

EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF DISCIPLINARY LITERACIES: AN ANALYSIS OF INSIGHTS FROM ALBANIA

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the expectations of Albanian educators regarding disciplinary literacies, emphasizing the specific skills necessary for successful participation in various academic fields, including reading, writing, and communication. The main research question investigates: How do Albanian teachers perceive disciplinary literacy, and in what ways do these perceptions affect their teaching methods? Employing a qualitative research approach, data were gathered via detailed individual interviews with educators and observations of the classroom. The main findings indicate that educators view disciplinary literacy as essential for students' educational achievement and future goals, highlighting the importance of vocabulary relevant to the discipline, critical thinking skills, and effective communication. Challenges noted include insufficient instructional time, oversized class sizes, restricted access to resources, and professional development focused on disciplinary literacy. Educators often utilize direct teaching of subject-specific vocabulary and group learning exercises to fill these gaps. Suggestions include incorporating disciplinary literacy goals into curriculum designs, offering specialized professional training, and reducing class sizes to enhance individualized teaching. These results seek to guide policymakers and educators, aiding in wider initiatives within the CLILNetLe European network to enhance disciplinary literacy instruction.

Key words

teachers' expectations, disciplinary literacies, analysis, Albania

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Introduction

A crucial element of student learning and engagement across various courses is disciplinary literacy, encompassing the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively in specific academic disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). The expectations, teaching methods, and curriculum frameworks established by teachers significantly shape students' advancement in disciplinary literacy (Lee, 2007). There is a gap in research on teachers' views on disciplinary literacy in the Albanian educational framework.

Disciplinary literacy is essential for students to attain academic success and to understand and interact with content specific to their subjects (Moje, 2008). Having robust disciplinary literacy skills enhances students' understanding, analytical thinking, and communication abilities in different academic fields (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Duchovicova et al. (2019) highlight the importance of teacher competencies, a stimulating environment, teacher professionalism, and the modes of speech, as well as the content and organizational structure, in creating optimal conditions for the development of correct speech in children from an early age.

Albanian educators recognize the significance of disciplinary literacy in enhancing students' academic success and preparing them for their future goals. Educators might face difficulties in implementing disciplinary literacy strategies for various reasons. Teachers' capacity to emphasize disciplinary literacy is frequently hindered by restricted instructional time, packed classrooms, and the need to cover a broad curriculum (Daniels & Zemelman, 2014). Sufficient education can be obstructed by a lack of resources and suitable instructional materials aimed at enhancing literacy in a

particular area (Baumann et al., 2011). A lack of access to professional development opportunities that focus on disciplinary literacy exacerbates teachers' issues (Cervetti et al., 2012). These challenges in fostering disciplinary literacies in the classroom likewise impact Albanian educators.

Albanian educators greatly value the growth of disciplinary literacy, prioritizing the enhancement of content knowledge, critical thinking skills, and effective communication abilities. Teachers use various teaching techniques to improve subject-specific literacies. When students receive direct instruction on terminology specific to a discipline, they become more proficient at comprehending and interacting with resources related to that area (Fang et al., 2019). By examining reading and writing tasks tailored to different academic areas, students can understand the distinct traditions and practices across various disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Collaborative learning tasks encourage interaction among peers and the exchange of disciplinary knowledge and viewpoints (Moje et al., 2004). Albanian teachers employ these teaching strategies to improve their students' disciplinary literacy.

The Role of Disciplinary Literacy in Academic Success

Disciplinary literacy encompasses the distinct ways of thinking, reading, and communicating required for specific academic disciplines, going beyond general literacy to emphasize practices unique to each area. These encompass analyzing scientific data, examining historical texts, and utilizing mathematical reasoning, all of which are vital for students' academic and career achievement (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Moje (2008) also emphasizes the importance of disciplinary literacy in equipping students to effectively navigate a progressively globalized and information-oriented society.

The significance of customized teaching methods in promoting disciplinary literacy is well-established. Leka and Roseni (2022) emphasize the importance of matching teaching methods to students' needs, especially in addressing issues related to engagement in online learning. Likewise, Roseni and Koroshi-Shano (2021) highlight that teacher professional development significantly enhances educators' skills in assessing and supporting students' academic progress, thereby reinforcing the connection between teaching effectiveness and student achievement. This alignment is especially vital in the Albanian context, where promoting disciplinary literacy can close disparities in educational quality and prepare students with essential skills for future success.

