

Editors' Introduction



For most Americans, the phrase “education and war” evokes disturbing images in which the familiar iconography of schooling is corrupted by haunting features. Some imagine children sitting attentively at their desks, their orderly rows and smiling faces surrounded by battle-scarred walls and gun-wielding patrolmen. Others picture similar groups of earnest students, obediently crouching underneath their desks in a duck-and-cover position, anticipating a bomb attack. Though these images are striking and upsetting—juxtaposing standard-issue desks, lively children, and attentive teachers with the brutal symbols of organized violence—they obscure the complexity of the relationship between education and war. Throughout history and across the globe, war-torn people and states have pursued educational change in their efforts to satisfy both their wartime goals and their postwar aspirations. Schooling has not simply been a casualty of conflict, but rather has been implicated in the conduct, resistance, and aftermath of wars in complicated ways.

This volume—an examination of the interconnections between education and war—comes at a time when intense political conflict is raging in nearly every region of the world, and when the importance of educational opportunity and quality is both widely acknowledged and scrutinized. To enrich our understanding of the roles that education plays in conflict-ridden contexts, we look to lessons from the past. We searched the archives of the *Harvard Educational Review* to uncover stories and studies of teaching and learning amidst violent political turmoil, to replace the standard, simplistic conception of wartime schooling with a more multifaceted and challenging set of ideas about the forms and purposes of education during and after war.

At first, the lessons of prior conflicts appear to have little relevance today, in part because warfare itself seems to have evolved. Where previous wars were typically waged by powerful governments or regional factions, today’s militias seem more diffuse or informal. Where armies in the past relied mostly on bullets and bombs, today’s arsenals also include sophisticated microscopic, economic, and technological tools. Where the political and economic ramifications of war were once relatively contained, today the effects reverberate worldwide. Despite these developments in form, the root causes of war—struggles for power or resources, ethnic or religious domination, and political or social ideology—remain unchanged. Moreover, the social and political divisions that drive war continue to be entangled with educational institutions and programs, regardless of when and where wars happen or sophisti-

cation of the war being waged. This collection reveals how people embroiled in conflict consistently reconsider and reshape education to reflect or resist the commitments, ideals, structures, and effects of wartime. Constituents use educational institutions to disseminate and reproduce dominant ideologies or to empower and inspire those marginalized; or to simultaneously promote both oppression and liberation. The articles and essays in this volume indicate that the uses and consequences of education in times of conflict are neither incidental nor insignificant.

The fact that education plays a pivotal role in wartime is unsurprising. Educational sociologists, from Emile Durkheim to Prudence Carter, have explored the dynamic relationship between schools and societies and the co-occurrence of educational and social change. It stands to reason that these interconnections would be maintained, or even amplified, in times of violent unrest, yet there are surprisingly few published examinations of these connective threads, particularly across geographic and political contexts. While political violence itself receives abundant attention in the media and among scholars, few journalists or academics consider the role of education in these conflicts. The most prominent recent works to explore these themes focus on education as it addresses childhood trauma or promotes democratic ideals—leaving underexamined the ways schools have been used to advance or obstruct the social and political agendas underlying conflict.

In this collection, we explore the purposes and forms of educational change in wartime and postwar contexts to understand why communities and political groups consistently seek to reform or create educational opportunities in the midst or aftermath of violent turmoil. What do the various approaches to education in these contexts reveal about the roles of educational institutions for those engaged in conflict or post-conflict action? How is education implicated—intentionally or not—in the social and political aims of individuals, organizations, communities, and governments engaged in war or postwar recovery?

The Relationship between Education and War

To understand the many ways in which education is implicated in the conduct of war, we selected articles that examine both formal and informal educational settings—any spaces where teachers and students meet and join in the work of teaching and learning. Because conflict at any scale can affect the lives of students, families, and teachers, we considered manuscripts that focus on any context in which nations or factions use violence to advance their sociopolitical agendas, whether in brief skirmishes or decades-long combat. The pieces included here illuminate the multiplicity of approaches adopted by conflict-torn communities and governments attempting to reshape education in order to promote their social and political goals, and highlight both the intended and unintended effects of these efforts.

The manuscripts in the *Harvard Educational Review* archives tend to emphasize the hope and promise that education offers. While we cannot dispute the powerful potential for education to oppress and colonize, we find that the articles in this volume primarily demonstrate education's potential to liberate, resist, reinvent, empower, and transform, sometimes in unexpected ways.

We have deliberately chosen not to prioritize "neutral" perspectives. The authors represented in this volume have diverse backgrounds and roles: they are teachers, organizers, historians, activists, observers, and scholars. They take implicit and explicit political positions with respect to their subjects, reflecting the partisan reality of both conflict and educational politics. We ask readers not to look *past* these authors' stances, but rather to look *inside* their portrayals of conflict to see how education is used by and for people with particular political commitments.

