Factors which influence the development of literacy skills in primary education – conclusions of a diagnosis study realised in Romania

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The diagnosis study

- Developed in 2011 within the project Developing key competences – a premise to social inclusion (coordinator: MoE, December 2010 – November 2012);

- It focuses on the manner of teaching reading and writing in the primary grades in Romanian schools;

- Questions: Which are the existing instructional practices for developing primary school students literacy competences? Which of the existing instructional practices should be promoted/ should be improved for a positive influence on the development of the primary school students' literacy skills?

- The methodology: document review (the national curriculum for grades I – IV; reports, studies, articles), survey - questionnaire (341 primary school teachers from 50 pilot schools, 12 school inspectors), interview (16 'resource' primary school teachers).

Factors – national evaluations

Socio-economic environment	Educational environment	Teacher's characteristics	Students characteristics
• Residence of the school (related with teachers characteristics)	• Multi-grade class teaching • Existence of teaching resources (computer, library) have NO influence	• residence • participation in professional development • continuity in teaching the same students	• gender

Factors – survey & interview

Educational environment	Teacher's characteristic	Socio-economic environment & students characteristics
• National curriculum • Approaches • Instructional practices • Resources	• participation in specific professional development	• Families with no/ poor interest in education • Disabilities • No motivation for reading & writing

Educational environment - national curriculum

Language & communication - The Romanian/ Hungarian/ German language (mother tongue)

- Aims: reading and writing skills, communication skills, identifying elements of grammatical construction and receptive language (sounds, letters, words, sentences); show interest for reading different texts (literary and non-literary)
- Selection of texts can be done by teachers (number of words of texts is mentioned in the curriculum – e.g. 300 words for 3rd and 4th graders)

Maths & sciences, Man & society, Sport & health, Arts, Technologies, Counselling

- Aims – basic acquisitions but NOT literacy skills
- Text books – many long texts (more than 300 words) with lots of specific words hard to understand by students

Educational environment - approaches in teaching reading and writing

Phonetic- analytic- synthetic method – traditional

- Writing (almost) = pronunciation in RO (phonetic reading)
- Sentence → words, syllables, sounds (analysis of words)
- Sounds, syllable, word, sentence (synthetic)
- 1st stage in reading – identification of letters
- 5 – 6 weeks for preparations, reading and writing is done simultaneously

Phonetic- analytic- synthetic method – '2 steps' alternative

- 3 weeks for preparations, 10 weeks for reading (by using 15 sounds and letters), writing (15 letters), reading & writing
- Reading before writing
- Advantage: students don't read 'by letters' (easy to correct, if they do)

Note: "Whole language" approach is used for teaching German language (mother tongue). "Whole-part-whole" approach is very rarely used.

Educational environment - instructional practices

Reading techniques

- Reading aloud (roles, chain, 'hand on' the text, by syllables) - 71%
- Silent reading (rarely used) – 5%
- Comprehension (reading with/ followed by tasks) – 20%
- Other (listening etc.) – 4%

Writing techniques

- Transcription of words, text (23%)
- Dictation (3%)
- Writing creative/ functional texts (25%)
- Other (exercises)

Educational environment - resources/ texts

Teaching - learning

- Worksheets (16.8%)
- Posters – rules (16%)
- Books with exercises (11.7%)
- Books (literature, encyclopedia) – 11.1%
- Magazines for children (2%)

Assessment/ evaluation

- Texts from the text book (36.8%)
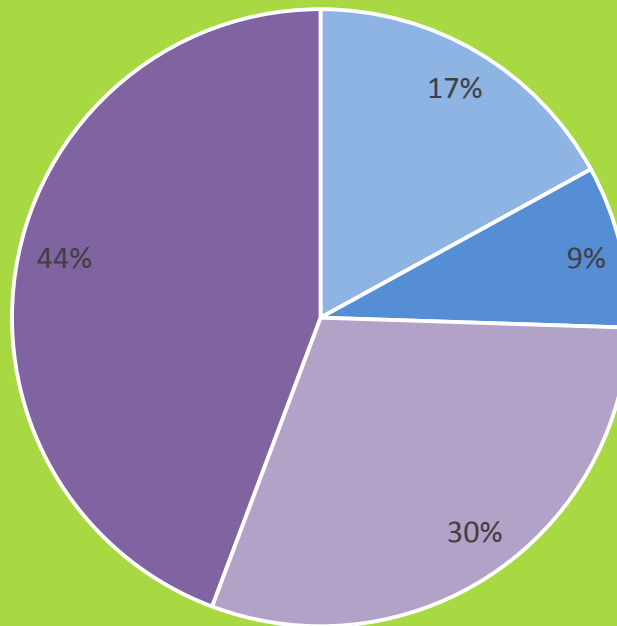- Texts at 'first sight' (24.54%)
- Texts prepared by the teacher (20.85%)
- Texts from readings (16.31%)

"Assessment is rarely used for teaching/ learning."

