

# An Historical Perspective on Coordinating Education Post-Conflict: Biopolitics, Governing at a Distance, and States of Exception

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## Abstract

*This article analyzes a 1944 publication entitled International Relief in Action 1914-1943: Selected Records with Notes alongside the 2004 standards for education in emergencies that were developed by INEE (the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies). In doing so, the author aims to reveal how biological life, expectations of individual, and social collectivities are conceptualized in relation to one another. The author argues that the contrast between the 1944 and the 2004 realities demonstrates a shift from a "eugenic" model to a greater focus on individual well-being, and that this shift has significant implications for how communities and society are organized and valued.*

“There can hardly be any question that contemporary knowledge and the best of professional practice in public and private community service must be mobilized in order to meet the peculiar challenge of international aid to social reconstruction.” As an introductory comment on the topic of “education in emergencies”, the theme of the present issue of *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, we may laud and welcome on many levels the vision and call to action expressed in this quote. While these words may be appropriate to our present moment, they come in fact from a 1944 text intended to help prepare relief workers for meeting the refugee crises of that time and the post-conflict reconstruction projects then on the horizon. I propose that bringing a comparative historical frame to bear on the standards for education in emergencies developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in 2004 can help to reveal the political and cultural logics embedded in the roles and social purposes that education is being envisioned to play in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction.

Harnessing education to post-conflict reconstruction can be viewed in terms proposed by Giorgio Agamben (2005) as a “state of exception” that normalizes an existing order within which the “exception” becomes increasingly less exceptional. This essay examines the ways that educational emergencies can be turned into opportunities for the extension of authority over others (particularly around the *control of life*) as well as occasions for the translation of global discourses within specific localities.

Despite the tendency to view education in emergency as an aberration to the ordinary business of schooling, there is much to suggest that there are fundamental ways in which modern educational practices grow out of and are linked to such settings. The specter of violence and civil unrest has haunted the provision of mass education from its earliest incarnations. Ian Hunter (1994) argues that the religious wars of seventeenth century Europe produced a host of educational imperatives linked to liberal notions of tolerance and freedom. From Hunter’s perspective, however, stabilizing individuals’ private dispositions through notions of liberty and self-governance was less an expansion and materialization of democratic political philosophy than a pragmatic, administrative mechanism designed to regulate societies in a way that tempered fratricidal violence (see also Popkewitz, forthcoming, 2007). This is consonant with one of the key arguments of Michel Foucault’s (1979) *Discipline and Punish*, which maintains that schools

pioneered disciplinary techniques of self-reflection and self-control that were then taken up by other social institutions. Schools have historically served as a site where the efforts of state and non-state actors align in the project of producing modern, governable subjects who are both docile and productive. Clearly there are many ways to analyze education reform projects in post-conflict and emergency settings. The analytic strategy taken here is to look at these initiatives as embodying a politics of managing biological life, regulating individual conduct, and fostering desirable, “proper” social assemblages. When we look comparatively at instances of educational reconstruction from 1944 and 2004, it becomes clear that there are critical shifts in how biological life, individual conduct and social collectivities have been put into relation with one another. The central argument made below is that in the 1944/2004 contrast we witness a shift away from a “eugenic” model to a focus on individual well-being that has profound implications for how communities and “the social” are organized and valued.

### **An Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 1944**

The quote that opens this essay comes from an instance of an inter-agency collaboration that was put together as World War II seemed to be drawing to a close. A partnership between three different relief-active US-based religious organizations, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Brethren Service Committee, and the Mennonite Central Committee resulted, in 1944, in the publication of a volume titled *International Relief in Action 1914-1943: Selected Records with Notes*. The book was expressly designed as a teaching aid along the lines of a textbook for relief workers; it featured 57 two to three page profiles of various relief efforts undertaken over the previous thirty years. Each relief effort profile also included six to ten discussion questions for readers to consider. The project was overseen by Hertha Kraus, at the time a professor of social work at Bryn Mawr College. Kraus, who was of German-Jewish origin, had been involved in Quaker relief services in Berlin after World War I, and was forced from her position as head of the Cologne department of public welfare with the Nazi takeover in 1933 (Bussiek, 2003). Eldon Burke, a 1936 University of Chicago PhD in history and member of the Church of the Brethren, also collaborated in the project.[2] When the volume was prepared, allied victory seemed within grasp and each of the three sponsoring organizations was already enough involved in relief efforts to know that the cessation of hostilities would reveal an extensive need for reconstruction projects in conflict-affected countries around the globe.

