

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES OF EDUCATION AND THE CIRCULATION OF PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE IN WESTERN EUROPE, 1876–1910



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At the end of the nineteenth century, the setting up of modern school systems raised a series of common questions and challenges at the European level.¹ Global trends such as demographic transition, industrialization, international migration, urbanization and the intensification of international trade imposed a new way of thinking about and organizing social life. Such trends contributed to shape new forms of youth socialization through the setting up of school structures in response to new educational demands.² The search for a balance between education, the training of qualified economic actors and the production of a social elite thus became the leitmotiv of school reforms in Western Europe. Institutional structures, their social and economic functions, as well as the coordination of various degrees of teaching, were at the core of cross-national polemics. Consequently, the numerous reforms at the end of the nineteenth century were not chronologically fortuitous coincidences but part of a reformist process that was characterized by the circulation of information and pedagogical ideas among West European countries.³ In this regard, recent studies in the history of education have pointed out that transnational connections and the use of foreign references played a major role in shaping modern school systems.⁴ Despite this historiographical renewal, the history of education is still mostly written from national perspectives, whereas the second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by a shared logic combining the construction of national identities with transnational school culture.

Notes for this chapter begin on page 232.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the genesis and development of International Congresses of Education, one of the first institutional forms taken by the transnational circulation of knowledge in the field of education.⁵ As the chapters of this book highlight, education is one of the many fields characterized by the rise of transnationally oriented activities.⁶ Between 1876 and 1910 no fewer than twenty international congresses, often combined with World's Fairs, were held in order to address the issues related to the construction of modern school systems. Congresses gathered together a wide range of national experts who tackled educational problems from an international perspective. These experts were active in reformist movements in their own countries and involved various professions as academics, teachers, pedagogues, school inspectors, politicians and civil servants. The chapter will focus on those actors who constructed internationalism in the field of education and school reform. More precisely, it will describe the emergence of transnational groups of experts who could operate as an epistemic community.⁷ The aim is to show how these informal networks operated and were related to the domestic and international political environment, as well as to assess their effectiveness in shaping national school reforms.⁸

The chapter will start with the genesis, development and characteristics of the international congresses selected for this research. In particular, it will stress the institutional forms that the transnationalization of school reforms took at the end of the nineteenth century. In the second part, the accent will be on actors who promoted transnational intellectual exchange by comparing the French, Swiss and German cases. Indeed, in order to understand the rise of these international congresses, it is important to consider the reformist context in which the experts were working. Finally, the third part will analyse the interaction between national and international levels as well as the impact of these congresses on national school reforms in Western Europe, reading them as the vectors of an international school culture.

International Congresses of Education and the Transnational Movement of 'School Reform'

Chris Leonards and Nico Randeraad's contribution to this volume provides a striking analysis of the congresses' role in the transnationalization of European social reform and the spread of expert knowledge in this field.⁹ Education did not escape the general enthusiasm for international congresses typical of the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ During this period, the education sections of World's Fairs and International

Congresses of Education were key places for the comparison and assessment of different educational systems.¹¹ From the 1880s onwards, many international meetings looked into how to organize educational programmes, considering such things as subjects to be taught, target audiences, the transition from primary to secondary school, as well as, more generally, the different approaches for adapting school systems to the evolution of modern societies. Congresses may be seen as places where social demands were stated and developed by networks of specialists who had various interpretations of school problems and sought to advocate their particular model. According to Christophe Prochasson, international congresses were thus places of intellectual exchange and dialogue for reformers.¹²

Within the field of education, political, social, moral and scientific considerations were closely intertwined. Consequently, the number of congresses devoted to childhood and its intellectual development or social protection was extremely high.¹³ On the basis of the discussions that took place there, Catherine Rollet addresses the rise of an 'international culture' of childhood.¹⁴ By cross-comparing the list of congresses established by the International Associations Union in 1960 with the one produced by the Bibliographical Society of America, it has been possible to identify four main types of congresses dealing with education issues, and constituting a relatively homogeneous series (see Table 10.1).¹⁵

The congresses of the international reformist movement at the end of the nineteenth century not only tackled pedagogical aspects, but also political, social and economic problems related to the construction of a modern school system. More particularly, they focused on the organization, structure and coordination of the various educational levels (primary, secondary, and professional/technical). They mostly took place over a very short period of time (i.e. 1880–1900) and, with few exceptions, within a European framework. The intensity of international meetings during those two decades can be explained by the fact that most West European countries were then in the process of setting up their modern public school systems.¹⁶

As Eckhardt Fuchs has pointed out, these international meetings shared two important characteristics.¹⁷ First, they most often took place at the same time as World's Fairs, which had, since the 1850s, offered permanent sections exhibiting educational items (drawings, school books, etc.) and explaining pedagogical methods of various countries.¹⁸ Such sections were organized and controlled by different states and sought to spread the benefits of their respective national school systems.¹⁹ By contrast, International Congresses of Education rather promoted international discussion on the principal school problems of the time. For example, three

Table 10.1. Sample of International Congresses on Education, 1876–1910

	Year	Place	Event	International Associations
International Congress of Education	1876	Philadelphia	World's Fair (WF)	
	1880	Brussels	–	
	1884	London	–	
	1884/85	New Orleans	Health Exhibition	
	1893	Chicago	WF WF	
International Congress of Higher and Secondary Education	1889	Paris	WF	International Bureau of Secondary Education (1912)
International Congress of Secondary Education	1900	Paris	WF	
International Congress of Primary Education	1889	Paris	WF	International Bureau of Teachers' Associations (1905)
	1900	Paris	WF	
	1905	Liège	WF	
	1910	Paris	–	
International Congress of Technical, Commercial and Industrial Education	1886	Bordeaux	–	Permanent Committee of International Congresses of Technical Education (1895)
	1889	Paris	WF	
	1895	Bordeaux	–	
	1897	London	–	
	1898	Antwerp	–	
	1899	Venice	–	
	1900	Paris	WF	
	1906	Milan	WF	
	1910	Vienna	–	

