

## LITERATURE REVIEW OF CURRENT STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Liliana MĂȚĂ<sup>a</sup> \*, Ioana BOGHIAN<sup>a</sup>, Konstantinos KOUMI<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău, Mărășești Street, 157, RO-600115, Bacău, Romania,

<sup>b</sup> University of Cyprus, 1678, Nicosia, Cyprus

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### Abstract

*This paper is an analysis of the most recent studies in the domain of training preschool and primary school teachers. The main purpose is to provide a unitary and updated image of the research in this field, and to elaborate a new vision of the way in which the studies focused on training preschool and primary school teachers are grouped. The complex analysis enables the identification of the main research in the field and, especially, the highlighting of the studies focused on a comparative analysis of the training programmes.*

**Key words:** preschool and primary education, training teachers, studies

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### 1. Relevance of the analysis of the studies on training pre-primary and primary school teachers

There is an increase, in recent years, in the number of studies on the training of pre-primary and primary school teachers. Knowledge of these studies is a must for starting and conducting new investigations in this field. The main aspects supporting the need to know the current state of studies based on training pre-primary and primary teachers are diverse. Firstly, there are *scientific* aspects, which emphasize the importance of knowing the present studies with a view to elaborating new theories and innovative models in the domain of training pre-primary and primary school teachers, in close correlation with the results of recent research. Secondly, the aspects related to the *research methodology* are obvious, generated by the need to know the research methods used so far, in order to be able to conduct new studies regarding the training of pre-primary and primary

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\* E-mail address: liliana.mata@ub.ro

school teachers. Thirdly, the aspects related to the *originality and novelty of the training programmes* for pre-primary and primary school teachers are more than relevant, because the quality of education may be increased by exploiting the research results. Not last, the aspects related to the *educational policies* in this area are important, as a result of the positive, long-term effects of the research results upon improving the strategies for training preschool and primary school teachers. Therefore, the main purpose of this chapter is to analyse the most recent studies regarding the theme approached, in order to identify the newest orientations and highlight the existing comparative research. At the end of the analysis of the studies, we shall highlight the predominating types of research or the missing ones, so that new directions of study may be identified.

## **2. Recent studies in the domain of training pre-primary and primary school teachers**

The analysis of the various studies conducted in recent years regarding the training of preschool and primary school teachers gives a unitary and integrating view, which provides better knowledge of the current state of the art in this domain.

Based on this analysis, several criteria for classifying the studies have been identified (Table 1.):

a) *comparative studies of pre-primary and primary school teacher training in different countries* (O'Sullivan et al., 2010);

b) *studies centred on the identification of the role of different variables in training of pre-primary and primary school teachers*: science process skills (Bati et al., 2010); communication and discursive strategies (Hobjilã, 2011); development teacher training framework (Ejuu, 2012);

c) *studies based on the identification of the perceptions upon the different variables of training programmes*: planning, implementation and evaluation dimensions of the primary curriculum (Bilgin et al., 2011); alternative measurement and evaluation techniques (Demir et al., 2011); professional development (Loizou, 2008; Ifanti and Fotopoulou, 2011; Karagiorgi, 2012); in-service teacher training programmes (Kavak et al., 2012); interdisciplinary teacher preparation (Miller and Losardo, 2002); importance of education professionals developing skills in educational research methodologies (Pereira, 2011); pre-service teacher training programmes (Major and Tiro, 2012);

d) *studies focused on the investigation of the effects of training courses upon the development of different components at pre-primary and primary teachers*: academic achievements (Efendioglu, 2012); conversational responsiveness (Piastra et al., 2012); orientations towards the arts (Davies,

2010); positive attention skills and consistent discipline (Lyon et al., 2009); construction of teacher identities (Lopes and Tormenta, 2010);

e) *studies based on the investigation of the impact of the curriculum reform upon training programmes of pre-primary and primary school teachers* (Masari and Petrovici, 2011);

f) *studies based on the development of specific models for pre-primary and primary teacher education: self-regulated learning model* (Vrieling et al., 2010).

g) *studies focused on the use of information and communication technologies in the training of pre-primary and primary school teachers* (Glava and Glava, 2011; Panagiotis et al., 2011).

