

Dr. Valeska Huber
German Historical Institute London
17 Bloomsbury Square
GB – London WC1A 2NJ
Email: huber@ghil.ac.uk

**Session Proposal 50th German Historikertag: Winners and Losers
23-26 September 2014, Göttingen**

Title:

Making Winners? Transforming Individuals through Education in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts

Time Period:

Modern and Recent History

Abstract:

The session explores ideas and methods relating to the transformation of individuals through education. It analyses conflicting conceptions of such transformative processes in colonial and postcolonial contexts through specific examples and will investigate various technologies of crafting subjectivity in a wide range of geographical locations, targeting children and adults, men and women. Highlighting exports, transfers and entanglements, it will look at case studies connecting Britain, India and other colonial locations but also transnational actors such as missionary societies and international organisations in order to assess the different aims and objectives of educational experiments intending individual transformation.

The session topic connects with the overall theme of the *Historikertag* by asking – in a slightly provocative manner - what it takes to transform a person into a ‘winner’. Answers to this question could vary widely of course and could be based on economic or political objectives, take the society or community as a whole or focus solely on the individual. The *aim* of educational experiments could be social mobility, but also economic manpower planning, political or religious conversion, the transition from manual worker to intellectual, spiritual fulfilment or other more holistic objectives. The presentations will furthermore investigate specific experimental *methods* of how to transform individuals proposed by educationists of different affiliations. Some of the papers will emphasise the *experience* of transformation rather than its aims and methods and highlight life stories and biographies of recipients of such educational experiments. Finally the *limits* and unintended outcomes of these experiments will emerge clearly in the different contributions.

The panel covers the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and draws on a variety of localities and case studies. The largest part of the panel investigates transfers and circulations of educational ideas between Britain and its colonies in India and West Africa. The last two papers move questions of individual transformation and social mobility into postcolonial and post-industrial contexts. The contributions present research undertaken at the German Historical Institute London (GHIL) and the Transnational Research Group ‘Poverty and Education in India’ (GHIL, Centre for Modern Indian Studies Göttingen, Jawaharlal Nehru University Delhi and King’s College London) in the history of colonial and postcolonial education and connect it with studies of British and German academics in this field.

Session Programme:

Chair:

Andreas Gestrich (GHIL)

Contributions:

- 1) Jana Tschurenev (Transnational Research Group, Göttingen): ‘Good Christians, Good Men and Good Subjects’: School Discipline in England and India in the Early Nineteenth Century
- 2) Silke Strickrodt (GHIL): Perspectives on Success and Failure: Female Elite Education in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone
- 3) Georgina Brewis (Institute of Education London): ‘Nobler and Higher Selves’: Transforming Students into Servants of India and Empire
- 4) Charlotte Hastings (University of Manchester): To Transform Colonial Children? Women Teachers at 1920s Queen's College, Lagos (Nigeria)
- 5) Valeska Huber (GHIL): ‘Transforming the Masses’? Literacy Campaigns at the End of Empire
- 6) Sumeet Mhaskar (Transnational Research Group, Göttingen): Education and Transformation of Working Class Youths in Post-Industrial Mumbai

Commentary:

Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zürich)

Abstracts of papers:

Jana Tschurenev (TRG): ‘Good Christians, Good Men and Good Subjects’: School Discipline in England and India in the Early Nineteenth Century

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, English social reformers vividly debated about ‘the education of the poor’. While both liberal and conservative-minded intellectuals and civil society activists agreed on the need to provide a new form of elementary ‘Schools for All’ (James Mill, 1812), the question remained what and how to teach workers' children, and who should control the new institutions. At the same time, missionaries took the novel ‘British system’ of education - which also relied on educational experiments in colonial contexts - to the British Presidencies in India. This paper outlines the processes of educational transfer between England and the British Presidencies in India, and then continues to compare the methods used in elementary schools in England, Madras, and Bengal, in order to produce ‘good Christians, good men, and good subjects’ (Andrew Bell, 1797). It points to the local variability of modern models of school discipline, especially the differences between schools for the working class in England and ‘native schools’ in India, and argues that ‘the rule of colonial difference’ shaped the agenda of public elementary education in the early nineteenth century British Empire: reformers wanted to include all children and turn them into rational subjects, but boys and girls, English and Bengali students, were to be made ‘useful’ for society in different ways.

Silke Strickrodt (GHIL): Perspectives on Success and Failure: Female Elite Education in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone

In the nineteenth century, the British colony of Sierra Leone became the site of educational experimentation, which can be regarded as the beginning of colonial education in West Africa. The focus of these experiments were the 'recaptives', Africans who had been rescued by the British navy from 'illegal' slave vessels, liberated and settled in the colony. These individuals who had lost virtually everything (apart from their bare lives), whose ties to family, kin and community had been severed, were to be transformed into 'winners', bearers of Christianity and (British) civilisation who were to lead their unenlightened countrymen to progress. The main instruments by which this transformation was to be achieved were a variety of schools run by the colonial government, various missionary societies and private parties. In this paper, I will concentrate on female elite education, which from the 1840s became a main concern for missionary societies, and examine different perspectives on 'success' and 'failure' which the various participants in this educational transformation had. The object is to look beyond the grand narrative of the policy makers in the metropole to what actually happened on the ground, where African students, their families and missionary teachers from various national, social and confessional backgrounds had their own agendas and used the schools for their own purposes. In this context, what looks like failure from the one perspective might well be counted a success from another.