Sources: Union des Associations Internationales, *Les Congrès internationaux de 1681 à 1899, de 1900 à 1919. Liste complete* (Brussels 1960); G. Winifred, *International congresses and conferences, 1840–1937: A Union List of their Publications Available in Libraries of the United States and Canada* (New York 1938).

hundred professors, school inspectors, civil servants and pedagogues discussed pedagogical issues in Brussels during an international congress called by the Belgian League of Education in 1880.²⁰ Educational problems were tackled in thematic sessions, including all school areas. From the end of the 1880s, Paris became the most important centre for these congresses. The prominent place of France testifies to the high level of activism of reformers in that country, who were supported by their own government especially during the 1889 and 1900 World's Fairs.

Secondly, these congresses were characterized by their fragmentary nature and the absence of a centralized organization. Taking place at a crucial time in the construction of modern school systems, they were thus informal gatherings for discussion, exchange and comparison between professionals in educational matters. Social observers and reformers of many countries described the end of the nineteenth century as a moment of crisis for educational systems caused by the introduction and extension of compulsory schooling, changing school parameters for the reproduction of a social elite (the conflict between 'traditional' versus 'modern' teaching) and the necessity of adapting education to suit the new economic requirements of industrialization.²¹ As places devoted to intellectual exchange and international comparison, congresses thus helped to provide suggestions aiming at the resolution of this educational crisis.²² For example, the organizing committee of the Congress of Secondary Education in 1889 reported that 'elites in civilized countries are aware that, in the interest of their political community, it is important not to ignore experience gained abroad . . . and that exchanges between countries have become a prerequisite for prosperity and progress'.²³

Over time, international congresses became more and more specialized in particular educational topics. In fact, starting in the 1880s, a series of congresses in France dealt with specific problems related to different levels of education – primary, secondary and technical. Despite the relative discontinuity of these international congresses, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the creation of the first permanent international bureaus and associations devoted to educational issues (see Table 10.1).²⁴ With its French, German and British members, the Permanent Committee of the International Congresses of Technical Education played a major role in ensuring the thematic and organizational continuity of congresses from 1897 to 1910.²⁵ Created in Bordeaux in 1895, this committee was the first attempt to propose a centralized organization of international activities in technical education. However, its role in the coordination of international congresses was quite limited. Congresses were always organized by national associations, but the committee was put in charge of developing a scientific programme, centralizing reports, and following national implementations of their resolutions.²⁶ The International Bureau of Secondary Education, founded in 1912, and the International Bureau of Teachers' Associations from 1905 were only partially in line with the intellectual aims of the international congresses of the end of the nineteenth century. They instead formed international federations that grouped together national associations of teachers and professors rather than networks of educational specialists. They sought to defend the corporate interests of these professional categories.²⁷ These organizations did

not explicitly wish to standardize and harmonize national school policies, nor did they want to institutionalize a common disciplinary and intellectual framework on the international level, as in the scientific field.²⁸ Their international dimension was exploited as a strategy during national political struggles in order to improve the working conditions of teachers. In this sense, they were not an elitist or exclusive network of experts, but they provided a striking example of the internationalization of the school question, as well as of the gradual establishment of permanent transnational associations.²⁹

International Congresses and Reformist Movements: The Elitist Nature of Transnational Expertise

The building of modern school systems created new problems and challenges that were increasingly debated by experts who met in new forms of transnational spaces. Consequently, it is important to focus on the actors constructing internationalism and transnational networks. From a theoretical point of view, this issue raises the question of the genesis of epistemic communities. According to Peter Haas, these are 'networks of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain'³⁰ as well as 'channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country'.³¹ To a certain extent, international congresses can be seen as places from which epistemic communities emerged due to the presence of particular professional categories with the scientific purpose of influencing policy makers. However, research on epistemic communities often overlooks tensions related to the social reproduction of knowledge and professional fields on the national level.³² Consequently, the focus should be on the social and professional specificities of reformers organizing and participating in international congresses, and the fact that the topics addressed often reflected purely national debates. In order to understand the national construction of transnational expertise, three national cases (France, Switzerland and Germany) will be considered, with emphasis on the similarities between them as well as their different ways of integrating the transnational sphere.

A significant number of international congresses of the selected sample were held in France (nine out of nineteen). Participants were pedagogues, inspectors and headmasters, as well as secondary school teachers and university professors. They were members of several societies and associations dealing with educational issues, and were extremely active in organizing international meetings.³³ In particular, the *Société pour l'étude*

des questions d'enseignement supérieur (founded in 1878), which published the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, was noteworthy for its international openness and its role in the French reforms of the late nineteenth century.³⁴ This society took an active part in the organization of the international congresses of 1889 and 1900 on secondary education, and with the organizers of congresses on primary education as well. School inspectors of the Ministère de l'Instruction publique as well as professors and senior lecturers at universities were especially involved in promoting these events.

The organizing committees of the international congresses held in France during this period were made up of a social elite, including well-known professors. Léo Saignat, professor of law at the University of Bordeaux, was the instigator of the international congresses on technical education, organized in France by the Société philomatique, and president of the International Permanent Committee, founded in 1895. Professors and intellectuals such as Alfred Croiset, Ernest Lavisse, Gabriel Compayré and Ferdinand Buisson, as well as Michel Bréal and Emile Levasseur, were deeply involved in promoting congresses addressing secondary educational issues. These influential reformers exercised great moral authority and maintained public interest in problems relating to the whole of the educational system. In addition, they were socialized with cross-national contacts thanks to their academic careers and positions.³⁵ They were also affiliated with foreign scientific societies and held key positions in public administration (in particular, on the Conseil supérieur de l'Instruction publique).³⁶ Likewise, Department of Education inspectors often held prominent positions on the organizing committees of international congresses.³⁷ They specialized in specific educational topics and provided technical advice that was able to influence the policies of the ministry. In fact, school inspectors took advantage of such congresses to promote the introduction of manual labour and professional education in French schools.

