

Simonetta Polenghi

The New International Historiography: Research Perspectives¹

ABSTRACT

L'articolo analizza l'evoluzione degli orientamenti della storiografia educativa internazionale negli ultimi trent'anni, assumendo come osservatorio i temi dei congressi annuali dell'ISCHE (International Standing Conference for the History of Education). L'analisi mostra come, accanto ai tradizionali ambiti della storia della scuola e dell'educazione, si siano progressivamente affermati nuovi filoni di ricerca, tra cui la storia culturale dell'educazione, le fonti vive, la cultura materiale della scuola, il rapporto tra corpo ed educazione, lo spazio educativo, la dimensione transnazionale della pedagogia e la decolonizzazione dell'educazione. L'articolo evidenzia inoltre alcuni ambiti che risultano suscettibili di più ampie indagini, quali il rapporto tra educazione e religione (spesso dimenticato a favore del tema della laicizzazione) e la storia della scuola secondaria, illustrando le possibili ragioni della loro minore presenza nel dibattito storiografico internazionale.

Parole chiave: *storia dell'educazione; ISCHE; filoni di ricerca; ricerca internazionale*

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This article examines the evolution of international educational historiography over

the past three decades using the themes of the annual conferences of the ISCHE (International Standing Conference for the History of Education) as an analytical lens. The analysis shows that, alongside the traditional fields of the history of schooling and education, new lines of inquiry have emerged, including the cultural history of education, visual sources, the material culture of schooling, the relationship between the body and education, educational spaces, the transnational dimension of educational history, and the decolonization of education. The article also identifies areas that remain open for further investigation, notably the relationship between education and religion—often overlooked in favour of secularization—and the history of secondary education. It discusses the possible reasons for the limited attention these topics have received within international educational historiography.

Keywords: *History of Education; ISCHE; Research trends; International research*

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1. This essay is an updated version of the essay *La nuova storiografia internazionale. Prospettive di ricerca*, published by the author in *La storiografia educativa in Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, Callegari, C., Zago, G. (ed.), Roma, Studium, 2025, pp. 61- 72.

di Pedagogia (2010-2022). È stata Vicepresidente vicaria (2013-2017) e Presidente (2017-2020) della SIPED (Società italiana di Pedagogia), membro del Comitato Esecutivo dell'ISCHE (International Standing Conference for the History of Education) (2016-2021) e Convenor di ISCHE 43 (Milano, 2022). Le sue ricerche riguardano la storia dell'università (XIX sec.), dell'infanzia e della scuola (XVIII-XX sec.). Coeditor

di due collane di storia dell'educazione, ha pubblicato oltre 200 lavori scientifici, inclusi numeri monografici di riviste internazionali. Nel 2011 ha ricevuto l'Österreichisches Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst e nel 2015 la Comenius Medal del J.A. Comenius National Pedagogical Museum and Library di Praga. È stata keynote speaker in numerose conferenze internazionali.

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The topic assigned to me is of particular significance, but also of considerable breadth. Aware of the partial nature of the perspective I have chosen, I nonetheless believe that it provides a useful - albeit certainly not exhaustive - interpretative key.

I shall therefore use as the guiding thread of my discussion the themes proposed over the past thirty years by ISCHE, the *International Standing Conference for the History of Education*.² ISCHE was founded in 1978 and organises an international conference every year (only in 2020, due to the Covid pandemic, it was impossible to do so). ISCHE includes both individual and institutional members, namely national societies for the history of education (both CIRSE and SIPSE are affiliated). Each year the General Assembly elects two members of the Executive Committee (on a three-year rotation), and every three years it elects the President for a three-year term. The President, in agreement with the Executive Committee, co-opts a representative of early-career researchers who are not yet permanently appointed - ISCHE indeed encourages research by younger scholars, as well as promoting five-year, multinational research groups (*Standing Working Groups* – SWG).³

The first presidents came from the Anglophone area and from Northern and Central Europe until 2000, when the Portuguese scholar António Nóvoa was elected.⁴ In 2022, the election of Inés Dussel - born in USA, but raised in Argentina and working in Mexico, in the Department of Educational Research at CINVESTAV - testified to ISCHE's global openness, which today is less centred on Europe and the United States, although both remain represented on the Executive Committee. After years of debate, in 2019 Portuguese was introduced as conference language alongside English, German, French, and Spanish.

