Comparing Special Education: From Origins to Contemporary Paradoxes

John G. Richardson & Justin J.W. Powell

360 pp. | 18 tables, 6 figures | $60-$48 (~20% discount code: CSE11)
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In today’s schools, the number of students who receive additional resources to access the curriculum is growing rapidly. The ongoing expansion of special education is among the most significant worldwide educational developments of the past century. Yet even among developed democracies the range varies hugely, from one student in twenty to one student in three receiving special education support and services. In contemporary conflicts about educational standards and accountability, special education plays a key role as it draws the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion. Comparing Special Education unites in-depth comparative and historical studies with analyses of global trends, with a particular focus on special and inclusive education in the United States, England, France, and Germany. The authors examine the causes and consequences of various institutional and organizational developments, illustrate differences in forms of educational governance and policy priorities, and highlight the evolution of social logics from segregation of students with special educational needs to their inclusive education in local schools.

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Note on Languages of Dis/ability and Special Needs

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Advance Praise:

“This is the most important book on special education to be produced for decades. Using historical and comparative information it demonstrates conclusively that a global commitment to inclusive education is leading to more graded, hierarchical systems in which regular education cannot function without an interconnection with special education.”
—Sally Tomlinson, University of Oxford

“This unique book identifies key issues that children with unusual needs pose for the enterprise of schooling.”
—Robert Dreeben, University of Chicago

“Finally, a text that moves beyond comparative transnational studies in safe statistical mode. This insightful account pushes the methodological envelope, artfully illustrating how claims about nations, education, disability and children are quite literally patterned inventions to be questioned rather than naively applied. A monumental and pathbreaking must-read.”
—Bernadette Baker, University of Wisconsin

“Special Education should not be taken for granted. From the earliest asylums through 19th century theories of eugenics to the current paradox of mainstream educational inclusion with persistent stigma, Richardson and Powell present a sweeping and insightful comparative sociological history of the origins and development of Special Education. They show that the ways youth with special needs are defined and educated reflect core ideologies and political struggles at the heart of a society. This is the authoritative sociological analysis of the topic.”
—David P. Baker, Pennsylvania State University

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