

## TUESDAY, APRIL 26

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9:00am-11:00am: Panel 2

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Chair: Erdmute Alber

**Issa Tamou (LASDEL Parakou):** ‘What do you become by going to school?’ Debates on education alibis within the rural population in northern Benin. Discussant: **Liz Cooper**

**Sabrina Maurus (Universität Bayreuth):** ‘L'école ne suffit pas’ – Questioning education alibis in northern Benin. Discussant: **Adeline Masquelier**

**Adeline Masquelier (Tulane University):** “Preserving Young Girls”: Girls’ schooling, development, and the educational alibi in Niger. Discussant: **Sabrina Maurus**

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11:00am-11:30am Coffee break

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11:30am-13:30pm: Panel 3

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Chair: Wandia Njoya

**Edoardo Quaretta (Campus University, Rome):** Symbolic investment, economic indebtedness: The paradox of schooling in contemporary Democratic Republic of the Congo (Lubumbashi – Haut-Katanga). Discussant: **Issifou Abou Moumouni**

**Nicola Ansell (Brunel University):** Schooling young people for the Anthropocene? Land, livestock and learning in rural Lesotho. Discussant: **Aikande Kwayu**

**Issifou Abou Moumouni (LASDEL Parakou):** Imaginaries and positioning of illiterate people facing the challenges of education. Discussant: **Amy Stambach**

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13:30pm Lunch

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## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

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9:00-11:30am: Panel 4

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Chair: Amy Stambach

**Hildah Oburu (University of Nairobi):** Social representations of school arson in Kenya: The paradox of the school dormitory as a ‘home away from home’ and a symbol of protest. Discussant: **Issa Tamou**

**Liz Cooper (Simon Fraser University):** Exams, school arson, and lifestyle audits: The suspicious paradigm of Kenya’s education system. Discussant: **Hildah Oburu**

**Murthee Maistry (University of KwaZulu-Natal):** The paradox of South African schooling: An analysis of multiple exploitations of the education alibi. Discussant: **Erdmute Alber**

**Erdmute Alber (Universität Bayreuth):** Aspirations, frustrations and cruel optimism: Parents’ perspectives on children’s educational pathways in rural West Africa. Discussant: **Edoardo Quaretta**.

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11:30am-12:00pm Coffee break

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12:00 -13:30pm: Group discussion of emergent themes and publication plans

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13:30pm: Lunch, farewell

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# THE EDUCATION ALIBI

APRIL 25-27, 2022  
ALEXANDER VON  
HUMBOLDT-HAUS,  
EICHENDORFFRING 5,  
95447 BAYREUTH

TOWARDS A  
CRITICALLY REFLEXIVE  
PERSPECTIVE ON  
THE PARADOXES OF  
SCHOOLING IN AFRICA

CONVENORS:  
ERDMUTE ALBER,  
LIZ COOPER AND  
WANDIA NJOYA



Education – and in practical terms, schooling – has often been described as one of the most invasive outcomes and long-lasting societal changes initiated by colonial rule in African countries. In globalized educational and development discourses relating to Africa, education and schooling usually have a positive connotation, as they are believed to be key to the future of the continent. The positive images, promises, and related attempts of “education for all” have for the most part evaded fundamental critique, and if anything, they have become more powerful. The workshop takes a critically reflexive perspective on education and schooling and their inherent moralities. To prompt such reflexivity, we suggest shifting the focus to what we describe as “the education alibi” in Africa.

In conceptualizing education as an alibi we mean to shine an interrogative light on institutions’ and actors’ plausible use of education to divert scrutiny from other matters. The official story of education – and its defense against accusations of malfeasance – continues to be one of innocence and indeed of public good. Overwhelmingly, the school enrolment of children continues to symbolize access to globalized knowledge and consequently improved futures of enlightenment. Yet, schooling has, since colonial times, constituted an arena of intense contestation. Across many different African histories, education is accused of much wrongdoing and of concealing depravity. Is it possible that while claiming to be doing one thing, education has (also) been doing another? How irrefutable is the education alibi?

To question an alibi is to take a deliberately investigative step; it is an analytical methodology before becoming a theory. This workshop features papers that approach education as a site of mutually entangled social projects of (re)production and putative transformation and their inherent moralities that need first to be analyzed and then re-articulated in a manner that locates education within competing projects that operate simultaneously. What forms of sociality and anti-sociality emerge through education? How is education naturalized, popularized, ignored? How do Western models and practices of education and schooling relate and pose challenges to other models, such as “indigenous” or Islamic educational institutions and concepts, and how are these relations perceived? What historical continuities and discontinuities are expressed that divert attention from matters thought to be already solved or solvable by education? What else is exposed when education’s stories don’t hold up?



## MONDAY, APRIL 25

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13:30pm: opening and welcome

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Rüdiger Seesemann, spokesperson of the Cluster Africa Multiple

Iris Clemens, spokesperson of the Research Section Learning in the Cluster

Erdmute Alber, Liz Cooper, Wandia Njoya, convenors

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14:00pm-16:30pm: Panel 1

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Chair: Liz Cooper

Wandia Njoya (Daystar University): Preaching water and drinking wine: The Kenyan state and public education. Discussant: Tyler Hook

Tyler Hook (University of Wisconsin, Madison): Educational reform in times of crisis: The corporatization of education in Liberia. Discussant: Wandia Njoya

Amy Stambach (CPUT Cape Town and University of Wisconsin, Madison): A tangle of reasons: Unraveling the donor (as) alibi. Discussant: Murthee Maistry

Aikdande Kwayu: “Donor Funding” as alibi: Understanding government-donor differences [regarding pregnant schoolgirls’ education] in Tanzania. Discussant: Nicola Ansell

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18:30pm: Conference Dinner

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