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REPORT:

The VII Scientific Conference of the SEPHE and the V Iberian-American Symposium of the RIDPHE (San Sebastián, June 28-July 1, 2016)

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In October 2014, the Spanish Society for the Research on Historical-Educational Heritage (SEPHE) entrusted the arrangement of its biennial conference to the Museum of Education and to the Garaian Group for Historical and Comparative Research in education of the University of the Basque Country. In the same period the opportunity arose to establish contact also with the Iberian-American Network for Research and Dissemination of Historical-Educational Heritage (RIDPHE). As a consequence the organizers and Societies decided to hold a joint event that brought together, for the very first time, the VII Jornadas Científicas of SEPHE and the V Simposio Iberoamericano of RIDPHE. The event, held in the Miramar Palace of the city of Donostia-San Sebastián (Basque Country, Spain) from June 29 to July 1, 2016, was dedicated to the theme Spaces and Historical-Educational Heritage and was arranged with the support of the Vice-Chancellor of the Gipuzkoa Campus, the Department of Theory and History of Education and the Summer Courses Foundation of the University of the Basque Country, together with the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (project n. EDU2013-44129-P), the State University of Campinas (Brazil), the Lenbur Foundation (Legazpi, Basque Country) and the Education, Culture and Society Research and Training Unit (UFI 11/54) of the Basque University. On this occasion was officially opened the new Museum of Education of the University of the Basque Country, founded in 2014 and coordinated by the Garaian Group¹³⁰. This new exhibition space is expected to act as a fundamental point of reference for preserving and studying the historical-

¹³⁰Cf. the website of the Museum: <<u>http://www.ehu.eus/museoeducacion</u>> (last access: August 8, 2016).



educational heritage of the Basque Nation, and for promoting its richness and value for future generations.

This meeting was the largest of the events organized by SEPHE and RIDPHE. In fact 143 scholars registered and, regarding their provenance, as expected the majority came from Spain (64% of the people registered), with Brazil being the second country (16.1%), and Italy the third (8,4%), followed by France (4,2%), Argentina, Chile and Portugal (2,1%), and finally México and Dominican Republic (0,7%).

Before addressing the content of the sessions, and in order to offer a framework for the contributions in each area, the organizers deemed it important to assign three keynote presentations to provide consistency to the aim of this meeting. These speeches would explore three different aspects of the conference's main topic: the first speech, as a theoretical contribution, had to focus on the concept of space seen from the perspective of historicaleducational heritage; the second, to outline the scenario of museum collections in universities; the third, to shed new light on heritage education in museums. The opening speech on school spaces was entrusted to Antonio Viñao (University of Murcia, Spain); the second was given by Marta Lourenco (Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal) who examined the current situation and future perspectives of the university museums and collections in Europe and Latin America; the closing speech was delivered by Marta Brunelli (University of Macerata, Italy) and concerned the development of communication and interpretation of educational heritage in museums. Through these presentations, the purpose of the organizers was to focus on three areas that undoubtedly reflect the main objectives of the Societies involved: to promote research and knowledge in the field of the historical-educational heritage, and to foster heritage education in university museums. The response to the call for papers for the Symposium could not have been more favourable and, although some sessions received more contributions than others, the high number of received proposals revealed the level of interest in the suggested theme, and reflected the current state of the research being carried out in this specific area of historical-educational studies.

The symposium was organized into five sessions, the first of which was entitled *School Spaces*. In this first session the expected contributions would focus on the fact that school activities take place in privileged spaces such as schools and other training and educational centres. Therefore, communications had to address the educational space intended as a micro-universe in which educational policies as well as the curriculum, school discipline, the role of teacher, the school functions, and finally the process itself of turning children into pupils, take concrete shape. All school practices happen in spatial contexts that are full of objects, agents and teaching materials and, moreover, are purposefully designed with specific architectural proposals such as: school yards, classrooms, school buildings, boarding structures, and so on. This session aimed to emphasize the materiality of school spaces and in particular how they were used, according to certain educational practices. The richness and variety of educational heritage in such spaces clearly emerges, and consequently this section received the largest number of contributions (28), which can be classified into three sub-categories: educational



centres (13), school architecture (8), and finally material objects, educational practices and uses of space (8).

