

Douglas E. Delaney, Robert C. Engen, and Meghan Fitzpatrick, eds.

Military Education and the British Empire, 1815–1949

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018. 244 pp.

Military Education and the British Empire provides an overview of military education in the period between the Napoleonic Wars to the end of the Second World War. With a distinct focus on officer education, this work explores the organization of staff and military colleges in Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and India across air, army, and naval services. This collection makes important contributions to on-going historiography by centring military education as a point of analysis rather than treating it as an aside and by placing it within a transnational context.

The anthology's eleven chapters touch on three central themes of interoperability, adaptability, and socialization to explore how relationships between military colleges facilitated cooperation across British imperial forces. These relationships took a variety of forms and included shared curricula, instructors, and students. However, the collection also highlights important distinctions between approaches to military education in the British empire that emerged through articulations of settler nationalism. For example, the Canadianization of curricula at Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston by 1945 included more frequent case studies of Canadian military operations and closer connections to the United States (221). Still, the collection explores how interoperability or a shared common understanding of approach, policies, and language were shared goals of imperial military education.

The collection also explores the theme of adaptability and the role of military education as “a generator of institutional knowledge and thinking to improve effectiveness” (6). Contributors examine a variety of approaches to military education related to academics, length, and focus. The length of programs ranged from a few weeks to four-year bachelor's degree programs. These programs aimed to provide knowledge and training to help students adapt to the demands of military service and shifted to address urgent mobilization during the world wars. Pedagogically, military colleges engaged students in their subjects using detailed case studies and offering strategic education in subjects including military history. For example, a “mixed syllabus” could include both local and imperial examples in content and instruction (90).

In their pedagogical approach, and in the subjects they taught, institutions for military education aimed to shape students into citizen soldiers. Socialization and cultivating “an appreciation of culture” was an important part of military education (109). Identity, and a shared imperial approach to it, “was at the heart of the matter” (233). Two particularly interesting examples of socialization are explored through military education at Quetta Staff College (Pakistan) and South African Military College. At Quetta, a common approach to teaching and education was adopted across all ranks of the Indian army. Cultural and religious differences between Indian and British soldiers had to be bridged in many areas, including language (176–8). After the South African War (1899–1902), the new South African defence force “became both a driver and a visible affirmation of union” bringing together men

who had been fighting a decade earlier to train at the South African Military College (85). The collection mentions other forms of socialization at military colleges such as—housing for officers and families, student groups and initiatives,—however, these examples remain generally outside the book's focus on institutional histories, leadership, and curricula.

This more limited view of military education leaves the education of nurses, women's auxiliary forces, and militia regrettably out of scope, as were connections with military education and organizations such as the Scouts, Girl Guides, cadets, and public schools. The voices of students themselves are generally overshadowed by a focus on correspondence between senior leadership, published official histories, or course texts. Perhaps future work that builds on this foundational text will explore intersections of military education with other educational systems, particularly public schools where military education was often part of curricula, and with ideals of imperial masculinity and citizenship.

In general, and with a few exceptions, gender, race and empire sit at the margin for much of the collection's analysis. As agents of empire, institutions for military education were also agents of colonial violence. Discussions about how racial and gendered ideologies of patriarchal white supremacy shaped who was let into military educational systems—and who was kept out and policed—feels left hanging in the balance. So too does the reality that staff, officers, and recruits who trained at these military institutions participated in colonial violence. A growing scholarship has demonstrated the pervasive and damaging ways imperialism takes hold through educational systems. Future studies could build on this work's strong foundation by more directly exploring military education as part of the British imperial project.

Mary Chaktsiris
York University

Paul Bocking

Public Education, Neoliberalism, and Teachers: New York, Mexico City, Toronto

Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2020. 299 pp.

Paul Bocking was introduced to educational politics at an early age, as he explains in the preface to *Public Education, Neoliberalism, and Teachers: New York, Mexico City, Toronto*. From his mother, a teacher, he learned how fragile professional autonomy—an educator's ability to shape the dynamics of the classroom free of outside interference—had become over the course of her decades-long career. As Bocking himself became a teacher in the early-2000s, he saw the problem getting exponentially worse, and came to see that neoliberalism, a governing philosophy which seeks to “realign [the] form and content” of public institutions with “for-profit rationalities,” was at the heart of the problem (3). In this book, based upon his doctoral work in labour geography, Bocking examines how neoliberalism has taken root in three