French primary and secondary school teachers were, however, not involved in the first wave of congresses. Their lack of cultural and social capital may explain why they held no key posts on the organizing committees, although their work was a subject of discussion during the congresses.³⁸ The debates themselves were often supervised by school inspectors and university professors.³⁹ By contrast, the International Bureau of Teachers' Associations and the International Bureau of Secondary Education, set up by national federations of several European countries in 1905 and 1912,⁴⁰ represented the first attempts to improve international collaboration among teachers and to bring union defence of their profession to a transnational level, but they did not provide significant scientific expertise on educational topics.

Something similar may be said about the social profile of Swiss experts, although, between 1876 and 1910, the Swiss Confederation did not organize any international exhibitions or congresses devoted to education.⁴¹ However, Switzerland was always present abroad. The federal government sent delegates to international congresses, encouraging them, through propaganda, to visit the exhibitions. In this regard, Madeleine Herren speaks about a 'governmental internationalism' initiated by Switzerland in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴² Political authorities, cantonal teachers' associations and specific trade associations (e.g. Vorort) gave subsidies to their most interested members (experts, industrialists, foremen and even apprentices) in order to facilitate visits to World's Fairs and participation in the congresses.⁴³

Officially, the Swiss presence at international congresses was relatively discreet (an average of two delegates per congress during the whole period), and served mainly to discuss issues relating to technical and professional education. The delegates, mostly university professors, were selected according to their scientific status and their academic specialization. Alexandre Herzen (professor of Physiology and Medicine at the University of Lausanne and correspondent for the French *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*) and François Guex (professor of Pedagogy at the University of Lausanne) took part in the French congresses on primary and secondary education in 1889 and 1900. Leon Génoud, headmaster of Technicum in Fribourg and founder of the *Revue suisse de l'enseignement professionnel*, attended almost all congresses on technical and professional education from the 1880s. In particular, Génoud argued that the influence of World's Fairs on educational reform was very strong. He also thought that the development of professional education was linked to economic progress, due to the necessity to train competent economic actors facing the new economic settings of the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the radical wing of Swiss liberalism often used the international reference to support reforms. Alexandre Gavard, a politician in Geneva and director of the Department of Public Education, was on friendly terms with members of French educational societies and admitted to being guided by the resolutions of several congresses in 1889 for his school reform project in Geneva.⁴⁵ Professors such as Guex were also members of the Société des instituteurs de la Suisse romande (the 'Société pédagogique romande' after 1889), and used this society to spread information to other Swiss teachers. While underlining the advantages of the Swiss educational system, these *rapporteurs* often recognized the usefulness of international comparison: already in 1868, the Swiss pedagogue Alexandre Daguët wrote that 'the advantage and the great utility of Exhibition and Congresses (in Paris) lie especially in comparisons

similar to a mirror, where every country can show itself with its qualities and defects'.⁴⁶ Similarly, the director of the Federal Office of Statistics, Johann Jakob Kummer, noted how international exhibitions highlighted both a nation's capacity for achievement and its weaknesses.⁴⁷ Official Swiss participation at congresses was controlled by the federal government, and the *Conférence intercantonale des Chefs des Départements de l'Instruction Publique* published reports.⁴⁸ Despite the extreme heterogeneity of the Swiss school system, the discussions resulting from these congresses therefore influenced the entire country.

Finally, German professors and pedagogues were conspicuous in their relative absence from the transnational arena. During the nineteenth century, the German school system was seen as a model by most European reformers: on the one hand, as a successful scientific model, due to its prestigious universities, and on the other, as a practical example of secondary and professional education.⁴⁹ The European reform movement often turned to this model as a source of inspiration.⁵⁰ In this way, it would have been possible to imagine the rise of a cultural strategy centred on the prestige of the German educational system. Despite the educational fame of Germany, no congress was organized there during the period under study. In addition, official German delegations to international congresses were not very numerous. Unlike the French and Swiss literature on the subject, German historiography stresses that internationalism was not a permanent strategy used during reform processes, although this attitude changed following the evolution of school debates.⁵¹

The major reason for the absence of German official delegates at French congresses was the political tension that existed between German and French governments after the war of 1870–71. However, some representatives were unofficially present at the international congresses in Paris. For instance, at the Congress of Secondary Education in 1889 three headmasters of women's secondary schools, as well as a correspondent of the French *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (Mr. Arndt, professor of History at the University of Leipzig), took part in the debate. Likewise, German delegates were very active in the congresses on technical education, and the president of the German Alliance for Education, Richard Stegemann, was a member of the Permanent Committee. By contrast, exhibitions and congresses in the United States were characterized by the massive attendance of German teachers and professors, as well as by remarkable official education sections. Cultural strategy and propaganda seem to have been directed above all towards the United States, where German schools were particularly well established,⁵² rather than towards Europe.⁵³ In Europe, German reformers had a more visible role in establishing scientific correspondence with their European counterparts and in setting up networks

for visitors within the framework of pedagogical missions, rather than in attending international meetings.

