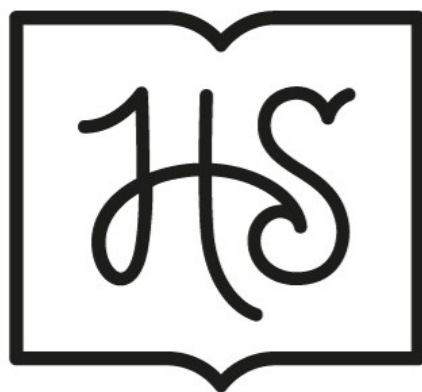


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REPORT:

ISCHE 37, Istanbul 24-27 June 2015. A short report.

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The 37 ISCHE (International Standing Conference for the History of Education) congress took place from the 24th to the 27th of June 2015 at Istanbul University. The theme chosen, *Culture and Education*, was indeed a very good one, that allowed many and different approaches and topics. In fact there were 340 participants, 323 paper presentations, 103 sessions and 39 countries represented - numbers that give immediately the idea of the dimension of the event: not only European and of course Turkish scholars, but also historians from the USA, Canada and South America (many from Brazil), from Japan, Taiwan, China, Africa, Australia took part to the Congress.

The questions scholars were asked to answer in the CFP revolved round central problems, like the roles of educational and school reforms in the context of cultural changes and transformations. Cultural elements like languages, religions, symbols, and routines had to be taken into account in the educational processes. The sub-themes of the congress were: cultural paradigms and education; agents of intercultural interaction; language and education; symbols, heroes, stories, and myths; rituals and routines.

The Pre-Conference Workshop, on *The Concept of Transnational*, was held on 23rd of June. The Conference itself took place in different buildings of the Istanbul University, an impressive mixture of new premises and ancient buildings, such as the glorious entrance and the Fire Tower, not to mention the nearby astonishing Suleymaniye complex, that the conference speakers could visit in organized tours, which undoubtedly concurred to make us appreciate the cultural richness and beauty of Istanbul. Cultural, religious and economic center, from the Roman Empire to nowadays, the city, with its cultural heritage, was a very appropriate place for the theme chosen.

Ali Arslan, professor of History in Istanbul University, opened the Conference with the first keynote speech, on Turkish educational system from Islamic civilization to Western civilization. This wide issue was then deepened by Mustafa Gunduz, of Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, who delivered a very interesting picture of Mustafa Satı Bey (1880-1968), a pioneer educator. Loyal Ottomanist first, then leader of Arab Nationalism, hence influent not only in Turkey but also in other Arabic countries and Egypt, Satı Bey modernized

the traditional teacher training, using Western pedagogical thinkers, too. He surely deserved the appellation of “Hero of education”, the title of the round table of the opening session. Adelina Arredondo (Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Morelos, Mexico), member of the ISCHE Executive Committee, gave a brilliant report about women teachers of the post-revolutionary Mexico, who bravely fought against illiteracy in lost and desolated rural areas. Craig Campbell (University of Sydney, Australia), presented the figure of Jean Blackburn, member of the Australian Communist Party and a feminist, and her work to modernize school in the last century. Kate Rousmaniere (Miami University, Oxford, USA) concentrated on Margaret Haley (1861-1939), founding leader of the first American teachers’ union. The roundtable raised a series of questions on the concept of “hero/heroine” of education, on gender stereotypes, on the meaning of the word hero itself.

The other keynote speakers were Tim Allender (University of Sydney, Australia) who focused on feminism in colonial India and stereotypes and mentality in female education, and Fella Moussaoui (El Kechai, Université d’Alger, Algeria) who reflected on French Colonial policy and Algerian élites’ reactions 1830-1962.

One can appreciate the effort to present scholars of different parts of the world, even if the methodologies of these speeches were different (biographies of single persons/social reconstruction of the work of many teachers/ cultural clash and so on).

As above said, 323 papers were presented, in 103 parallel sessions. It is clearly impossible to sum up all the papers, so I will try to follow the main lines, in order to provide the reader with some clues about the most relevant tendencies of the produced researches.

Since the submitted panels involved a previous research plan and an existing cooperation among scholars of different countries, I shall concentrate on them. 18 Panels were submitted, plus those organized by the standing working groups (SWG) of ISCHE.