Challenges in Disciplinary Literacy Implementation

The obstacles encountered by teachers in advancing disciplinary literacy are similar across the board, but they carry distinct ramifications in Albania. Systemic obstacles like time limitations, overcrowded classes, and unequal resources impede successful execution. Daniels and Zemelman (2014) observe that broad curricula frequently restrict the time for profound engagement in disciplines, a concern also reflected in Albania. Educators indicate that trying to balance the wide range of curricula with the depth required for disciplinary understanding frequently leads to a cursory examination of essential ideas. This tension is reinforced by Roseni's (2014) assessment of English textbooks in Albanian high schools, which uncovers deficiencies in curriculum design that do not effectively foster critical literacy skills.

Class size remains another significant obstacle. Teachers in classrooms with more than 35 students often find it challenging to offer personalized attention and feedback, which are essential for engaging students with discipline-specific texts and methods. Duke (2004) emphasizes that large class sizes limit individualized teaching, an issue that is especially pressing in underfunded rural schools. These differences exacerbate inequalities in educational outcomes, as teachers in rural areas often rely on outdated

textbooks and lack access to digital resources, thereby widening the gap in opportunities for disciplinary literacy (Baumann et al., 2011).

Opportunities for professional development in Albania often fall short in equipping teachers with the essential skills needed to address these systemic challenges. Roseni and Koroshi-Shano (2021) emphasize that ongoing professional development is crucial for educators to adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students. In the absence of such training, educators encounter difficulties in adopting innovative methods that conform to global standards.

Strategies for Promoting Disciplinary Literacy

In spite of these obstacles, Albanian teachers have utilized various successful approaches to enhance disciplinary literacy. A key method is direct teaching of vocabulary specific to the discipline, utilized by 85% of those involved in the study. Instructing students in the specialized terminology of their fields enables them to interact more productively with intricate texts and ideas, promoting critical analysis and understanding (Fang et al., 2019).

Joint learning activities, including group projects and peer discussions, are also commonly utilized. Approximately 65% of educators reported using these techniques, which not only enhance students' understanding of the subject matter but also promote active participation and the exchange of diverse viewpoints. Leka and Roseni (2022) emphasize the significance of interactive and cooperative methods in tackling issues, especially in online education settings, thereby reinforcing these tactics.

Another frequent strategy employed by Albanian educators is modeling expert practices within various disciplines. Educators illustrate methods for analyzing data or interpreting texts specific to their field, helping students build the skills and confidence needed for independent involvement (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). These methods demonstrate research-supported principles for promoting disciplinary literacy and correspond with practices suggested in international educational literature.

Assessment Practices and Resource Allocation

Evaluation methods are crucial in promoting disciplinary literacy, especially when they are clear and focused on students. Muho and Taraj (2022) emphasize the importance of communicating learning objectives and assessment standards to students, a technique that clarifies the learning process and motivates students to achieve their goals. This is consistent with Roseni's (2014) review of English textbooks, which advocates for evaluations that directly enhance the advancement of critical literacy abilities.

Variations in resources between urban and rural schools create a notable obstacle to maintaining uniform disciplinary literacy teaching. Urban educators report improved access to digital tools and additional resources, whereas rural teachers often rely on outdated materials, which hinders their ability to deliver effective instruction. Baumann et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of current materials in developing critical literacy skills, while Leka and Roseni (2022) argue that access to digital platforms is crucial for engaging students in learning environments, whether face-to-face or online.

Professional Development and Systemic Support

Continuous professional growth is essential for equipping educators with the competencies necessary to effectively apply disciplinary literacy strategies. Among Albanian educators, 92% showed enthusiasm for workshops and training sessions aimed at incorporating disciplinary literacy into their instruction. This result corresponds with Roseni and Koroshi-Shano's (2021) study, which emphasizes the

transformative ability of professional development to improve teachers' evaluative and instructional skills.

Professional growth likewise encourages teamwork and creativity within educational organizations. Leka and Roseni (2022) emphasize the importance of establishing inclusive learning communities, where teachers can exchange resources, effective strategies, and creative instructional techniques. These cooperative networks are especially beneficial in addressing systemic obstacles to the implementation of disciplinary literacy in Albania.

Implications for Educational Policy in Albania

The literature emphasizes the necessity for structural reforms to enhance disciplinary literacy in Albania. Curriculum frameworks should clearly incorporate disciplinary literacy goals, providing specific instructions for teaching these skills across various subjects (Roseni & Koroshi-Shano, 2021). Moreover, focused investments in digital resources and teaching materials are essential to tackle resource inequalities and guarantee fair access to quality education (Leka & Roseni, 2022).

