, but few institutional actions. Still, " by 1789 the level of development of the French system of education was remarkable for its time. Enrolment in elementary schools was relatively high and 562 secondary schools boasted 74, 747 student, 40, 000 of whom had scholarships"(4). It is true that the destructive component of the revolution has effected the education, but the only explanation was because what ever was before the revolution has to go. But it is fair to say that the revolutionaries also looked at the state of the education from many aspects, like " the duties and prerogatives of the state, the rights of parents, the potential benefits of higher education, the economic needs of the nation, the necessity for training teachers, and the suitable status of the teaching profession in a republic"(5). The first changes made to the French community were basically related to religion. It can be said that the revaluation wanted to change any thing related to the old system, including the great position that was occupied by the church. In fact , as the revolutionaries were destroying the statues that presented the church at Notre Dame, they were removing every influence made by the church in the education system. What was really

weird and in the same time interesting, is that the leaders of the revolution were willing to change almost anything related to the old system except the idea of educating women. Actually most of the revolution leaders believed that only men should have the right of education because they will engaged in the state affairs. And women do not need education because their role was to take care of the family and the raise children. By 1794 a kind of a normal life was founded, and that was a result of the execution of Robespierre. This kind of normal life gave the government the chance to give attention to the education reform. A decree soon followed, that the number one important thing regarding the education was the training of teachers. And the curriculum of the schools contains " republican morality and the public and private virtues, as well as the techniques of teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, practical geometry, French history and grammar;" and books must be used and not any books but the ones which is described in the Convention.(1) One more thing the revolutionaries wanted to make sure to change was the spoken language, as there were a great many different languages and dialects were spoken. The Revolutionary Government left the part of guiding citizens to one language to schools.(6)

According to Vignery, " although the Old Regime system creased to exist,' some schools on all levels survived the onslaughts of the Revolution'."(5) These schools called private schools. " Bailey's historical study of the French colleges shows clearly that they survived the revolution's radical stages by adapting to their changing environment and mobilizing the resources they had inherited from the Old Regime".(4) Larger and wealthier schools were more likely to remain open . in 1798 the government tried to take over the

control on these schools but no much success was established, but in 1799 the government managed to control private schools in some regions. And in an attempt of the government to have a competitive advantage over any private school, the government had a condition that if some one want to get a position with the government to apply an evidence that he had went to a Republic school.(1)

As oboist of some might expect, the state of French public education especially the one of central schools, was weak. Number of flows was there, for example the lack of efficient teachers and more substantial the lack of efficient students as well. Actually, the schools of Paris and other areas with high rate of population did very well, but in the rest of the country things was not as good as they should be. Another serious problem was that requires of a graduate from a central school was not really reasonable at all times, either academic or curricular. Lastly, we can say that the central schools did not reach the goals it was made to establish. And it needed some one great to help reaching these goals.

After the revolution, and under the new system Napoleon toke over most of the power. And in 1804, Napoleon became the Emperor of France and had the ultimate control over the government. Napoleon managed to make France the most powerful country of Europe and that was by making a lot of changes in the system of the country. Napoleon always believed in education and had it in its priorities, and he also believed in efficient kind of education and for this to come true, education in France must spread majorly especially regarding the secondary level. There was number of problems that the

French people complained about, like the lack of schools in several areas  
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plus the lack of efficiency in the teaching faculty, not to mention the lack of commitment to attend among students and in some areas the lack of religious kind of education.(1)