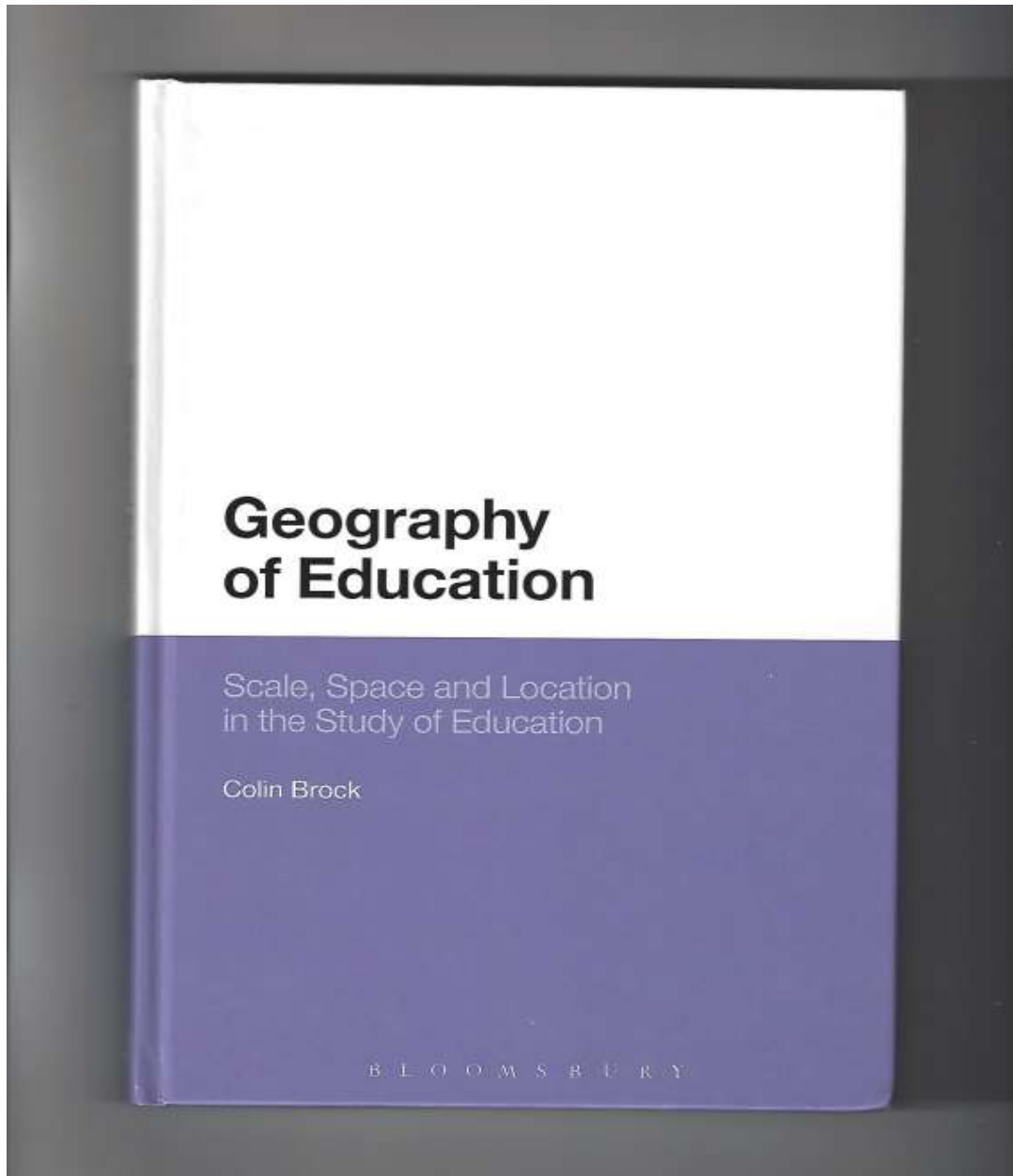


Geography of Education



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Geography of Education is an important book. It is important for several reasons, not the least being Colin Brock's considerable background in international and comparative education and his understanding and appreciation of geography as a discipline and its relevance in and to studies of education. The increasing emphases on place and space in education, in relation to the sites of education, learning in formal and informal situations, the range of scales at which education can be examined, and the variety of locations for research are drawn together in this book. It is global in scope and offers perspectives on diversity and sustainability alongside development and internationalization. Brock makes the point (p.9) that this book is for educators and geographers, arguing that both need to recognize the pertinence of studies of place, scale, space and location that are inherent in educational provision and activities. Geography is taught in schools and other institutions across the globe in one context or another, and geography is necessary in understanding where children and young people are educated, their access to education, the resourcing of education and local and national policies that affect their education.

Brock's considerable background in and as a promoter of comparative and international education (Brock, 2011, 2013) over many years provides him with a particular understanding of the geography of education from local to global perspectives. This book is complemented by the parallel publication in book form (Pe Symaco & Brock, 2016) of the articles about space, place and scale in studying education from the 2013 August issue of *Comparative Education* (Vol. 49, Issue 3). That collection and Brock's sole-authored book help to take forward the initiatives and investigations of other researchers in the field of the geography of education (Adnett & Davies, 2002; Brooks et al., 2012; Gulson & Symes, 2007; Hernandez & Goodson, 2007; Taylor, 2002, 2011). Such work sits alongside the interest in place-based education as a further geographical perspective and dynamic in educational study and practice (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Hutchinson, 2004; Sobel, 2013; Somerville et al, 2009) together with the geographies of learning, places of learning and place in the context of professional development (Clarke, 2016; Dolan, 2001; Ellsworth, 2005). SAs Brock notes, there are geographies of education.

