You are cordially invited to attend:

“SCHOOLSCAPES”

Educational Imaginaries in Comparative and International Contexts

A conference sponsored by
The Centre for Comparative and International Education Research (CCIER)
Department of Education, University of Oxford (OUDE)
Wednesday, 29 May 2013 @ 15 Norham Gardens

8:45 - 9 AM  Welcome and Opening Remarks: David Johnson, Amy Stambach, David Mills

9 AM – 11 AM  PANEL ONE: Citizens, Subjects, Students

“I want to be an Alima who is a Doctor”: Contesting Dilemmas and Everyday Negotiation in a Girl’s Madrasa in Delhi
Hem Borker, OUDE DPhil Candidate

The Education of Young American Muslims: Religious Knowledge and Authority
Zainab Kabba, OUDE DPhil Candidate

Ideological Rhetoric, Pragmatic Desires, and Global Horizons: Chinese middle school education as infrastructures of desire
Peidong Yang, OUDE DPhil Candidate

High School as a Site for Student Exploration of Citizenship in a Changing Socio-political Landscape: A Case of Lahore, Pakistan
Soufia Siddiqi, OUDE DPhil Candidate

11 – 11:15 AM  Break

11:15 – 1:15 PM  PANEL TWO: Education and Im/mobility

Integration or Segregation? Teachers’ Attitudes toward the Immigrant Children’s Ethnic Identity and Culture in Japan
Fumiko Takahashi, Sociology DPhil Candidate

Urban Aspirations: Rural Migrants’ (Dis)illusions and Urban Higher Education in Kathmandu, Nepal
Andrea Koelbel, OUCE DPhil Candidate

Educating Dharavi: Reflecting on the Promises and Realities of Schooling in a Mumbai Slum
Laura Hakimi, OUDE DPhil Candidate

From Success to Failure: A Quick Journey
Shrochis Karki, International Studies DPhil Candidate
1:15 – 1:30  Break (Lunch provided)

1:30 – 2:30  Keynote Talk  
Chinese Patriotic Education in the Internet Era  
Dr. Annie Hongping Nie  
Institute for Chinese Studies  
University of Oxford

2:45 – 4:45  PANEL THREE: School Contexts, Qualities, Qualifications

`Be Not Wise`: A Study of the Educational Beliefs and Practices of the Old Colony Mennonites of Canada and Mexico  
Robyn Sneath, OUDE DPhil Candidate

Models of Bilingual Education in Majority Language Contexts: An Exploratory Study of Bilingual Programmes in Qatari Primary Schools  
Fatma Al-Maadheed, OUDE DPhil Candidate

Mediating the Tension between Tradition and Modernization? Curriculum Reform and Implementation in Bhutan  
Chelsea Robbles, OUDE DPhil Candidate

Learning about Inequality at Close Range: Traditional Qur’anic Students Working as Domestics in Kano, Nigeria  
Hannah Hoechner, DPhil Candidate, Department of International Development

4:45 – 5:30  Conference synthesis and open discussion

7PM  Dinner at local venue (self-pay)

See Paper Abstracts below:
“I want to be an Alima who is a Doctor”: Contesting Dilemmas and Everyday Negotiation in a Girl's Madrasa in Delhi (Hem Borker, OUDE DPhil candidate)

The research explores the complexities of Muslim identity, gender and madrasa education through an ethnographic study of Jamia-tul-Mominaat, a girls’ madrasa in Delhi. It focuses on the experiential dimension of the girls’ everyday engagement with madrasa education and their ways of expressing themselves as educated Muslim girls. In order to understand these daily experiences, it explores the social background of girls, reasons for studying in the madrasa, aspirations, everyday dilemmas and conception of their own selves as women. The research develops an understanding of how the girls negotiate the traditional madrasa prescriptions and the new opportunities it brings. The aim is to highlight the dynamic ways in which ‘being educated in the madrasa’ influences the girls evolving identities and how this in turn contributes to the negotiation of gender in the family and wider community. This is a timely study, coming at a time when the Prime Minister’s High Level Committee Report has highlighted the educational disadvantage of Muslims in India and there is increasing prominence accorded to madrasa modernisation by the state in an effort to promote education of Muslims. The paper is based on my fieldwork in Madrasa Jamia-tul-Mominaat from September 2012 – April 2013. Fieldwork primarily involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews with girls studying in the madrasa, teachers, parents and community members and ex-madrasa students to explore the different aspects of students’ everyday experiences in the madrasa.

The Education of Young American Muslims: Religious Knowledge and Authority (Zainab Kabba, OUDE DPhil candidate)

This study explores the educational experiences of a range of young Muslims in America. Focus is placed on the ways in which they use contact with religious knowledge and authority as a way to navigate understandings of what it means to be Muslim in a secular society. The research study will use four Islamic learning environments, attended by young adults, for an ethnographic exploration of notions of religious knowledge and authority. The combined use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation spread over eight months will illuminate how knowledge is constructed, distributed, and contested by individuals and what factors play a role in these configurations. How, where, and from whom American Muslims seek knowledge informs the ways in which they navigate multiple identities and provides insight into ideas of citizenship, integral to discourses around narratives of Muslims in America and the distinct threads they weave through the social fabric of American society.

