



Educação e Pesquisa

ISSN: 1517-9702

ISSN: 1678-4634

Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo

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Gênero e história da educação: itinerários de Rebecca Rogers¹
Educação e Pesquisa, vol. 44, e44002001, 2018
Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo

DOI: 10.1590/S1678-4634201844002001

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Gender and history of education: itineraries of Rebecca Rogers¹

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Abstract

Professor since 2006 at one of the most prestigious French Departments of Education, (Université Paris Descartes), Rebecca Rogers's academic trajectory has been associated from the start with Women and Gender studies and the History of Education. Born in the USA, she has built her career in Europe, particularly in France. She earned her PhD at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* under the supervision of Dominique Julia. She began her teaching career at the University of Iowa in the United States, and in 1994 obtained a position at the *Université de Strasbourg* as *Maître de Conférence*. In 2015, she assumed the presidency of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), the most relevant scientific society in the field of History of Education. Her academic background and involvement in the educational arena as well as the theoretical and methodological choices are addressed in this interview, which also describes the relationship established with Brazilian researchers in projects carried out in the Faculties of Education of UNICAMP and USP. The current debates about gender emerging in the public sphere in France and the challenges faced by historical-educational research, whether in the dimension of a transnational history of education or in the consolidation of a field of research also emerge in Rebecca Rogers' interview. This list of topics makes the interview dense in problematizations, opening a range of questions that challenges readers interested in the international academic and political scene.

Keywords

History of education – Gender – Vocational training – Transnational history – Biography – International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE).

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634201844002001>
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Figura 1- Foto da entrevistada



Fonte: Arquivos pessoais da entrevistada.

maître de conference. In 2015, she assumed the presidency of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), the most relevant scientific society in the field of History of Education.

Her recognition as a specialist in the History of Education and Gender Studies as well as her activity as Professor at the Université Paris Descartes led to her integration within a working group, which created the *Cité de Genre* in 2015. This virtual structure seeks to encourage both teaching and research collaborations in the area of Gender studies within a consortium of thirteen institutions of higher education, four of which are universities, known at the Université Sorbonne Paris Cité (USPC). Within this consortium special international collaborations have been targeted, one of which being with the University of São Paulo. In this context emerged the project “Women and Innovation in Teaching”, which involves a joint investigation between French and Brazilian researchers, led by Rebecca Rogers and Diana Vidal³.

The project aims to compose the biographies of women who were innovative in the field of education in São Paulo and in France from the 1860s to the 1960s. Participants have made available written and visual documents and produce short videos for an online website in order to further future inquiries as well as to nourish current teaching practices in different school levels (<https://histeduc.wixsite.com/genre-genero>). In its second year, the joint research program has favored academic interchange, such as panels presented in international conferences in Paris and in Buenos Aires; the collection of a large volume of sources; and comparative analyses and exchanges.

3- Professors at the Faculty of Education Maurilane Biccás, Paula Vicentini, Rita Gallego, Vivian Batista da Silva, Dislane Zerbinatti de Moraes and Katiene Nogueira da Silva are members of the Brazilian team. It also comprises the Post-PhD student Rafaela Rabelo, the PhD students Ariadne Ecar, Fernanda Franchini, Fabiana Munhis, Josiane Marques and Claudineia Avanzini, and Professors Rachel Abdala (University of Taubaté) and Wiara Alcantara (Federal University of São Paulo). The French team is composed of *Maître de Conférence* Gabrielle Houbre (Université Paris Diderot), Laurent Gutierrez (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre), Marianne Thivend (Université Lyon 2) and Emmanuelle Picard (ENS Lyon), and PhD Students at the Université Paris Descartes Véra Léon, Geneviève Pezeu, Sébastien-Akira Alix, Hayarpi Papikyan and Marie-Elise Hunyadi.

Introduction

Professor since 2006 at one of the most prestigious French departments of education, (Université Paris Descartes), Rebecca Rogers’s academic trajectory has been associated from the start with women and gender studies and the history of education. Born in the USA, she has built her career in Europe, particularly in France. She earned her PhD at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales under the supervision of Dominique Julia, an early modernist. She began her teaching career at the University of Iowa in the United States, and in 1994 obtained a position at the Université de Strasbourg as

However, Rebecca Rogers's intellectual engagement with Brazilian colleagues and Brazil is prior to this project. It began with her participation as a scientific expert in a project led by Águeda Bittencourt at the State University of Campinas, entitled "Catholic Congregations, Education and National State in Brazil". From this partnership derived the sole article Rebecca has published in Portuguese, "Congregações femininas e difusão de um modelo escolar: uma história transnacional", *Pro-Posições*, Campinas, v.25, n. 1, p. 55-74, Jan./Apr.2014. (ROGERS, 2014).

