

Preface

The focus of this book is on *how* successful and validated teaching approaches can be implemented and *sustained* to support teachers in addressing the diverse needs of individual students in our school systems.

It is embedded in a philosophy that aims to connect students and teachers through evidence-based approaches that effectively address their strengths and needs. It seeks to maximise students' potential to flourish as individuals and classroom members while acknowledging that we all experience life and learning differently. Everyone has a past and has been exposed to different teaching and learning strategies, interests, languages, cultures, strengths and challenges. It advocates for inclusion through the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders including educators, researchers, community leaders, students, parents and policymakers. It endeavours to encourage discussions on how to advance the use of research to enhance inclusive practice *and* how good practice within authentic and changing twenty-first century classrooms can inform research.

Sustaining the complex balance between research and practice in ways that integrate the knowledge and strengths of multiple perspectives can advance student engagement and achievement and their sense of belonging within diverse learning communities. Advances in research on implementing evidence-based practices for educating students with and without disabilities have generated a strong knowledge base that can underpin efforts to make classrooms and schools more inclusive. Yet despite these significant advances, there remains a significant gap between what has been proven to work in classrooms and the extent to which it has been applied and sustained to address the diverse needs of students.

This complex research-to-practice (RTP) gap is a common concern across a range of disciplines and has been discussed at length by educational researchers and classroom teachers alike. National and global education directives continue to advocate for the sustained use of research-based practices to enhance student outcomes. But still our inability to close the RTP gap has an adverse effect on the progress of inclusion in schools and our ability to effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of all students.

The book is divided into three sections which specifically focus on the sustained use of research to enhance inclusive education. The first section builds and *states the case* by identifying the concerns and complexities associated with the research-to-practice gap in inclusive education. The second section presents a detailed perspective of both research and practice paradigms. It *makes the case* by investigating the practices of six experienced educators and their efforts to empower student growth through the use and sustainment of educational practices that are embedded in research. Essential consideration of case study design is also presented in Section 2. The third and final section considers key findings from the two previous sections to propose a way forward in *building a solution* to reducing the research-to-practice gap. A framework in the form of a comprehensive and cyclic research-to-practice model that highlights the importance of integrating the key components beneficial to reducing the RTP gap is presented in Part 3.

The primary aim of this cyclic research-to-practice model is to enhance the sustained use of validated research in school-based applications to respond to the diverse needs of all students. This research-to-practice model is also proposed as a planning tool for education systems, policy developers, school leadership and tertiary teacher educators to raise awareness of the essential connections between key RTP factors and the people implementing the initiatives, the projects themselves and the preparation required if valuable and validated research initiatives are to be successfully sustained in practice.

As national and international policies mandate that all educators be responsive to the inclusion of all students through the use of research-based practices, this book may be of particular interest to those who strive to address the needs of a diverse student population. This includes applied academics and researchers committed to research to practice, researchers moving towards practice-based studies, teachers, school and system leadership staff, policy developers and evaluators, educational psychologists and professional support agency staff.

In brief the topics covered include the need for a consistent and comprehensive approach to inclusive education that is informed by multiple perspectives. The goal is to ensure that teachers and students can successfully access validated instructional approaches that address their educational needs. This book's comprehensive approach enables readers to develop a deep understanding of the issues, successes, failures and concerns associated with the benefits and challenges of sustaining research innovations in practice. An emphasis is placed on giving traction to research endeavours and empowering educational professionals with a practical pathway to use validated research practices to enhance effective and timely instruction within the global context of inclusion. Methodological decisions and procedures are presented in detail to provide an example for future teacher researchers interested in school-based case study research.

I would like to thank the readers for their interest in this book and the dedicated teachers and researchers who became involved in this work to make a difference. Responding to this well-articulated research-to-practice gap represents the felt obligation of many. It has led to a moral and ethical response to working towards a strengths-based approach that proposes a possible pathway that links research and

practice to enhance student engagement and success. I wish you success in the progression of your research, research-based teaching and learning endeavours and in the sustained development of inclusive school communities.

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