2. <https://www.ische.org/> (last retrieved 06.06.2026).

3. <https://www.ische.org/about-ische/standing-working-groups/> (last retrieved 06.06.2026).

4. <https://www.ische.org/about-ische/history/> (last retrieved 06.06.2026).

Participation in the conferences follows the approval of a submitted abstract through a double-blind peer-review process. The call for papers is presented to the Executive Committee two years in advance by the Convenor of the host university and is extensively discussed within the Committee itself. Analysing the themes proposed over the past thirty years by the annual ISCHE conferences is therefore indicative (though not exhaustive) of international research trends.⁵

1. “Traditional” themes

A number of conferences have been devoted to what might be defined as “traditional” themes, that is, themes reflecting the more consolidated tendencies of historical-educational research. Several conferences focused on the history of schooling and basic education: the history of schooling from a comparative perspective (1996, ISCHE 18, Kraków, *Schooling in Changing Societies: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*); the history of popular education (2009, ISCHE 31, Utrecht, *The History of Popular Education*); and the relationship between school and society (2011, ISCHE 33, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, *Education and Society: New Perspectives on an Old Debate*). In 2003 (ISCHE 25, São Paulo, Brazil, *Education and Modernity*), emphasis was placed on the dynamics of modernisation and schooling, linking the history of education to social and political transformations. This theme was revisited in various ways in subsequent years. In 2008 (ISCHE 30, Rutgers University, USA, *Education and Inequality: Historical Approaches on Schooling and Social Stratification*), attention was focused on the issue of social inequality and its repercussions on schooling, an issue taken up again in 2013 (ISCHE 35, Riga, *Education and Power*), addressing the theme of political, economic, and social power and its influence on education.

In 2017 (ISCHE 39, Buenos Aires, *Education and Emancipation*), the intention was to emphasise the emancipatory dimension of education and literacy, also - and strongly - in a political sense, with particular reference to their capacity for resilience in the face of dictatorships, in clear connection with the situation in Latin America.

In 2006, by contrast, attention had been focused on processes of literacy, including the techniques of reading and writing employed over time (ISCHE 28, Umeå, *Technologies of the Word. Literacies in the History of Education*).⁶ The theme was closely linked

5. Two years after each ISCHE conference, *Paedagogica Historica*, the prestigious international journal, publishes a special issue that brings together a selection of significant articles, in addition to the editorial by the Convenor(s). For a more in-depth analysis, reference should be made to these sources.

6. D. Lindmark, *Technologies of the Word: Literacies in the History of Education*, in «*Paedagogica Historica*», XLIV, Special issue, 2008, 1-2.

to the research interests of Daniel Lindmark, Convenor of the conference and a well-known Swedish scholar, and reflected the interdisciplinary advances of historiography in the fields of literacy, orality, and writing. In 2024, an SWG of Iberian–Latin American scope began its work, dedicated to practices of written culture. Sweden hosted ISCHE once again in 2021, when, for the first time, the conference was held not in person but online, due to the Covid pandemic (ISCHE 42, Örebro, *Looking from Above and Below: Rethinking the Social in the History of Education*). In this case too, the research pursued by the Convenor, Johannes Westberg, fostered renewed sensitivity towards the reconsideration and updating of the nexus between school, society, and economy.⁷

A short time apart, two conferences were devoted to the history of childhood, a central theme within the discipline (2007, ISCHE 29, Hamburg, *Children and Youth at Risk*; 2010, ISCHE 32, Amsterdam, *Discoveries of Childhood in History*). In 2014 (ISCHE 36, London, *Education, War and Peace*), the themes of peace education, militaristic education, and childhood and schooling in times of war were addressed. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Lebanon, and Mexico had brought a dramatic issue back to the attention of historians, one that the new century had not eclipsed. The conference, also owing to London's centrality for intercontinental flights, was highly successful (with 500 participants), attesting to the extent to which the topic was keenly felt.

