

Touching Bodies SWG annual report

The Touching Bodies SWG was created in July, 2014, by the General Assembly, during ISCHE 36 held in London. The convenors are Diana Vidal (Brazil, USP), Ines Dussel (Mexico, Cinvestav) and Marcelo Caruso (Germany, Humboldt University).

General Purpose of the SWG

In contemporary schools, it is almost impossible that bodies touch other bodies without being questioned or put under suspicion. School regulations, moral orders, and pedagogical discourses have established that teachers and students have to keep their distance. Also, students' peer relationships are similarly scrutinized. It is not only old punishment practices that are forbidden; bodily expressions of kind and care are practically vanishing from the time-space of schooling. These changes are related to shifts in our understanding of violence; what passed as rituals of initiation in the past may now fall into the category of bullying, and what was perceived as caress and warmth may now be read as sexual harassment or assault.

It seems that we have never talked so much about bodies in school. We have never given so much attention to teachers and students as individuals, subjects of desire, anger, sadness or happiness. There was never so much fear of touching each other, hurting each other, affecting each other.

Or was there? How was the contact between bodies theorized and practiced in schools in the past? Which languages were used to talk about it? Which strategies and devices were designed to deal with this touching? When did 'hurting' become a pedagogical problem? When did rights and protection enter this space? What other transformations are we seeing today?

ISCHE 37 in Istanbul 2014:

In order to discuss these questions from a historical perspective, all researchers were invited to a first meeting that will take place during 2015 ISCHE Conference in Istanbul. We're proposing two panels with a presence of 8 researchers and two invited professors as discussants.

So far, our mailing list has 29 addresses of history of education researchers from many countries. At the meeting, we expect to design a collective research agenda, which will include seminars, publications, and concrete projects.