

Call for Articles / Call for Abstracts: JHB Volume 33 (2027)

Call for Abstracts for the thematic focus and Call for Articles for the general section in the *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* (Yearbook for Historical Educational Research), Vol. 33 (2027)

JHB – Yearbook for Historical Educational Research 33 (2027): Education and Elites. Relations and Configurations in Historical Transition

The *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* (JHB) is published by the Section for Historical Educational Research within the German Educational Research Association (DGfE), in cooperation with the BBF | Research Library for the History of Education at the DIPF | Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education.

Each volume of the JHB consists of a thematic section as well as non-thematic articles and an edited historical source with commentary/interpretation.

This is a

1. Call for Abstracts for the thematic focus (A: *Education and Elites. Relations and Configurations in Historical Transition*):
Submissions selected by the editorial board will undergo a double-blind peer review.
 - Deadline for abstract submission: 30.04.2026
 - Upon acceptance: Deadline for full paper submission: 30.09.2026
2. Call for Articles for the non-thematic section (B):
Articles will undergo a double-blind peer review. Source commentaries/interpretations will undergo an editor review.
 - Deadline for submission: 30.09.2026

Emerging researchers are especially encouraged to submit contributions.

The JHB is published simultaneously in print and in open access (<https://jb-historische-bildungsforschung.de>). The digital OA version allows for the dynamic integration of media content (images, video, and audio formats). Contributions that include such media content are particularly welcome.

(A) Call for Abstracts: Thematic Focus – Education and Elites. Relations and Configurations in Historical Transition (JHB 33, 2027)

As is often the case in times of accelerated societal transformation, „elites“ have once again become problematic. Current criticism of elites expresses a sense of unease toward the privileged „upper class“, who is held responsible for political, economic, and cultural malformations, for disregarding the interests of „the ordinary people“, many of whom feel politically underrepresented. This critique also targets a new cultural self-understanding of contemporary elites, who no longer see themselves – as they did well into the 20th century – as conservative and tradition-oriented, but rather as part of a progressive global class that uses the potentials of unlimited markets and cultures for individual and collective self-expression,

allegedly neglecting the common good.¹ Whether in the context of Brexit, the French Yellow Vest protests, election campaigns, or German political discourse (for example, regarding the persistent ‚East/West divide‘) – elite criticism is omnipresent and forms part of the global repertoire of political conflict.²

Beyond this often populistically instrumentalized discontent, elite criticism reflects a crisis of legitimacy concerning social reproduction, democracy, and political participation – areas in which national education systems of liberal states play a central role in ensuring fairness. The promise of modern liberal societies – that individuals and their performance determine their social position – is perceived as unfulfilled.³ Instead, the rhetoric of a „credentialed elite“ and the defense of meritocracy now serve those in top positions to legitimize their privileged (power) status, as argued by Michael Sandel.⁴ This brings national education policies and systems, global actors such as the OECD, and the certification of educational degrees into focus. Since the 19th century, these institutions and procedures have been attributed an increasingly important societal and political role in the distribution of positions and in guaranteeing justice in the sense of meritocracy; a notion that has been questioned by numerous empirical studies since the 1970s and periodically scandalized with the rise of PISA and other international assessment studies.

In addition to elite-critical or elite-hostile positions, public debate also includes numerous voices who view ‚elite-bashing‘ as a danger to democracy, arguing that complex societies cannot function without elites.⁵ Within this broader discursive spectrum, the thematic focus of the *Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung* aims to explore how the formation, recruitment, character, and function of elites have historically been connected to ideas, practices, and processes of education, training, and socialization, and what continuities and transformations can be identified. Following a heuristic approach, we adopt a broad concept of „elite“, enabling the reconstruction of discursive shifts and transformations in the relationship between elites, democracy, and education across political, social, and economic systems. „Elite“ is a socioculturally and historically variable term whose composite forms (credentialed elite, positional elite, functional elite, etc.) can only be analyzed through historical semantics within their specific sociocultural and historical contexts.⁶ We follow a definition of elites (from Latin *eligere*: to choose, to select) as groups that distinguish themselves from a larger social community, regardless of the criteria (abilities, ‚virtues‘, social position, control over resources, etc.) on which this exclusive status is based.⁷

¹ Vgl. Boltanski, L. & Esquerre, A. (2019). *Enrichment. A Critique of Commodities*. Cambridge/Medford.

² Cf. Norris, P. & Inglehart, R. (2020). *Cultural Backlash. Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press; Rieger-Ladich, M. (2022). *Das Privileg. Kampfvokabel und Erkenntnisinstrument*. Ditzingen; Hartmann, M. (2025). Mehr Kontinuität als Wandel. Die deutschen Eliten vom Kaiserreich bis heute. *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 35, p. 187-212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11609-025-00557-4>; Sauer, H. (2025). *Klasse. Die Entstehung von Oben und Unten*. München.

³ Cf. Hartmann, M. (2002). *Der Mythos von den Leistungseliten. Spitzenkarrieren und soziale Herkunft in Wirtschaft, Politik, Justiz und Wissenschaft*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus.

