

International ELINET Symposium 2018
“Literacy in the 21st Century: Participation – Inclusion – Equity”.

July 23-24, 2018, Cologne, Germany



ROUND TABLE: Literacy Policies in Europe – Examples of Successful National Policies

Chair: Viv Bird, ELINET Management Board

Monday, July 23, at 17.45–19.00

Location: Lecture Hall Building / 1st Floor / Room C

LITERACY CHANGES LIVES.

ROUND TABLE: Literacy policies in Europe – examples of successful national policies

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Chair: Viv Bird, ELINET Management Board

Abstract:

There is widespread agreement - despite the fact that one in five Europeans lack the necessary literacy skills to function in modern society – that literacy does not command high attention among policymakers. The aim of the *Literacy Policies in Europe* Round Table is to highlight some examples across Europe of successful literacy policies or practices that have a national influence. Which factors have contributed to the development of these practices and policies? What has been achieved, and what have been the challenges?

In this session, we will hear about the development and progress of national literacy policies in Portugal and Finland, a national professional development programme for teachers in Sweden, and national initiatives arising out of the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy 2011-2020 in Ireland.

Time	Presenter / Country	Title
Introduction		
17.45 - 17.55	Viv Bird (United Kingdom)	Introductions and literacy policy context
Input Contributions		
17.55 - 18.05	Gerry Shiel (Ireland)	The implementation of the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy in Ireland
18.05 - 18.15	Ana Cristina Ferreira de Aguiar Sarmiento, & Iris Susan Pires Pereira (Portugal)	Literacy policy initiatives in Portugal: The National Reading Plan and the National Programme for the Teaching of Portuguese
18.15 - 18.25	Sari Sulkunen & Ilmi Villacis (Finland)	National Literacy Forum in Finland

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18.25 - 18.35	Pia Kangas & Helga Stensson (Sweden)	The Literacy Boost – A Professional Development Programme for Teachers in Sweden
Discussion		
18.35-19.00	All presenters and the audience including Respondent: Kristina Cunningham, DG Education and Culture, European Commission, Brussels	Discussion and exchange

Abstracts and Presenters:

I. Introductions and literacy policy context

Chair: Viv Bird

Viv Bird has worked in the education and literacy sector for most of her career including most recently seven years as the CEO of BookTrust, the UK’s largest reading charity. Previously Viv held posts at the National Literacy Trust including Literacy and Social Inclusion Project Director during which time she wrote a number of influential policy and research papers.

For five years (2009-2014) Viv was Chair of EU Read, a consortium of European reading promotion organisations and, since 2013, a Board Member of the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET). In a voluntary capacity, Viv was a school governor for 25 years, including 11 years as Chair of Governors of an extremely challenging inner city school, recognised in 2007 as one of the most improved secondary schools in England. Since her retirement in 2015, Viv continues to work with ELINET as a Board Member to promote effective literacy policies across Europe. In 2016, she was invited to join the British Council’s Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Group.

Publications

V. Bird and R. Akerman *Literacy and Social Inclusion: the Handbook* (2005), National Literacy Trust

V. Bird and R. Akerman *Every which way we can: A literacy and social inclusion position paper* (2005), National Literacy Trust

P. Hannon and V. Bird *Family Literacy in England: Theory, Practice, Research and Policy* (2004). In Wasik, B.H. (Ed.) (2004) *Handbook of family literacy*

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II. The implementation of the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy in Ireland

Presenter: Gerry Shiel

Abstract:

Gerry Shiel will discuss the implementation of the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy 2011-2020 in Ireland, which arose because of concerns about low performance levels in PISA 2009. He will describe successes of the Strategy to date, as well as some of the initiatives that have been put in place to support the Strategy at both school and community levels. He will also make reference to new national initiatives that are consistent with aspects of the Strategy, including the implementation of a Digital Learning Framework in schools.

Bio Note:

Dr. Gerry Shiel works at the Educational Research Centre, St Patrick’s Campus, Dublin, where he has responsibility for national and international assessments in reading literacy and mathematics. As part of the EU-ELINET project, he worked on country reports for several European countries. He is especially interested in programmes designed to improve reading literacy among children in disadvantaged settings.

III. Literacy policy initiatives in Portugal: The National Reading Plan and the National Programme for the Teaching of Portuguese, Portugal

Presenters: Ana Cristina Ferreira de Aguiar Sarmiento, & Iris Susan Pires Pereira

Abstract:

The presentation focuses on two political initiatives developed in Portugal in the last decade, starting with some initiatives, achievements and challenges of Portugal's National Reading Plan (NRP). The NRP, launched in 2006, represented an institutional response to the concern with the literacy levels of the Portuguese. In the last 10 years the NRP has implemented a set of measures aimed at developing the reading skills and habits of the Portuguese population, with a particular focus on schoolchildren. Recognising the need to consolidate and extend this public policy and to align it with the national strategy of qualification of Portuguese society and increasing literacy levels, the NRP was extended till 2027. The conceptual field of the Plan has recently been extended to include verbal literacy, information and the media, both digital and others, with a view to developing multi-literacies.

