A Comparative Analysis of the Current Literacy Policies from five European Countries

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Presentation highlights

- The background context
- Research questions and aim
- Research procedures
- Resulting corpus of the policy initiatives
- Preliminary findings
- Preliminary conclusions
The background context

- The shared belief on the importance of literacy:
  - social and economic progress
  - citizens’ empowerment
  - lifelong learning
- The results of population in international assessments considered as a ‘problem’
- The ‘European literacy crisis’
- The institution (and constitution) of literacy as a policy target
- The implementation of several programmes, projects, initiatives:
  - Working groups
  - Networks
  - Project fundings
High Level Group of Experts on Literacy

Mission
- To examine how to support literacy throughout lifelong learning
- To identify common success factors of literacy programmes and policy initiatives
- To provide some proposals and best practice examples for the improvement of the European literacy policies

European literacy network – ELINET

Mission
- To analyse literacy policies and practices of European countries
- To raise awareness of all European institutions about the importance of reading and writing in people’s everyday life.
- To contribute to a greater involvement of all citizens with literacy

Examples: HLG and ELINET project (EAC/S05/2013)
Research questions:

- What policies regulate literacy education for adolescents in Europe?
- What initiatives have been created to implement these policies?

Aim:

- To evaluate literacy policies and their implementation practices in 5 European countries: PT, ES, GR, RO, IE
  
  Ultimately,

- To understand to what extent literacy policies are effectively in line with European concerns regarding (the ‘lack’ of) literacy
Research procedures

1. Identification of the initiatives (actions, programmes, …)

3 Key intervention policy areas:

- Creation of more literate environments
- Improvement of the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion and equity

Since 2000

+ Collection of each initiative framing/supporting documents:

- Legislation,
- Guidelines,
- Working programmes,
- Reports
- Research articles
- Other official and unofficial web-based documents
2. Description of each initiative (action, programme,…)
   - Goals
   - Actors
   - Contexts
   - Funding
   - Process of implementation (actions, resources)
   - Theoretical framework
   - Evaluation
   - Social impact

3. Validation by national experts
## Resulting corpus of policy initiatives (114 init.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portugal (32 init.)</th>
<th>Spain (32 init.)</th>
<th>Ireland (15 init.)</th>
<th>Greece (14 init.)</th>
<th>Romania (21 init.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading ... communicate... intergrate (2015)</td>
<td>Reading promotion plan (2001)</td>
<td>T h e n a t i o n a l S t r a t e g y to improve literacy and numeracy (2011)</td>
<td>ICT in language teaching practices (2013)</td>
<td>Reading to learn (2013)</td>
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Goals
- To raise levels
- To develop literacy skills
- To increase competences
- To improve language performance
- To promote school results

Contexts
- School
- Classrooms
- School libraries
- Formal educational environments

Actors
- Teachers
- Educators
- Students
- School librarians

Focus
- Reading practices
- Books reading (literary book)
- Use of ICT for learning
Goals – some examples

**National Reading Plan**  
(2006, PT)  
“the main objective … is to raise the level of literacy of the Portuguese people”

**Reading circles**  
(2004, RO)  
“to improve the students’ literacy skills, which are tested in national examinations”

**Right to read campaign**  
(2014, IE)  
“to embed the development of literacy into the lives of communities …”

**Reading time**  
(2003, ES)  
“to contribute to the acquisition of key competencies…”

**Education and lifelong learning**  
(2007, GR)  
“…development of students’ «horizontal abilities» transversing all school activities…”
The scope of the initiatives

- Right to read campaign (IE)
- Navigating in reading (PT)
- Reading camping (ES)
- Reading together (ES)
- School libraries for reading, information and learning (ES)
- Metropolitan of readings (RO)
- Boys reading (RO)
- Reading more at home (PT)
- Reading more in various accents (PT)
- National reading Plan (PT)
- Reading in families (ES)
- Reading in pairs (ES)
- Reading time (ES)
- Reading promotion plan (ES)
- I want to read for me! (RO)
- Reading in line (ES)
- Reading circles (RO)
- Reading to learn (RO)
- Lifelong readers (GR)
- Development of reading skills (RO)
- Reading for the third millennium (RO)
- Read it (RO)
- Reading...Comunícate...Include (PT)
- Let’s introduce a book - The Little Prince (RO)
- Bookraft (GR)
- National book centre (GR)
Preliminary conclusions

- The predominance of a ‘deficit model’ (Clark, 2005) oriented to the development of basic skills needs.
- A narrow perspective of reading and literacy where it is not visible solid theoretical grounds.
- The predominance of an ‘utilitarian’ (and sometimes ‘romantic’) view of literacy (Macedo & Freire, 2000).
- ‘Empowerment’ and ‘emancipation’ as well as with effective social inclusion do not encounter conditions to be fully reached.
- There are few indicators that the activities acknowledge diversities (gender and linguistic) that they may promote critical thinking and transformed practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

An ‘autonomous’ approach of literacy in opposition to an ‘ideological’ one (Street, 1984)
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