

ISCHE 43 Milan, Italy

31 August- 4 September 2022

Histories of Educational Technologies.

Cultural and Social Dimensions of Pedagogical Objects

Pointing out the importance of technology for education, as well for everyday life today, seems a truism, after the emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, we consider educational technology as the combined use of computer hardware and software, educational theory and practice to facilitate learning, but we can also say that we started using technologies in the classroom long before the advent of ICT, Skinner's programmed instruction and machine learning. In fact, if we consider educational technologies as a set of techniques, methods and objects used in the learning process, our heuristic perspective expands significantly. In this perspective in fact, blackboards, textbooks, exercise-books, school-desks and various kind of pen (stylus, reed pens, quills, fountain pens, ballpoint pens) can also be considered educational technologies. New technologies have consistently produced a change in teaching tools and methods.

The term technologies is here intended in a broad sense, meaning operative strategies to optimize pedagogical practices, and includes media as well. Looking at technology implies analyzing teaching methods and educational objects in relation not only to educational theories, but also to politics and economics. How did teachers and educationalists shape their actions, and what tools did they choose? Were they free in their operational choices? What role did political power and economic forces play in the development and use of education technologies? Teaching practice is complex and involves objects and artifacts as well as unintentional or hidden messages. Deciphering the wide spectrum of educational means is one of the most interesting recent trends in educational historiography.

With this in mind, the organizers of ISCHE 43 encourage scholars to focus on various aspects, such as curriculum studies, with regard to concrete pedagogical application in school didactics; the means of informally educating behaviours, perspectives and attitudes not included in the formal curriculum of students but rather transmitted through the school system (the so-called "hidden curriculum"); evaluation tools and models (student assessment); and the means of establishing school discipline (systems of merit awards and sanctions/punishments, whether corporal or non-corporal).

ISCHE 43 aims to foster reflection on schools' material culture in all its dimensions. Relevant sources include pedagogical tools and teaching objects used in all disciplines (exercise books, teaching aids, science materials, gym equipment, etc.), with regards to their conceptualization, design, patenting, industrial production and real use in the classroom. The pedagogical use of images in schoolbooks, children's literature and other teaching objects (primers and book illustrations, wallcharts and posters, lantern slides and films, etc.) deserves careful analysis, in line with the "visual turn". Primers and textbooks, but also children's literature are key educational tools, in addition to educational media (radio, film, computer, educational radio, educational TV programmes for children and adults, etc.). When exploring the history of objects in teaching, it is also relevant to include objects and methods used in teaching the disabled, which demonstrate a close connection between medicine and pedagogy. Intelligence test tools, teaching equipment and devices used in special education therefore need to be considered. More generally, record cards, administration forms, teachers' diaries and records can be examined.

Teaching is also intertwined with architecture: how was teaching affected by the design, use and function of school furniture (school desks, blackboard, etc.)? How did the design, internal organization and use of school spaces and learning environments determine pedagogical practice?

The conference encourages participants to research how educational models, methods and tools circulated at an international level, through both the commercial and transnational dissemination of ideas; to identify authors and agents of educational change; and to explore UNESCO teaching tools. It also encourages the exploration of how educational technologies became part of colonizing strategies, the geopolitics of such technologies, the new actors involved in colonised educational spaces and practices; and how educational tools reinforced gender and race inequalities in education.

Further, it was not only children but also adults who were involved as learners: which methods and artifacts were used for adult education and to improve literacy? How has higher education in universities changed, what have been the technological, cultural and ecological drivers of innovation?

Themes

The organizers welcome proposals that address the following themes (including transversal approaches), encompassed under the conference's general theme:

1. Material histories of objects and their educational use
2. Curriculum, school didactics and teaching objects in formal and informal contexts
3. Learning technologies and educational media
4. The politics of educational technologies and media
5. Technology and the body
6. Travelling objects: the production, reproduction and circulation of educational objects
7. Archives and sources about pedagogical tools
8. The symbolic meaning of pedagogical objects