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In the second part we will present the National Programme for the Teaching of Portuguese, an in-service teacher education enacted in Portugal from 2006 to 2010, aimed at improving primary students’ literacy. Its major principles, contents and complex procedure will be outlined, and some evidence of its effects will be offered in the voice of teachers and children involved.

Bio Notes:

Cristina Sarmento holds a Master Degree in Analysis and Interpretation in Regional Geography and Physical Geography. Formerly a teacher of Geography and School Library Coordinator at a high school, Cristina was a member of a technical-pedagogical team of the Portuguese Ministry of Education. Cristina is a member of the Portuguese National Reading Plan since 2017.

Íris Susana Pires Pereira holds a PhD in Child Studies. She manages the Research Center on Education (CIEd) at the Institute of Education, University of Minho, in Portugal, where she is Assistant Professor. Her research focuses on the language of schooling, digital literacy in the early years and literacy practices in teachers’ professional development. She is currently a representative of Portugal in the COST Action IS1410 *The Digital Literacy and Multimodal Practices of Young Children*.

IV. National Literacy Forum in Finland

Presenters: Sari Sulkunen & Ilmi Villacis

Abstract:

The Minister of Education and Culture set up the National Literacy Forum in 2017. The Forum’s aim is to review the literacy challenges and provide recommendations for improving the literacy work in Finland. The Forum consists of 30 literacy experts and stakeholders from researchers and educators to NGOs and novelists, and its work is supported by a 5-member secretariat. The Forum will publish its report in August 2018. Sari Sulkunen and Ilmi Villacis will briefly describe the context for the Forum, its working process and the main areas of focus. Their talk covers the perspectives of the Finnish Reading Centre, a major Finnish NGO working for literacy in the national field, as well as that of a literacy researcher.

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Bio Notes:

Sari Sulkunen is a Literacy Researcher and Senior Lecturer at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She was a Member of the EU’s High Level Group on Literacy and was on the PISA 2018 Reading Expert Group. She holds a PhD at the University of Jyväskylä, and adjunct professor at the University of Oulu.

Ilmi Villacis is the Director of the Finnish Reading Centre. She is an experienced manager with a history of working in the non-profit organization management. Ilmi also worked for the Finnish Government in culture administration and public relations. Ilmi graduated from the University of Helsinki and Helsinki Business College.

V. The Literacy Boost CPD Programme in Sweden

Presenters: Pia Kangas & Helga Stensson

Abstract:

The Swedish National Agency for Education is responsible for the organisation of The Literacy Boost, a CPD programme for secondary teachers structured around collaborative learning that aims at assimilating new knowledge into day-to-day practices. The Swedish National Curriculum states that enhancing literacy skills among students is the responsibility of teachers in all subjects. Therefore, teachers of all subjects are addressed in the programme. Teachers of Swedish are of course very important but so are teachers of subjects such as social studies and natural sciences, where reading comprehension is key.

The structure of the collaborative learning is based on educational materials that are developed by various institutes for higher education around Sweden. All the educational material is published on a web portal. Teachers in participating schools form groups that work together for at least one year.

The Literacy Boost is a successful educational programme which has reached as many as 25 per cent of all Swedish teachers which means approximately 30 000 individuals. The research-based evaluation conducted by Umeå Center for Evaluation Research has shown, for example, that 70 per cent of the teachers stated that they had deepened their pedagogical collegial discussions and 80 per cent declared that they had learned with and from each other.

Reference:

Carlbaum, S., Andersson, E., & Hanberger, A. (2016). *Utvärdering av Läslyftet. Delrapport 2: Erfarenheter av Läslyftet läsåret 2015/16*. Umeå: Umeå Centre for Evaluation Research, Umeå universitet.

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Bio Notes:

Pia Kangas and **Helga Stensson** are Directors of Education at The Swedish National Agency for Education. They have a background as teachers in upper secondary school and have been involved in education projects in the fields of literacy, literature and assessment of second language learners. They now work with the organisation of The Literacy Boost, a nationwide CPD programme for Literacy in all subjects.

Discussion Respondent: Kristina Cunningham

Bio Note:

Kristina Cunningham is currently the senior policy officer in charge of Multilingualism in the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission in Brussels. Before this she worked as a translator for the European Commission and as a sales and marketing manager in the private sector, including eight years in Germany. She holds a Masters degree in business administration and modern languages from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and a Certificate of Political Studies from the Institute of Political Sciences in Paris, France.

Kristina's current work is focusing on the implementation of the EU objective for the development of language competences in Europe, as agreed by the Heads of State and Government: that every EU citizen should have the opportunity to learn at least two languages in addition to the language of schooling during compulsory education. In recent years, the "mother tongue+2 objective" has been open to interpretation in recognition of the fact that many young children have a different mother tongue than the main language of schooling. As a consequence, she has been closely involved in the development of strategies for making multicultural and multilingual classrooms more efficient and socially more inclusive. New actions are also envisaged to support teachers in their constantly evolving roles. As a result of this work, the European Commission adopted a proposed Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning, in May 2018.

Multilingualism is supported through EU funding programmes, enabling young people to study and work abroad, but also co-financing innovative projects and good practices aimed at promoting language skills.

The European Commission's web site on language learning policy: http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/learning-languages/index_en.htm