**Table 1.** *Classification criteria for the studies centred on training pre-primary and primary school teachers*

<b>Criteria of classification</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Results</b>
a) Comparative studies of pre-primary and primary teacher training in different countries	O'Sullivan et al. (2010)	Comparing Irish and South African primary students' experiences regarding their comparative education courses	portrayal of the contextual background of South Africa and of Ireland, survey	The role of contextual factors in determining the significance of different aspects of comparative education in primary teachers' training.
b) Studies centred on the identification of the role of different variables in the training of pre-primary and primary school teachers	Bati et al. (2010)	Determining the pre-school teachers' awareness of the science process skills	content analysis, descriptive analysis, interview	Teachers do not give due consideration to science activities in pre-primary education and awareness levels of teachers regarding science process skills are remarkably low.
	Hobjilã (2011)	Identifying the role of communication and of discursive strategies in the training of pre-primary and primary school teachers	qualitative analysis of curricular documents, interview, 18 Romanian pre-primary and primary school teachers from initial training programmes	The curricula and course syllabi pertaining to the initial training of pre-primary and primary school teachers exhibit a predominantly theoretical orientation in actualising the issues related to communication.
	Ejuu (2012)	Highlighting the gains and challenges met in the implementation of the Uganda early	106 principals and tutors of early childhood	Major challenges were found in institutional management and

		childhood development teacher training framework	development teacher training institutions, questionnaires and interviews	administrative set ups, tutor competencies, and trainee assessment.
c) Studies based on the identification of the perceptions of the different variables, as a result of participation in continuing education courses	Miller and Losardo (2002)	Evaluating the graduates' perceptions upon strengths and needs in interdisciplinary teacher preparation for early childhood education	survey	Graduates reported a need in the preparation programmes for more content and application in areas including working with families, behaviour analysis and working with children who have moderate to severe disabilities.
	Loizou (2008)	Exploring the Cypriot primary school teachers' understanding of professional development; their engagement in and understanding of reflective practice; the changes brought about in practice through reflective practice; the factors associated with these changes	18 Cypriot primary school teachers, semi-structured interviews	The analysis of the interviews revealed that Cypriot primary school teachers perceive professional development as the receipt of knowledge from an official authority.
	Bilgin et al. (2011)	Determining practising teachers' views on the planning, implementation and evaluation dimensions of the primary curriculum and the differences between those who have participated in in-service courses and those who have not.	259 practising teachers in primary schools, five-point Likert scale	Primary school teachers who have participated in in-service training courses and those who have not do not share similar points of view regarding the dimensions of the new curriculum for primary education. It is recommended that time allocated to in-service courses need to be increased and more teachers need to be reached through these courses.
	Güneş et al. (2011)	Investigating the needs of primary	3 open-ended questions,	Teachers indicate that they need to be

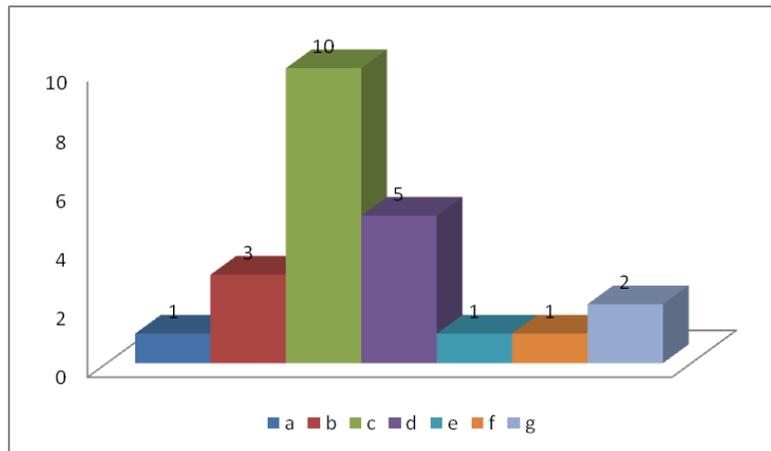
		school teachers about in-service training	11 primary school teachers	trained on topics such as teaching methods and techniques.
	Ifanti and Fotopoulou (2011)	Identifying the views of in-service primary teachers in Greece upon professional development	86 in-service teachers, questionnaire	The majority of teachers underlined their intrinsic motivation to become primary education teachers. The research results indicate the positive attitudes towards enhancing their professionalism.
	Pereira (2011)	Identifying the concepts of students attending the Master's cycle in pre-primary and primary school; Teaching about the importance of educational professionals developing skills in educational research methodologies	Concepts on Research Processes and Teaching Practice (CRPTP)	The results highlight the benefits for professional life and the difficulties in its realization. The difficulties identified revealed that the students were aware of their own insecurities and hesitations in a learning experience, indicating awareness of the limits of theoretical and practical knowledge.
	Demir et al. (2011)	Exploring the views of the primary teachers who took in-service training, about alternative measurement and evaluation techniques	54 teachers, interview	Teachers aim to evaluate their students using cognitive-emotional and psychomotor perspectives and help them gain the habits of research and responsibility.
	Karagiorgi (2012)	Determining Greek-Cypriot teachers' development of professional identities	7 teachers in one primary school in Cyprus, interviews	Interviews indicate that teachers' conceptions of good teaching reflect a focus on results rather than processes while respondents perceive their professional growth throughout the years as minimal.
	Kavak et al. (2012)	Evaluating the opinions of the primary school teachers about in-	681 teachers, In-service Teacher Training	Participants are moderately satisfied by in-service teacher trainings. Teachers

