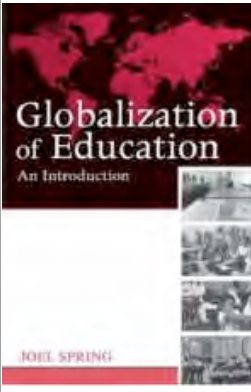


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Globalization of Education		
Author:	Joel Spring (2008)	
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Joel Spring, the author of *Globalization of Education* (2008), currently teaches at Queen’s College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His research interests include such topics as history of education, multicultural education, Native American culture, the politics of education, global education, and human rights education (City University of New York Graduate Center). Spring has written a myriad of books including: *How Educational Ideologies are Shaping Global Society* (2004), *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy* (1998), *American Education* 11th ed. (2003), and *The American School 1642-2004* 6th ed. (2005). Through Spring’s writing and study of schools and education, he has acquired the knowledge base to thoroughly and decisively dissect the influence of globalization on education—the topic he addresses in *Globalization of Education*.

In *Globalization of Education*, Spring investigates the impact of globalization on education and ultimately reveals an underlying idea: global macro decisions made at the superstructure level trickle down to micro decisions made at the local level. Once Spring puts forth this theory, the rest of the book serves as a platform to further delineate the connection between globalization and its influence on local education. To understand this point, keep in mind that the superstructure level essentially equates to such international organizations as the World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—to name a few. Because these organizations provide

international guidance and financial assistance, they influence on a global level the educational policies and decisions made by local school systems. Thus globalization is not just a nebulous macro phenomenon; instead it is an international force experienced at the local level, hence such terms as glocalization—the combination of global and local.

Spring offers several useful examples to illustrate this global-local connection, including a description of OECD international education policies. For its part, OECD promotes the standardization of education; a policy that among other things mandates the implementation of an accountability model to assess school performance at an international level. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) serves as the worldwide accountability tool utilized by OECD to measure the academic performance of students in mathematics, reading, and science. As Spring explains, due to the international desire to demonstrate proficiency on PISA, this OECD policy pressures nationwide education systems in various ways. For example, “Wanting to impress their national leaders, school officials hope their students do well on these tests in comparison to other countries. The consequence is a trend to uniformly national curricula . . .” (p. 62). Ultimately, this example portrays the chain of influence from global superstructure agencies on down to local education systems.

The question, in the end, that Spring seems to ponder involves measuring how the global reach effects local education. For Spring, the response depends upon one’s perspective. Throughout the book, Spring analyzes the impact of globalization via various theoretical frameworks with the purpose of providing the tools needed to interpret the effects of globalization. These theoretical frameworks include the world education culture model, world system and postcolonial/critical model, and culturalist model. Spring utilizes these various analytic models in order to illustrate the interpretive differences that individuals possess when considering specific global scenarios. For example, Spring contrasts the world culture view with the postcolonial perspective in his analysis of the pros and cons of introducing Western farming techniques to under-developed countries. Spring writes, “world culture theorists might argue that this process represents the local culture utilizing scientific corporate farming,” (p. 53). In this case, the implication underscores the supposed superiority of Western methods. However, postcolonialists view the utilization of Western farming techniques as an insensitive intrusion of Western values into the local culture with the end result of perpetuating the stratified status quo. Essentially perspective influences one’s interpretation of the effects of globalization.

Through Spring’s assessment, which incorporates different theoretical perspectives (i.e., culture model and post-colonial model), he seems to subtly ask that his readers question the phenomenon of globalization rather than merely accepting the effects of globalization as a matter of fact. For example, Spring’s contrast between Western religion and Eastern religion not only delineates the differences between these religions, it also forces the reader to appreciate Western individualism and Eastern collectivism. The implication, in this case, is twofold. One, globalization possesses different meanings for different entities. Two, individuals should examine the notion that globalization is a panacea to cure the problems of society.

While the purpose of Spring's book focuses on the process by which global agencies influence local education, it is Pauline Lipman's book *High stakes education* (2004) that illustrates the details of the local effects of globalization on education. Lipman's case study analysis of several schools within Chicago Public Schools (CPS) documents the negative effects of globalization on education and thus offers an effective contextualization to underscore the ideas put forth by Spring. In particular, Lipman emphasizes the stratifying impact of globalization on education within CPS due to the city of Chicago's focus on becoming a premier, global city. As Chicago's leaders worked to elevate the city's status, several decisions were influenced by global policies promoted by the various global agencies Spring describes in his book. Thus, an analysis of CPS demonstrates the real world impact of globalization on education.

One key example illustrative of the global effect on local education is Lipman's exploration of Chicago's implementation of a high stakes accountability system to measure and evaluate the performance of its schools. As mentioned earlier, high stakes accountability is a global trend sponsored by such organizations as OECD in order to promote educational standardization. In the United States, standardization emerges in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). As Lipman explains, the CPS accountability model allowed the school system to rank, sort, and assess the performance of its schools. More importantly, in many ways this model not only reinforced the status quo, but it also entrenched the socially stratified hierarchy. Accountability models bolster the status quo because the students who typically need the most help tend to be economically disadvantaged minorities. Instead of receiving an enriching, college prep curriculum, these students receive a vanquished, test prep curriculum. As a result, disadvantaged minorities are not prepared to succeed in the professional world. Thus the rich continue to get richer and the poor get poorer, which Spring asserts may be a trend resulting from the effects of globalization.

If Lipman demonstrates the ground level impact of globalization, Spring enhances our understanding of the intricacies of globalization at the macro level. It seems that Spring's focus is not so much to castigate globalization as a pariah, but rather, he wants to give his readers the intellectual tools needed to understand some of the realities of globalization in order to adequately assess its worldwide impact. This book is a must read for educators who want to enlighten their students with a 360 degree view of globalization that extends beyond the pro-Western, industrialized viewpoint.

Reviewed by

Howard Menand

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

<hmenano@uncc.edu>

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