



Standing Working Group

Notre tout puissant Empire du milieu: histories of secondary education

ISCHE 47 in Athens

online conference, July 9-10, 2026

on-site conference, July 15-18, 2026

Call for Papers

deadline: January 15, 2026



National Women's Volleyball Champion Team, Junior Category, 1976-77, and students of the Liceu de Carolina Michäelis, Porto, Portugal.

This Standing Working Group (SWG) intends to examine secondary education (or, according to Lucien Febvre, “notre tout puissant Empire du milieu”, 1939) in terms of specific historical contexts: its social and political mission, formative goals, curriculum organization, subjects taught, teaching methods, material structure and culture, teacher training, adolescence and youth supervision, among other issues. The topic demands attention for many reasons. Secondary education has been seen socially as “the survival of a conception of culture formulated when education was the right and possession of a few people” (Isaac L. Kandel, 1926), a situation that has completely changed. Also, bearing in mind the diversity of syllabi or educational tracks developed in Western countries from the mid-19th century onwards, the relations established with new forms of social, economic, and labour organization require revision. Finally, given its intermediate position, the connection between primary education output and higher education input, derived from the continuous increase in years of compulsory education over the past century, has also transformed secondary education into “basic” education, leading to successive reforms during the twentieth century. All these transformations require historical systematization and conceptual analysis.

Call for Papers for ISCHE Conference in Athens

For the upcoming ISCHE conference, the SWG welcomes papers for presentations in two sections. The proposals may either address one or the other. Also, the SWG will assemble online and onsite sessions and receive proposals in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Section 1: Historical studies on secondary education (including transversal approaches)

- History, circulation of discourses, and practices that shaped secondary education.
- Curriculum organization, tracks, teaching methods, assessment, and outcomes.
- Students, adolescence, and identity.
- Teachers, teacher education, and professional development.
- Social class, gender, ethnicity, equity, and empowerment.
- School types, facilities, and material culture.

Section 2: Secondary education from the 1960s to the 1990s

- Secondary education reforms.
- Secondary education expansion, the role of secondary education in compulsory schooling, and the relations with other education levels.
- Educational policies, international organizations and (comparative) perspectives related to secondary education.
- Diversification of secondary education and development of vocational and other alternative tracks to traditional schooling and training for adolescents and youth.
- Primary sources (and findings) for studying secondary education through alternative approaches: body, (in)discipline, assessment, buildings, among others.

Proposals submission

Submissions are to be made via the ISCHE submission system at: www.conftool.org/ische47

For further information on the submission process, please see: <https://www.ische.org/ische-conference/upcoming-conferences/ische-47-athens/how-to-submit-to-ische-47/> .

Please submit your proposal by selecting the respective SWG in the Abstracts area, where you can also choose the language and modality of participation.

Participants will be notified by March 2026.

Welcome to *Notre tout puissant Empire du milieu: histories of secondary education!*

The SWG Convenors,

Felicitas Acosta, Universidad Nac. de General Sarmiento/Universidad de La Plata, Argentina

Antonio Canales Serrano, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Luís Grosso Correia, Universidade do Porto, Portugal