In the following interview, some of those aspects will be expanded. The first two questions explore Rebecca's initial contacts with Women and Gender Studies and the activities she developed in pursuing these research interests. There we find the construction of an intellectual and theoretical framework. References to publications allow readers to follow her research trajectory. While remaining faithful to an interest in the history of girls' education in nineteenth-century France, as Rebecca argues, her interests have evolved over the 35 years Rebecca has been working in the field. Nowadays she is increasingly interested in promoting a transnational history of education.

The next three questions focus on themes related to her historiographic approach and make explicit the practical outcomes of her research and academic achievements. There she mentions the *Cité du Genre* and the projects conducted in collaboration with Brazilian researchers, in particular the one with the University of São Paulo. She also explains the place that biographic methodology and Gender Studies holds within the contemporary field of French History of Education. With respect to the latter, Rebecca notes that Gender as a category of analysis continues to be weakly represented in most PhD dissertations. For her, many students finish their doctoral training without having been introduced to any serious discussion about Gender. Class remains the most adopted category, rarely combined with Gender and even more rarely with Race. She highlights, however, that recent debates on education give evidence of a new importance given to the concept of Gender in France. Simultaneously, the emergence of social movements, such as "le mariage pour tous" (marriage for all), has offered an opportunity for Gender specialists to speak out publically.

The interview concludes with two questions about ISCHE related to its current initiatives and challenges. ISCHE appears in Rebecca's discourse not only as a space for academic and scientific interchange, but also as a site of sociability and conviviality where members have an opportunity to consolidate often enduring bonds within an international community of researchers of History of Education. Rebecca stresses the importance of the annual international conferences. She also highlights the recent creation of ISCHE Book Series Global Histories of Education in association to Palgrave Macmillan, under the responsibility of Diana Vidal, a member of ISCHE's executive committee.

She acknowledges three challenges confronting ISCHE for the future: the linguistic issue, the need to encourage new generations and the imbalance between the flourishing of academic research and the suppression of the discipline in teacher training institutions in many countries. Concerning the first aspect, Rebecca recognizes the need to stimulate the multilingual dialogue using at least the four official languages of ISCHE (French, English, German and Spanish), in order to contain the spread of English as a *lingua*

franca. Further, she believes the future of ISCHE relies on the new generation. Therefore, it is necessary to motivate students to pursue subjects in the History of Education and foster the participation of young scholars in conferences by promoting friendly environments and providing financial support. Finally, Rebecca shows optimism regarding the vigor of ISCHE and research in the History of Education in the world.

At the end of the interview, a selection of books and articles published by Rebecca Rogers, some of them available on open access, serve as an invitation to the reader to continue the dialogue with this renowned intellectual in Gender Studies and the History of Education and researcher committed to public debate and the promotion of the academic field.

We now give the floor to Rebecca.

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ROGERS, Rebecca. Congregações femininas e difusão de um modelo escolar: uma história transnacional. **Pro-Posições**, Campinas, v. 25, n. 1, p. 55-74, Jan./Apr. 2014. Available: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-73072014000100004>>. Access: 2017.

Interview

DV: How would you summarize your scholarly interests? Can you tell us what you are currently working on?

In many ways I have remained very faithful to my initial research interests sparked over thirty-five years ago: the history of girls' education in nineteenth-century France. I have also remained faithful to a way of approaching this history, favoring a socio-cultural approach that explores the social characteristics of students and teachers while situating them with respect to cultural representations of female learning. But, of course, the objects I study today and the questions I ask are influenced by current debates within the field as well as by my teaching experiences. As a result, my current projects have become more transnational and comparative in nature, as I learn more about girls' education and women's teaching outside France in an intellectual context where global history is more and more the rage.