Brock opens his discussion by considering geography, education and the 'geography of education'. He presents views of geography and education demonstrating common interests in, for instance, economics, political science, demography, sociology and history in their respective disciplines. He argues that geography is a foundation discipline in the study of

education, noting that comparative education might be thought of as being geographical in itself. Yet it is only recently that Furlong and Lawn (2011) have included geography alongside the philosophy, history, sociology, psychology and economics of education. Brock spends much of the first chapter exploring how the various sub-disciplines of geography – including physical geography, cultural and social geography, population geography, historical geography, and more – provide the basis for analysis and insights into education in schools, higher education and beyond. He touches also on the roles of fieldwork and applied geography.

In chapter 2 Brock takes the reader deeper into geography's ways of understanding education, applying the subject's conceptual base and making connections with geographical modeling in the reality of the educational world. He draws on the work of geographers and like Broek and Haggett and the geography educator Walford, and might have explored more recent contributions by Jackson, Cresswell and Dorling (Jackson, 2006; Bonnett, 2008; Cresswell, 2015; Dorling & Lee, 2016). In this context he develops the role and contribution of the geographical concepts of space, place and scale. His argument is that spatial scales and factors affect educational activities at any location, be this continental, national or regional levels or at the level of the school. While much educational debate and analysis takes place in relation to state provided educational provision, Brock considers additionally the provision of private education. He explores as well aspects of education in small nation states, such as island states in the Pacific and Caribbean. As he acknowledges, this is a more theoretical and geographically-focused chapter to identify ways in which key geographical concepts apply to education.

Chapter 3 considers some examples of the historical emergence of education systems for national need and benefit. Brock notes ways in which education emerged and developed in Germany, for instance, because, among other reasons, of the impact of patronage, trade and urbanization which provided funding, core locations and spatial connections. He follows this with more recent and focused examples from the USA and the UK linked to location, diffusion, cultural dimensions, marketization and the growth of national educational systems, underpinning all of which are spatial dynamics. Noting the range of purposes for educational structures moves the discussion clearly into the realm of a political geography of education, again drawing on examples from various parts of the world. Private sector education is examined, and higher education is considered, for instance in the context of the internationalizing of university education and student cross-national migration. There is much here to wet the appetite for further examination and research in an evolving global educational environment.

In his fourth chapter Brock explores a different side of education, its non-formal and informal dimensions, considering historical aspects in examples from the UK and noting also the unequal disparity of education as it developed in and across the country's jurisdictions. He continues from an introduction to adult education to examine their current geographies, before looking at the role of international and national non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). The second half of the chapter is devoted to ‘children’s, young people’s, family and community geographies’, ‘education in situations and locations of constraint and coercion’, and the world of work. He draws on a wide range of studies, from children’s geographies to intergenerational studies, from young people’s incarceration to dislocated and ‘looked after’ children, and apprenticeships, among others, using examples from the UK and other parts of the world. He acknowledges that much of this area of non-formal and informal education is under-researched, not only geographically, but states that it is a rich area for further study.

Chapter 5 explores the interconnections of geography, survival and sustainability, opening with an examination of the relationship of cyberspace with education, since cyberspace and cybergeographies are increasingly affecting our changing world. He considers then matters of globalization and disparity in provision and access to education. The focus of the chapter develops from these starting points, developing what has been a major concern of Brock’s, articulated more fully in his book *Education as a Global Concern*, sub-titled ‘Education as a humanitarian response’ (Brock, 2013). Drawing on evidence of inequality, marginalization and exclusion, conflict, climate change, environmental hazards and concerns and many other challenges to the human and planetary condition, he argues that ‘it is in cultural geography that the foundations of geographies of education reside’ (p.173). To tackle the concerns he raises, Brock argues that it is at individual and local community levels that actions will be realized, though at all and levels of education scales leadership will be required. He sees education and the provision of a ‘relevant curriculum’ as vital in this enterprise, set out as the dimensions of core technical skills, local resonance and liberal education (pp.177-9) and in which geography would have an important role.

In conclusion Brock reminds readers that his interest has been to demonstrate the variety of geographies of education and the role of geography in understanding and contributing to education. His task he sees as having been to stimulate interest as well as to draw together a range of strands to begin to bring clarity to the notion of the geographies of education. His illustrations of the importance of location, scale, connections, culture and place, as key concepts, alongside what the sub-disciplines of geography contribute to investigations, analysis and understanding; provide a valuable insight into the significance of geography as a fundamental disciplinary area within the study of education.

I have only partly and briefly been able to draft a rough sketch map of some of the features of Brock’s impressive book. He is the first to draw together the considerable range of geographical dimensions of and insights into education. He appreciates, perhaps more than anyone else, just how much more there is to do and that geographers and educators need to work together on the enterprise of fuller and deeper research from local through national and continental to global scales. There are many signposts in this book, and it is a key source to promote future research in geographies of education. Geography educators should certainly have a copy on their shelves.

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