



ISCHE

LOOKING FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

Rethinking the Social in the History of Education

Online conference
June 14–25, 2021



Title

ISCHE 42 - Looking from Above and Below: Rethinking the Social in the History of Education – Book of Abstracts

Editors

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Publishers

International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), Berlin
School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Örebro University

The text wording is the exclusive responsibility of the respective author/s.

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Building an Equal Society: the Struggle of the Italian Popular Schools During the Second Postwar Through Some Teachers' Narratives

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An interesting field to rethink the Social in the History of Education can be identified in the microhistory of some popular schools opened in Italy during the second postwar, according to the Decree 12/04/47 of the Minister of Education Guido Gonella (Sani, 2018). Those new schools were invested of two important functions: to struggle against the cultural and moral illiteracy and to educate Italians to a democratic way of life, after two decades under the Fascist regime. The social dimension of education was reinterpreted in a new manner, in order to recognize the centrality of the educational needs of each human person and the leading role of the educational relation with students, brotherly driven to become real protagonists of their life's choices (Chizzolini, 1950; Damiano, 2019). Most students were marginal teenagers, orphan girls, manual workers, injured men, widows, disabled or elderly people. For each of them, popular schools offered a new chance of life, because they gave them the possibility to experience an educational context characterized by solidarity, equity, inclusion and reciprocal cooperation, through the valorization of mutual and spontaneous teaching-learning processes (Chizzolini, 1949; Scaglia, 2016).

This first draft could take advantage of two heuristic historiographical perspectives: the first one is represented by the study of the Individual School Memories (Meda, Viñao, 2017); the second one by the analysis of the Educationalization of Social Problems (Smeyers, Depaepe, 2008). It aims to investigate some meaningful popular schools' narratives made known by the Catholic teacher magazine «Scuola Italiana Moderna» in the year 1948-49, after a contest between the readers promoted by the editor-in-chief Vittorino Chizzolini, which was involved in the concurrent Italian school system reform (Sani, 1997; Scaglia, 2020). The best narratives were awarded the publication in a special insert of the magazine, entitled *Scoperta d'anime alla scuola popolare*. They could be considered as examples of Individual School Memories, "made" by the real words of some teachers, which offered an original portrait of their students and the practice of schooling as means of popular education and social growth, built from below.

The narratives show how those popular schools represented a sort of laboratories to experiment a new social theory of education, connected to the lower classes' educational needs (Ferrer, 2011) and aimed at encouraging each person to start self-education processes, to learn from real-life activities and to recognize manual work as a source of education and social building (Lund, Carr, 2008; Bertagna, 2020). They were characterized, indeed, by the emphasis on the democratic dimension of schooling, the promotion of active school method and a new approach to teacher education, more attentive to struggle for equal rights (Bertoni Jovine, 1954; Santoni Rugiu, 1979; Sani, 2018). Consequently, their study could contribute to rethink the Social in the History of Education, because it will highlight the role of popular education in building a new democratic society, based on the social justice, the respect of personal rights, the acknowledgment of popular culture (Braster, 2011), against the risk of the past Fascist populism.

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"Then we were ready to be radicals!" – Memories of School Student Activism In Post-war Finland

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The previous years have marked the rise of a new kind of a youth generation, that has taken an active stand against global issues, such as climate change. Friday's for Future school strikes and mass demonstrations by school students have a strong resemblance to events that took place some 50 years ago around the Western countries. Much like today, the flow of the '60s swept over young people of different ages. But what differs, unlike 50 years ago, this time the forefront of the movement is dominated by school-aged children. Historically, the history of youth radicalism, as well as the cultural story of the year '68, has been dominated by university students. Previous research has widely neglected the fact, that the student movement also mobilized younger and often more eager students from the secondary school levels. (Marwick 1998; Vinen 2018; Jorgenssen 2008.) History of the school students' activism has so far been in the margins (see Graham 2005; Cunningham & Lavalette 2014; Ides 2014).

In my paper, I aim to demonstrate that school-aged children have a long and transnational history of dissidence and joining together to oppose strong authorities and conservative values in educational institutions and society at large. This paper is based on my PhD study on the history of the school student movement in Finnish upper secondary schools in the 1950s to 1970s. In my PhD study, I demonstrated that the post-war Finnish upper secondary school students constituted a school student movement, that aimed to change the Finnish school system and society at large. By advocating for changes within the institutions, they also aimed to change the prospects of an entire generation.

Based on oral history and life interviews collected as a part of my PhD study, I will discuss themes of youthful activism and memories of school and youth. I will use the Finnish school students as an example to demonstrate, how school students have activated in protests against national and international issues at different times. My overarching research questions are 1) what kind of forms school student activism took and how it evolved, 2) what were the motives behind the activism? Moreover, by addressing these questions, I aim to provide new perspectives on the history of school