

INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLES AND
PRACTICES IN LITERACY
EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION VOLUME 11

INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN LITERACY EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international Declarations and Conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both the developed and developing worlds. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intra-country levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed in light of local contextual and cultural situations in order to assist educators, peripatetic staff, and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, empirical findings, and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staffs to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners in order to provide ideas on reframing education so as to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners; incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially inhibit the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series intends to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcome them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a particular topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice all children should have the opportunity to access and participate in quality education in order to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and academics, who have a professional interest in

the inclusion of children and youth who are marginalising in inclusive schools and classrooms.

This volume focuses on Literacy for all students within regular classes. Adopting both constructivist and socio-culturalism positions there is a strong emphasis on the practical implementation of supporting the literacy learning of all students through structured, sequential literacy pedagogy and a cross disciplinary approach. Many examples are provided of authentic ideas that incorporate explicit teaching, with the provision of activities that engage students in their own learning. The authors in this volume are highly experienced academics, researchers and teachers and bring a wealth of both theoretical and practical perspectives to improving literacy learning across the curriculum and for all learners. The philosophy of inclusive literacy is embedded within all chapters and this is especially evident in those that address how teachers can support the challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds who find literacy very difficult. Issues of social justice in relation to teaching literacy are also discussed. Although this book undoubtedly promotes an inclusive approach to teaching literacy within the regular classroom, the authors bring their own experience to the fore when they acknowledge that this is not always possible to achieve. By suggesting that for some students front-loading may be necessary, undertaken in small group or pull-out sessions, this actually strengthens the possibility that the differentiation occurring within the regular classroom will be of greater benefit subsequently to all students. Targeting the individual needs of some students might at times require specialized interventions; these may be more suitably and effectually undertaken outside of the regular classroom. For example, many teachers already appreciate how difficult it can be to implement direct instruction methods with small groups of children within a busy classroom situation. The realism of the ideas suggested in this book are most welcome. Teachers and leaders can confidently read this book knowing that the suggestions are grounded in evidence-based best practices and that the proposed pedagogies and differentiations to the curriculum are directed towards what is manageable for all regular class teachers. I highly recommend this book for all teachers of literacy and for those continuing the important role of researching best practices for effective inclusive literacy.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor

INTRODUCTION

In this volume, theories, key principles and research are examined along with policies and practices that operate in several countries, where mainstream teachers provide inclusive literacy education. The major theme of the volume is *Literacy for all* in regular classes. This encompasses both the changes in requirements to be literate in today's society, the literacy demands across the curriculum and the difficulties faced by a wide range of students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those coming from social disadvantage and poverty. Some authors examine the challenges for teachers in current education systems, with packed curricula, additional demands for accountability, assessment and record keeping, and how the further challenges in literacy teaching might be addressed. The introduction begins with the overarching theoretical frameworks in the volume, followed by some understandings around inclusive literacy, then authors and their chapters are introduced.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In accordance with current theories in the field, the umbrella theoretical frameworks in this book incorporate Constructivism, Socio-culturalism and Social Justice. An Explicit Literacy Pedagogy is also supported. Constructivism is viewed as the active process in building knowledge and learning that occurs through experiences (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 321). In an educational sense it means that students learn and understand through their experiences, and the learning activities provided, rather than through a solely didactic approach. Closely aligned to Constructivism, Socio-Culturalism includes an approach to teaching that focusses on interactions, face-to-face either in pairs or groups, but also interacting with ideas in texts and media. It incorporates the notions that learning takes place in a social context and we learn through social interaction (Carrington et al., 2012). The understanding of Social Justice used here is that all children, regardless of circumstance, deserve a high-quality education with qualified, knowledgeable teachers; that the education of every child matters and supporting student learning and well-being are prioritised (Carrington et al., 2012; Munns, Sawyer, & Cole, 2013). These frameworks are a shift away from

a medical perspective that views the difficulty/disability as the major limiting factor for education, towards an understanding that learning and progress is possible with the appropriate programs, explicit instruction, interactions and support. Explicit Literacy Pedagogy encompasses teaching that uses explicit instruction such that literacy learning goals are made clear to students, and students are taught a metalanguage for talking about language and for using it as an object of thought (McLachlan, Nicholson, Fielding-Barnsley, Mercer, & Ohi, 2013). Instruction follows a progressive pathway and ongoing monitoring of understanding and feedback is undertaken by the teacher (Shanker & Ekwall, 2003).

Individual authors in this book may describe their work in terms of additional theoretical positions, or use specific definitions that apply in their particular contexts.

