Industrial Revolution: Ideas And Theories

Taking under scrutiny a pessimistic view, the historical and political context of England was fundamental for understanding the different ideas of theorists, such as Marx or Engels (Clark and Cummins, 2014). This is further explained by Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto, defining the horrible conditions of the labourers, hence they expressed the fact that “these labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like other article of commerce” (Marx and Engels, 2007: 14). Therefore, the birth of the factory, in England, and the necessity of labour as an instrument for the machine caused the phenomenon defined as exploitation and the fact that they were not able to benefit from the new industrial and reproductive world (Feinstein, 1998). Furthermore, according to Marx (1990), mechanisation was a process that caused the worst living conditions of commoners since they were considered as labour-power and appendage for the machine. In view of this, the development of machinery created inequality since labour supply was the main consumption of the higher class of society, on the other hand, according to Allen (2011) the poor law was a system to assist their different condition. However, according to Hobsbawm (1999), the introduction of the new poor relief, in 1834 was increasing this inequality due to the ineligibility and the abolition of the outdoor relief.

Considering these poor conditions, it is possible to understand the decision of the households to allow and incentive the children to work and the necessity of society of new labourers. As expressed by Schumpeter, the industrial revolution was “creative destruction” (Allen: 2011: 81) since even if the machinery was enhancing the progress, it intensified exploitation, creating a destructive consequence: child labour. This relates to the birth of the machinery and the different skills needed from labour, which developed the enrolment of the child since “insofar as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of slight muscular strength” (Marx, 1990: 372). Therefore, families started to sell child labour-power, creating a new form of a cheap slave, especially in the miners were, only, the children were able to reach some areas (Marx, 1990). However, according to Engels (1987), children were assuming unsanitary conditions and diseases due to the absence of security in the factory, on the other hand, the middle class continued to exploit this different labour due to the lowest wage.

Moreover, Dickens’ Oliver Twist is a testimony of this condition because the child was considered as a power for the industrialism and children were growing up faster due to the absence from school and the adherence to crime groups. dickens

On the other hand, the family mechanisms changed during the Industrial Revolution because, previously, was just the man of family who was gaining the wage, on the other hand, according to Marx (1990) “Now he sells wife and child. He has become a slave-dealer. The demand for children’s labour often resembles in form the inquiries for negro slaves, such as were formerly to be read among the advertisements in American journals.” (Marx, 1990: 373).

In view of this, the employment of children stimulated revolves in the political context, which enhanced law to improve the condition of the child labour, however, the law as the act of education was useless considering the prolongation of the working day.