If, in these conferences, the history of schooling and education was examined in relation to social, economic, and political transformations, a more pronounced attention to the history of pedagogy can be found in two events: one devoted to the New Education movement (2004, ISCHE 26, Geneva, *New Education: Genesis and Metamorphoses*), and the other to reform pedagogies and their underlying ethical values (2023, ISCHE 44, Budapest, *Histories of Education and Reform: Traditions, Tensions and Transitions*). The organisers, from ELTE University in Budapest, are attentive scholars of *Reformpädagogik* and *Lebensreform*, and are particularly sensitive to highlighting the connections between philosophy, art, the human sciences, pedagogy and politics, and school and educational reforms.

Present across all these events - if one pays close attention to the calls for papers and the books of abstracts - is the history of the school in its various components, which have been foregrounded in certain conferences, such as that of 2025, which thematises the figure of the teacher and the history of teaching (2025, ISCHE 46, Lille, *Teachers and Teaching*), to which I shall return later. In 2000, Spain hosted a conference specifically devoted to school and educational textbooks (ISCHE 22, Alcalá, *Books and Education*), thanks to the sensitivity of the Convenor, María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, who articulated the strong interest of Spanish scholars in the history

7. J. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling: The Social, Economic and Cultural History of School Finance in Sweden, 1840-1900*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2017.

of textbooks. This line of research, which now boasts an extensive bibliography but still offers significant scope for further investigation, has been cultivated in many countries; nevertheless, pioneering studies are to be found precisely in Spain, France, Germany,⁸ and Italy. It has also led to the creation of databases such as *Emmanuelle* in France and *Manes* in Spain and Latin America, as well as research centres such as CEINCE in Spain⁹ and the Georg Eckert Institute in Germany.¹⁰

2. Less explored topics

The conferences recalled above developed themes that were already present within the field of international historiography. There are, however, also cases of conferences that have rightly brought into the spotlight a number of much less explored topics which, despite the impetus that such events invariably provide, have not subsequently received the degree of expansion that might have been expected.

In 1997, in Dublin, attention was focused on religious faiths and education from a historical and comparative perspective (1997, ISCHE 19, Dublin, *Faiths and Education: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*). However, the history of religious education - which in Italy has always been at the centre of numerous studies, particularly by Catholic scholars¹¹ - has not received attention comparable, for instance, to that devoted to secular education - for instance, one SWG focused on the *History of Laic Education: Concepts, Policies and Practices around the World* (2016-2021). In 2020, Stephen G. Parker, Sophie Allen, and Rob J. K. Freathy reflected on the decline of interest in the religious dimension in the history of nineteenth and twentieth-century England: «Why there has been this hiatus in scholarly interest in the religious dimensions of the founding period of education in England is somewhat puzzling». One possible explanation they identify lies in the academic separation between departments of ecclesiastical history and those of modern and contemporary history, as well as in the fact that historians of education are generally based in departments of education. Alternatively, the strong focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may have led to a neglect of the extent to which the religious dimension permeated people's lives in the medieval and early modern periods (and, of course, in antiquity as well). The British scholars concluded: «Whatever the reasons for the shift away from taking into account the religious dynamic in educational history specifically, here we urge a commitment to its perma-

8. In 1997, the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Schulbuch- und Bildungsmedienforschung* was founded by Eva Matthes at the Universität Augsburg.

9. <https://www.ceince.eu/> (last retrieved 06.06.2026).

10. <https://www.gei.de/en/institute> (last retrieved 06.06.2026).