Professional growth must stay at the forefront, emphasizing the provision of strategies for teachers to engage students in critical literacy, promote collaborative learning, and utilize digital tools efficiently. These efforts, along with structural changes, can establish an educational setting where disciplinary literacy is not only highlighted but also effectively nurtured, thereby aiding students' academic and career achievements. By implementing these strategies and addressing systemic issues, Albania can align its educational practices with international standards, ensuring that students are well-equipped to navigate the challenges of a more complex and interconnected world.

The study undertaken

Research aims and hypothesis and questions

This research aims to examine the expectations of Albanian educators concerning disciplinary literacies, emphasizing the particular abilities necessary for successful participation in different academic fields, such as reading, writing, and communication.

Research instruments and procedures

This research employed a qualitative research design to investigate Albanian educators' views on disciplinary literacies. The sample consisted of 50 educators from primary and secondary institutions in both urban and rural areas of Albania, covering various subjects, including science, language arts, and mathematics. Teachers were chosen through purposive sampling to guarantee a diverse array of viewpoints.

Detailed individual interviews provided teachers with a unique opportunity to openly express their views on disciplinary literacies, teaching methods, and the challenges they faced. Classroom observations enhanced the interviews by recording actual practices. These observations focused on the incorporation of disciplinary literacy skills, the use of teaching materials, student engagement, and classroom interactions, providing an enhanced understanding of the teaching methods employed by teachers and the practical application of disciplinary literacy.

The data analysis procedure involved several stages. Initially, transcripts and observational notes were carefully reviewed to become familiar with the content. Crucial statements, concepts, and patterns regarding educators' expectations and difficulties with disciplinary literacies were recognized and categorized. The codes were later organized into themes that reflected recurring trends in the data. Peer debriefing was conducted with seasoned qualitative researchers to gain further insights and confirm the strength of the interpretations. Member checking enabled participants to examine and verify the correctness of the researchers' interpretations of their replies.

Reliability and validity were further enhanced through the triangulation of data sources, combining interview responses and classroom observations. These measures ensured a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspectives on disciplinary literacies, providing a robust foundation for the study's findings and recommendations.

Study findings

Challenges

The results of this research support current literature regarding the systemic obstacles encountered by teachers in advancing disciplinary literacy. Albanian educators recognized insufficient teaching time as a significant obstacle, aligning with the findings of Daniels and Zemelman (2014), who observe that curriculum pressures frequently overshadow opportunities for in-depth disciplinary engagement. Educators highlighted that the wide range of curricula frequently allows minimal space for developing critical literacy skills essential for substantial student involvement with disciplinary content.

High-class sizes exacerbate these challenges, hindering educators from offering personalized feedback that is crucial for cultivating discipline-specific reading, writing, and communication skills. In classrooms with more than 35 students, educators find it difficult to customize their teaching, echoing Duke's (2004) notes on the detrimental effects of oversized classes on student performance.

Differences in resources between urban and rural schools continue to be a significant concern. Although urban educators frequently benefit from digital resources and additional materials, rural teachers often rely on outdated textbooks that fail to meet modern disciplinary literacy standards. This discrepancy aligns with the findings of Baumann et al. (2011) and is further highlighted by Roseni's (2014) evaluation of English textbooks in Albania, which revealed significant deficiencies in resources designed to promote critical literacy skills. Moreover, the absence of specialized professional development options, as highlighted by Roseni and Koroshi-Shano (2021), hampers educators' ability to tackle these systemic issues efficiently.

Strategies

Despite these obstacles, the research revealed various successful techniques employed by Albanian educators to promote disciplinary literacy. An important strategy includes direct teaching of vocabulary specific to each discipline, mentioned by 85% of respondents as a vital element of their educational methods. This approach aids students in deciphering intricate texts and concepts within their disciplines, a technique endorsed by Fang et al. (2019).

Collaborative learning tasks, such as group projects and peer discussions, were identified by 65% of educators as effective methods for involving students in disciplinary conversations and knowledge sharing. These activities enhance understanding while also helping students develop critical thinking and communication skills, aligning with the findings of Leka and Roseni (2022) regarding the benefits of interactive and collaborative learning.

Another commonly utilized strategy is modeling expert practices within various disciplines. Educators showcase the methods professionals use for reading and writing tasks in their disciplines, such as examining scientific information or deciphering historical texts. This approach illustrates Shanahan and Shanahan's (2008) focus on the significance of modeling to assist students in effectively engaging with discipline-specific content.

