Aims and Expected Outcomes

Policy issues are of paramount importance for many of the educational leaders who support the IEA studies internationally. The Reading Literacy Study was designed to provide results which could serve as a basis for decision making concerning the improvement of reading in primary and secondary schools. The study coincided with the UNESCO World Literacy Year and set 1990 as the year in which the first large-scale baseline data were established against which future achievements in literacy would be measured.

For the purpose of this study, reading literacy refers to the linguistic and cognitive processing of those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. As this implies, literacy is regarded as both a cultural practice and an intellectual achievement.

The purposes of this study are:
1. To discribe the achievement levels in reading literacy of comparable samples of students in educational systems;
2. To describe the voluntary reading activities of 9 and 14 year old students;
3. To identify differences in policies and instructional practices in reading, and to study the ways in which they relate to students' achievement and voluntary reading;
4. To produce valid international tests and questionnaires which could be used to investigate reading literacy development in other countries; and,
5. To provide national baseline data suitable for monitoring changes in literacy levels and patterns over time.

The data in participating countries were collected during 1990 and 1991. In addition to achievement measures, data were collected on salient home and school factors which are believed to influence the acquisition of literacy.

The products of the international study were:

- Valid measures suitable for measuring literacy across countries;
- Estimates of the percentage of each population reaching specified levels of literacy;
- Comparative data across countries of literacy achievement in three domains (narrative passages, expository passages, documents) on an international scale;
- The identification of which school, teacher, and societal factors influence literacy and to what extent;
- Comparative data across countries schools and teacher practices in the teaching of reading; and,
- The establishment of a 1990 baseline database in 30 countries.

These products are of use to each education system because it will have "hard" data on literacy levels which it can relate to economic, health, and other educational indicators. The study also identifies those variables which, if changed, could help to improve literacy rates.
Finally, the large 1990 database on an international level will be usefull in assessing changes over time in literacy achievement in future years.

Target Populations

Population A

All students attending mainstream schools on a full-time basis at the grade level in which most students aged 9:00-9:11 years (during the first week of the eight month of the school year) are enrolled.

Population B

All students attending mainstream schools on a full-time basis at the grade level in which most students aged 14:00-14:11 years (during the first week of the eight month of the school year) are enrolled.

Weighting

The RL datafiles contain weight variables SCHWGT, TCHWGT and STDWGT.
All analysis and publications from RL have been based on data weighted by these variables. The variables SCHWGT and TCHWGT have been based on the student weigts (=sum of STDWGT).
This means that weighted results from school or teacher instruments are also based on the number of students in such a school (with such a teacher) and not on the number of schools.

To give a simple example:
If a country has just 2 schools, one with 30 students and one with 10 students, the mean school size is clearly (30+10) / 2 = 20 students.
However the average student will be on a school with
(30*30 + 10+10) / (30+10) = 25 students
This number of 25 will be the outcome of the analysis of the school data.

Other information

Descriptions of participating countries and of the used instruments can be found elsewhere in this database.

National deviations of the international target populations can be found in the country information.

The data

The Reading Literacy data are available on separate diskettes.
Data are available from the following respondent levels:
ES = E : Educational System (country or part of a country)
SM = M : Stratum
SC = C : School
TE = T : Teacher
ST = S : Student (all instruments in one file)

All data have been combined over all countries for each respondent level, except for the student data (because of the filesize).

All data, including the student data, are also available per country.
If you want to combine one or more student data files, it is strongly advised to put them together in the order of the codes in the variable ID_ES_NI (standard numeric country codes), as the files on the other levels are in this order and a different order makes it more difficult to merge data from different respondent levels.
The order of variable ID_ES_NI is the same as the order in which the country files have been put on diskette.

For population A the data are on 16 diskettes (1.44 Mb; 3.5 inch).
The total file size of the raw data is 50 Mb for the student files and 4.7 Mb for the other files.

For population B the data are on 23 diskettes (1.44 Mb; 3.5 inch).
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Personnel
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International Coordinating Center

University of Hamburg
Germany

T. Neville Postlethwaite, International Coordinator (1989-1991)
Andreas Schleicher, Data Manager (1989-1992); International Coordinator (1991-1992)
Dieter Kotte, Asst. International Coordinator (1989-1990)
R. Elaine Degenhart, Asst. International Coordinator (1990-1992)

International Steering Committee

Warwick B. Elly, University of Canterbury, New Zealand (Chair)
John T. Guthrie, University of Maryland, United States (1989-1991)
Ingvar Lundberg, University of Umea, Sweden
Francis Mangubhai, University of Southern Queensland, Australia
Alan C. Purves, State University of New York-Albany, United States (Standing Committee Representative)
Kenneth N. Ross, Deakin University, Australia (Sampling Referee)

Techical Advisors

Albert E. Beaton, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ United States
Nadir Atash, Westat, Rockville, MD United States
Peter Allerup, Danish Institute for Educational Research, Copenhagen, Denmark

Publications
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Elley, Warwick B. : How in the World do Students Read?; Hamburg: IEA, 1992.

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(Most of this text is derived from the IEA Guidebook 1993, pp 76-79).

RL1 ES_A Country Level Statistics Population A

This section contains descriptive variables for this population on the level of the Educational System.
The results of the National Case Study questionnaire are not included in this database, so there is no questionnaire associated with this section.

RL1 SM_A Stratum Level Statistics Population A

This section contains descriptive variables for this population on the level of a Stratum.
It also contains a variable, containing the national defined label of each stratum.
There is no questionnaire associated with this section.

RL1 SQBG_A School Questionnaire Population A

The School Questionnaire included (among others) questions concerning the principal's training and experience; personal descriptive data (sex, age); school descriptive data (size, library, initiatives taken to improve reading, contacts with the community, and so on).

RL1 TQBG_A Teacher Questionnaire Population A

The Teacher Questionnaire included (among others) questions concerning training and experience; personal descriptive data (sex, age); classroom materials and environment; and teaching strategies and activities.

RL1 STQ3_A Student Questionnaire (A3) Population A

The student questionnaire includes (among others) questions concerning parents' education and interaction with the student and his schooling; the students' reading and leisure time activities; and personal descriptive data (sex, age).

RL1 STR1_A Student Reading Test, Session 1 (A1) Population A

The Reading Test includes a word recognition test as well as passages and items representing narrative text, expository text and documents.
The tasks require an ability to comprehend specific vocabulary and continous text and to locate and use document information.

The Reading Test has been split up to be administered in 2 sessions, of which this part is the first session.
The word recognition test is included in this part.

As the word recognition test contains only pictures and one word
- where the word is included in the variable label-
the questions of this test are not included in the database.

The Reading Tests consist of text passages, with pictures as illustrations.
Some pictures belonging to the passages however are essential, e.g. a map about an island.
Following each of the passages are 2 to 7 test items, referring to this passages. Some of these items contain pictures too. These pictures have been described under 'Question'.
The corresponding variables of the test items can be identified by their variable labels, starting with D(ocument), E(xpository) or N(arrative), followed by a short description of the passage.
The passages belonging to the Reading Tests are not included in the database.

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