11. It suffices to mention the national conferences promoted by L. Pazzaglia, in addition to his studies on the history of the teaching of religion.

ment value». ¹² Indeed, it is studies of the modern age that tend to emphasise more strongly the importance of religious education; ¹³ one may think, for example, of works on the religious dimension of the Enlightenment, too often interpreted as an exclusively secular or atheistic movement. ¹⁴ It is also worth recalling studies on the secularisation of contemporary society, which underline its strong links with the religious dimension. ¹⁵

The conference held in Paris in 2002 addressed the history of secondary education (2002, ISCHE 24, Paris, *Secondary Education: Institutional, Cultural and Social History*). This represented an important historiographical effort, since historians of education tend to concentrate their attention on elementary schooling, partly because of their institutional location within departments of education, which train primary school teachers or educators. This circumstance often encourages scholars to focus on topics that are more readily applicable from a didactic perspective, as they are of greater immediate interest to their students. Studies in early modern history have long produced significant work on the colleges of teaching congregations - above all the Jesuits; nevertheless, the imbalance between the volume of research devoted to basic schooling and that devoted to secondary education remains considerable. In 2022, precisely in order to strengthen this field, a specific ISCHE SWG (2022–27) was established, with Convenors Luís Grosso Correia (Portugal), Felicitas Acosta (Argentina), and Antonio Canales Serrano (Spain).

3. New fields of enquiry

Some editions of ISCHE have proved particularly innovative, as they have embraced ongoing impulses for historiographical renewal and have contributed to advancing them. In 1998, an important conference devoted to the *visual turn* was held in Belgium (1998, ISCHE 20, Kortrijk, *The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education*). It contributed in a significant way to stimulating the study of visual sources, opening up a broad field of enquiry that remains highly productive to this day. Among

12. S.G. Parker-S. Allen-R.J.K. Freathy, *The Church of England and the 1870 Elementary Education Act*, in «British Journal of Educational Studies», LXVIII, 2020, 5, p. 542.

13. J.J.H. Dekker, *In search of multiple compatibility: Modernization, secularization, religion, and education in history*, in «Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education», 2021, 2, pp. 171-175.

14. D. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment. Protestants, Jews and Catholics from London to Vienna*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008; J.D. Burson-U.L. Lehner (eds), *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe. A Transnational History*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2014; D. Lindmark, *Technologies of the word: literacies in the history of education*, cit.

15. M. Buchardt, *The political project of secularization and modern education reform in "provincialized Europe"*. *Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.*, in «Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education», XI, 2021, 2, pp. 164-170; M. Buchardt (ed.), *Secularization within Europe and Beyond: The Political Projects of Modernizing Religion through Education Reform*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2024.

the new sources employed were paintings, photographs (including class photographs), comics, images in textbooks, and new media (television, cinema), among others. It is worth recalling that the ISCHE President for 2022–2025, Inés Dussel, is a recognised specialist in this field.¹⁶

Quite significant was the 2015 edition, devoted to the broad theme of culture and education (2015, ISCHE 37, Istanbul, *Education and Culture*), which reflected the so-called *cultural turn* - that is, the intention to examine not only socio-economic and political history, but also to place at the centre of historiographical investigation language, representations, values, symbols, communication, emotions, in short, the complex facets of human cultures.¹⁷ The congress, hosted by Istanbul University, also formed part of the efforts of Turkish scholars to broaden their international dimension and to be recognised as a substantial academic community. These were the years in which Turkey's accession to the European Union was being discussed. The subsequent repression under Erdoğan significantly slowed this process.

Partly connected to the visual turn was the Portuguese conference of 2019 devoted to educational spaces (2019, ISCHE 41, Porto, *Spaces and Places of Education*), which likewise represented an important moment in educational historiography. It encouraged scholars to focus their attention on the places of education, from school buildings to classroom furnishings, while also devoting attention to extra-school spaces - for example, places of youth aggregation, oratories, or children's bedrooms. To what extent have these places, their dimensions, and their furnishings influenced teaching and educational processes, in more or less conscious ways? This question, posed in the wake of Foucault's well-known reflections, gave rise to a series of new studies.¹⁸