Resources

The research emphasized a notable difference in resource access between urban and rural educational institutions. Urban educators indicated improved access to digital tools and interactive learning platforms, essential for involving students in

disciplinary literacy activities. Nevertheless, rural educators frequently rely on outdated resources, a hurdle that limits their ability to deliver effective, subject-specific instruction. This concern aligns with Baumann et al. (2011), who emphasize the necessity of modern and readily available teaching materials in promoting disciplinary literacy.

Educators recognized digital tools, including multimedia materials and web-based platforms, as especially impactful in enhancing student involvement and understanding. Nevertheless, just 40% of participants indicated they had access to sufficient digital resources, emphasizing the necessity for increased investment in technology to promote fair instructional methods, as noted by Leka and Roseni (2022).

Professional Development

Professional development has arisen as a vital necessity for Albanian educators. Ninety-two percent of participants expressed a keen interest in participating in workshops and training sessions designed to incorporate disciplinary literacy into their teaching methods. This discovery is consistent with the work of Roseni and Koroshi-Shano (2021), who highlight the powerful influence of professional development on teaching effectiveness.

Participants emphasized the significance of practical, hands-on training that prepares them with methods for creating subject-specific lessons, integrating digital tools, and encouraging critical thinking abilities in students. They highlighted the importance of collaborative learning communities, in which educators can exchange resources, effective strategies, and creative teaching techniques. This is in accordance with Leka and Roseni's (2022) suggestion for establishing inclusive professional networks to address systemic barriers and foster innovative teaching methods.

Implications

These results highlight the critical necessity for comprehensive reforms to tackle the obstacles to disciplinary literacy in Albania. Focused curriculum updates should clearly embed disciplinary literacy goals, offering teachers specific directions for weaving these skills into their instructional methods. In agreement with Roseni and Koroshi-Shano (2021), aligning curriculum frameworks with disciplinary literacy objectives can improve teachers' capacity to provide effective and captivating instruction.

Investing in professional development is crucial to provide teachers with the skills needed to tackle challenges such as limited time, unequal resources, and large student numbers. Workshops, training programs, and cooperative learning experiences can enable educators to implement evidence-based methods, as indicated by Cervetti et al. (2012).

Additionally, tackling the resource inequalities between urban and rural schools must be a priority. Offering access to current textbooks, digital resources, and engaging platforms can improve the consistency and quality of literacy instruction in various disciplines. By addressing these challenges, Albania can foster an educational environment where disciplinary literacy is both emphasized and nurtured, ensuring that students are equipped for academic and professional success in a globalized society.

Conclusion

This research provides valuable insights into Albanian teachers' perspectives on disciplinary literacy, underscoring its vital importance in enhancing students' academic achievement and preparing them for future career challenges. The results highlight the essential requirement for disciplinary literacy as a foundation for promoting understanding in specific subjects, analytical thinking, and proficient communication abilities. Although educators demonstrated a deep commitment to advancing these literacies, the research revealed notable obstacles that hinder their

efforts, including curriculum limitations, resource disparities, and inadequate professional development options.

To tackle these issues, this research promotes comprehensive reforms in curriculum design, professional growth, and resource distribution. Creating curriculum frameworks that clearly incorporate disciplinary literacy goals is crucial. These frameworks should provide teachers with explicit guidance on integrating discipline-specific skills into their teaching methods, promoting consistency and effectiveness across different subjects. Moreover, fostering interdisciplinary connections within the curriculum can further improve students' capability to transfer and utilize disciplinary literacy skills across different academic situations.

Professional growth is another key element for enhancing disciplinary literacy in Albania. Targeted training sessions, workshops, and cooperative learning groups are essential for providing educators with the resources and techniques needed to adopt evidence-based methods. Professional development initiatives must focus on real-world applications, such as teaching discipline-specific terminology, demonstrating expert techniques, and utilizing digital resources to foster engaging and interactive educational settings.

Tackling resource imbalances is equally essential. Guaranteeing fair access to revised textbooks, digital resources, and additional materials can greatly enhance the uniformity and quality of disciplinary literacy education. It is essential to prioritize resource distribution to rural schools, which face greater challenges, in order to close the gap and promote equitable learning opportunities for every student.

Decreasing class sizes is a crucial suggestion to enhance individualized instruction and increase student engagement. Reduced class sizes allow educators to offer personalized feedback, promoting a greater comprehension of subject-specific literature and ideas.

Through the adoption of these suggestions, Albania can create an educational environment that prioritizes disciplinary literacy while ensuring its successful development. This method aligns with broader educational objectives aimed at equipping students for success in a progressively global and information-driven environment. Addressing the systemic obstacles identified in this research will enable educators to meet the requirements of their fields and equip students with the competencies necessary for academic and career success.

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