		service teacher training programmes in the Turkish educational system.	Inventory (ITTI) developed by Yamak et al. (2011)	also strongly desire to receive training on concepts and scientific developments.
	Major and Tiro (2012)	Investigating the perceptions of pre-service primary teachers regarding their teacher education programme	17 pre-service teachers, semi-structured interview	Participants indicated that they spend too much time on learning/ exploring theory and less time on hands-on experience.
d) Studies focused on investigating the effects of training courses upon the development of different components at pre-primary and primary school teachers	Lyon et al. (2009)	Increasing pre-primary teachers' positive attention skills and consistent discipline in order to enhance children's psychosocial functioning and prevent mental health problems	12 teachers, classroom observations	The findings indicated systematic increases in trained skills during intervention, and consumer evaluations showed that the training was rated positively.
	Davies (2010)	Exploring the impact upon pre-service teachers' orientations towards the arts through a week of performing arts within a one-year postgraduate teacher education programme	observation, audio-recorded interviews, survey	The results highlight the role of arts in primary pre-service teacher education.
	Lopes and Tormenta (2010)	Relating pre-service training curricula and the construction of teacher identities	biographical narratives, primary teachers	Pre-service training has a real impact on identities, but a large part of that impact gets neutralised in the work contexts.
	Efendioğlu (2012)	Investigating the effects of training courses on pre-service teachers' academic achievements in the field of geography	31 pre-service primary teachers in the control group, 58 in the experimental group, experimental design	The courseware is quite effective, improving pre-service teachers' academic achievements.
	Piasta et al. (2012)	Determining the effect of professional development on pre-primary teachers' conversational responsiveness in the classroom	49 preschool teachers, experimental design	Trained teachers used significantly more communication-facilitating strategies across the year but no such difference for language-developing

				strategies.
e) Studies based on investigating the impact of curriculum reform upon the training programmes for pre-primary and primary school teachers	Masari and Petrovici (2011)	Exploring the characteristics and effects of changing syllabi according to the Bologna system upon Romanian pre-service training of pre-primary and primary school teachers	242 students and 50 university teachers as experts, questionnaire	The results of our study reveals that the students and teachers share the opinion that it is absolutely necessary to change the actual curriculum, and they gave some innovative directions to be followed into the new pre-service teachers' training.
f) Studies based on the development of specific models for pre-primary and primary teacher education	Vrieling et al. (2010)	Highlighting the importance of students' self-regulated learning skills for successful learning.	literature search	There are elaborated SRL model for primary teacher education based on seven process-oriented design principles.
g) Studies focused on the use of information and communication technologies in the training of pre-primary and primary teachers	Glava and Glava (2011)	Analyzing the use of the learning platform BSCW (Basic Smart, Cooperate Worldwide) as a virtual classroom for pre-primary and primary school teacher training	case study, experiment	The BSCW platform represents a virtual classroom that offers the undergraduates – future teachers – the possibility to exercise their learning management skills, improve their cooperation and learning tasks, their design abilities.
	Panagiotis et al. (2011)	Identifying the teachers' educational needs and the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies and its impact on teaching, learning and cognitive processes as well as the students' behavioural adaptation	118 primary school teachers, questionnaire	On the one hand, teachers were not fully satisfied with the training they had already received. On the other hand, they were positive in the idea of continuous training. At the same time, there are differences among demographic units concerning the characteristics of training.