Ideological Rhetoric, Pragmatic Desires, and Global Horizons: Chinese middle school education as “infrastructures” of desire (Peidong Yang, OUDE DPhil candidate)

The landscape of middle school education in contemporary China is shaped by a plethora of social forces ranging from the historical, cultural, ideological, economic and global. This paper offers a cursory examination of some of these forces, shedding some light into Chinese public middle school education as an “infrastructure” that is conducive to producing particular desires and ways of desiring while not others. Specifically, by presenting and interpreting three sets of ethnographic data observed from a typical ‘key middle school’ in China, this paper identifies respectively three distinct tones that can be said to compose the somewhat discordant life-world of the typical Chinese middle school. Firstly, China's socialist legacy of moral education, including the education for patriotic/nationalistic and other values harking back to Communist and/or Confucian ideals, lingers on and still tries to inculcate in school students an ideologized rhetoric on certain issues. Secondly, however, the reality of today’s China as a developing country with a large population and relatively low per capita GDP means that there are intense competitions at all levels of the pyramid-shaped education system. The crucial importance of education in ensuring survival and enabling social mobilities instills in students a ruthlessly pragmatic and instrumentalist attitude towards learning and education. Yet, third, more recently, the emergence of affluent/wealthy Chinese middle and upper classes has encouraged internationalized/globalized schooling arrangements that increasingly impact on and disrupt the “indigenous” educational ecosystem in China. This makes school education in China today a fascinating phenomenon caught in between continuity and change, resilience and transition.
On Pakistani Citizenship Education (Soufia Siddiqi, OUDE DPhil candidate)
Global political analysis largely links extreme and terrorist discourse in Pakistan with the country's private religious schools, known as madressahs. On the other hand, mainstream education also appears to support a militaristic, undemocratic narrative of citizenship in the country (Ahmad, 2004; Saigol, 2005). Current research on Pakistani citizenship education is largely limited to policies, curricula and textbooks. This study explores agency among school actors, notably students, to reflect on their civic and political belonging to Pakistan as a key aspect of citizenship education. It perceives civic identity and citizenship as fluid concepts that ebb and flow with real-life values and socio-political situations intersecting with the school lives of students. Using an ethnographic approach in high school settings, the study explores pupil perspectives about school as a dynamic site for interaction and negotiation with the wider social and political dimensions of being young and Pakistani today.

Integration or Segregation? Teachers' attitudes toward ethnic identity of immigrant children in Japan (Fumiko Takahashi, DPhil Sociology)
This paper investigates how Japanese schoolteachers think about immigrant children's ethnic identities. For immigrant children, school is the first-entrance to Japanese society. It plays a significantly important role to determine how they participate in Japanese society both in cultural aspect and socio-economic aspect. In light of cultural aspect, the interaction with teachers is an important process for children to negotiate and develop his/her ethnic identity. For Japanese society, school is a window to look at Japan in the future in terms of how they can integrate the increasing immigrant children and develop ethnic relations. By conducting interviews with about 20 school-teachers for immigrant children in Japan, it found out that respecting minority culture means different depending on whether the teacher has ethnic or civic national identity. It further discusses that respect for culture may sometimes result in segregation, becoming a barrier to integration.

Urban Aspirations: Rural Migrants' (Dis)illusions and Urban Higher Education in Kathmandu, Nepal (Andrea Koelbel, School of Geography and the Environment)
Many aspiring Nepali youth have significantly contributed to the unabated population movement from the more rural parts of the country to the capital city. With the ambition to continue to higher levels of education, young people move from their rural homes to the capital city, only to find a much more heterogeneous educational landscape than they ever had imagined. By taking a comparative approach in this paper, I analyse which aspirations the young urban migrants and their non-migrant peers attach to urban higher education, how these ideas may change over time, and what the chances are for fulfilling these hopes. In this context, I discuss notions of maturity, (in)dependence and upward social mobility arguing that these constructs are largely spatially dependent. The analysis is based on insights gained through daily interactions with public university students in Kathmandu over a period of seven months in 2011/12.

Educating Dharavi: Reflecting on the promises and realities of schooling in a Mumbai slum (Laura Hakimi, OUDE DPhil candidate)
This study draws on three months of observation and a series of interviews with 25 young adults, aged 16 to 30, enrolled on an NGO-funded Youth Empowerment Program in the disadvantaged urban area of Dharavi, Mumbai. Participants reflect on their own experiences of school, the qualifications they achieve, and how this has prepared them for employment and further education. They dwell on the expectations of their own families, the ways these intersect with gender, caste and religion, and, in some cases, how the opportunities they have lacked have shaped their ambitions and desires for their own children's education. The study presents the linguistic and cultural diversity of the schooling available in Dharavi and how this is juxtaposed with increasing demand for English-medium education that is associated with social advantage and
greater employment opportunities. Indeed, those participants who have received an English-medium education reflect on the extent to which it delivers all that it promises.