Georgina Brewis (Institute of Education, London): 'Nobler and Higher Selves': Transforming Students into Servants of India and Empire

In 1908 British missionary educator Charles Freer Andrews considered that 'one of the most striking developments of the present century has been the growing connection between students in Colleges and social work among the poor' and noted that the 'East is rapidly taking up the new social movement' (Andrews, 1908). Andrews, a lecturer at St Stephen's College, Delhi was one of a global network of social service enthusiasts who operated across colonial and state borders in the years before the First World War. This paper explores the idea of social service as a transformative pedagogic method in Indian higher education colleges in the first two decades of the twentieth century. College-based social service leagues encouraged the development of students' nobler and better selves through service. Christian colleges, in particular, encouraged service as part of a broadened curriculum aimed at making good imperial citizens. Educators placed emphasis on practical service and manual tasks that increased students' 'manliness' and promoted contact with lower castes and members of different religious communities - transforming students into 'winners' equipped to lead a future independent India with compassion and moral responsibility. However, far from being purely a British import, student social service in India was a hybrid ideal, which drew on a complex set of Christian-Idealist-reformist Hindu influences and reflected a constant interplay of ideas and practices between European and Indian educationists in India. The paper ends by showing how Indian students' take-up of social service was used by missionary educators to inspire students elsewhere in Britain, America and Australia.

Christine Hastings: To Transform Colonial Children? Women Teachers at 1920s Queen's College, Lagos (Nigeria)

This paper will focus on a colonial conflict over the transformation of young women through education. Set in 1920s Nigeria, when schooling for boys and girls was a key topic of public discussion, it demonstrates the way in which colonial ideologies over schooling diverged. Girls' schooling in British colonial Africa as for example Bastian, Leach and Strickrodt have discussed, was largely conducted by missions aiming to educate young women in western Christian ideals of motherhood and family. This paper is set in the late 1920s and 30s, and reflects

the ambiguities of colonial education policy in this period in coastal West African communities. Despite numerous private and mission girls' schools in Lagos, the colonial state established a new school, 'Queen's College' in the late 1920s. From missions' and colonial desires to educate future mothers, and Lagosian parents' aspirations for their daughters that went beyond this limited perspective, teachers were placed between these conflicting demands. Specifically, the paper will discuss the way in which the employment of British women teachers by the state, revealed this conflict over teaching children in new ways.

Valeska Huber (GHIL): 'Transforming the Masses'? Literacy Campaigns at the End of Empire

In the late colonial and early postcolonial period, mass education programmes were introduced in new scales. There were of course different justifications for such measures: they could be humanitarian, economic or arguing for the need of modern individuals to participate in the public sphere in a new way, an argument that came to be linked with reflections on decolonisation, 'democratisation' and the Cold War. In this paper, I will investigate the specific methods of the American missionary Frank C Laubach developed in the American colony of the Philippines and then adopted worldwide. The question of the envisaged individual transformation through access to reading and writing and – through this individual transformation – the transformation from 'masses' into populations able to govern themselves will be at the centre of the paper. Looking both at Laubach's methods and ideas and at different locations of implementation, among them the Philippines and India, will enable us to link the late colonial period and the Cold War era and lead us to reflections regarding the scope of his vision but also its shortcomings and local specificities.

Sumeet Mhaskar: Education and Transformation of Working Class Youths in Post-Industrial Mumbai

During the last two decades of the 20th century large scale industrial closures took place in major Indian cities such as Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Kolkata and Mumbai. The industrial closures resulted in the retrenchment of a large amount of workforce as well as a sharp decline in the employment opportunities in the formal manufacturing sector. The implications of industrial closures on the workforce and to a certain extent on their families have received significant scholarly attention. However, there remains a major gap in the literature that investigates the implications of education on the working class youths. The survey I conducted among more than 924 ex-millworkers' households in 2009 suggest that merely 8 percent children have either obtained technical education or have professional qualifications such as doctors, engineers and management professionals. About 18 percent have completed their undergraduate studies and a large majority, which is nearly 70 percent, have not studied beyond the Higher Secondary Certificate. These figures suggests that an overwhelming majority of ex-millworkers' children do not have required education and skills for employment in the service sector economy. This paper aims to explore the narratives of working youths who have managed to obtain higher education despite numerous odds - social, political and economic. It will especially examine the conditions that have been crucial for the working class youths to obtain education and move upwards economically as well as socially. This paper relies on the quantitative survey data that I have collected during 2009 and qualitative interviews with ex-millworkers children, parents and schoolteachers. In addition, personal documents, biographies, relevant reports will be consulted.