Despite the conciseness of the above mentioned examples, the elitist and exclusive nature of international congresses becomes apparent. Reformers who participated in international congresses clearly shared professional ties and exchanged ideas in an attempt to influence policy. In addition, these professors and inspectors had close connections to political power and decision makers through their professional status or their membership of governmental institutions. Within the framework of international congresses, reformers clarified cause and effect relationships and helped states to formulate policies by proposing alternatives.⁵⁴ National experts also formed part of a wider social and cultural group, which gradually constructed an 'international grammar' of school reform on the basis of their expertise.⁵⁵ Knowledge about foreign school systems legitimated their suggestions for reform, while reinforcing their scientific authority – a valuable asset for their academic careers. As places where experts could meet and talk, congresses provided these professors and inspectors with the possibility of comparing their school systems with those of their European counterparts. Such transnational activities thus increased the social and cultural capital of reformers, and facilitated the constitution of an 'international capital' of knowledge, experience and personal contacts that could be used as a form of social distinction on the national level.⁵⁶ However, as the third part of this chapter will show, national stakes always remained important. Consequently, it is necessary to take into account interactions between the national and international levels and, in particular, those mechanisms that regulated the construction of transnational spaces and their impact on national school issues.⁵⁷

Congresses between National Specificities and the Rise of an International School Culture

Promoters and participants in international congresses aspired to create an ideal space for international discussion and comparison between representatives of different national educational systems. By operating as an epistemic community, this should have resulted in a coordinated programme of urgent reforms to be applied by the ministries and parliaments concerned. Yet, in spite of recurring rhetoric on the possibilities of international collaboration and the construction of a common set of reforms, the national dimension remained significant for two reasons. First, the place where a congress was held greatly influenced foreign attendance, and this prevented these meetings from being truly

international. At the congresses in Belgium, France or the United States, the majority of attendees were local representatives.⁵⁸ In addition, geographical distance and a lack of English-language skills considerably reduced the attendance of European reformers at the congresses held in the United States (Philadelphia 1876, New Orleans 1884–85 and Chicago 1893).⁵⁹ Secondly, topic choice depended on current national debates. In France, discussion topics were selected and prepared in advance by the organizing committee. Foreign members and participants were not involved in preparation of the programme.⁶⁰ Although several issues were clearly cross-national (such as the overproduction of graduates and the new educational challenges due to industrialization),⁶¹ these were always adapted to national contexts. Starting from the characteristics of each particular national system, reformist groups addressed issues that were then discussed on the transnational level. International congresses thus operated as informal networks by providing intellectual exchange and collaboration between national experts. The same questions were afterwards retranslated for use in national debates and country specific educational reform. In this way, the comparative analysis of various national organizations and identification of the most effective formulas led to the discovery of a wide field of possibilities and alternatives. The final resolutions of these congresses show that respect for national peculiarities was the *sine qua non* condition of any reform. Professor Alfred Croiset repeatedly emphasized this:

Among different conceptions of teaching and schooling, there must be a common and variable part due to the social situation of each country: the common part is – wherever one proposes the ideal of educated men – everything that contributes to the moral, physical and intellectual preparation for life of man in the modern world. Variable elements are modifications, changes as well as phenomena of adaptation to the geographical and historical environment of a nation.⁶²

In the same way, Charles Victor Langlois, professor of History at the Sorbonne, analysed the main differences between the various school systems in Europe around 1900. His report showed how countries with an ‘aristocratic’ political structure, such as Great Britain and Germany, differed from ‘democracies’, such as Switzerland and the United States, or from ‘hybrid’ political regimes, like France.⁶³ Consequently, different political traditions combined with differing parameters for the (re)production of a social elite made it hard to propose a general educational model valid for all national cases. A single rule for all societies was therefore impossible, even dangerous. At the end of the congresses, reformers refused to commit themselves to any common projects. Instead, they

studied how to adapt school systems within their existing societies and political structures.

The relative absence of coordinated international action is another reason for seeing the congresses as events that remained largely confined to their national contexts and responded to internal challenges only. In France, a recurrent topic during the last decades of the nineteenth century was the introduction of manual work and the teaching of drawing in primary schools.⁶⁴ The French school inspector Gustave-Adolphe Salicis brought back, from the 1880 International Congress of Brussels, the idea of making manual work compulsory in primary schools.⁶⁵ This was implemented in France at the beginning of the 1880s. In the Swiss case, the desire to make primary schools more professional also played a central role in the pedagogical debate because the teaching of drawing and manual work became compulsory in the 1890s. According to the Swiss national councillor Jürgen Schächli, congresses, in their desire to improve education, helped to strengthen the utilitarian character of primary schools in countries like Great Britain, France and Austria-Hungary.⁶⁶

Secondary education was another significant example. In France, topics discussed at congresses were selected by the organizing committees according to the most urgent issues. For instance, in 1889, questions related to the *baccalauréat*, other secondary school examinations and problems concerning teacher training received great attention because of their importance in several reform projects at the end of the 1880s. By 1900 this was no longer the case.⁶⁷ By contrast, the quarrel between advocates of classical and modern education and the controversy over the place of ancient languages and modern sciences in the curriculum continued. The social role of secondary education and its function in the construction of a social elite also held the attention of reformers. The German school model, in particular the 'Realschule' model, addressed the issue of the social role of secondary education.⁶⁸ The very aim of teaching 'realities' (modern languages and sciences rather than ancient languages) and the earlier 'utilitarian' specialization of secondary schools was precisely to find a balance between a traditional and a modern approach to education, or more specifically, between reproducing the existing social order and meeting new economic demands.⁶⁹ Thanks to their professional status and international capital, national experts who participated in congresses made use of all these arguments to influence state policies. In summary, one of the main effects of international congresses was the setting up of national reform agendas.⁷⁰ Reports and resolutions from educational exhibitions and meetings helped to establish a reformist schedule that finally triggered a set of initiatives taken by groups of reformers in the numerous European states concerned.⁷¹

