

Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione



30 Years of School Material Culture: The Role of the Italian Scholarly Community Between Identity-Building Contributions and Future Trajectories

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Call for papers for the monographic section of issue 2/2026 of *RSE–Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione*

It was in 1995 that Dominique Julia introduced the concept of “school culture” as an object of historical inquiry. From that moment onwards, as if in a circular wave radiating from this initial point of impact, the subjects of school life considered in the study of the history of schooling and of education gradually broadened. A phenomenon has thus emerged that has irreversibly characterised the last thirty years of research in the field: **the history of education has exponentially multiplied its sources**. New interpretative spaces have opened, along with new insights regarding potential elements to be used as sources, and new opportunities to discern the various material aspects of the educational and scholastic past in their role as crossroads—capable of revealing multiple layers of encounter between different trajectories, threads, meanings, and exchanges.

The Spanish research community initially left an indelible mark in this respect, shaping the debate while simultaneously opening it to new possibilities: whereas Viñao Frago emphasised school culture as a constellation of practices and objects, Escolano studied the school as a material place. Before long, the growing international interest led to a widespread “material turn,” through which material culture forcefully entered the epistemology of historical-educational studies.

Beginning with school textbooks and later widening the scope to include school writings, furniture, didactic objects, collections, architectures, spaces, symbolic material traces (plaques, engravings, sculptures) and concrete ones (lunch baskets, school smocks, loudspeakers) of school life and of every aspect of public and private educational experience, scholars have devoted themselves to identifying these new research subjects in depth, as well as to mapping the multiple fields they intersect – economic, industrial, commercial, artistic, manufacturing, social history, and more.

Over the past thirty years, thanks to the material turn in its objects of study, the history of education has, so to speak, embraced more closely the pathways of these other interdisciplinary domains of inquiry, in a process of reciprocal enrichment and entanglement. Within this new epistemological landscape, Italian research has not only been able to recognise this paradigmatic shift, but it has effectively made it its own.

The monographic section of issue 2/2026 of the *Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione* aims to reflect on the role of Italian scholarship within this epistemological reconfiguration: *How has the Italian scholarly community identified and studied new material sources for the history of schooling and education? What theoretical and methodological insights have been developed? What forms has the process of deep appropriation of this disciplinary shift taken, and what characteristics have the outcomes of this process assumed? And, in turn, what has the national scholarly community devoted to school materiality – through the identity it has shaped over these past thirty years – offered to international communities, thereby positively influencing and enriching reciprocal research approaches?*

By way of example, proposed articles **may illustrate the trajectories and perspectives adopted by Italian studies** dedicated to school architecture or to school, educational, and pedagogical museums; to school archives or classroom furnishings; to didactic objects related to specific disciplines or to everyday items associated with the full spectrum of school and educational life. Articles reconstructing research carried out by the Italian scholarly community on educational games and teaching aids more broadly will also be considered, as will contributions examining specific types of material sources (for example: Italian studies on school photography as a source, or on exercise books, patents, or reports by inspectors, jurors, commissioners, and similar figures).

Without limiting the focus to the role of the past, this call also welcomes contributions that reflect on the current role of Italian studies devoted to school and

educational material culture, as well as on the new avenues of inquiry they are now opening. These emerging perspectives lay the groundwork for contributions capable of enriching international debate and advancing scientific progress across the entire field.

Submissions from international scholars are also welcome, particularly those wishing to reflect on how Italian studies on material culture have contributed to international discourse—either by offering specific insights into shared research trajectories or by opening new interpretative pathways and analyses of previously unexplored sources.

This call does not aim to offer an inventory of individual research projects centred on one or more material sources; rather, it seeks to highlight the broader advancements made by the Italian scholarly community in the study of categories of material sources. It calls for a critical analysis that both recognises the key role played by Italy and underscores its ability to build bridges between the intellectual perspectives of different scholarly communities, ultimately shaping its own vision and setting its own trajectory.

Essential Reference Bibliography

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D'Ascenzo M., Vignoli R., *Scuola, didattica e musei. Il Museo didattico 'Luigi Bombicci' di Bologna*. Bologna, Clueb, 2008.

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- Polenghi S. (ed.), *Educational tools in History. New sources and perspectives*, Roma, Armando editore, 2024.
- Targhetta F., *Tra produzione industriale e alfabetizzazione diffusa: nuovi approdi per la storia della cultura materiale della scuola*, *History Of Education & Children's Literature*, 13, 2018, pp. 587-592.
- Viñao Frago A., *La historia material e inmaterial de la escuela: memoria, patrimonio y educación*, *Educação*, 35/1, 2012, pp. 7-17.

Timeline

By **10 January 2026**, authors must submit an abstract of their proposal to the following e-mail addresses: **30anni_culturamateriale@gmail.com** and **redazione@rivistadistoriadelleducazione.it**

The abstract (between 500 and 800 words, and written in both Italian and English) must include the following elements:

- A clear indication of the specific theme of school and educational material culture that the article intends to address;
- The main stages in the development of Italian scholarship on that specific theme over the past 30 years;
- 3-5 keywords;
- A bibliography (maximum 10 titles).

The proposal must be accompanied by **a short biographical note of the author(s)** (approximately 75 words).

The selection process carried out by the editors and the journal's editorial board will be completed by 30 January 2026.

By **15 May 2026**, selected authors must upload their full article to the RSE platform: <https://rivistadistoriadelleducazione.it/index.php/rse/about/submissions> (Registration is required for those who do not already have an account.)

The article must not exceed 45.000 characters (including spaces, notes, and bibliography) and must be prepared in accordance with the journal's editorial guidelines:

<https://rivistadistoriadelleducazione.it/index.php/rse/libraryFiles/downloadPublic/244>

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For further information regarding the call, please write to:

30anni_culturamateriale@gmail.com