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
- Residence of the school (related with teachers characteristics)

## Educational environment
- Multi-grade class teaching
- Existence of teaching resources (computer, library) have NO influence

## Teacher’s characteristics
- residence
- participation in professional development
- continuity in teaching the same students

## Students characteristics
- gender
Factors - survey & interview

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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: 44%
- Use ICT - rural area: 17%
- Don't use ICT - urban area: 30%
- Don't use ICT - rural area: 9%
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."

- 58% Teacher Training Houses courses
- 24% courses provided by Universities
- 18% no participation
Socio-economic environment & students characteristics (1)

Families with no/poor interest in education

Students prepare inconsistently for lessons

Low receptivity

Poor vocabulary

Families with no/poor interest in education
Socio-economic environment & students characteristics (2)

Disabilities

- Dyslexia
- Lefthanders (?)
- Attention disorder
- &
- Lack of specialized staff

Lack of motivation to read and write

- Why to read and write
- &
- Spending too much time on computers
- Lots of writing mistakes because of the abbreviations used
Thank you!

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