From a methodological point of view, an overall analysis of the international congresses held between 1876 and 1910 raises the question of transnational activities as a relevant variable when defining forms of schooling. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann suggest that the transnational dimension may be studied as an analytical level that interacts with the local and the national levels: it ‘produces its own logics with feedback effects upon other space-structuring logics’.⁷² Similarly, sociologists of education of the Stanford group describe the universalization of modern schooling⁷³ and the dynamics of convergence and divergence in the setting up of educational systems.⁷⁴ Studies relating to the progressive worldwide institutionalization of the European school model since the end of nineteenth century, namely the spreading of a ‘state system of mass education’, provide a stimulating theoretical framework.⁷⁵ The juxtaposition of different school models during international congresses, ranked according to effectiveness, gradually led to the emergence of common cognitive frameworks that shaped the national school systems of Western Europe. As a result, the guidelines for the educational reforms of the late nineteenth century basically had a common cultural matrix. In fact, congresses and World’s Fairs were a chance for reformers to assess the major trends in school organization and pedagogy. François Guex, a Swiss delegate to the French exhibitions, before leaving for Paris in 1900, argued that the main purpose of his mission was indeed ‘to report on the current state of education in the various civilized nations, and to evaluate to what degree these various nations are involved in this movement’.⁷⁶ From this perspective, it is possible to identify three main results of international congresses and transnational activities in the educational field.

First, participation in international exhibitions revealed the universal character of the evolution of school systems during the nineteenth century. Indeed, the existence of distinctive national models did not prevent the emergence of universal educational principles. For primary education, international conferences showed how the concepts of obligation, gratuitousness and secularism finally spread throughout Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in most cases, the state, namely a public entity, was in charge of setting up and consolidating the school system.⁷⁸ In this sense, François Guex emphasized in his *rapport* for the Congress of 1900 the universalization of the fundamental principles of primary education, and, especially, the spreading of the ideas of compulsory and public education.⁷⁹ Emile Levasseur, professor of statistics and Collège de France’s administrator, also identified the basic principles of universalization of the school system with free compulsory education.⁸⁰ The nineteenth century was thus characterized by the development of a common basis for school systems in all the so-called civilized countries.⁸¹

Secondly, the move towards a division between a classical and a modern education in secondary schools, inspired by the German example, emerged during international congresses.⁸² According to Charles Victor Langlois, the gradual decline of classical studies throughout the nineteenth century occurred in parallel with the emergence of a more diversified school system. In order to study the major trends and significance of these reforms, Fritz Ringer suggests the concept of 'segmentation': the 'process of subdivision of educational systems in parallel schools and programmes distinguished by curriculum and social background of students'.⁸³ During the nineteenth century, the construction of a complex and coordinated educational system, which included a wide range of school levels based on sex, social origin, religion, age, individual skills or merit, became the general long-term trend characterizing most of the European school systems.⁸⁴ International congresses encouraged the grasping of new educational opportunities in order to meet the growing ambitions of the middle class, and strove to meet the new educational challenges posed by industrialization.⁸⁵ Along with the establishment of the state authority as a regulating entity (except for perhaps in Great Britain where the role of private schools remained very important), all countries saw this evolution as simultaneously necessary. Through discussion and exchange on the international level, the principle of the 'segmentation' of school systems spread to all European countries.

Thirdly, international congresses remained informal spaces of transnational intellectual exchange. However, the beginning of the twentieth century saw their gradual transformation into structured and organized transnational networks (see Table 10.1).⁸⁶ At that time, international associations and bureaus still had limited influence, but they represented a first step towards the formal transnational networks which were to be established in the field of education during the interwar period. Indeed, they were reactivated after the First World War as transnational networks, working with international organizations linked to the League of Nations.⁸⁷

Conclusion

As places of intellectual exchange promoted by specific reformist groups, international congresses of education offer an interesting research field for the analysis of the international circulation of pedagogical ideas and school models in Western Europe. Unlike the traditional comparative approach, this analytical perspective does not involve searching for every common characteristic between two or more national cases.⁸⁸ By contrast, it allows

us to see some problems too often restricted to a national framework in the context of the international movement and circulation of pedagogical ideas, crossing borders and mobilizing a set of solutions according to the political and cultural traditions of each national context.

In this context, congresses served as institutional spaces where experts could compare and contrast various ideas about schooling. They stimulated intellectual exchange about educational problems and facilitated the comparison of national school systems. In our three cases, experts constituted an elitist and exclusive network, mostly made up of university professors and school inspectors who sought to identify a central set of problems and influence national policies. The concept of an epistemic community summarizes the ways in which specialized technical advice (re)oriented state behaviour and helps to explain how different national policies may converge. Although transnational groups remained informal, sharing casual beliefs and views that were always adapted to national debates, they created a new sphere of expertise that superseded former reformist strategies.

Despite the absence of centralized organizations on the international level until the early twentieth century, congresses of education paved the way for the development of an international grammar of school reform, which largely circumvented the nation-state. Nevertheless, national stakes always constituted an important dimension. On the one hand, the main achievement of international congresses was the acknowledgment of cultural and political specificities as elements not to be ignored or bypassed by reformers. Rather than discussions on a universal school model, international congresses proposed a wide spectrum of possible changes according to different national contexts. On the other hand, the transnational sphere may be seen as a strategy to improve scientific and reformist legitimacy. Indeed, international comparisons and transnational discussions on educational issues provided additional knowledge and symbolic capital to reformers, who ultimately contributed to shape national reform agendas.