For comparative purposes, and admittedly somewhat fancifully, I am proposing we treat the collaborative project of these three US-based protestant denominations long known as “peace churches” as an inter-agency network. My objective is not to point out that “we have done this before”; it is to discern ways that what is occurring now is both similar to and different from what has historically occurred in this arena. To be sure, using the 1944 instance as a reference point is problematic in that the 57 project records collected in Quaker-Brethren-Mennonite collaboration are not restricted to child welfare and education-related projects. In contrast, though the INEE *Minimum Standards* do touch on many more aspects of chronic crises and emergencies than schooling (for example, in the “Assessment Framework” and “Situation Analysis Checklist”, *Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies*, 2004), they are chiefly concerned with educational provision and policy. Alongside this, one cannot fail to note that a much broader coalition of agencies has been assembled in the present day INEE effort, including international NGOs, UN agencies, and the World Bank, in addition to religiously affiliated organizations. It also bears mentioning that the two cases are ill-matched in terms of significance or consequence, given the much greater scale of INEE efforts and uncertainty on the extent to which Hertha Kraus’s project did in fact influence reconstruction after World War II, and the analysis that follows should certainly not be taken as an exhaustive characterization of all relief efforts undertaken in

the mid/late 1940s. Nevertheless, the 1944/2004 comparison is useful for revealing changes in philosophy and social/cultural assumptions about education in emergencies. Despite the above caveats, a certain comparability is established by virtue of the fact that both instances are projects of creating standards, establishing best-practices, and building professional expertise through training initiatives. In 1944, the training was to take place through the formation of study groups whose discussions about the book would result in “exploratory trips along the highways and byways of foreign service planning” (Kraus, 1944); since 2004, training has been taking place through INEE’s aggressive Training of Trainers (TOT) initiative. This article focuses on what were and are held as appropriate standards and best-practices in each instance.

### **Biopolitics and Distancing “Life” from Eugenics**

At an inescapable level, loss of life, its increasing precariousness, and threats to its healthy perseverance or flourishing, consistently form the background problem which education in emergencies and chronic crises attempts to address. Yet, how “life” is conceptualized in relation to both human bodies and social bodies is anything but fixed and constant. In this section I will argue for there being a fundamental difference with respect to bio-power and the politics of life between the following two notions:

- “The central goal [of international relief] will spring from faith in the supremacy of personal values applied to the concrete challenge of our day: rehabilitation of Man himself, so that all men in all countries may have a greater chance and freedom to function on their highest level.” (Kraus, 1944, p. 215)
- “Education is not only a right, but in situations of emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction, is a necessity that can be *life-saving* and *life-sustaining*, providing physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection.” [emphasis in original] (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2007)[3]

Michel Foucault (1978) identified two poles around which power over life has evolved since the seventeenth century. He argued that one can speak of an “anatomo-politics of the human body” that took the form of regulations that optimized the capabilities and machine-like efficiencies of individual bodies, as well as of a “biopolitics of the population” that set its sights on the “species body” and concerned itself with birth rates, life expectancy, aggregate levels of health, and the like (p. 139). In the nineteenth century these two poles were brought together in the form of concrete arrangements, such as in the deployment of sexuality and, I would add, post-conflict reconstruction efforts. When discussing the notion of “bio-power”, to name the joining of individual health with populational health, Foucault offered the following:

For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being into question. (p. 143)