INCLUSIVE LITERACY

Inclusive literacy is discussed in detail in the first chapter. Here, however, a note is made that the forms of explicit teaching and support required for children with a learning difficulty or disability in literacy, often go beyond what a regular class teacher can reasonably be expected to provide whilst teaching a whole class. Given the range of student abilities in a regular class, it can be extremely difficult, at times, for teachers, no matter how competent, to provide sufficiently differentiated instruction to improve each child's literacy during the allotted time for literacy. That support in regular classrooms often needs to be in the form of additional time for literacy, in one on one or small group instruction, that is targeted towards an individual student's literacy learning needs. Inclusive regular class differentiated literacy instruction can then, have some additional pull-out or in-class teaching undertaken by a knowledgeable instructor, at a different time to the regular class literacy instruction. In this way, the student who needs it, is exposed to more literacy instruction.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE VOLUME

In this volume authors consider the issues associated with developing and improving the literacy of every student in mainstream classrooms and provide examples of good practices and models of effective inclusion in literacy teaching at different year levels, for different groups of students and the application to important subjects such as mathematics and science. At this point, it is noted that different authors may use a range of terms, that can be read interchangeably across or within chapters. For example, the terms 'regular', 'mainstream' or 'general' classroom are used to indicate a class containing students with a

range of abilities from those with learning disabilities to those who are gifted and to differentiate that classroom from a special education class. Further, the terms 'students', 'learners' and 'children' are used interchangeably. Authors indicate more specific groups with terms such as early years, young children, pre-school, primary, elementary, secondary, high school and students in transition.

The chapters are arranged in two parts. The first presents a wide perspective on theory and research into how literacy and the requirements to be literate have changed and the current demands on teachers and students. Part I also includes information on the research, policies and practices of inclusion in several countries. Part II focuses on research-based practices that can be used in everyday settings and within regular classrooms and as a supplement to provide targeted inclusive literacy for specific cohorts of students, from early childhood through to adolescence, and for children from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

In Part I, the first chapter by Marion Milton provides an overview of Inclusive Literacy with definitions, an outline of current research and examples of practice in the field, focussing on the Australian context. In order to ascertain the literacy learning needs of students in regular classrooms, Maureen Walsh considers the complex multi-modal world of literacy in today's society and the impact this has on our understanding and expectations for literacy in classrooms. Then David Evans examines the literacy needed for mathematics and what teachers need to consider when using the language of mathematics in order to be inclusive of all the students in their classrooms. Following, there are several chapters from international authors that outline particular research, policies, and practices in their countries. Michael Shevlin and Richard Rose present information from a large research study they undertook on inclusion in Ireland. Then Katrin Böhme, Birgit Heppt and Nicole Haag present the outcomes of their research which investigated literacy for students with special needs and those from other language backgrounds in Germany. While the students in their study were learning in German, it is very interesting to reflect on the fact that there are many similarities to the difficulties faced by students with special needs or learning in their second language in English speaking countries.

For literacy in science Randy Yerrick and Monica Ridgeway describe their research in the United States of America amongst urban secondary students and how sections of society are disadvantaged through the language and assessments used to measure science knowledge. The final chapter in this part is by Juan Bornman who discusses literacy and inclusion in South Africa, and the difficulties experienced by teachers facing large classes and students with low literacy levels. That chapter highlights the situation for teachers and students that may be different or amplified compared with the context presented by a number of the other authors.

Part II begins with a chapter on theory and research related to inclusive practices for young pre-school children. In this chapter Caroline Barratt-Pugh, Mary Rohl and Nola Allen describe research projects into an early years community-based initiative which is having a positive impact on beginning literacy.

Then several chapters focus on aspects of literacy learning and teaching that occurs in the primary/elementary level of schooling. Timothy Rasinski and Chase Young present some practical strategies to use with students struggling in reading fluency, based on their research into reading difficulties. Grace Oakley investigates the use of multimedia and technology for improving literacy outcomes for students struggling with certain aspects of literacy. Elaine Blake and Pauline Roberts examine how to use children's literature to develop science and literacy within science teaching. Following that, Susan Main and Deslea Konza share initial findings from their research with Australian Aboriginal students, who in general have lower literacy and poorer outcomes from schooling than the rest of the population. The authors discuss the issues that surround the teaching of these students and how teachers may work to improve literacy outcomes.

Next, Mary Keeffe tackles the difficult role faced by teachers of adolescent students with literacy difficulties, including those with dyslexia, in their transition to secondary school. Then Mary Doveston and Una Lodge examine some of the findings from their research into the introduction of a reading comprehension strategy into a large multi-cultural secondary school in England. Finally, Marion Milton examines the context for a proportion of children who come from language backgrounds other than English and how teachers may inadvertently inhibit student learning by the style of teaching, assumptions they make about the students' command of English, and the language teachers use in the classroom, that acts to exclude those students. A number of useful research-based strategies are presented in the chapters in this part, which teachers in a regular class may use to assist the literacy development of children from other language backgrounds.

Marion Milton

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