The SWG *Mapping the Discipline History of Education*, whose convenors were Eckhardt Fuchs, (Georg Eckert Institute, Germany), ISCHE President, Rita Hofstetter (University of Geneva, Switzerland) and Emmanuelle Picard (Ecole Normale supérieure de Lyon, France) is to be pointed out, as producing an important advancement in the very knowledge of history of education. Aim of this SWG is to reflect on the growth and the traits of the discipline from an institutional point of view: reconstructing the institutional foundation (Institutes, departments), communication networks (associations, events, and journals), education of young generations (Ph.D. thesis, curricula, and diploma) and new research methods. The results will be shared via an internationally built database. This is a relevant goal: sufficient to think about the growth and then the contraction of the academic chairs in UK or in Italy, or the situation in post-communist countries. Already in ISCHE 36, in London, important results were acknowledged. In Istanbul, Iveta Kestere and Iveta Ozola, of the University of Latvia, gave information on history of education courses in the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and Montenegro; Attila Nobik (University of Szeged, Hungary) showed the changing status of history of education in Hungary from 1990 to 2015, highlighting the contrast between the scientific flourishing of the discipline and its academic weakening, since it has been expelled from teacher training. Particularly interesting, as

testified by the great audience, was the Roundtable on the scientific journals on history of education, chaired by Antonella Cagnolati (University of Foggia, Italy) and Eckhardt Fuchs. Six journals were presented: History of Education (UK), The Nordic Journal of Educational History (Sweden), History of Education & Children's Literature (Italy), Espacio, Tiempo y Educacion (Spain), Themata Istoriastis Ekpaidefsis (Crete) and Historia da Educacao/ASPHE (Brazil). The debate that followed was very stimulating, not only for young researchers.

Indeed the question of scientific journals is becoming everywhere compelling. Standardized systems of evaluation, peer review process, open access or paper format, prevalence of national issues, difficulties in publishing when a theme is not in the mainstream: all these questions are relevant and were raised. A useful tool, accessible on-line, is the just published book: *Connecting History of Education. Scientific Journals as International Tools for a Global World*. Hernández Huerta, J. L., Cagnolati, A., & Diestro Fernández, A. (Eds.), ed.FahrenHouse, Salamanca, 2015, that provides information on 26 journals of different countries (<http://www.fahrenhouse.com/fh/downloads/connecting-history-of-education-scientific-journals-as-international-tools-for-a-global-world/>).

The SWG *Gender and Education/ Gender, Power relations and education in a transnational world*, convenors Christine Mayer (University of Hamburg, Germany) and Adelina Arredondo, organized three panels. The theme of woman teachers, in particular, was tackled by many participants, not only of the SWG. Two other SWG panels were dedicated to woman teachers: in the French colonial empire and in Latin America. But the question of female education was present in quite a number of other papers, thus confirming the persistence of scholars' interest in it.

The SWG *Teachers Critical Thinking*, convenor Andre Robert (Université Lyon 2, France) purposed three panels in French on French communism, education and critical thinking, 1930-1990; controversies in "New Education" and the Freinet case (1900-1950); antagonistic forms of teachers critical thinking during 20th century.

The SWG *Touching bodies in schools*, convenors Diana Vidal (University of Sao Paulo, Brazil), Ines Dussel (DIE---CINVESTAV, Mexico) and Marcelo Caruso (Humboldt Universität, Germany) organized three panels, discussed by Noah Sobe (Loyola University, Chicago, USA). The theme itself may raise some scepticism, in terms of plausibility of a serious research. A more traditional *Education and the bodies* (the general theme of ISCHE 38, which will be held 17-20 August 2016 in Chicago on the campus of Loyola University) may be terminologically more correct. *Touching bodies* seems winking to trendy terms. A research on body *contact* in schools looks rather contradictory, not to say fairly arduous as far as sources are concerned. A Foucault approach is not to be mastered by every scholar, and may also be questioned. A research on body and education, on the other hand, is surely relevant and opens various studies perspectives. The heuristic tangle of the concept *Touching bodies* appears in the papers of the SWG panels, which were very different in methodology and in analysis. Correction of mental illness in Brazilian schools; body representation in Brazilian Scoutism; emotions, nationalism and bodily expressions like civic ceremonies or parades in Chile; hygiene, medicine and schools in Portugal; sexual behaviour, homosexuality

