

## READING COMPETENCE AND TEACHER TRAINING IN ITALY

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

In 1975, during the Congress of the “*Association Francaise des Enseignants de Francais*”, the French linguist and semiologist Roland Barthes (1915-1980), said that “the verb TO READ can be followed by several direct objects: I read texts, images, cities, faces, gestures, scenarios, etc”. This suggests us that reading is something more complex than we can imagine. If we look at the etymology of the Italian word “*leggere*” (to read), we can appreciate how its meaning lead us to understand the multiple pedagogical implications connected to this action. “*Leggere*” derives from the Latin word “*legere*”, that means to pick up and collect something. So, first of all, reading is *to gather* something (information, study contents, stories, etc.) from the world all around us, and it underlines how this action goes far beyond the simple mechanical repetition of words and sounds and how it is strictly linked with significances’ acquisition. Also, the Latin root - *leg-* recalls and is based on the term *lògos*, that is intrinsically associated to the concepts of “word”, “speech”, “cause”, “reason”, “intellect”. Therefore, reading can be considered as a multidimensional action that involves the whole person (child), who “*raccoglie*” (picks up) and “*coglie*” (gathers) the profound meaning of what he reads. So, reading is a process aimed not only to understand a written text or an image, but – more extensively – the reality, becoming instrument of knowledge and growth, both individual and collective.

According with this premise, “*Reading Literacy is understanding, using and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential and to participate in society. This definition goes beyond the basic notion of reading literacy as decoding and literal comprehension: it implies understanding, using and reflecting on written information for a wide range of purposes. Thus, it takes into account the reader’s active and interactive role to gain meaning from written texts*”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition adopted by OECD within its Programme for International Student Assessment. Although, PISA focuses ability to use reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges of a superior age spectrum than that of READ-COM, as it measures 15-year-olds’, the overall adopted meaning of “reading literacy” is fully fitted with the concept to be pursued within the project.

For sure, reading has a role of primary importance with relevant impacts on all learning areas and it is possible to affirm that school success is strictly connected with the ability to correctly decipher a verbal and/or written message (both from the phonological and the semantic), so as to acquire sense, knowledge and competencies. Therefore, it is essential that this ability (and aptitude), will be carefully encouraged, promoted and developed since the childhood education.

Recent studies and scientific evidences underline as approaching children to reading from early childhood (even just from 0-3) brings several positive consequences on their growth and developmental outcomes. These initial benefits are later reprised, enriched and widened within the following educational stages, constituting a valuable base for children's literacy. Therefore, *reading education* is fundamental for the health and the intellectual, linguistic, emotional and relational evolution of the child, and it has significant effects also for his adult life.

School Education, in particular Childhood Education (3-6) and Primary Education (6-11), cover a key role to introduce and support children to the practice of reasoning, lifelong learning and active participation to social life through reading education and, for this reason, the proper training of teachers represent an essential prerequisite to this purpose. The educational personnel, other than teaching how to read and write, should become an *active agent for the reading education promotion*, by adopting specific tools, educational strategies and the reading proposals offered by the rich and stimulating editorial production for children. According to the legacy of Gianni Rodari<sup>2</sup> - indeed - a good teacher should always keep in mind that neither books are prescribed nor imposed: books are suggested and proposed to help young readers also to discover their beauty.

Close to this wide extended concept of reading education there is the Literacy, more strictly linked to the process - performed by children - of concrete skills acquisition for reading and writing and to their use for personal developmental, growing and studying purposes. The contents of the literacy competence<sup>3</sup>, as well as its main pedagogic and

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<sup>2</sup> Giovanni "Gianni" Rodari (Omegna, 23 October 1920 - Rome, 14 April 1980), was a famous Italian writer, pedagogue, journalist and poet, specialized in children's literature and translated into many languages. Unique Italian winner of the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Prize in 1970, he was one of the major interpreters of the "fantastic" theme and, thanks to the 1973 Grammar of Fantasy, his main work, one of the main theorists of the art of inventing stories.