Reading through the authors' positions and across wide-ranging contexts, we found recurring themes that reveal the ways in which schooling is employed as a tool of warfare and defense. First, we find evidence of the ways in which educational institutions are instrumental in the development of political, ethnic, or religious identities. Within the Nazi-run Warsaw ghetto, for example, secret schools sustained the practices, history, and customs of Jews targeted for genocide and cultural obliteration. Elsewhere, schools have been spaces in which identities are forged anew: in post-Revolutionary America political leaders called on schools to carry out republican indoctrination to inculcate the principles underlying the new nation's political structures. In other educational spaces, identities are contested: today's Palestinian American high school students struggle to maintain ties to the Palestinian people while both adopting and challenging the American norms and values propagated in their schools.

Education is also revealed as a force in the negotiation of power relations, serving as a tool for political resistance, social mobility, and/or economic development. We find that in both an El Salvadoran school and a Nicaraguan literacy campaign, enterprising twentieth-century curriculum reformers sought to remediate their countries' socioeconomic inequity by cultivating students' critical consciousness and social awareness. In the other hemisphere, Eritreans expanded educational access for women in an attempt to end gender inequality and build the human capital of their newly independent nation. Schools can also simultaneously reproduce and disrupt the social order. For instance, though the Bantu people were provided a separate curriculum meant to reinforce their subordinate status in apartheid South Africa, these educational programs also helped them develop cultural solidarity and a collective will to resist the political system of their oppressors.

Finally, the articles in this volume show that in times of conflict schools can cultivate communal dispositions toward either hope or fear. Schools promote hope through the transformative power of small acts—for instance, in an elementary school that educates Arab and Jewish students together, or in an

underground university that defied the communist Polish government's restrictions on intellectual freedom. Yet this collection also reveals that schools can shelter anxieties by failing to challenge collective fears, assumptions, and biases, by implicitly sanctioning violence, or by neglecting to teach the possibilities of peace.

Together these articles and essays suggest that no aspect of education is untouched by war; school structures, curriculum, pedagogy, access, outcomes, and personal and emotional ties to schools and colleagues are reconsidered in the wake of violence and political upheaval. Moreover, they uncover—across different contexts and conditions and through various approaches—a shared set of concerns about belonging, power, sustenance, and agency that come to the fore during times of violence and political turbulence. The numerous forms of educational change in the midst of war and recovery confirm not only that educational institutions are deeply situated in their surrounding communities and states, but also that education is often used instrumentally and intentionally to advance the wartime political and social goals of peoples and governments—often with unforeseen consequences. Across this volume, we confront both the immense potential of education to promote justice and transform societies, and the limits and disappointments of that potential.

Approaches to Educational Change During War: Reforms and New Forms

We have organized this volume around the familiar question of how educational changes happen—as reform or revolution, from the inside-out or the outside-in. We acknowledge that this dichotomy may be overly simplistic, yet this simplicity also reveals a deeper truth—that the purposes and consequences of educational change are often analogous regardless of where the change originates.

The first section of the book, *Reforms of Education Amidst Conflict*, explores wartime educational changes that originated from within existing educational systems, and how social and political change are reflected in, or leveraged by, these changes. The second section of the volume, *New Forms of Education Amidst Conflict*, investigates how education during conflict has been reconfigured from outside the institutionalized systems. These articles consider the purposes and impacts of new educational programs and structures, emerging in response to conflict, to abandon or oppose established approaches.

The pieces in each section reflect these two divergent approaches to educational change, yet we anticipate that readers will find more similarities than differences across these sections. The accounts in this collection show that wartime and postwar educational initiatives, whether originating within or outside existing systems, produce expected as well as unanticipated social and political ramifications, and may succeed and fail as agents of change.

Education and Conflict Today

We offer this book at a time when America is engaged in military battles half a world away, and Americans grapple with a diffuse “war on terror” that is both everywhere and nowhere. Even though the country is embroiled in conflict, many Americans have largely been shielded from its impact, and are rarely forced to consider how education is affected by and involved in these battles. While there are no armed soldiers or duck-and-cover drills in today’s American classrooms, our schools are no less implicated in contemporary conflicts than are those examined in this collection. Educators today, like those in past wars, are struggling with how to teach their students about political and global conflicts and about their country’s involvement and influence around the world. Educational institutions continue to shape students’ developing and shifting identities, contributing to the perpetuation or contradiction of forms of racial, ethnic, and religious oppression that incite violent conflicts around the world. Classrooms in America, like those in other war-torn nations, harbor collective hope for social change and improvement, as well as people’s fears of the distant and unfamiliar.

This book offers lessons for educators around the world to consider how conflict affects and engages all teachers, learners, schools, and societies. In particular, we challenge the educational community in America to abandon the simplistic images that come to mind when we think about education and war. We invite readers to reflect on the ways our own teaching practices, interactions with students, and research agendas take certain approaches and political ideas for granted. We ask educators to contemplate the ways in which violent political conflict shapes and pervades our lives and work, despite the distance of geography and years that may separate us from war. Most important, we call on each reader to consider how to uncover and disrupt the ideological agendas and persistent fear that keep us from using education as a means to envision and enact a more peaceful and just world.

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