Notes

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4. J.F. Chanet, 'Instruction publique, éducation nationale et liberté d'enseignement en Europe occidentale au XIXe siècle', *Paedagogica Historica* 41 (2005): 10. For a general overview of 'educational policy borrowings' from a historical point of view, see D. Phillips and K. Ochs (eds), *Educational Policy Borrowings: Historical Perspectives* (Oxford 2004); G. Steiner-Khamsi (ed), *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending* (New-York 2004).
 5. For a general overview, see Eckhardt Fuchs, 'Räume und Mechanismen der internationalen Wissenschaftskommunikation und Ideenzirkulation vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 27 (1) (2002): 122–40. On the role of pedagogical press, see E. Fuchs, P. Drewek, M. Zimmer-Müller, *Internationale Rezeption in pädagogischen Zeitschriften im deutsch-amerikanischen Vergleich 1871–1945/50* (Berlin 2010).
 6. According to David Thelen, the transnational approach focuses on 'how a particular phenomenon passed over the nation as a whole, how it passed across the nation, seeing how it bumped over natural and man-made features, or how it passed through, transforming and being transformed': D. Thelen, 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History', *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 968. For a wider historiographical discussion, see P-Y. Saunier, *Transnational History* (Basingstoke 2013); P. Clavin, 'Defining transnationalism', *Contemporary European History* 14 (4) (2005): 421–29.
 7. P. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', *International Organization* 46(1) (1992): 1–35.
 8. On the nineteenth century's internationalism, see M.H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840's to the First World War* (Oxford 2008).
 9. Also see C. Leonards and N. Randerad, 'Transnational Experts in Social Reform, 1840–1880', *International Review of Social History* 55(2) (2010): 215–39.
 10. A. Rasmussen, 'L'internationale scientifique, 1890–1914', (Ph.D. dissertation, EHESS Paris, 1995).
 11. M. Lawn (ed.), *Modelling the Future. Exhibitions and the Materiality of Education* (Oxford 2009).
 12. C. Prochasson, 'Les Congrès, lieux de l'échange intellectuel. Introduction', *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 7 (1989): 5–22.
 13. For an overview of the social and legal protection of children from an international perspective, see J. Droux, 'L'internationalisation de la protection de l'enfance: acteurs, concurrences et projets transnationaux (1900–1925)', *Critique internationale* 52 (2011): 17–33; M.-S. Dupont-Mouchat and E. Pierre (eds), *Enfance et justice au XIXe siècle. Essais d'histoire comparée de la protection de l'enfance 1820–1914. France, Belgique, Pays-Bas, Canada* (Paris 2001).
 14. C. Rollet, 'La santé et la protection des enfants vues à travers les congrès internationaux', *Annales de démographie historique* 101 (2001): 113–16.
 15. Union des Associations Internationales, *Les congrès internationaux de 1681 à 1899, de 1900 à 1919. Liste complete* (Brussels 1960). Another list has been edited by Gregory Winifred under the auspices of the Bibliographical Society of America: G. Winifred,

- International Congresses and Conferences, 1840–1937: A Union List of their Publications Available in Libraries of the United States and Canada* (New York 1938).
16. J.N. Luc and P. Savoie (eds), 'L'État et l'éducation en Europe, XVIIIe–XXIe siècles', *Histoire de l'éducation* 134 (2012); A. Green, *Education and State Formation. The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (London 1990).
 17. E. Fuchs, 'Educational Sciences, Morality and Politics: International Educational Congress in the Early Twentieth Century', *Paedagogica Historica* 5–6 (2004): 759–61.
 18. For a general overview of international congresses during World's Fairs, see A. Rasmussen, 'Jalons pour une histoire des congrès internationaux au XIXe siècle: régulation scientifique et propagande intellectuelle', *Relations internationales* 62 (1990): 115–33.
 19. Klaus Dittrich, *Experts Going Transnational: Education at World Exhibitions during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Portsmouth, 2010).
 20. Ligue Belge de l'Enseignement, *Congrès international de l'enseignement* (Brussels 1880); B. Rheims, *Congrès international de l'enseignement tenu à Bruxelles, du 22 au 29 août 1880. Deuxième section. Enseignement secondaire* (Paris 1880).
 21. Emile Durkheim argued that at the end of the nineteenth century the 'school question' raised common problems in every Western country. See E. Durkheim, *L'évolution pédagogique en France* (Paris 1990), 13.
 22. See P.-Y. Saunier, 'Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux', *Genèses* 57 (2007): 115.
 23. *Le congrès international de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'enseignement secondaire en 1889* (Paris 1890), 5.
 24. A. Rasmussen, 'Tournant, inflexions, ruptures: le moment internationaliste', *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 19 (2001): 27–41.
 25. This committee was composed of three well-known personalities: Léo Saignat (professor of Law at the University of Bordeaux), Richard Stegemann (president of the German Alliance for Education) and Spencer Compton Cavendish (President of the *Board of Education* between 1900 and 1902.).
 26. *Le congrès international de l'enseignement technique* (Paris 1900), 605.
 27. See 'La Fédération des instituteurs d'Europe', *Revue de l'enseignement primaire et primaire supérieur* 39 (1907): 478–79; Bureau international des fédérations d'institutrices et d'instituteurs, *Deuxième congrès de l'enseignement primaire. Compte rendu officiel* (Paris 1910).
 28. Especially see the special issue of the *Revue germanique internationale* entitled 'La fabrique internationale de la science' 10 (2010). On this question also see E. Crawford, T. Shin and S. Sörlin, 'The Nationalization and Denationalization of the Sciences: An Introductory Essay' in *Denationalizing Science: The Contexts of International Scientific Practice*, eds Crawford, Shin and Sörlin (Dordrecht 1992), 1–42; E. Brian, 'Transactions statistiques au XIXe siècle. Mouvements internationaux de capitaux symboliques', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145 (2002): 34–46.
 29. Similar evolution took place in the field of social reform as well. See R. Gregarek, 'Le mirage de l'Europe sociale. Associations internationales de politique sociale au tournant du 20e siècle', *Vingtième Siècle* 48 (199): 103–18.
 30. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities', 4.
 31. *Ibid.*, 27.
 32. For a critical analysis of this concept, see Y. Viltard, 'L'étrange carrière du concept d'épistémè en science politique', *Raisons politiques* 23 (2006): 195–201; S. Kott, 'Une "communauté épistémique" du social? Experts de l'OIT et internationalisation des politiques sociales dans l'entre-deux-guerres', *Genèses* 71 (2008): 26–46.