The injustices that human politics bring upon human life come into high relief in post-conflict emergencies; the effects of “natural” disasters should also be seen in connection with human politics, a point well illustrated by Hurricane Katrina as well as a host of less well-renowned disasters in other parts of the world. Yet, in Foucault’s argument, the point is not that the most formidable power human societies face is simply the power over death. He notes that “it is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race” (p. 137) that modern governments have been able to wage war. The fruitful management of life and survival are the preeminent concerns

of education in emergencies. In the 1944 instance at hand, one finds the management of life discussed in “eugenic” terms, which I broadly define as a political rationality that establishes fundamental linkages between the individual and the “social body”.

In her introduction to the 1944 volume, Hertha Kraus underscored the importance of integrating foreign aid with national planning. This of course would be difficult in situations that called for “speedy, spontaneous improvised service” (p. 1), but it was held up as the ideal standard towards which aid workers should strive. Returning people to proper collective living was set as the chief goal of social reconstruction and the restoration of “organized services to the millions so that each individual may find the right response to bitter needs which he cannot meet alone” (p. 216). The 1944 excerpt bulleted above speaks to a human flourishing underpinned by opportunity and freedom, yet the text goes on to specify the three domains in which it was apparently most critical to function at the “highest level”:

- In the family area – as provider, as the educator of the young, and as the anchor of emotional security and stability.
- In the economic area – as manager, producer, and consumer.
- In the political area – *as the vital cell of an ordered community*, as leader or willing follower in national and international co-operation. [emphasis added] (p. 216)

One sees in this an anatomo-politics of the human body, concerned with people’s capacities for economic productivity (as “provider” and “producer”) and proper pro social dispositions (“emotional security and stability”), melded with the biopolitics of population, most notably captured in the notion that human political existence needed to be reworked so that each individual formed one “vital cell of an ordered community”.

Eugenics as a twentieth-century social movement encompassed a variety of projects ranging from being concerned with fashioning “fitter families” and “better babies” to advocating forced sterilization and racial “purification” policies (Selden, 1999; Kline, 2001). I am applying the term “eugenic” to speak broadly about an interest in rationally planning the quality of a population. This is a theme that is common on an operational level to both racial betterment advocates and public health educators (Rose, 2007). Given the repugnant Nazi policies of racial purity in the background of the 1944 efforts to prepare people for post-conflict reconstruction work, it is ironic to find eugenic themes in the standards for social reconstruction that were presented as antidote and solution to the problems created during the second World War. Nonetheless, if we concern ourselves with the larger cultural formations and discursive regimes that simultaneously enable and limit what it is possible to think and do at any given moment, this should not necessarily be a surprise.[4] Even though the guiding principles for post-conflict reconstruction in this 1944 instance were seemingly humanistic and centered on enhancing human potential, they demonstrate an unsettling compatibility with a eugenic perspective on bio-power that takes population, nation and the productive quality of bodies as foremost concerns.

My purpose in engaging in such an extensive analysis of this one historical document is, as stated previously, to see what it might illuminate about the INEE efforts of the present. To aid this illumination, we can turn to a comment Rose offers on the distance between our present political and biomedical circumstances and the eugenic body that occupied center stage from the nineteenth century through the late twentieth century:

the political rationalities of our present are no longer inspired by the dream of taking charge of the lives of each in the name of the destiny of all ... The ideal of an omniscient social state that would shape, coordinate, and manage the affairs of all sectors of society has fallen into disrepute. The idea of "society" as a single, if heterogenous, domain with a national culture, a national population, a national destiny, coextensive with a national territory and the powers of a national political government has entered a crisis. (2007, p. 62)

If states (and international agencies) are no longer chiefly preoccupied with managing populations en masse, this does not mean that they have abandoned the politics of subjecting life to judgments of value. Rose proposes that "quality is no longer evolutionary fitness but quality of life, the political territory of society gives way to the domesticated spaces of family and community" (p. 64). These shifts seem very much captured in the contrast between the 1944 and 2004 instances of inter-agency collaboration on post-conflict reconstruction. In framing education as "not only a right" but "a necessity that can be *life-saving* and *life-sustaining*" the INEE standards bring to the table a perspective on bio-power that takes life as it is lived in its everyday respects as the object of management, furtherance, and improvement.