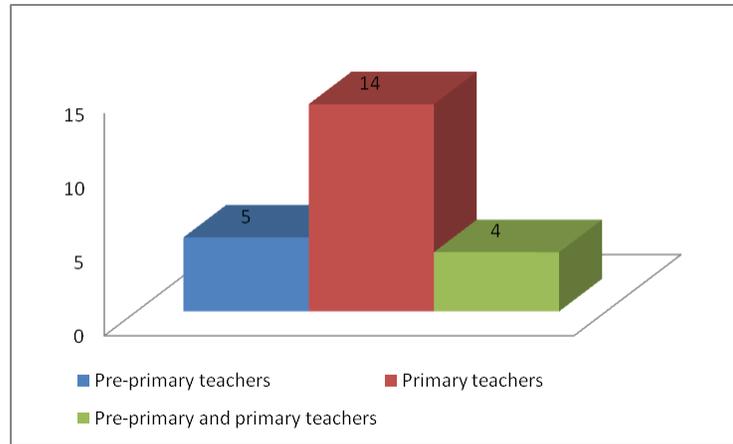
The analysis of studies focused on pre-primary and primary teacher training contributes to highlighting important and relevant conclusions regarding the current state of knowledge. Therefore, it is proposed an analysis of the frequencies, at the level of studies in this area, according to different criteria: the categories of studies (presented above: a, b, c, d, e, f, g); the education level of teachers (pre-primary and primary); the research methods (questionnaire, interview, biographical narratives, content analysis, survey, classroom observations, experiment).

Regarding the *categories of studies*, the analysis of frequencies (Figure 1) indicates that there prevail the studies based on identifying the perceptions upon the different variables, as a result of participation in continuing education courses. Of the 23 studies analyzed, 10 are centred on identifying the teachers' perceptions upon the various aspects of training. It is very interesting that there are very few comparative studies in this area. Also, there are identified few studies based on investigating the impact of curriculum reform changes upon the training programmes for pre-primary and primary school teachers and studies based on the development of specific models for pre-primary and primary teacher education.



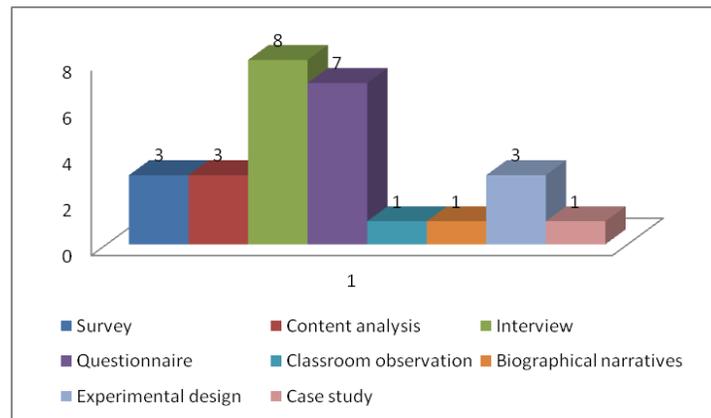
**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of the frequency of studies according to the main categories

Regarding the education level of teachers, the frequencies obtained (Figure 2) highlight the fact that most studies are focused on primary teachers training (14), compared to pre-primary teachers training (5).



**Figure 2.** Graphical representation of the frequency of studies according to the education level of teachers

Regarding the research methods, it results that the research methods used most often in the studies on pre-primary and primary teachers training are the interview and the questionnaire (Figure 3). In contrast to these methods, the least used research methods used are classroom observation, biographical narratives and case studies.



**Figure 3.** Graphical representation of the frequency of studies according to the research methods

Following the analysis of studies regarding the training of pre-primary and primary teachers, it results the need for conducting a comparative research. Also, future studies should exploit the qualitative methods, such as classroom observation and case study. Another aspect which was highlighted by our analysis consists in the need for studies on the training of pre-primary teachers.

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