

Foundations of Special Education: An Introduction

M. Farrell

(2009) *West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, 313 pp, A\$80.95, ISBN: 978 0 470 75396 5 (hbk) 978 0 470 75397 2 (pbk)*

As the title of the book suggests, an introduction to the disciplines and perspectives that underpin contemporary special education is given to targeted readers such as teachers and other professionals that work with, or research and educate, children with disorders/disabilities. Strengths of the content include: (1) the in-depth consideration of a wide range of disability/disorder types and aspects that contribute to special education, some of which include social, medical and psycholinguistic with a chapter devoted to each foundational discipline; (2) conveyance of the complexity, breadth and varying professional perspectives within special education emphasising the need for meaningful communication and respectful acknowledgement within and between disciplines and professionals (e.g., teachers, speech pathologists, medical doctors, psychotherapists). The layout of the book is logical and consistent, aiding comprehension and recall. The book is divided into 13 chapters, each of which include a relevant list of key texts and/or 'thinking points' to assist content analyses, reflection and understanding. Some chapters also include a limited number of predominantly US-based Internet resources.

The introductory chapter defines special education, providing a detailed description of the many facets that the definition contains. The aims and methods of special education are also clearly defined. Although Chapter 2 reviews special education legislation from only a US and UK perspective, it does provide a useful description of the major types of disorders/disabilities. Chapter 3 provides a unique and thorough explanation, discussion and analysis of the terminology used and misused in special education. The chapter reflects the tone of the book, which does not seem to criticise professionals' errors in interpretation, but rather gently informs for the purpose of increasing awareness of other professionals' perspectives. Indeed, somehow throughout the book there exists the delightful feeling of being forgiven, hugged and guided. Chapters 4 to 12 detail the major aspects and theories that contribute to special education, including social, medical, neuropsychological, psychotherapeutic, behavioural/observational, developmental, psycholinguistic, technological, and pedagogical. Importantly, these chapters also include 'fuller examples' that successfully apply the discussion to practical situations. The final chapter provides a tidy summary and suggests implications for future developments.

As suggested by the author, the book would be a suitable text to complement studies in special education and as a reference text for professionals. However, parents might also benefit from the book; first, by the relevant information it contains, and second, by referring and recommending it to professionals involved in their children's lives. Such a recommendation to professionals by parents might assist to enhance the quality of multidisciplinary service that their child receives.

A minor criticism of the book is that although it is intended for readers across a wide range of developed countries, its resources predominantly derive from the United States and the United Kingdom. The book might appeal to a broader cross-cultural audience had it included key texts and Internet resources from a wider range of countries. Having said this, there is no doubt that the text addresses highly relevant and important issues in contemporary special education that is achieved in a knowledgeable, intelligent and respectful manner. For this, the author should be congratulated and the book highly recommended.

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The Special Education Handbook: An A-Z Guide (4th edition)

M. Farrell

(2009) London: David Fulton Press, paperback version A\$42.95, ISBN 978 0 415 49020 7

The *Special Education Handbook: An A-Z Guide* is a useful handbook. The author, Michael Farrell, has extensive experience within special education within the UK context. The underlying structure of the handbook, while arranged alphabetically, is organised around seven broad themes. The thematic index of entries is listed in the back section of the book, so it is easy to navigate around the book, and locate the appropriate topic within the alphabetical headings sections.

1. *Basic terms, ideas and values:* special education issues/terms; disciplines associated with special education (e.g., audiologists, educators, psychologists, neurologists, orthoptics and prosthetics, physical therapists, speech pathologist, social workers).
2. *Venues related to special education and school organisation:* Boarding special school, home schooling, hospital schooling, mainstream schooling, resource room, special classes, special schools.
3. *Roles and responsibilities:* administration, advocate, assessment, counsellor, conductive education, dance movement therapist, dietician, health services, legal framework, mentor, music therapist, occupational therapist, parents, physiotherapist, social worker, special needs officer, teacher, teaching aide, technician.
4. *Individual differences among learners with disabilities/disorders:* Anxiety, Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, autism, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, genetic disorders, communication difficulties, conduct disorder, deafblindness, depressive disorders, developmental coordination disorder, developmental delay, dyscalcula, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Down syndrome, elective mutism, fragile X syndrome, hearing impairment, mild cognitive impairment, severe learning difficulties, motor disorders, muscular dystrophy, neural tube defects, OCD, Oppositional defiance disorder, phobias, Prader-Willi syndrome, Rett syndrome, stuttering, Tourette syndrome, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment.

5. *Curriculum and assessment*: access, accreditation, curriculum, functional skills, handwriting, life skills, literacy, numeracy, personal and social education, physical education, play, psychometric tests, skills.
6. *Resources and technology*: Adaptive equipment, aids to hearing, Braille and Moon, buildings and design, computer technology, funding, internet, journals and other publications, low vision devices and lighting, multisensory environments, postural and positional supports, protective appliances and clothing, symbols, talking mats.
7. *Pedagogy and classroom organisation*: anger management training, applied behaviour analysis, AAC, autonomy and independence, behaviour chain interruption strategy, breaks and lesson structure, classroom organisation and layout, discrete trial teaching, individual education plans, social skills training, art therapy, dance movement therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, drama therapy.

The handbook can be used for flexible but systematic reading, using the classified list of entries. An additional asset of the book is that each entry is followed by an appropriate reference or web site to refer to if you want to seek further information. Although it was written for UK and US audiences, it is encouraging to see that some Australian textbooks are referenced, such as Arthur-Kelly, M., Lyons, G., Butterfield, N., and Gordon, C. (2007), *Classroom management: Creating positive learning environments*, published by Thompson Learning. In general terms, I prefer to set an Australian textbook for my students, such as Ashman, A., and Elkins, J. (Eds.), (2009), *Education for Inclusion and Diversity* published by Pearson Australia, but I think this handbook provides a very useful range of references and would enable students to have a useful resource available to them, especially when they started teaching within the special education field. It is also a useful book for teachers new to the field, who may require additional support and professional development if they are working to include a child with disabilities within their mainstream classroom.

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