“The Worldwide Education Revolution”

The worldwide education revolution over the past 150 years has thoroughly transformed human society. The relentless inclusion of ever more people into formal and non-formal schooling—from early childhood education to advanced university training and beyond—is a social revolution with cultural, material, and political consequences for human life around the globe. Some claim that the education revolution has fostered major improvements in the quality of social and individual life, while others are critical and highlight disappointing outcomes and persistent shortcomings of contemporary educational systems. Arguably the education revolution has created a schooled society to an unprecedented degree, and widespread education in postindustrial society has created central cultural ideas about new types of knowledge, new kinds of experts, new definitions of personal success and failure, new conceptions of the workplace and jobs, new ways to make profitable firms and to structure formal organizations, new definitions of intelligence and human talent, new styles of parenting, widespread political mobilization, new dimensions of mass religion, and more. Understanding the past, present, and future of the education revolution is a central challenge to the comparative study of education. What has been the legacy of the education revolution? What are its current challenges and promises for the future? How do the transformative and democratic effects of education interact with the social forces of inertia and inequality that still pervade the system of education in both developed and developing countries? What can comparative and international scholarship uniquely add to debate about the emerging schooled society? These and related questions are the focus of the 2012 CIES conference.