In the past year I have had more time to think about my scholarship thanks to a semester sabbatical granted by my university. Because I chose to spend the sabbatical at a research university in the United States – the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – I used my time there to talk to scholars in my field, to attend conferences, to read, and to plan the direction I would like my research to go. I did not, however, spend much time in archives discovering new sources, since my archives are mainly in France. This was a choice, of course, a choice based on my need to take time to reflect on my projects, the sort of time I generally do not have when I am in my professional setting where teaching and administrative responsibilities fill my days.

But let me be more specific about what I am actually working on. In the past year I finished both an edited volume and an article for a special issue on the history of popular education. The volume, entitled *Women in international and universal exhibitions, 1876-1937*, was published by Routledge in 2018. My co-editor for this project, Myriam Boussahba-Bravard, is a specialist in British suffragism. This book is the result of a collective interdisciplinary project that in some ways led me away from girls' education, although not completely. Working on women's presence in international and universal exhibitions was an opportunity to think about how women used these quintessential sites of modernity to express their aspirations. In other words, we wanted in this book to assemble a group of authors who would emphasize women's role as actors, rather than spectators or objects, within worlds' fairs and to consider how participation affected their lives, or the projects with which they were engaged. The articles analyze individual women, but also groups which met in congresses organized alongside the exhibitions. Girls' education, as well as the issue of female learning, figure prominently within some of the chapters. I was particularly interested, for example, in a chapter by Teresa Pinto that shows how the products of Portuguese girls' "industrial" education found their way into the exhibits and into the official reports at the end of the century, and then how these products disappear in the printed histories about Portuguese participation in early 20th century exhibitions. At the National Centennial Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro (1908), for

example, girls' lacework was prominently on display in the Portuguese exhibition, but the inspectors of technical education who wrote the reports and the first histories of technical education make no mention of this. Nor have historians in their wake. This chapter echoes the work I have done that challenges the historical memory we have of how colonial women teachers used industrial fairs and universal exhibitions to promote support for their school workshops. Like Teresa Pinto I was able to chart how the products of girls' vocational training attracted international interest at the time and was seen as a sign of the way French teachers participated in the "civilizing mission." But also, more pragmatically, these exhibitions were a way to earn money for girls' schools. One shouldn't forget that these exhibitions played a role in international cultural diplomacy but they were also places where objects were sold and where businesses earned a reputation within an emerging tourist economy. Looking at international exhibitions is then a way for me to think about connecting girls' education to a reflection on how representations of this education are used politically (both by women and by the organizers), how the discussion about girls' education were part of international conversations (within education congresses), and how the products of girls' education (mainly artisanal handiwork like embroideries or rugs) entered into a global economy.

This project stimulated me to turn more specifically to the study of professional or vocational girls' schooling thinking not only about the skills girls were taught but also the work economy girls entered with these skills. This is the topic of an article I finished last spring for a French journal (*Revue d'Histoire du XIXe Siècle*), which examines the diversity of vocational institutions for girls that emerged in France and in Algeria in the 1860s. What interested me in this article was to note the significance of the discussion about girls' vocational training at a moment in France when a great number of educational reforms are taking place. And I wanted to emphasize that a wide range of groups with differing political ideologies argued for the importance of preparing girls for work: socialist reformers, feminists but also Catholic nuns and the liberal economists present in the government. Perhaps most intriguing for me, however, was the realization that this sort of debate about preparing girls for a future beyond motherhood was taking place throughout Europe: in Britain, in Belgium, in Germany, in Italy, in Russia, etc. This has gotten me thinking about specific moments when similar initiatives emerge all over. It's intriguing to wonder why. In my article I drew on articles in the 1860s from the first British feminist journal, *The Englishwoman's Journal*, to show that at the time British women were also interested in charting for their readership the existence of professional schools for girls on the continent.

DV: Could you speak more specifically about this issue of the circulation of information and your interest in the methodologies and analytical categories underlying your most recent work? How do you see your scholarship contributing to larger questions within the field?

I have long been interested in de-nationalizing my approach to the history of girls' education. I tried to do this initially in my second book, *From the salon to the schoolroom* (2005), in two ways. Firstly, I showed how reformers and politicians used

foreign examples to argue for or against changes in French girls' schooling, when discussing, for example, the development of secondary schools, or coeducation within schools. My argument here was that educational reforms depended rhetorically on examples of what was happening elsewhere but also that reformers needed the impact of international comparisons to argue for change, much like the results of the PISA evaluations have provoked change within some country's curriculum today. Secondly, I argued that French girls' education in the 19th century made an impact well beyond metropolitan France. I traced this impact by studying the French teachers who went off to set up schools in the French colonies (in Algeria and French West Africa) as well as in Britain and the United States. In these Protestant countries, French nuns were at the forefront of a "missionary" effort to convert Protestants, setting up boarding schools for female elites that had acquired a reputation for the quality of the "French" education they offered. My theoretical inspiration in this investigation came from reading scholarship about the British Empire, especially Catherine Hall's work that emphasizes so beautifully the interconnectedness of the metropole and colony.

