



ISCHE 43 Milan. *Histories of Educational Technologies. Cultural and Social Dimensions of Pedagogical Objects. Aims and Results*

Simonetta Polenghi^a

Anna Debè^b

^a Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan
simonetta.polenghi@unicatt.it

^b Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan
anna.debe@unicatt.it

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After the postponement of the Conference in 2020 and the online Conference held in 2021, the *International Standing Conference for the History of Education* (ISCHE) Annual Congress was once again able to take place in person this year. ISCHE 43 was held at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan in Italy (31 August – 3 September 2022) with the main theme of *Histories of Educa-*

tional Technologies. Cultural and Social Dimensions of Pedagogical Objects. The pandemic has forced us to adopt new ways of working and meeting. As a result, the 43rd edition of the Conference was also extended to include additional online events on 5 and 6 September.

In fact, the hybrid Conference has proved very successful, not least in attracting a large number of participants. 400 scholars registered to attend the Congress in person and a further 132 online, and they came from all over the world, with high attendance from Italy, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, United States, France, and Portugal. Globally, 48 countries were represented. Among those registering were also 3 scholars from Ukraine (1 in Milan and 2 online), who were exempted from all fees.

More than 430 proposals were submitted, with 390 being accepted by the scientific committee through a double-blind referee process.

Therefore 303 individual papers were presented during the Conference week, together with 23 pre-formed panels, 18 symposia, 5 special events, and 2 plenary addresses: Lisa Gitelman (New York University) spoke about *Media History and the Rise of What We Call Writing* and Maria del Mar Del Pozo Andrés (University of Alcalá) about *The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of Educational Technologies: The Curious Case of Decroly in Spain*. A total of 127 sessions were organized, of which 91 were in person and 36 online.

The topic of the Conference sounds very much adapted to the pandemic and its influence on teaching, but it had in fact been decided long before the eruption of Covid-19. The term *technologies* was intended in a broad sense, meaning practical strategies to optimize pedagogical practices, including media. Considering technology implies analyzing teaching methods and educational objects in relation not only to educational theories, but also to politics and economics. Hence the organisers encouraged scholars to focus on various aspects, such as curriculum studies, in terms of their concrete pedagogical application in school didactics, and aimed to foster reflection on schools' material culture in all its dimensions.

What themes developed during the conference? Which sources were used most?

The topic "material histories of objects and their educational use" proved one of the most popular. Writing technologies from different times and countries, national school exhibitions on school supplies, pedagogical objects from the arts and crafts schools, and tools for the teaching of sciences were the subject of several papers. School didactics and teaching objects was also a theme that received much attention. Many scholars concentrated on school textbooks, a topic that has been widely researched but is still capable of offering new insights, such as the discourse on and representations of otherness in school textbooks; the transnational dissemination of intuitive teaching through textbooks; and picture books. The material turn, the visual turn and the linguistic turn were heuristic concepts used in other papers. The effect of the visual turn, for instance, can be seen in the images contained

in textbooks, primers, picture books, and comics. Old engravings can show how classroom objects could be used in completely different ways to those intended by the pupils present in these classrooms. Children's literature also featured quite widely, often being interweaved with different languages, in particular cinema.

The question of the production and circulation of educational objects was also addressed, with research that concentrated on schools as a market and the production, trade and transnational circulation of pedagogical and scientific objects. Industrialization also affected the school market, more so when compulsory school laws were enforced.

Educational media in the form of cinema, TV and radio received in depth analysis in many papers. Cinema and TV particularly attracted interest in terms of: educational TV programmes for children and adults; films about school; the pedagogy of school film making; video-games and the changing idea of the child; the sending of exercises to pupils through the post; and lessons via radio during the Spanish flu pandemic.

Travelling objects proved another topic that attracted much research, for instance with reference to the colonial world. In India, for example, the impact of the introduction of textbooks and the multiplication of materials related to writing and recording was explored as crucial developments in deauthorizing the work of the old gurus. Indigenous schools in Africa or in Brazil were influenced by European teaching tools, but pedagogical theories were also actually altered by the cultural changes of their artifacts, like the Froebelian gifts in Japan.

The topic of tools used in the education of the disabled was of interest to many participants, as were the themes of cognitive tests and the rise of educational testing technologies as a trans-national phenomenon; the critical history of testing, assessment, and evaluation; and cultural bias in cognitive tests.

The history of the curriculum was also examined by various panels, covering the expansion of secondary education during the 1960s in developing countries and international development organizations; the teaching-technological innovations of socialist educational science in the context of the "scientific-technological Revolution", and the

pedagogical settings, technologies and knowledge practices in Switzerland and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1960–1980.

The final scientific outcomes of ISCHE 43 that can be seen in the e-book of abstracts are impressive. Compared with our expectations as organizers and convenors, we received more papers on the history of special education than we were hoping and, on the other hand, were quite surprised not to receive papers on exercise books as a pedagogical tool – a topic that was however masterly presented in the keynote speech of Maria del Mar Del Pozo Andrés, who spoke in depth about the use of the Decroly pedagogical tools in Spain.