INEE documents place great emphasis on community partnership, something that I will be returning to in the following section. However, in reference to the bio-politics of human life that is connected with educational reconstruction post-conflict, it is important to note that with the INEE, *national* community membership and the furtherance of the national social body are no longer the ultimate goals of reconstruction. Quite tellingly, the online overview to the INEE minimum standards notes that they are intended to "give guidance and flexibility in responding to needs at the most important level – the community" (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2007). Harmonization with national education programs is a concern within the minimum standards, though more as a matter of technical optimization of programs than good social governance (in the sense, for example, of facilitating an inclusive, democratic politics). It is worthwhile to note that the mandate to strengthen national education programs appears as merely one of the indicators within the "analysis strategies" to be used in developing "response strategies" (p. 24). In place of the national "corporate" entity, political authority is seen to reside in the local community. "Community participation" is set as one of two standards common to all categories and is defined as "allow[ing] members of an affected population to be heard, empowering them to be part of decision-making processes and enabling them to take direct action on education issues" (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2004, p. 12). With this view of "community" as something to be animated, enabled, and facilitated, we have traveled some distance from Kraus's "ordered community" within which the optimal individual functioning is as a *vital*, constitutive cell. No longer does vitality serve the community; for INEE, community serves vitality.

If, as just proposed, we have identified a fundamental reconfiguration of eugenic body and body politic, the question still stands as to what form of biopolitics is embedded in the notion that post-conflict education needs be "life-saving and life-sustaining". Based on an examination of contemporary biomedicine Nikolas Rose (2007) notes that we are increasingly seeing a "molecularization" of life that blurs the boundaries between treatment and prevention as well as between natural and prosthetic. Rose also points to the restructuring (at least in certain cultural settings), of "health" as no longer simply the avoidance of sickness and premature death, but as corporeal optimization that encompasses a wide range of factors and leads to an overall "well-being". It is in this milieu that notions such as "lifestyle" become imbued with an ethical dimension.

Rose refers to “somatic individuality” as the new model of this kind of subjectivity and proposes that we are increasingly seeing claims for “biological citizenship” and “a universal human right to the protection ... of each human person’s bare life and the dignity of their living vital body” (2001, p. 21). A central aspect of this human rights discourse is that human beings appear not to need to ground their claims for protection on the basis of political and social collectivities, rather merely in the name of their *biological* existence.[5] INEE documents clearly exhibit this new biopolitics in the notion that the life-saving and life-sustaining post-conflict education should provide “physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection” (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2007) – sentiments that also pervade the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a politics of risk management in these protections that could be subject of an article in itself,[6] and for present purposes we can focus on the prevalence in INEE documents of the concept of “psycho-social well-being” as a key indicator of a shift away from an anatomo-politics of the human body centered on docility and productivity. The new politics of life embedded in contemporary post-conflict educational reconstruction can certainly be welcomed for ethically prioritizing the individual, though – cribbing Foucault’s dictum that “everything is dangerous” – we would do well to remain cognizant of the forms of social responsibility that can be lost when the relationship between individual and social bodies is reconfigured to focus nearly exclusively on molecular and corporeal vitality.