The second session can be identified with what is usually referred to, in the educational field, as "informal education", and as such it deals with the theme of *Ludic Spaces*. Complementary to the central role that the school space has in the life of children as well as of adolescents and adults, these areas also form part of the pervasive dimension of education. So ludic spaces can be found in parks and gardens, cinemas, theatres, recreational and sports areas, thematic parks etc. Here we can find both various material objects (toys) and immaterial (such as songs and dances, for example), which all make up the playful side of education. This session received nine communications, which indicates that the themes proposed are still unexplored fields for researchers in the historical-educational area.

The third session, entitled *Mirrored Spaces*, aimed to focus not so much on the school reality or the educational spaces in themselves, but rather on the way in which schools and spaces are usually represented. When looking at the "mirrors" (e.g. photographic images, historical documentaries, films and so on) reflecting school spaces with teachers, students and school materials, we can analyse how these have been depicted in the collective imagery. In short, the session proposed to work on the image reflected by the space beyond its own materiality. With this aim, the "new" primary sources that are being discovered by historical research, and which form part of the historical-educational heritage itself, prove to be essential to favouring this approach. In this session thirteen contributions were received, which fundamentally refer to the space described in films (4), in photography (4) and other narrative media (5).

As a complement to the previous session, the fourth focused on the *Recounted Spaces*. Each space, in fact, becomes more significant when there are voices that fill it with content and meanings, imagery, changes and innovative uses. Oral testimonies, autobiographies, stories and other individual narratives give new voice to the real actors of school spaces such as teachers, architects, educationalists, school inspectors as well as ex-alumni with their childhood memories, reflecting the most varied aspects of life and education. The largest number of contributions pertained to teachers' voices (10), confirming their relevance within the school space; while other educational narratives (4) and school notebooks (5) showed complementary viewpoints of educational practices. The inclusion of notebooks can be explained not so much for their value as sources (which has been largely demonstrated up to now), but rather in order to explore the genesis of the narration of school learning and experience.

Finally, the fifth session was dedicated to *Research and Historical-Educational Heritage*, which was very successful since it received twenty-one communications, structured into three sub-categories: museums' educational practices (9), collections, museums and educational heritage (5), and finally documentation centres and archives (7). The session proved to be very coherent since the received contributions reflected the same approach of previous editions of the conferences of both SEPHE and RIDPHE, in which the main focus was represented by school museums, school museology, historical-educational heritage and heritage education. On the other hand, the session confirmed how the museums and centres of

historical-educational heritage are currently experiencing a season of change and development worldwide, as evidenced by the many initiatives illustrated, which all share the aim of promoting knowledge and a widespread awareness of this specific heritage through projects realized not only by scholars and educators, but very often carried out together with students, teachers and citizens.

As mentioned, the received communications amounted to a total of ninety-one and arrived from Latin America as well as from several European countries. All the communications and keynote presentations have been published in the book *Espacios y Patrimonio Histórico-Educativo*, which is now freely available in the Institutional Repository of the University of the Basque Country¹³¹. This high number of submissions greatly exceeded the organizers' expectations, since the proposed theme was unusual in the field of studies on historical-educational heritage where the most commonly addressed issues regard museological and/or museographic themes, or particular aspects of school objects and specific educational collections.

In conclusion, it can be said that this event accomplished two important goals. On the one hand, it presented the concept of school and educational spaces as a "multifaceted object" – as defined by Antonio Viñao – that can be analysed from different perspectives, and whose heuristic productivity has been confirmed by the many and wide-ranging communications presented during the symposium. On the other hand, the first experience of holding a joint meeting between SEPHE and RIDPHE has represented an important step towards internationalization, both by promoting a closer cooperation and integration of the two societies, and by encouraging increasing involvement of colleagues from other European countries. This first experience has allowed the sharing of practices, the exchanging of ideas and the promotion of possible collaborations that, in the future, could result in joint research projects and, consequently, foster scientific progress in our discipline.

 $^{^{131}}$ DÁVILA, P. – NAYA L.M^a (eds.). *Espacios y patrimonio histórico-educativo*. Donostia: Erein, 2016. The pdf of the Proceedings can be downloaded from the URL: <<u>https://addi.ehu.es/handle/10810/18512</u>>. An additional access is available in the portal for the dissemination of Hispanic scientific production Dialnet: <<u>https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/libro?codigo=655034</u>> (last access: August 8, 2016).