

Down Syndrome and Literacy: Pathways to Quality Inclusive Education - Dr Loredana Muscat

This study aimed to evaluate the literacy abilities and environments of students with Down Syndrome (DS) from the perspective of educators while also evaluating the school literacy environments of students with DS within the Maltese context. This forms part of a larger study investigating literacy skills in Down Syndrome. This part of the study enabled the researcher to investigate the level of collaboration between educators and other professionals to evaluate whether educators were sufficiently knowledgeable about their students' abilities and how to use these skills to help them progress through the literacy acquisition journey. A quantitative explorative design was utilised to evaluate students with DS's literacy experience from their educators' perspective. Fifty-eight educators of students with DS were involved in the study. The researchers use *Chi-square* testing to identify similarities and differences between the different sectors and schooling levels. The study identified that students with DS could achieve a monoliterate or biliterate reading level in Malta. Results also shed light on the different literacy training methodologies adopted by the different schools. Results also indicate that not all educators were aware of the students' skills and difficulties, and such knowledge could contribute to better planning throughout literacy intervention planning. The results have several educational implications, such as better training for all educators in relation to Down Syndrome, literacy intervention techniques and also to challenges and opportunities related to bilingualism and biliteracy in DS. Results also highlight the importance of providing bilingual exposure to Maltese students with DS.