and school education in Brazil in the 1930s; education of girls' bodies in China are certainly interesting issues, but one may fail to see where the *touching of bodies* lies there. Educational rituals and body relations changes between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, by Filiz Meşeci Giorgetti (Istanbul University) and the dynamic of self-restraint in early monitorial pedagogy by Marcelo Caruso, were papers which managed to address the research methods in order to fulfil the epistemological question. Questionable, on the other hand, was the paper on school toilets: the fact that school lavatories were designed to prevent touching bodies and preserve privacy seems hardly deserving a study. It is indeed worth to establish when national regulations started to impose internal toilets, but an analysis on interaction of bodies in the school bathrooms may have a limited impact.

As for the submitted panels, some presented more traditional themes and others revolved around new perspectives. The one on *Cultures of synchronization? Historical perspectives on educational rituals and routines*, coordinator: Marcelo Caruso, dealt with an intriguing issue, which was chosen also by many other single scholars (the sub-theme *Rituals and Routines* had in fact attracted many studies and is indeed methodological interesting, too).

The panel *Senses and sense-making: Intersensorial perspectives on education and embodied enculturation*, coordinator: Geert Thyssen (University of Luxembourg), Discussant: Ian Grosvenor (University of Birmingham, UK) faced a difficult task. The paper by Catherine Burke (University of Cambridge, UK) *Designing for touch, reach and movement in post-war (1946-1972) English primary and infant school environments* was very convincing, being based on a solid corpus of sources, not to say on Burke's long experience of school and space, whereas less original were the papers on taste and on smell.

The panel *Visual media as a mode of cultural paradigms* presented papers which were not linked in methodology, probably also because two authors were not historians of education. The panel on *The history of education and the history of emotions: methodological questions from Latin America*, coordinator: Pablo Toro Blanco (Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile), discussant: Elsie Rockwell (Centro de Investigacion Y de Estudios Avanzados, Mexico) highlighted interesting issues, using textbooks as primary sources, on hygiene and the rhetoric of fear, on patriotic feeling and on juvenile emotions.

Alongside these panels, which dealt with new topics, others addressed more traditional matters. Two panels were dedicated to *Religion and education*, one coordinated by Annemieke Van Drenth (Leiden University, The Netherland) on Liberal Protestantism, and one by myself, on the challenges religious education had to face in periods of cultural transitions, challenges coming from the State, from new cultural models, from other religions or confessions, in different areas of the Habsburg Empire, in Socialist Hungary and in the Basque Country, during Francoism. Other single papers on religious education were presented in different sessions. Various speeches on Ottoman education deserve to be mentioned, a theme scarcely known in Europe. As for woman education, religious education was confirmed as a main topic of interest.

Similarly, the history of pedagogy appeared very solidly represented by the panel *The new education fellowship as a platform of cultural exchanges. Diffusion vs cohesion strategies*.

(1920---1970), coordinators: Béatrice Haenggeli-Jenni, Rita Hofstetter and Frederic Mole (University of Geneva, Switzerland): all the papers were interesting, but two stood out, those of Maria del Mar Del Pozo Andres and Joan Soler Mata (University of Alcalá and University of Vic, Spain) *Looking at Europe: networks and relations in the Progressive Education Movement in Spain* and of Angelo Van Gorp, Frank Simon and Marc Depaepe (University of Gent and Leuven University, Belgium) *Frictions between New Education Fellowship Protagonists: the Decroly/Montessori "method conflict" in the 1920s and 1930s*. Other single speeches were delivered on pedagogical ideas, by different scholars, in other sessions.

Another very good panel was the one about *The impact of shifting cultural representations of the child on foster-homes educational methods and practices (1950-1980)*, coordinators: Joelle Droux (University of Geneva) and Véronique Czáká (FNS, Switzerland). The cultural shifts in the representation of the child and the consequent changes in child protection and care in the Netherlands from the 1940s to the 1970s were well depicted by Jeroen J.H. Dekker (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Netherlands). The situation in Switzerland and in Tyrol was convincingly shown by the other scholars of the panel, in a globally coherent picture. Education and childhood was also the theme of other papers, but not so many as one would expect.