### **Community, Stakeholding, and Governing at a Distance**

Community involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and appreciation of local cultural contexts were central concerns of the 1944 inter-agency network. The importance of “different attitudes, different values, and different community resources” (1944, p. 2) is a common theme across Kraus’s volume and the following two discussion questions are representative of the approach taken. These particular questions followed a case study of 1919 Quaker relief work in provisioning rural Serbian villages with agricultural tools, building material, and food and medical supplies. Relief workers in training were asked, among other considerations, to ponder:

4. Is it desirable to co-operate with an established civic committee which has previously had responsibility for some related function, or would you rather develop a new committee to co-operate with your service? ...
5. How does the status of women in a given culture affect their potential contribution to a community service? How can we discover and understand their status within the culture in which our service operates? (1944, p. 47)

The first question usefully directs our attention to the ways that international post-conflict aid has great potential for restructuring local communities. The second can be read as a deep appreciation of the necessity for flexibility and adaptation to local circumstances in reconstruction projects. One might choose to see these two gestures as at odds with one another; however, I think the larger point is that any policy action calibrated on “local context” invariably reconfigures that “context”. [7] In the previous section, I argued that coordination with national-level planning and the national polity had moved from being a matter of good, democratic governance (1944) to a matter of technical optimization (2004). Here, conversely, as I will demonstrate, we have a reverse parallel: cultural context and community involvement move from being mere matters of technical effectiveness (1944) to issues closely linked with social and political governance (2004).

The INEE minimum standards deploy notions of community and participation that help us better understand a set of regulative social mechanisms that are becoming increasingly standardized across the globe. The standards suggest that contemporary reconstruction projects in post-conflict

and chronic crisis situations are efficiently promoting a certain type of state and certain kinds of political rationalities. INEE documents note that community participation in emergency education programs can take symbolic/token or “full” forms, observing that the former is considerably less effective for ensuring lasting, quality programs than the latter. Moreover, alongside measures of program adequacy, INEE carefully specifies a number of key indicators (and provides additional “guidance notes”) to ensure that “emergency-affected community members actively participate in assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the education programme”. Among the procedures that the minimum standards recommend are the formation of “community education committees” that draw their membership from youth and women’s groups, parents and parent organizations, local agencies, and civil society organizations. INEE documents explicitly state that the responsibilities and activities that characterize this community-based approach are to leave an imprint on the affected areas, as such an approach “will help to create structures (if they are not already in place) and strengthen existing structures” (2004, p. 15). The community education committee is set as one of the key stakeholders in emergency education projects, and – in language that seems to be stubbornly determined to bring about its own reality – is charged with working with “the community ... through a participatory grass-roots planning process” that aims to result in a “community-based education action plan” (p. 16).

The “will to community” that pervades the INEE minimum standards is by no means unique in our present day and age. One could quite reasonably point to the volumes of social capital research (e.g. Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003) or even communitarian political philosophy (e.g. Sandel, 1996; Walzer, 1983) to explain the practical and salvational promise that “community” now holds across multiple social domains. It is important, however, to remember that community-based audits and community-based action plans are regulative social mechanisms which embody political rationalities that specify what is proper for both the state and the individual. These mechanisms presume a state that seeks to decentralize decision-making and devolve its authority. In place of intimate involvement in the day-to-day lives of its citizens, this is to be the kind of state that governs at a distance (see, Franklin, Bloch, & Popkewitz, 2003).[8] Community-based politics are clearly predicated on an appreciation of the associational lives of citizens. Nonetheless, the concept of membership, inasmuch as it operates as a human right, also establishes responsibilities and normalizes enthusiasm, initiative, dedication, and perhaps volunteerism as the proper dispositions and behaviors of community “members”. It is ironic that, given the commitment to diversity and pluralism embedded in much of the contemporary rhetoric of community, this mode of social regulation in effect propagates a moral code anchored in principles that are held to be natural, obvious, uncontestable, and appropriately universal (Rose, 2000). We see a politics around membership at play in the INEE minimum standards’ requirement that community education committees be largely formed from existing associational matrices. A broad base of membership becomes the grounds that legitimate actions taken by such entities and, as a result, qualify them as social actions.