I didn't refer to my approach as being transnational at the time (I was writing in 2003). Increasingly, however, I've found myself using the label of transnational history to describe "my" histories of education where French pedagogues or teachers leave France to investigate schools elsewhere or to found schools themselves while keeping in touch with the homeland. This was the object of my first publication in a Brazilian journal, *Pro-Posições* in 2014 "*Congregações femininas e difusão de um modelo escolar: uma história transnacional*". Transnational history is also at the heart of two essays that I submitted to collective volumes in the past year. My contributions to these volumes both deal with transnational or connected history and are entitled: "Conversations about the Transnational: reading and writing the empire in the history of education" and "French Nuns go International: rereading histories of girls' education through a political and transnational lens." In both of these essays, I'm interested in how the insights of a transnational approach challenge us as historians to think beyond national frameworks. Within education in particular, I am struck by a long tradition of international conversations about a wide range of subjects (pedagogy, the role of girls' education, coeducation, etc.) and I'm interested in seeing the effects in different national settings of such conversations that travel across linguistic borders. But I'm also very interested in how specific models of schoolings are modified when transplanted elsewhere. French nuns, in particular, carried a model of boarding school education around the world (including Brazil). What happens then to this model over the years, as native teachers are recruited or as French educational programs encounter the challenges of a different cultural setting?

Obviously these articles engage with and are stimulated by current interest in a range of methodologies that challenge the national orientation of much research in the history of education; transnational history, connected history, entangled history or global history. I'm less interested in pinning a label on my own approach than in encouraging scholars to consider how historical actors looked outside their home countries for inspiration, to pay attention to how ideas and actors travelled over national boundaries, how ideas about education were translated in other settings and to consider how such travelling modified social realities. I recently heard António Nóvoa give a lecture in Geneva where he argued

brilliantly for the ways such a perspective allow us to compare and reread our historical material with different eyes. I believe such attention to transnational circulations offers a fruitful way to reread national histories, but also alerts us as scholars to the importance of following the intellectual debates in our field beyond our national communities. When I initiated a collaborative and interdisciplinary project on the history of coeducation in the early 2000s, it was because I was aware of important books on the topic in Germany, Britain and the United States while nothing had been published in France. Then when I started learning more about this history, I realized French pedagogues at the end of the 19th century used the example of American coeducation either to argue for or against its introduction in France. From the outset debates about coeducation were woven into transnational conversations.

Above all, however, I believe my foray into international discussions about the transnational characteristics of girls' education offers a way to bring women and the analytical category of gender to the forefront. By bringing attention to the ways vocational girls' education was an object of discussion throughout Europe in the 1860s, for example, I challenge French historians of education to adopt a gendered perspective to the development of a public *system* of education.

DV: Could you say more about the place of gender in the history of education in France today?

Without question I am the person associated in France with the development of gender approaches within the history of education, while my predecessor Françoise Mayeur made the study of girls' education legitimate in the 1970s and 1980s. Françoise Mayeur, however, was suspicious about what she perceived as the feminist slant of women's history and she never embraced the insights of gender history, which most French scholars initially saw as an American import. It's really only since the early 2000s that gender history began to be accepted more widely within the historical community and the use of the term "genre" no longer needs to be explained every time one uses it. I was the person to edit the first issues on girls' education in the French journal, *Histoire de l'Éducation* in 2003 (on female teachers) and 2007 (on girls' education). When Mineke van Essen and I edited that first issue on female teachers we published a table that counted the number of articles on female teachers in major history of education journals in the field. Between 1976 and 2003 *History of Education* (GB) had published 29 articles on women teachers, the Canadian journal *Historical Studies in Education/Revue de Histoire de l'Éducation* had published 21 articles since 1989, whereas *Histoire de l'Éducation* had never published an article on the subject since its creation in 1978! In 2007, my state-of-the-art article about girls' education explained to a French readership how gender analysis opened new areas of exploration. I showed in particular how scholars have used gender to explore questions about the historical construction of gendered identities, about the gendered nature of knowledge, about the history of coeducation. I noted as well that while we now understand fairly well how education constructs historical representations of femininity, very few studies have used education to study the history of masculinity! This issue appeared shortly after I was hired as a Professor within the education department at the

