Thursday Tea Talk
Comparative & International Development Education

Come learn from and mingle with the OLPD community!
Thursday, November 12th, 4:00pm-5:00pm
Burton Hall 227

Check out the Abstract of...

Dr. Joan DeJaeghere
Associate Professor; Coordinator of CIDE; Co-PI on the Learn, Earn, and Save Initiative

Girls’ educational and livelihood aspirations and agency: Imagining alternative futures through schooling in low-resourced Tanzanian communities

The chance of a secondary education for young girls who might have otherwise been among many out-of-school youth cultivates aspirations for their future. While aspirations expand the possibilities of opportunities, they also go unfulfilled in an environment of low achievement rates, high unemployment, and constraining gender norms that can leave many secondary graduates disempowered. This study examines how aspirations, agency and future well-being are linked through four-years of longitudinal data from interviews with girls in a vocational and technical school in rural Tanzania. Conceptually, this paper situates aspirations, agency and well-being within Sen’s capability approach, while also drawing inspiration from Appadurai’s use of aspirations as a cultural concept that is future and change oriented. It also draws on Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus to look closely at how girls’ knowledge, dispositions and values change through the schooling process, and how they can draw on these new aspects of their habitus to take action in daily situations that both change their lives and the social fields in which they are situated. The papers expands on these bodies of literature to conceptualize aspirations and agency as dialectically and socially-situated, not only in gendered constraints, but in fostering new gender social norms.

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