⁴ Sandel, M.J. (2020). *The Tyranny of Merit. What’s Become of the Common Good?* London: Allen Lane. Vgl. Mijs, J.J.B. & Savage, M. (2020). Meritocracy, Elitism and Inequality. *The Political Quarterly* 91(2), 397-404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12828>.

⁵ Cf. Kroll, Th. (2021). Eliten und Elitenkritik als Forschungsfeld der Sozialgeschichte vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert. *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 61, p. 9-30, p. 11.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷ Cf. Edinger, M. (2021). Eliten. In: U. Andersen et al. (Hg.), *Handwörterbuch des politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden, p. 247-251; Reitmayer, M. (2022). *Eliten*. Version: 2.0. Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, URL: http://docupedia.de/zg/Reitmayer_eliten_v2_de_2022.

Typically, these are individuals whose actions, interpretations of reality, and decisions – due to privileged opportunities for action – shape opinions, influence behavior, or indirectly affect the living conditions of larger groups.⁸ Based on this definition, the relationship between the concept of elites and other social categories as well as (educational) political constellations must be reconstructed for each specific sociocultural context.

We welcome contributions that examine the relationship between education, democracy or politics, elites (both in the sense of elite education and elite formation), and elite criticism from a historical-educational perspective. The concept of elites may be approached as a social or sociological category, but also as a slogan or contested term with utopian or ideological dimensions. We are interested in connections between the formation, establishment, stabilization, exchange, or delegitimization of elites on the one hand, and historically specific education policies, institutions, practices, and discourses on the other. Theoretical and methodological approaches may include social, cultural, discourse, and gender history, as well as praxeological perspectives. Relevant institutions of education and socialization include various general and vocational, private and public, national and international school types and contexts, as well as universities, academies and early childhood education. Socialization contexts such as families, peer groups, political parties, and youth organizations may also be considered. There are no temporal or geographical limitations; contributions from international and transnational perspectives are explicitly welcome.

Possible perspectives and linking points include:

Change and persistence of elites:

How have systemic ruptures – such as reforms during the transition from feudal to bourgeois society, the two world wars, or post-1989 transformations – affected the relationship between education and elites, including its theorization and discursive framing? What effects have gradual structural changes typical of German and Western European history had (e.g., the educational reform era, socioeconomic changes, new public management, processes of economization and internationalization since the 1990s)?

Elite education – elite formation:

What role do institutions, concepts, or theories of education, competencies, (school) performance, and educational qualifications play in the emergence, justification, and critique of (credentialed) elites? Which discursive connections were established, and with what intentions?

Elites, education, democracy (and critique):

What tensions arise between assumptions about the relationship between democracy, education, and participation on the one hand, and unfulfilled promises of social mobility on the other? What political consequences result, and how does politics respond?

Relationship between educational institutions and elite formation/recruitment:

Which educational institutions, programs, and reforms (e.g., elite universities, excellence initiatives) have been associated with elites or demanded as such? What historical connections exist between elite formation and school types, school profiles, or curricula (e.g., 'gymnasium', vocational education, comprehensive school, private vs. public schools)? How do conflicts between competing elite groups manifest in education? To what extent can transformations in educational institutions, discourses, and practices be understood as negotiations between elite groups and as changes in elite concepts?

⁸ Cf. Hoffmann-Lange, U. (1992). *Elite, Macht und Konflikt in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Opladen, p. 19.

Elite discourses and semantics:

What argumentative and discursive power does the term „elite“ hold in the context of education, educational critique, and reform across different epochs? How do pedagogical discourses (in media, public debates, academia, teacher education) contribute to defining who is considered to belong to any kind of elite in specific sociohistorical contexts and according to which criteria?

Elite formation and gender:

How is the male construction of „elite“ reflected in educational institutions, discourses, and recruitment practices? What processes and practices of networking, inclusion/exclusion, and ‘othering’ stabilize or challenge elite formations?

Elite cultures, representations, and practices in educational contexts:

What changes in school-based elite cultures can be identified at the level of aesthetic representations and forms of expression (objects, symbols, architecture, etc.)?

From the ‚Republic of Scholars‘ to the transnational elite:

What role do mobility, exchange, and the circulation of education and knowledge across spatial (e.g., national) boundaries play – historically and today – in the formation of elites?

Submit your abstract (max. 300 words) by 30 April 2026 via email to the editors:

- Esther Berner (bernere@hsu-hh.de)
- Julia Kurig (j.kurig@dipf.de)

Selected articles (max. 60,000 characters including spaces and footnotes, in German or English) must be submitted by 30 September 2026 and will undergo a peer-review process.

(B) Call for Articles: Non-thematic Contributions and Sources

For the non-thematic section, contributions may be submitted until 30.09.2026. All historical topics are welcome. Contributions addressing periods before the 18th century are particularly encouraged. Each year, the JHB also aims to publish a significant historical source accompanied by contextual interpretation.

Send your article or source proposal to:

Katharina Vogel – jhb@dipf.de

Deadlines at a Glance

Abstract submission (thematic section): 30.04.2026

Full text submission (thematic and general sections): 30.09.2026

Guidelines for Manuscript

Manuscript guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.jb-historische-bildungsforschung.de/editorial/guidelines-de.xml>