One panel concerned the practices of testing and evaluating in schools between 1800 and 2000, coordinator: Sabine Reh (Humboldt University Berlin, Germany) and Patrick Buhler (University of Applied Sciences North-Western Switzerland). This, too, was an interesting and clear cluster of researches.

Quite a lot of papers revolved around language and education, plus one panel on *Language and Education in Multilingual Nations*. Intercultural education was approached also in the panel about *Intercultural interaction between Japan and the West at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century* and another one about Finland.

Culture and education was the core of the panel on *The Role of tradition and heritage in transmitting individual and collective societal values*, coordinator: Sabine Krause. The young scholars Krause and Benita Blessing, both of the University of Vienna, Cristina Cammarano (Salisbury University, USA) and Martin Viehhauser (University of Tübingen, Germany) presented interesting researches on cultural heritage and the impact on education in the early 20th century. Movies as well as an architectural style (*Heimatstil*) were object of the works of Blessing and of Viehhauser, who managed to construct clever and solid papers.

The broad theme *Culture and education* was approached from other points of view in numerous speeches, on journals, associations and textbooks as agents (it deserves to be mentioned at least Carmen Sanchidrian Blanco, of the Universidad de Málaga, Spain) on inclusion (disabled, Holocaust, racism); on democracy and diversity; on education and colonialism; on school and changes during different political regimes. Films and teaching materials were also examined. An interesting panel was dedicated to *Reading materials and methods in France, USA, Brazil, Chile and Mexico (1750---1950)*, coordinator: Elsie Rockwell. Textbooks, literacy and material culture were also themes of other papers, even if

one would expect more attention to these subjects, which have attracted the scholar eyes in many countries.

Mathematics, music and art were also touched. On *Education and art* concentrated the panel coordinated by Ian Grosvenor, where, among the others, Iveta Kestere (University of Latvia) described the School Theatre Movement in Soviet Latvia (1950s – 1980s), explaining how a highly disciplined activity as theatre was actually enjoyed by pupils, and providing a convincing example of new historical analysis on Soviet educational pedagogy.

Lastly, one panel was about *Manual training (1870-1914)* and another one was about the *Creation of “new” citizens from the Late 18th to the 20th century*.

As a general conclusion, one has to stress the presence of many young and well prepared scholars from different countries and the invaluable possibility to meet, share and discuss with colleagues of all over the world as real good points of ISCHE 37 (not to mention the chance of visiting a city as rich of history as Istanbul). The great varieties of sub-themes, allowed by the broadness of the title *Culture and education*, made the conference very rich, but the great number of sessions, held in various buildings, hindered the possibility to hear all what one wanted to, so that one left with the regret of having missed many panels. Not all the speeches were at the same level: I have heard some brilliant ones, many good ones and some poor ones. But this is the case with such a great number of participants. In spite of the fact that they were suggested in the CFP, ancient and medieval history were neglected and there were very few speeches on modern history. The total concentration on 19th and especially 20th century education is not a good sign: we need specialists who master ancient languages and who can deal with remote past and not only with yesterday.

Finally, the ISCHE Executive Committee was partially renewed. Rebecca Rogers was elected new president after Eckhardt Fuchs. Noah Sobe, who will host ISCHE 38 in Chicago, is the treasurer, and Karin Prim is the Secretary. The other members are still Grace Oluremilekun Akanbi, Adelina Arredondo, Joaquim Pintassilgo, Ian Grosvenor for “Paedagogica Historica” and Diana Vidal.

One last observation has to be made on the economic sustainability for scholars, a topic I have discussed with many colleagues. The global cost (travelling, hotel, the high ISCHE fee) has discouraged quite a few people from answering the CFP. There is in fact a gap between countries: there are states where due to the economic crisis research funds have been cut dramatically. Having to choose among CFP, economic reasons have to be taken into account, especially where there are very scarce possibilities to see the paper published, as for ISCHE Conferences. This is a real shame, for it hinders the strengthening of networks of research. Going to Chicago (ISCHE 2016) or to Buenos Aires (ISCHE 2017) will present prohibitive costs for many of us from Europe, who may have to wait until Berlin (ISCHE 2018).