From Success to Failure: A Quick Journey (Shrochis Karki, DPhil International Studies)

This paper will analyse the transition of public school students to higher education and gainful employment in Nepal. The paper begins with a brief introduction on the ‘positively deviant’ behaviour of Bhumi, a community school, to effectively manipulate the system towards effective student outcomes. The paper addresses the life trajectories of Bhumi graduates to contextualize this outcome within the larger political economy. The difficulties in accessing higher education and gainful employment demonstrate the discord between the education system and its expected outcome. Even those initially celebrated as success stories find themselves subsequently branded as failures, and contend with low level jobs that continue to place them at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Given the persistence of networks for employment, as well as the emergence of foreign employment as a viable alternative, the role of schools as sites where poor and marginalized students can attain their aspirations is under increasing scrutiny.

‘Be Not Wise’: A Study of the Educational Beliefs and Practices of the Old Colony Mennonites of Canada and Mexico (Robyn Sneath, OUDE DPhil candidate; Trudeau Scholar)

My research comprises an archival and ethnographic analysis of Canadian Old Colony Mennonites’ perceptions of the purpose of schooling and the extent to which this understanding has remained constant across time and space. In the 1920s, tensions with the government over schooling prompted the mass exodus of approximately 8,000 Mennonites from Canada to Mexico. Since then, as many as 50,000 of the descendants of the original emigrants have returned to Canada. At the root of the conflict is a fundamentally different understanding of the purpose of education; for these Mennonites, schooling serves as the primary locus through which their language, faith, and worldview are transmitted. The liberal notion of schooling as a vehicle through which autonomy and social mobility are promoted is anathema to the Old Colony vision. Ultimately, this project will contribute to knowledge about how ethnic and religious minorities use education to preserve their religious, linguistic, and epistemological boundaries.

Models of Bilingual Education in Majority Language Contexts: An Exploratory Study of Bilingual Programmes in Qatari Primary Schools (Fatma Al-Maadheed, OUDE DPhil candidate)

Following an ethnographic approach, this study explored bilingual programmes offered by two types of primary schools in Qatar: international and independent schools. Qatar with its unique linguistic and socio-economic situation launched a new initiative for educational development in 2001 but with hardly any research linked to these changes. The study reveals that the Qatari bilingual schools context was one of heteroglossia, with three codes in operation: Modern Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic dialects and English. The two schools adopted different models of bilingualism. The international school adopted a strict separation policy between the two languages following a monoglossic belief. The independent school was found to apply a flexible language policy. The study highlighted the daily challenges produced from the diglossia situation in Qatar, the difference between students and teacher dialect as well as acquiring literacy in the formal language. In addition to an absence of a clear language policy in the schools, the study brought attention to the instructional methods utilised in language teaching which are mostly associated with successful bilingual education.

Mediating the tension between tradition and modernization? Curriculum reform and implementation in Bhutan (Chelsea Robbles, OUDE DPhil candidate)

This study examines the modernization of the educational system in Bhutan. It focuses on three key dimensions. The first dimension concerns the debates and discussions surrounding the question of modernization. As is to be expected, there
are strongly held views that modernization is a ‘good’ thing for Bhutan; however, conversely, there exist equipotent views that traditional values and customs may erode in the quest for modernization. The study seeks to tease out these contestations through the examination of available text, including oral texts. The second key dimension of this study examines the translation of decisions from the aforementioned debate—n.b. modernization policies have already been shaped though the debate is ongoing—into the delivery of education. Thus, the study focuses both on curriculum policy as well as implementation strategies. Finally, the third key dimension focuses on the role of the teacher as a mediator.

Learning about inequality at close range: Traditional Qur’anic students working as domestics in Kano, Nigeria (Hannah Hoechner, DPhil, International Development) The enrolment of many boys and young men in traditional Qur’anic schools rather than formal education has become an issue of growing concern in northern Nigeria. The almajirai, the students of such schools, have attracted attention in the context of increased attempts to achieve universal primary education and growing concerns about child welfare. They have also been associated with Islamic radicalisation and militancy. Drawing on over a year of ethnographic and participatory field research, my paper embeds the experiences the almajirai make in urban Kano within an analysis of the wider political economy. I pay attention in particular to the almajirai’s roles as domestic workers, roles they often take up to sustain themselves economically during their studies. I describe the almajirai’s struggles to defend their sense of self and of purpose in a context where inequalities in terms of both material possessions and opportunities are pervasive.