

ABSTRACT

The School Literacy Practices of Forms 1, 2, and 3: A Case Study

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The thesis acknowledges concerns about literacy levels, nationally and internationally. Literacy is associated with opening pathways to lifelong learning and continued personal growth and development. In addition, there are perceived related benefits to a country's social, economic, political and cultural development. As schools are centres of literacy learning, interest was generated in the relationship between school literacy practices and national literacy levels.

A case study of school literacy practices in one secondary school of Trinidad and Tobago was conducted to determine the kinds of reading and writing activities generally engaged in by pupils and the conceptions of literacy and literacy learning teachers and pupils hold. Current classroom practices and ways of facilitating literacy development were also examined. The study, conducted in two stages, focussed on Forms 1 to 3.

Stage I, The Reading and Writing Survey, gathered data about the reading and writing activities pupils were engaged in daily during one six-day cycle of the school timetable. Four types of reading activities and three types of writing activities were identified. These were quantified and presented in tables and charts for comparison across levels. An initial sketch of literacy practices emerged.

Data collected at Stage II, The In-Depth Study, through questionnaires, classroom observation, interviews and a survey of pupils' written work, produced a more comprehensive picture of school literacy practices.

The study found a predominantly traditional, product-oriented, transmission approach to literacy teaching. Current strategies of content literacy teaching were not frequently employed.

The findings raised the following points; the need (a) to develop a language policy, (b) to train teachers in content literacy practices, that is, to incorporate language-based activities into their teaching, (c) to provide the necessary resources and infra-structure to ensure effective curriculum delivery and (d) to examine the complex nature of classroom interaction and its impact on the learning process.

Keywords: literacy; reading; writing; school literacy practices; content literacy.