16. *The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education*, M. Depaepe, B. Henkens (eds), in «Paedagogica Historica», XXXVI, 2000, 1, pp. 10-17; U. Mietzner-K. Myers-N. Peim, *Visual History. Images of Education*, Berna, Peter Lang, 2005; *Fotografia i història de l'educació*, F. Comas Rubí (ed.), in «Educació i Història», 15, 2015, special issue; M. del Mar del Pozo-S. Braster, *Exploring New Ways of Studying School Memories: The Engraving as a Blind Spot of the History of Education*, in *School Memories. New Trends in the History of Education*, C. Yanes-Cabrera-J. Meda-A. Viñao (eds), Cham, Springer, 2017, pp. 11-28; J. Meda, *Invisible Schools. The public image of rural schools in southern Italy in photographic inquiries and photo-reportages (1925-1955)*, in «Historia y Memoria de la Educación», 8, 2018, pp. 347-396; S. Polenghi, *Film as a source for historical enquiry in education. Research methods and a case study: film adaptations of Pinocchio and their reception in Italy*, in «Educació i Història», 31, 2018, pp. 89-111; I. Dussel, *The Visual Turn in the History of Education: Four Comments for a Historiographical Discussion*, in *Rethinking the History of Education*, T.S. Popkewitz (ed.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 29-49; I. Dussel, *Visuality, Materiality, and History*, in *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education*, T. Fitzgerald (ed), Berlin, Springer, 2020, pp. 137-152.

17. S. Polenghi, *ISCHE 37, Istanbul 24-27 June 2015. A short report*, in «Historia Scholastica», 1, 2015, 1, pp. 94-99.

18. *Architecture and school space*, F.J. Rodríguez Méndez-C. Manique da Silva (eds), in «Historia y Memoria de la Educación», 13, 2021, special issue; L. Grosso Correia, *Spaces and places of*

In 2016, another important conference was held in Chicago, addressing the so-called *corporeal turn* (ISCHE 38, Chicago, USA, *Education and the Body*). Here too, the visual and spatial dimensions intersected, and an underlying Foucauldian heuristic framework was evident. Attention was focused more explicitly on pedagogies of control or liberation of the body, both within and beyond the classroom. Disciplines such as gymnastics were privileged, but attention was also paid to the “different” body, and thus to the history of special or decolonial education.¹⁹ Two years later, these themes were taken up again in Berlin (2018, ISCHE 40, Berlin, *Education and Nature*), where greater emphasis was placed on environmental issues (city–countryside; nature–culture; science teaching; school meals and nutrition; gender; decolonisation, etc.).²⁰

Four years later, the first post-pandemic congress was held in Milan at the Università Cattolica, inaugurating the dual format of in-person and online participation. The author of this paper served as Convenor and sought to strengthen research devoted to the so-called *material turn*, a field closely related to the visual and spatial dimensions, but also to the economy and to the cultural and symbolic - no less than pedagogical - significance of educational objects (2022, ISCHE 43, Milan, *Histories of Educational Technologies: Cultural and Social Dimensions of Pedagogical Objects*).²¹ The conference, which recorded more than 500 participants, reflected the developments of this area of enquiry, cultivated in particular in Spain²² and in Italy, thanks to the pioneering studies of Juri Meda²³ and linked to the concept of school culture.²⁴

education: prelude, in «Paedagogica Historica», LVII, 2021, 1-2, special issue, pp. 1-10.

19. *Education and the Body in Europe (1900-1950), Movements, public health, pedagogical rules and cultural ideas*, S. Polenghi-A. Németh-T. Kasper (eds), Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021, Italian translation: *Corpo ed educazione in Europa (1900-1950). Movimenti socio-culturali, salute pubblica, norme pedagogiche*, Parma, Junior, 2022.

20. Cfr. M. Caruso-S. Reh-E. Fuchs, *Education and Nature*, in «Paedagogica Historica», LVI, 2020, 1-2, special issue, pp. 1-8.

21. S. Polenghi, *Histories of educational technologies. Introducing the cultural and social dimensions of pedagogical objects*, in «Paedagogica Historica», LX, 2024, 1, special issue, pp. 1-17.

22. *La cultura material de la escuela*, A. Escolano Benito (ed.), Berlanga de Duero, CEINCE, 2007; A. Viñao Frago, *La historia material e inmaterial de la escuela: memoria, patrimonio y educación*, in «Educação», XXXV, 2012, 1, pp. 7-17; *Etnohistoria de la escuela. Actas del XII Coloquio Nacional de Historia de la Educación (Burgos, 18-21 de junio de 2003)*, A. Jénez Eguizábal et al. (eds), Burgos, Universidad de Burgos - Sociedad Española de Historia de la Educación, 2003; *Materialities of Schooling. Design, Technology, Objects, Routines*, M. Lawn-I. Grosvenor (eds), Oxford Symposium Books, 2005; *The Material Turn in the History of Education*, in «Educació i Història», V.L. Gaspar da Silva-J. Meda-G. de Souza (eds), 38, 2021, special issue.