University Paris Descartes, which is amongst the oldest and the most prestigious education departments in France. It's undoubtedly noteworthy that I was hired in part *because* of my specialty in the gendered history of education, not *in spite* of it as was the case when I was recruited at the University of Strasbourg in 1994. Things have changed, and the number of doctoral dissertations I am directing on gender in the history of education is a sign that it has achieved new forms of legitimacy.

Still gender approaches in general continue to be a minority within historical studies of education and many graduate students can still finish their dissertation without having any courses that deal specifically with how gender structures the educational system, fashions student and teacher identities and operates in the juncture between training and work. Students think about social class analytically, but more rarely combine such an analysis with gender, and even less frequently does race emerge as an analytical category in French histories of education. I've argued in articles that this is largely the product of a universalizing Republican discourse about education in France that emerged during the Third Republic educational reforms in the 1880s, and has remained largely unquestioned until recently. In essence one might say Pierre Bourdieu's influence remains heavily dominant or Michel Foucault for his study of the disciplinary process, while gender historians, such as Joan Wallach Scott, or gender theorist Judith Butler have only recently become more familiar thanks to French translations in the past ten years. Class and power often appear in studies as if they were "ungendered" despite the scholarship that shows how gender operates in the construction of class relations and how power operates in gendered ways.

But, as I just mentioned, there are clear signs that things are changing and that gender approaches – in moderation – are even fashionable. Many of the contemporary debates in education have brought to light the usefulness of gender as a category of analysis (when thinking about the presence of veiled students within schools for example). At the same time recent social movements have attracted media attention to gender theory. During the massive Catholic demonstrations against the 2013 law known as "le mariage pour tous" (marriage for all) – allowing homosexuals to marry – conservative polemicists blamed "gender theory" for threatening the foundations of the French family. Particularly in social media false information has been circulating about primary school teachers using an imported American "gender theory" in their classrooms and schoolbooks in order to teach young boys and girls that biology was not destiny. The predominant fear was that leftist (and feminist) teachers were threatening the virility of young boys by encouraging homosexuality. In some ways the virulence of the public attacks against "gender theory" opened an intellectual space that allowed gender specialists such as myself to explain how gender offers a way to examine critically the history of the French school system and attitudes about education. The ideals of equality that the French hold so dear were implemented only very recently for girls with the generalization of coeducation in 1975. For most of the past two hundred years girls have been educated in separate schools; within secondary schools they have received an education that prepared them to be mothers, not professionals like their brothers. In the context of these very public debates, I was frequently asked to speak on the radio and the picture book I published with Françoise Thébaud in 2010 was reedited

to respond to public interest in understanding how gender norms have conditioned the education of girls since the start of the Third Republic (in the 1870s).

DV: What sort of effect has this debate had then on institutional support for gender studies?

That's an excellent question! The French higher education system is experiencing a lot of reforms these days and these reforms have favored the emergence of new projects that are interdisciplinary and collaborative. Since gender is an analytical category that is widely used within the social sciences and humanities, it offers a particularly useful basis for such collaborations. In European and international calls for projects, a gender perspective is almost always an added value to a project. And for the experts who evaluate such projects gender it's seen not only as a fashionable theoretical position, it's also connected to a contemporary political agenda to promote gender equality.

The project that we are working on together – about Women and Innovation in Teaching – directly benefitted in France, from this favorable institutional climate. But it also benefitted from the more specific circumstances surrounding restructuring in higher education in Paris. My University has joined a consortium of thirteen institutions of higher education (four of which are universities). Known as the Université Sorbonne Paris Cité (or USPC), this consortium has used its budget to initiate collaborative undertakings in both teaching and research, but also to promote collaborative projects with a few highly respected foreign institutions, one of which is the University of São Paulo. A group of us gender specialists within the different institutions of USPC saw this as an excellent opportunity to attract attention to the number of scholars engaged in both teaching and doing research on gender.

