

ABSTRACT

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Why Some Students Struggle to Read: A Case Study

Dayah Dookie-Ramkelawan

This study sought to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of why some students struggle to read. Data were collected through interviews with one Standard 2 teacher and three of her struggling readers, and from questionnaires completed by 12 teachers. The research sought to determine: 1) the factors struggling readers perceive as facilitating or militating against their acquiring reading skills, 2) the factors that teachers perceive as facilitating or mitigating against students' acquisition of reading skills, and 3) the extent to which teachers' and students' perceptions coincide. Findings revealed that the students believed their limited knowledge of reading skills, inadequate reading instruction, and how they viewed themselves as readers all impacted negatively on their learning to read, while hands-on teaching strategies as well as teacher expectations and attitudes encouraged reading. Further, teachers believed that students' lack of reading skills, poor teaching, and lack of parental support also impeded students' ability to acquire reading competencies. It was found that there was a close relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about the need to develop reading skills. These skills, or lack thereof, along with the role of proper reading instruction, were perceived by both the teachers and the students as factors that either facilitated or hindered struggling readers.

Keywords: Reading difficulties; Perceptions; Primary school students; Primary school teachers; Student attitudes; Teacher attitudes; Performance factors; Trinidad and Tobago