23. J. Meda, *Mezzi di educazione di massa: saggi di storia della cultura materiale della scuola tra XIX e XX secolo*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016.

24. M. Depaepe-F. Simon, *Is there any Place for the History of 'Education' in the 'History of Education'? A Plea for the History of Everyday Educational Reality in- and outside Schools*, in «Paedagogica Historica», XXXI, 1995, 1, pp. 9-16; *The Black Box of Schooling. A Cultural History of the*

By contrast, it is rather striking that over the past thirty years no conference has been devoted specifically to the history of female education, even though, as is well known, the history of women teachers²⁵ as well as that of female pupils, girls' schools, and books and magazines aimed at girls have all been the subject of research and have always been present transversally in conference papers and calls for papers. Nevertheless, in 2018 an SWG dedicated to the transnational history of female education was established - *Gendering Local, National, Regional, Transnational and Supra-National Histories of Education* (2018–2023).

Another theme that has been the object of recent research in Italy as well as internationally concerns the history of emotions and education.²⁶ In this case too, there has not yet been a conference specifically devoted to the topic, although it does appear in papers presented at the most recent editions.

The theme of the “transnational” likewise runs through the conferences. In 2012, the conference was devoted to internationalisation (ISCHE 34, Geneva, *Internationalization in Education*), but in more recent years the term *transnational* has also been adopted, to denote educational phenomena that transcend national borders and, in so doing, become hybridised and adapted to national contexts.²⁷ The ISCHE series *Global Histories of Education* was inaugurated in 2019 with a volume devoted precisely to transnational perspectives in the history of education.²⁸ Other volumes in the series fit squarely within this line of enquiry, also examining the history of women's education.²⁹

Classroom, S. Braster-I. Grosvenor-M. Del Mar Del Pozo Andrés (eds), Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2011; P. Smeyers-M. Depaepe, *Educational Research: Material Culture and Its Representation*, Cham, Springer International, 2016; D. Gonçalves Vidal-A. Paulilo, *School Culture*, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018.

25. *Las maestras de la República*, C. Flecha Garcia et al. (eds), Madrid, Catarata, 2012; M. del Mar del Pozo Andrés, *Justa Freire o la pasión de educar: biografía de una maestra atrapada en la historia de España (1896-1965)*, Barcelona, Octaedro, 2013.

26. A. Escolano Benito, *Emociones & educación: la construcción histórica de la educación emocional*, Madrid, Vision Libros, 2018; *Disability history and emotions: reclaiming pain, agency and intersectionality*, Dubourg, N., Scalenghe, S. & Verstraete P. (eds), Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2026 (in press).

27. M. Caruso, *The History of Transnational and Comparative Education*, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Education*, J.L. Rury, E.H. Tamura (eds), New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 569–587; R. Cowen, *Comparative, International and Transnational Histories of Education*, in *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education. Debates, Tensions and Directions*, pp. 48–63.

28. E. Fuchs-E. Roldán Vera, *The Transnational in the History of Education. Concepts and Perspectives*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

29. *Women, power relations, and education in a transnational world*, C. Mayer-A. Arredondo (eds), Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Finally, another highly relevant theme is decolonisation, already addressed in 1999 in Australia (ISCHE 21, Sydney, *Education and Ethnicity*), taken up again in 2024 in Brazil (ISCHE 45, Natal, *(De)coloniality and Diversity in the Histories of Education*), and present in many papers across different conferences. Post-colonial Africa is the focus of a volume in the ISCHE series,³⁰ and since 2024 it has also been the subject of a new SWG, *History of Education in African Societies* (2024–2029), Religious education, which has been somewhat neglected, as noted above, is instead addressed within decolonial studies, beginning with the seminal work of Marc Depaepe.³¹