This is what spawned the creation of the *Cité du Genre* in November 2015, which presented itself as a virtual structure federating the different initiatives on gender within USPC. For the President of USPC, as well as the presidents of the different institutions, the *Cité du Genre* was a great example of a bottom-up response to calls for greater inter-institutional and interdisciplinary collaborations. I was from the outset in the group of women who designed the project for the *Cité du Genre* and who saw the potential for developing an institutional base for more collaborative and higher profile initiatives. I think it helped that I am not only widely respected as a gender specialist in history and education, but also that my President had appointed me to be the *chargée de mission égalité femme/hommes* in 2012. As “equality officer” for my university I have spent the past five years not only diagnosing the respective position of women and men in the university, but I have also argued that an institution's ability to establish and maintain egalitarian practices in the workplace depends on the critical input of gender research: in sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, and of course education and history.

Our project that explores the historical role women have played in innovative teaching projects is an excellent illustration of this interconnection between gender analysis and institutional cultures. And by confronting our French and Brazilian perspectives we are also engaging in the sort of transnational dialogues I think are so fruitful not only to learn about what others are doing, but to understand better one's own positioning.

DV. This project is also very much about biography and the usefulness of biographical approaches. Can you say something more about this?

My last monograph was a biography about Eugénie Luce, a French schoolteacher who founded the first school for Muslim girls in Algiers in 1845 (*A Frenchwoman's imperial story: Madame Luce in nineteenth-century Algeria*, 2013). Until I began working on Mme Luce, I had never been particularly interested in biographies. I must confess I am now a convert, as I loved the sort of investigative research I did trying to piece together the different aspects of this woman's life and pondering the gender dynamics of historical memory. Why was this woman who acquired fame for teaching Muslim girls French in the mid-nineteenth century remembered in 1930 for the centennial of the French conquest of Algeria as the "grandmother of Algerian art"? How did schooling disappear in the historical record in favor of celebrating female embroidery? As a result, since working on Mme Luce, I have begun to build a series of biographical files about women schoolteachers, most of whom have received very little historical attention. In France, biographies about female pedagogues or teachers are few and far between, but this approach is currently quite fashionable as historians in many countries have become interested in the "biographical turn". In gender history this sort of approach has generated some wonderful studies that draw on the insights of Judith Butler in order to think about how women "perform" gender and play with gender norms in their self-presentation.

In deciding to focus on biographies within our Franco-Brazilian project our ambition is rather different, however, as we seek to accumulate documentation (written and visual) about the lives of a series of women whose work in some way changed ways of thinking about education, knowledge and women's position with respect to gendered expectations of the time. We are less interested in how these women performed gender than in how their actions helped shape evolving educational realities. Above all, this project is anchored in our own professional teaching practices, since we are using this collaborative project to train both master and doctoral students in historical research in education as well as in the critical use of biographical and gender approaches. For the past two years I have run a master's seminar in biographical approaches in education that I will now connect directly to our project. This year I have decided to ask my students to contribute to the website that the Faculty of Education at São Paulo created for our project. In other words, I am hoping that the research I ask my students to do for the class can then contribute to our project, teaching them in the process that a scholarship is a collaborative project. I love the idea that students in São Paulo and in Paris will be working on nourishing a website in French and Portuguese that brings to life the lives of women educators of the past.

DV: Could you say something in conclusion about the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) and your vision as President of what it represents today in the field of the history of education?

It is a very great honor to serve as President of ISCHE, an organization that I have known about since the start of my professional career. In fact the first academic

conference I participated in was an ISCHE conference in Prague in 1990. I discovered what an international conference was, and I discovered in particular a standing working group on “The History of Gender and Education” where I spoke on the role of religious orders in modern French women’s education. For this interview, I dug into my archives and found the carefully annotated abstracts of the papers that were given within this group and rediscovered the names of colleagues with whom I then developed in some cases vibrant exchanges. The paper I delivered within the main conference took place in a more formal and far more intimidating setting than the discussions of the gender group. I spoke on “The Legacy of Saint-Cyr in the Reform of Girls’ Education in France” and I remember feeling very young, inexperienced and amateur sitting at the front of a big lecture hall with Willem Frijhoff as one of the participants in the session. Since that first conference, ISCHE has become my international community of like-minded history of education scholars, who are especially interested in exchanging their ideas in an international context. Over the years the people who attended the standing working group in gender have become friends and attending conferences has become more than just an opportunity to present my work and discover a new city, but also a way to extend my network of professional friends.