The individuals who are to participate in “community involvement” clearly must possess some of the characteristics that Meyer and Jepperson identify as central to the increasingly prevalent modern notion of “agentic actorhood”, notably an “extreme readiness” (2000, p. 107) to act as the authorized agents for broader interests and for other individuals. In this regard, we can cite the INEE mandate that communities willfully – and, in fact, as one of their organizing principles – attend to vulnerable groups that fall within their catchment areas. Through membership, the engaged individual is to be *of* the community, *for* the community, and ought to have the sensibilities and dispositions to match. INEE strategies of coalition-forming and techniques of reconstituting the bases for collective action may turn out to be entirely sound responses to post-

conflict and chronic crisis situations. Nonetheless, it would seem prudent to proceed with an awareness that the virtuous community and the civility that is supposed to accompany it are contestable, idealized creations, as well as forms of governance specific to particular times and places.

### **Conclusion: States of Exception**

Emergencies readily become excuses for intervention. At the outset of this piece, I referred to Giorgio Agamben's concept of the "state of exception" as a way of aligning the post-conflict situation with his argument that through the disruption of "normal" social operations sovereignty establishes itself and its objects. Agamben (1998) argues that control over and transformation of bare life are the fundamental operations of sovereignty, which accordingly positions the concentration camp as a paradigmatic case of modern biopower (c.f., Foucault, 1978). Following Rose (2001; 2007), I have argued that contemporary politics of life represent a different, non-eugenic form of bio-politics, which we see embedded in the INEE minimum standards. Post-conflict and chronic crisis settings afford opportunities for the propagation of a view of life that no longer needs a social body to be transformed into a good life (*eu zēn*) and can instead pivot on notions such as "well-being" for its optimal realization and fulfillment. Nonetheless, engagement with collective social forms clearly remains central, as I have argued above with respect to INEE's community-based features. I have maintained that political technologies and technologies of the self elide one another as education is deployed in emergency situations. The contrast between the 1944 instance of an inter-agency network dedicated to training and developing professional practices and the contemporary instance of a similar phenomenon sheds light on what of consequence is occurring when education is viewed as a life-saving and life-sustaining necessity and when community participation standard number one is simply "participation". We also gain insight into the role that education plays in governing societies, which is not solely through the exercise of the school's mandate to raise children in the proper sorts of ways. Instead, the projects of education, establishing schools, analyzing needs, and evaluating outcomes, etcetera, advance political rationalities and regulative ideals that supervise the textures and meanings of ethical practice.

### **Notes**

- [1]. I am indebted to Amy Shuffelton, Emily Warren, and Carrie Rackers for reading drafts of this article and for discussions on the issues raised here.
- [2]. Both Kraus and Burke later played active roles in reconstruction and relief efforts after World War II - Kraus advised the American military government, was an AFSC delegate to Germany, and was involved with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA); Burke served as the American representative to the Council of Relief Agencies Licensed to Operate in Germany (CRALOG).
- [3]. There are minor textual differences between (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2004) and excerpts from the document that are posted on the INEE website <http://www.ineesite.org/>. The present analysis makes use of both sources.
- [4]. Wendy Kline (2001) offers the provocative argument that the "golden age" of the Eugenics movement in the United States occurred much later than historians typically acknowledge. She maintains that the cultural significance that "good parenting" took on in the 1950s had its roots in the fitter families campaigns of the 1930s, thus positioning eugenics as a much more significant twentieth-century cultural and social movement than is sometimes acknowledged.



- [5]. This is not to say that seventeenth century natural right philosophers (e.g. Locke) didn't appreciate human life, rather that their claims about the entitlements of existence were grounded in concepts other than the "biological".
- [6]. There is extensive literature on the management of risk as a key element of social governance in our present day and age. See, e.g., the journal *Risk & Society* as well as (Beck, 1992, 1999; Ericson, 2005; Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2007; Rose, 1999).
- [7]. One might point to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle as the theoretical warrant for this assertion, though I think it would be equally effective to argue that the contemporary enthrallment with "context" is guided by assumptions about what constitute legitimate "contextual" categories that end up being remarkably continuous with the much critiqued, traditional anthropological notion of "culture" as a reified causal explanatory matrix.
- [8]. See (Callon & Latour, 1981) for the classic exposition of the concept of "governing-at-a-distance".

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