33. French National Archives, 'Congrès divers', F17 3098.
34. C. Charle, *La République des universitaires, 1870–1940* (Paris 1994), 21–31.
35. M. Werner, 'Philological Networks: A History of Disciplines and Academic Reform in Nineteenth-Century France' in Charle, Schriewer and Wagner, *Transnational Intellectual Networks*, 205–24.
36. The Higher Council for Public Instruction, founded in 1850, was a consultative commission of the French Ministère de l'Instruction publique that included whole actors of the educational community.
37. School inspectors such as Gustave Salicis, Guillaume Jost, Félix Martel and Paul Jacquemart played a major role in organizing international congresses as well as pedagogical surveys in foreign countries. For an overview of the French pedagogical missions during the nineteenth century, see D. Matasci, 'Le système scolaire français et ses miroirs. Les missions pédagogiques entre comparaison internationale et circulation des savoirs (1842–1914)', *Histoire de l'Éducation* 125 (2010): 5–26.
38. P. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G. Richardson (New York 1986), 241–58.
39. 'Le congrès international de l'enseignement secondaire', *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (1889): 166.
40. The International Bureau of Teachers' Associations included representatives of France, Germany, England, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, Holland, Norway, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland. The International Bureau of Secondary Education was limited to France, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Holland.
41. There were some exceptions, such as the Congrès international de l'enseignement du dessin (held in Bern in 1904) and the Congrès international de l'enseignement ménager (held in Fribourg in 1908).
42. M. Herren, *Hintertüren zur Macht. Internationalismus und modernisierungsorientierte Aussenpolitik in Belgien, der Schweiz und den USA, 1865–1914* (Munich 2000).
43. Swiss Federal Archives, 'Ausstellung im Ausland', n. 477 (1880–1907), vol. 62 03 10.
44. L. Genoud, *L'enseignement professionnel pratique à l'Exposition de Chicago*, (Fribourg 1894); L. Genoud, *L'enseignement à l'Exposition universelle, Paris, 1900. L'enseignement professionnel* (Fribourg 1901).
45. State Archives of Geneva, *Mémorial du Grand conseil* (1890), 1032.
46. *Rapports sur l'exposition scolaire de Paris en 1867, adressés aux gouvernements cantonaux et à la Société des instituteurs de la Suisse romande par les délégués des cantons et de la Société: MM. Chappuis–Vuichoud, Maillard, Favre, Biolley, Paroz, Fromaigeat et Guerne. Rapports complétés, mis en ordre et précédés d'une introduction par A. Daguët, président de la délégation et rapporteur général* (Lausanne 1868): 133.
47. J.J. Kummer, *Das Fortbildungsschulwesen* (Bern 1874), 9.
48. 'Die Schule auf der Weltausstellung', *Der Pionier* 10 (1890–1900): 34–53.
49. On the impact of the German reference in France, see D. Matasci, 'L'école républicaine et l'étranger. Acteurs et espaces de l'internationalisation de la "réforme scolaire" en France (1870-première moitié du XXe siècle)', (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Geneva–EHESS Paris, 2012).
50. Many studies address the importance of the German school model during the nineteenth century. For primary and secondary education see D. Phillips, 'Mehr als Reiseberichte? Britische Beobachter des deutschen Bildungswesens im 19. Jahrhundert' in *Weltkultur und kulturelle Bedeutungswelten. Zur Globalisierung von Bildungsdiskursen*, ed. J. Schriewer (Frankfurt and New York 2007), 23–43; B. Trouillet, 'Der Sieg des preussischen Schulmeisters' und seine Folgen für Frankreich, 1870–1914 (Cologne 1991). On the diffusion

- of German university model, see M. Schalenberg, *Humboldt auf Reisen? Die Rezeption des deutschen Universitätsmodells in den französischen und britischen Reformdiskursen (1810–1870)* (Basel 2003); R.C. Schwinges (ed), *Humboldt international: der Export des deutschen Universitätsmodells im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Basel 2001).
51. P. Gonon, *Das internationale Argument in der Bildungsreform. Die Rolle internationaler Bezüge in den bildungspolitischen Debatten zur schweizerischen Berufsbildung und zur englischen Reform der Sekundarstufe II* (Bern 1998), 161; B. Zymek, *Das Ausland als Argument in der pädagogischen Reformdiskussion. Schulpolitische Selbstrechtfertigung, Auslandspropaganda, internationale Verständigung und Ansätze zu einer Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft in des internationalen Berichterstattung deutscher pädagogischer Zeitschriften, 1871–1952* (Ratingen 1975).
 52. On German interest in American education, see H. Geitz, J. Heideking and J. Herbst (eds), *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917*, (Cambridge 1995); B. Goldberg, 'The Forty-Eighters and the School System in America: The Theory and Practice of Reform' in *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States*, ed. C.L. Brancaforte (New York 1989), 203–18.
 53. E. Fuchs, 'Gouvernementaler Internationalismus und Bildung: Deutschland und die USA am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts' in Schriewer, *Weltkultur und kulturelle Bedeutungswelten*, 45–73.
 54. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities', 15–16.
 55. On the concept of 'grammar of schooling', see D. Tyack and W. Tobin, 'The "grammar" of schooling: why has it been so hard to change', *American Educational Research Journal* 31 (3) (1994): 453–79.
 56. Y. Dezalay, 'Les courtiers de l'international. Héritiers cosmopolites, mercenaires de l'impérialisme et missionnaires de l'universel', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 151–52 (2004): 7. Similarly, Peter Haas asserts that these communities form a network that confers authority and legitimacy to its members.
 57. K.K. Patel, *Nach der Nationalfixiertheit. Perspektiven einer transnationalen Geschichte* (Berlin 2004), 11.
 58. See for example *International Conference on Education: Held at Philadelphia, July 17 and 18: in Connection with the International Exhibition of 1876* (Washington 1877); A. Du Mesnil, *Lettre à Jules Ferry* (Paris 1880). A critique is also provided by Ernst Von Sallwürk in his article 'Der internationaler Kongress in Brüssel', *Deutsche Blätter für Erziehenden Unterricht* 46 (1880): 366.
 59. At the time of the exhibition and congress in Chicago, the Swiss Government noted the indifference of many potential participants. The main reasons for this indifference were geographical distance and financial costs of travel. See *Feuille fédérale* (14 Dec. 1892), 980.
 60. H. Doliveux, 'Le congrès international de l'enseignement primaire de 1900', *Revue pédagogique* 10 (1900): 338–40.
 61. See Ringer, *Education and Society*.
 62. *Le Congrès international de l'enseignement secondaire à l'exposition universelle de 1900. Procès verbaux et comptes-rendus officiels* (Paris 1901), 81.
 63. C.V. Langlois, *Exposition universelle. Rapports du jury international–Etranger* (Paris 1900), 101–14.
 64. R. d'Enfert, 'L'introduction du travail manuel dans les écoles primaires de garçons', *Histoire de l'éducation* 113 (2007): 35–41.
 65. P. Rougier-Pintiaux, 'Les instituteurs et l'introduction du travail manuel dans les écoles primaires de garçons du XIXe siècle', *Revue de sociologie française* 29 (1988): 279. Also see Salicis' report: G. Salicis, *De l'enseignement manuel et professionnel en Allemagne et dans*

