

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

EMPOWERING THE LEARNER:  
Exploring Students' Voices Through the  
Hermeneutic Circle.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Education in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

By

ROSEMARIE ANTONIETTE HEATH

Kingston, Jamaica

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### *Abstract*

Information literacy is of major importance to the effective functioning of any country's education system. In highlighting the importance of information literacy, this study focuses on the notion of bringing voice to high school curriculum-based research. It hangs on the theory that when students learn to own their research by writing themselves into it, after accessing, analyzing and interpreting related information, they are becoming information literate. The hermeneutic circle provides a working context within which the emergence of *voice* may be encouraged. The study is qualitative in nature, and takes the form of a case study, in which the lived experiences of six students, a history teacher and the information specialist are examined. The application of an action research model sees the student participants completing their own research projects, while employing the use of the Big6 skills, created by Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1990). Emerging from the study is the importance of collaboration between information specialists and subject teachers towards building programs which encourage student involvement in the decision making process surrounding research assignments. Also highlighted is the necessity for all student teachers to be exposed to information literacy as a part of their formal training. The study combines the information search process from library and information studies with social constructivist learning theories from education. Therefore, I expect that both researchers and scholars in education and in information studies will find it interesting, and that it will act as a guide for future curriculum planning and implementation.