

# 46th edition of the International Standing Conference on the History of Education (ISCHE)

Lille, France, July 8-11, 2025

## TEACHERS AND TEACHING

### *History on the move*

Throughout history and in all levels and types of learning, teaching is at the core of the education process. ISCHE 46 will explore the history of teachers and teaching, from the earliest times through the early 21st century, in all its diversity. UNESCO defines teachers as all those who instruct others. Employing a broad definition of 'instruct,' ISCHE 46 will consider the histories not only of professional teachers in institutions from infant schools to universities, but also of trainers, families, tutors, youth associations, popular movements, self-instruction, and even non-human teachers such as other living beings and technological devices.

The conference theme *Teachers and Teaching* seeks to highlight actual and ideal roles of teachers and teaching in schools and in society. Their functions, importance, and status have evolved profoundly throughout history and continue to embody many contradictions. In the case of school teachers, they have been instruments of literacy, knowledge, and even emancipation. The very nature of teachers' function – making particular kinds of knowledge available to others – can also raise expectations and cause tensions with those responsible for educational policies.

**The social characteristics of human teachers:** Who are the people who teach (professionally or otherwise), what does it mean to be a teacher, and how does one become a teacher? The historical sociology of teaching interrogates the history of social advancement through access to the profession as well as internal differentiation within it. The identities and status of teachers are many and varied, depending on the subjects they teach and the institutions in which they work. The knowledge and skills required to become and work as a teacher, as well as the recruitment and assessment procedures for this profession, have varied by subject and level, and teacher training has aroused much debate since it became institutionalized in the early nineteenth century. Because teachers' gender, sexuality, social class, ethnic origins, and other background characteristics have influenced their training and status, analysis of these factors is essential to the historical sociology of teaching.

**The work of teaching:** Making particular kinds of knowledge available, and the conditions in which it takes place, have undergone profound changes throughout history, along with conceptions of the teacher's authority. From memorization and recitation to "learning by doing" and active learning, teachers' methods have - and have not - evolved in important ways. Working conditions have changed as a result of new administrative approaches, as well as teachers' individual and organized efforts through professional, political, community, and/or trade union activities. The methods and working conditions of schoolteachers, university faculty, and those who teach in

non-institutional contexts have differed in important ways that illuminate broader trends and issues.

**Representations and knowledge of the teaching profession:** Media and cultural images of teachers are many and varied, nurtured by individual or collective memories easily distorted by the passage of time. A range of teachers figure in cultural productions of the past (literature, theater, film...) whose characters serve as archetypes of goodness or severity, from teachers committed to their pupils to those who are burned out and cynical. Understanding the emergence and evolution of these representations illuminates how culture informs, shapes and refracts the politics of teaching and historical memory.

**Pluralizing teaching and teachers:** Teachers are not only those legitimized professionally by the state and other certifying agencies, but also other agents which make knowledge available to others. Social, cultural and religious movements have been important teachers in human history. Also, non-human actors such as plants and animals as well as technological artifacts that have knowledge inscribed into them have also played a role in teaching and passing knowledge throughout different generations.

Approaching the history of education through a focus on teachers and teaching requires particular attention to contexts. ISCHE 46 aims to make the most of the plurality of contexts by exploring all historical periods and geographical areas. Case studies, comparative approaches, studies of individuals, and institutional or system-wide analyses are all welcome, as are a diverse range of the sources and methodologies. All knowledge about teachers and teaching practices, as well as their renewal, is equally important.

The proposals for this conference could be based on several axes:

1. Teachers' career paths and identities: recruitment, qualifications, training, retraining, advancement; gender, social, ethnic, and geographical origins.
2. Teachers' working and living conditions: official requirements, daily life, working hours, salaries, retirement, health, vulnerabilities.
3. Knowledge practices: subject content, pedagogical knowledge, didactic expertise, continuing education; professionalization, authority in the classroom, pedagogical practices, intercultural teaching, public pedagogies.
4. Relationships and interactions with other actors: students, of course, but also hierarchies (management, inspectors, etc.); families; other teachers, whether within the school or at local, national or even international meetings; as well as political and social systems. Relations between teachers and the state will need to be carefully studied ; we'll be looking at teachers' associations, unionization and politicization, for example.
5. Teaching tools and school artifacts: the socio-materiality of teaching through the creation, production, and dissemination of technologies for teaching.
6. Teachers and teaching outside the school: school and society, cultural and social roles of teachers in community life, institutional contexts of practice and

interactions with societies; atypical teaching spaces (prison, hospital, etc.); crisis contexts (war, epidemics, natural disasters).

7. Non-human actors and teaching practices: the history of teachers and teaching beyond the human-centered approach.
8. Representations of teachers and teaching in literature, cinema and mass culture and their impact on collective memory.

Keywords: teaching practices, professions, identities, professional knowledge, pedagogy, non-human teaching.

**Le site de soumission des propositions ouvrira à la fin du mois d'octobre 2024, avec toutes les informations nécessaires.**