- les pays du Nord. Rapport à M. le ministre de l'Instruction publique sur une mission relative à l'enseignement du travail manuel dans divers pays étrangers* (Paris 1887).
66. J. Schättli, *Bausteine zur Schule der Zukunft* (Zurich 1899).
 67. *Le congrès international de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'enseignement secondaire en 1889* (Paris 1890).
 68. See the report of Max Leclerc: *Le congrès international de l'enseignement secondaire à l'exposition universelle de 1900. Procès verbaux et comptes rendus officiels* (Paris 1901): 81–88.
 69. See R. Anderson, 'The Idea of Secondary School in Nineteenth-century Europe', *Paedagogica Historica* 40 (2004): 93–106.
 70. D. Béland, 'Ideas and Social Policy: An Institutional Perspective', *Social Policy and Administration* 39 (2005): 1–18.
 71. E. Petit, *De l'École à la Cité. Études sur l'Éducation populaire* (Paris 1910): 130–31.
 72. M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison. *Histoire croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 43.
 73. A. Benavot and P. Riddle, 'The Expansion of Primary Education, 1870–1940: Trends and Issues', *Sociology of Education* 61 (1988): 191–210.
 74. A. Inkeles and L. Sirowy, 'Convergent and Divergent Trends in National Educational Systems', *Social Forces* 62 (1983): 303–33.
 75. F.O. Ramirez and J. Boli, 'The Political Institutionalization of Compulsory Education: the Rise of Compulsory Schooling in the Western Cultural Context', in *A Significant Social Revolution: Cross-Cultural Aspects of the Evolution of Compulsory Education*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London 1994): 1–20.
 76. Conférence intercantonale de la Suisse romande, *L'école primaire à l'exposition universelle Paris 1900* (Sion 1903), 2.
 77. The crucial issue of secular education was not directly tackled during these meetings. This could be explained by the fact that international congresses, especially those on primary education organized in France, gathered together partisans of secular education: participants were already convinced by the necessity to separate education from religion. For a comparative perspective on the history of secularization of schools in Europe, see B. Mély, *La question de la séparation des églises et de l'école dans quelques pays européens: Allemagne, France, Grande-Bretagne, Italie (1789–1914)* (Lausanne 2004).
 78. E. Levasseur, *L'enseignement primaire dans les pays civilisés* (Paris 1897), 494.
 79. F. Guex, *Éducation et instruction. Rapport présenté au Haut Conseil fédéral sur le groupe I de l'Exposition universelle Paris 1900* (Lausanne 1903), 39.
 80. Levasseur, *L'enseignement primaire*, 491–514.
 81. E. Levasseur, 'Instruction primaire et secondaire', *Exposition universelle de Vienne en 1873. Rapports* vol. IV (Paris 1875): 506–29.
 82. Langlois, *Exposition universelle*, 110.
 83. F. Ringer, 'La segmentation des systèmes d'enseignement. Les réformes de l'enseignement secondaire français et prussien, 1865–1920', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 149 (2003): 6.
 84. See F. Ringer, D. Müller and S. Brian (eds), *The Rise of the Modern Educational System: Structural Change and Social Reproduction (1870–1920)* (Cambridge and Paris 1987).
 85. H. Bérenger, *Congrès international de l'enseignement secondaire, tenu à Paris du 31 juillet au 5 août 1900. Procès-verbaux sommaires* (Paris 1900).
 86. For a history of international organizations, see M. Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (Darmstadt 2009).
 87. For a synthetic overview of the educational activities of the League of Nations and other international organizations after the First World War, see R. Hofstetter

- and B. Schneuwly, 'The International Bureau of Education (1925–1968): a Platform for Designing a "Chart of World Aspirations for Education"', *European Educational Research Journal* 12 (2): 215–30; E. Fuchs, 'The Creation of New International Networks in Education: The League of Nations and Educational Organization in the 1920s', *Paedagogica Historica* 43 (2007): 199–209.
88. For a discussion on the limits of comparative history, see M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (Paris 2004); J. Kocka, 'Comparison and beyond', *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 39–44.