As President, I feel very strongly that this sort of international intellectual sociability is an essential aspect of what ISCHE is. I want both early career researchers as well as retired colleagues to want to attend conferences to learn about what others are working on, to get feedback on their own work, to nourish established friendships and create new ties. We now all have access through digital resources to each other’s work, but nothing replaces the face to face conversations over lunches and coffee breaks. Reading on one’s computer screen does not create the same sense of community as dancing together at ISCHE’s banquet! ISCHE, however, is striving to be more, and our website and digital projects reflect how we would like to become the automatic reference for scholars throughout the world seeking to learn about or address an international audience in our field. By providing information about our own activities and especially our conferences in the past as well as the future, the ISCHE website seeks to develop a virtual community. With the ISCHE books series on “Global Histories of Education,” which you are responsible for, we are going a step further as we encourage the sort of global or transnational conversations I discussed at the beginning of this interview. We have the sort of membership that can allow us to make the sorts of connections necessary to produce innovative histories that go beyond the national paradigms that can limit our intellectual vision or creativity. In other words, I really see ISCHE as a community with the potential to write exciting new scholarship for all of us, as well as challenging our national communities to rise to the challenges of our globalized world.

DV: Can you say more about these challenges for the future, both for ISCHE and more generally for the history of education?

Intellectually, the impact of globalization has been very stimulating and I hope it will continue to be so. For ISCHE this has meant making real efforts to move beyond the European-North American membership that was at the heart of the association by attracting members from around the world, and by organizing conferences around the world. But this effort to become a truly *international* association brings real challenges, most obviously linguistic. As a native English speaker I am always struck by the incredible advantage this gives me in an international setting where increasingly English has become the lingua franca.

As ISCHE president I have pursued my predecessors' efforts to make greater efforts to support all four of ISCHE's official languages – English, Spanish, French and German – through multilingual sessions within the conferences which are given more time to allow for translation and exchange. All that we can do as an association to promote knowledge of scholarship in a wide range of languages is critical for the future. That was one of my concerns in creating the history of education salon initiative on the website, where I asked scholars from Belgium, France, Argentina and Canada to speak about their scholarship on education and the body. The videos we produced are in French, English and Spanish with subtitling in English to allow non-native speakers to follow.

A second challenge that I take very seriously is promoting the history of education among doctoral students and early career researchers. Here again, I believe the current interest in global or transnational issues makes our field more exciting for young scholars who have grown up in a globalized world. But we need to make sure our association is welcoming and attractive, and that means providing a stimulating and encouraging intellectual environment within our conferences. But we also need to think creatively about ways to get young scholars engaged within the community. This was what motivated coopting an early career researcher onto the executive committee of ISCHE. I have pursued and amplified initiatives on their behalf within the annual conference: organizing moments when early career researchers can meet with established scholars, organizing panels about publishing and organizing social events that create a sense of community. Beginning this year for the conference in Buenos Aires, we also provided travels funds to help young scholars attend the conference. Our aim is to be able to provide more and more such support in the future, as well as to respond to their specific needs or desires. One suggestion we are working on is a methods-oriented panel for early career scholars.

Finally, I was very struck in my meeting with the presidents of national associations in Buenos Aires this summer that many national communities are very anxious about the institutional future of the history of education in their countries. Unlike their counterparts' situation in Brazil, where the history of education still flourishes within universities and education departments, many colleagues report the gradual disappearance of history within education curricula and a weak legitimacy of education within their history departments.

Personally, based on my own experience, I have a more optimistic vision of the future; not only do I have a dynamic group of doctoral students myself, I encounter or correspond with many young people interested in the history of education from around

the world. Moreover, within ISCHE I feel I have the privilege of dialoguing with many interesting and creative scholars, and I appreciate a great deal the scholarship I read in our international journal, *Paedagogica Historica*. My own impression, born of my bi-national institutional positioning and my involvement in ISCHE, is that I'm part of a particularly dynamic community of scholars. But I know this doesn't necessarily translate into jobs within institutions and each national context is different. Here I think we need to think creatively in ISCHE about how to parlay our vibrant intellectual discussions into forms of lobbying for the continuing if not increasing relevance of the history of education for educational institutions around the world. I don't have any easy solutions but I believe we are collectively well positioned to help individual members and national constituencies in this task.

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