

## ABSTRACT

### **An Investigation Into Teachers' Understandings About Gender and Their Impact on the Teaching of Reading in Primary Schools in the Educational District of St. George East**

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This study sought to investigate three primary school teachers' beliefs about gender and learning to read, and to examine the congruence or incongruence of these beliefs with their classroom practices. Data were collected through interviews with three teachers at a primary school in the St. George East Education District of Trinidad and Tobago. Other data were collected through classroom observations. Results of the data indicated that in all three cases, the teachers believed that boys were more disruptive than girls and viewed this as a key contributor to the differences in reading performance. They therefore felt that if effective instruction was to take place, the students were expected to be quiet, pay attention during reading instruction, and follow given instruction. In all three cases, behavioural conceptions of literacy were reflected in the teacher-centred lessons, which emphasized direct instruction and little support for student autonomy. Observations of the classroom practices of the teachers contradicted their stated beliefs of the ways of teaching reading to boys and girls. There was little congruence between their beliefs and their actual reading instruction.

**Keywords:** Teacher attitudes; Primary school teachers; Gender analysis; Teaching methods; Reading research; Sex differences; Case studies; Reading development; Trinidad and Tobago