Educational environment – resources (ICT, software)

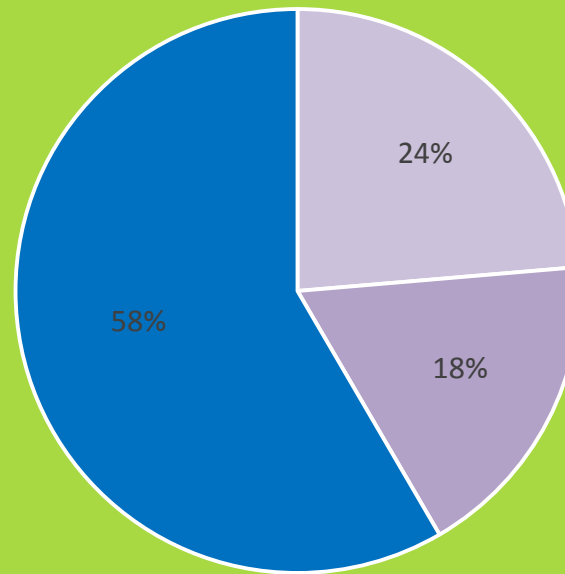Using ICT for the development of the literacy skills

□ use ICT - urban area □ use ICT - rural area □ don't use ICT - urban area □ don't use ICT - rural area

Teachers' characteristics – professional development in the area of development of literacy skills
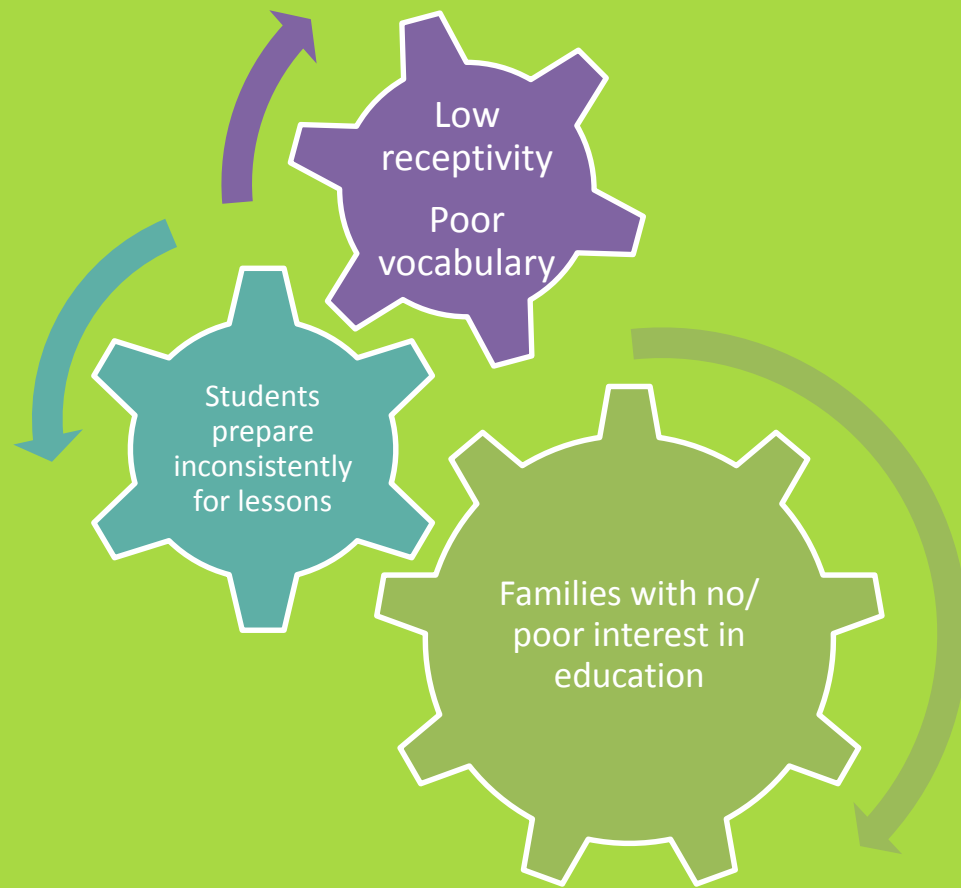
Respondents participation - in-service teacher training courses

"Pre-service training in this area is poor."

24%

18%

58%

■ Teacher Training Houses courses   ■ courses provided by Universities   ■ no participation

Socio-economic environment & students characteristics (1)

Low receptivity

Poor vocabulary

Students prepare inconsistently for lessons

Families with no/ poor interest in education

Socio-economic environment & students characteristics (2)

Disabilities	Lack of motivation to read and write
• Dyslexia • Lefthanders (?) • Attention disorder • & • Lack of specialized staff	• Why to read and write • & • Spending too much time on computers • Lots of writing mistakes because of the abbreviations used

Thank you!

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Summary of „Factori de influenta ai dezvoltarii competentelor de citit-scris in invatamantul primar - Studiu de diagnoza"
Brighton, July 2014