

LITERACY IN THE SECONDARY
CLASSROOM:
A STUDY OF TEACHER AND STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS

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‘LITERACY IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM: A STUDY OF
TEACHER AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS.’

This thesis presents research on the perceptions of students and teachers of their experiences of literacy across the curriculum. Its findings establish what these perceptions are and how they relate to each other and the traditions of literacy theory. The research took place in a large comprehensive school which takes its students from a small town and outlying villages. All of the students, who were in Year 10 at the time of the research, are considered by the school to be successful and are in top sets for the majority of their subjects. This study is therefore concerned with the literacy practices of able students. The teachers interviewed teach a variety of subjects across the curriculum and have a variety of additional roles within the school.

The study is presented within the context of a technocratic culture of education which requires measurable educational outcomes and the inevitable emphasis upon uniformity. At the heart of the thesis is a critical approach which endorses an ideological model of literacy.

Three key themes emerged from the data and these form the basis of the structure of the thesis. These are the significance of the individual within the literacy practices which characterise the classroom, the role context plays in determining those practices and the freedom which the individual has within them. The study shows that within the perceptions of the participants these themes not only co-exist but are inter-related.

The thesis argues that any policy determining literacy practices in the classroom must take into account these factors, acknowledge that literacy is a highly individualised activity and that literacy is context dependent rather than neutral. Literacy education must allow both teachers and students freedom to shape their own literacy practices.

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