4. Conclusion: intersections and repercussions

As it has been shown, an analysis of the themes of ISCHE conferences makes it possible to trace the most significant strands of international educational historiography and to identify emerging trends. Since these themes are linked to the scholarly interests of the proposing Convenors (while, as noted, requiring the approval of the Executive Committee), they may reflect either well-established lines of research or more innovative impulses. It should also be recalled that conference themes must be broad enough to attract a wide range of scholars; it is the calls for papers that further articulate and specify the topics to be explored. By way of example, a few passages from the call for ISCHE 46 (Lille, 2025), devoted to *Teachers and Teaching*, and from the call for ISCHE 47 (Athens, 2026), devoted to *Sources and Research Practices in the History of Education: Challenges and Perspectives*—both centred on traditional themes in the history of schooling, yet approached in the light of new research trends—may be cited.

The Lille call addresses issues of gender and ethnicity in relation to teachers' identities. Attention is devoted to teachers' health—a theme linked to corporeality and to the material conditions of school buildings—as well as to everyday life, a topic characteristic of the *Annales* tradition. Other passages identify the internationalisa-

30. *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa. Policies, Paradigms, and Entanglements, 1890s-1980s*, D. Matasci-M. Bandeira Jerónimo-H. Gonçalves Dores (eds), Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

31. B. Hellinckx-M. Depaepe-F. Simon, *The Educational Work of Catholic Women Religious in the 19th and 20th Centuries. A historiographical survey*, in «Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique», CIV, 2009, 2, pp. 529-549; M. Depaepe, *Colonial education in the Congo - a question of "uncritical" pedagogy until the bitter end? La educación en el Congo, ¿una cuestión de pedagogía "acrítica" hasta el amargo final? L'éducation coloniale au Congo – une question de pédagogie "non-critique" jusqu'à la fin?*, in «Encounters in Theory and History of Education», 18, 2017, pp. 2-26; D. Raftery, *Irish Nuns and Education in the Anglophone World. A Transnational History*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023; U.L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment. The Forgotten History of a Global Movement*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

tion and politicisation of teachers' associations as promising lines of inquiry. The role of teachers in times of crisis, such as wars (the theme of ISCHE 2014, London) and epidemics (a topic that gained prominence in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic), is also highlighted. A further strand of research concerns the material culture of schooling. Educational spaces, including extra-school settings—from prisons to hospitals—as well as the natural environment, also feature prominently. Another line of inquiry focuses on schooling in collective memory, a topic that has attracted particular attention among Spanish and Italian scholars.

The Athens call emphasises both the broadening of sources and methodologies and the influence of the various “turns” in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. spatial, visual, material, affective, and transnational turns). Accordingly, material objects, bodily practices, collective memory, and affective and representational dimensions are highlighted, alongside the growing interest in digital sources, source databases, and artificial intelligence.

It is thus possible to discern fruitful intersections among the various research directions, bearing witness to the ways in which, over the past thirty years, international historical-educational research has opened up new avenues of enquiry through the use of new sources.

Finally, one may ask what impact these changes have had in Italy. It is impossible to provide a full account here, but it suffices to recall that Italian scholars have made a significant contribution to the development of several of these themes, as attested by the recognition some of them have received within ISCHE's Executive Committee itself.³² Two points, however, merit particular emphasis. First, the strong influence of Anglophone terminology has contributed to a heightened interest in the history of education, alongside the history of schooling and pedagogy (also linked to other factors, ranging from didactic requirements in degree courses in Educational Sciences - addressed not to future teachers but to aspiring social educators - to the abandonment of a neo-idealist cultural framework). This has led to a redefinition by ministerial decree of the disciplinary field from *History of Pedagogy* to *History of Pedagogy and Education*.

Within this broadening of horizons, however, there is also an inherent risk, namely the neglect of the history of educational theories, which must always provide the conceptual foundation for historical-educational studies.

32. In 2016, the present author was elected in Chicago as a member of the Executive Committee for a three-year term and was subsequently co-opted until 2022. In 2022, Juri Meda was elected in Milan for a three-year term.