<sup>3</sup> **Literacy competence** "is the ability to identify, understand, express, create, and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio and digital materials across disciplines and

training goals are described within the European Framework of Key competences for Lifelong Learning (2018/C 189/01), that constitutes a common reference – for each EU member country - to design their own scholastic *curricula* for the different educational levels. In Italy, the national curriculum for Preschool and for the First Cycle of Education including Primary School (and First Grade Secondary School) is prescribed by the D.M. 254 of 16/11/2012 - and subsequent legislative integrations – and by the related National Indications promulgated by the Ministry of Education (MIUR)<sup>4</sup>. **For the Childhood Education**, the National Indications foresee specific “*Fields of Experience*” that offer a set of objects, situations, images and languages referred to the symbolic systems of the Italian culture able to evoke, stimulate and accompany the children learning. These Indications also provide teachers the main educational goals to be pursued for the global and unitary development of the child. Being properly guided by his teacher – indeed - the child can deepen and systematize his learning, proceeding by trial and error through direct experience, play, and socialization.

When children arrive at the Preschool, they have a significant linguistic expertise - but with differentiated skills - to be carefully observed and enhanced. In the school stimulating linguistic environment, children develop their further linguistic competences and they do that through different activities such as: learning to listen stories and tales, talking with adults and peers, playing with the language they use, experiencing the pleasure of communication and starting to explore the written language. So, the educational environment offers the opportunity to experience a variety of meaningful communicative situations, in which each child becomes able to use the various aspects of language, gains confidence in their own expressive abilities, communicates, describes, tells, imagines. The Preschool has the responsibility to promote the mastery of the Italian language in all children, also respecting the use of the language of origin

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*contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way. Development of literacy forms the basis for further learning and further linguistic interaction. Depending on the context, literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region” (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on Key competences for Lifelong Learning)*

<sup>4</sup> The indications propose a series of pedagogical and cultural suggestions that intend to communicate a modern and effective idea of school based on methodological innovation, to be taken in account by the whole national educational community both for the steadily improvement and adaptation of each school's curriculum and of the National Indications themselves. Following the example of what is happening in Europe, a National Scientific Committee has been set up. The Committee is in charge to direct and sustain initiatives on methodological research and educational innovation and to support teachers' training, accompanying the adoption of the 2012 Indications as well as to collect and elaborated the gained feedback for their future formulations <http://www.indicazioninazionali.it/2018/08/26/indicazioni-2012/>

in case of foreign babies. Children indeed often live in multilingual environments and, if properly guided, they can familiarize themselves with a second language, in natural situations, of dialogue and daily life, becoming progressively aware of different sounds, tones and meanings. Within the Childhood Education stage, teachers develop and carry out appropriate educational activities aimed to extend the children lexicon and to the correct pronunciation of sounds, words and sentences, as well as to promote the practice of different verbal interaction modalities (listening, speaking, dialoguing, explaining), also contributing to the development of a logical thought and creative. As concern in particular the encounter with the reading – as encouraged by teachers – it can support the progressive approach of children to the written language. Through short illustrated books and stories, dramatizations and reading aloud proposed by the teachers, children are motivated to develop a positive relationship with the future reading and writing.

Tab. 1 – Educational goals for Literacy in Childhood Education

<b>Goals for the Literacy competence within the Childhood Education (National Indications 2012)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The child uses Italian language, enriches and specifies his own lexicon, understands words and speeches, makes hypothesis on meanings;</li><li>● He is able to express and communicate to the others emotions, feelings, argumentations through verbal language in different situations;</li><li>● He experiences rhymes, nursery rhymes, dramatizations and invents new words, look for similarities and analogies between sounds and meanings;</li><li>● He listens and understands narrations, he tells and invents stories, asks and offers explanations, uses the language to design and arrange activities also to define their rules;</li><li>● He makes reasoning on the language, discovers different languages, recognizing and experiencing their plurality, and measures himself with creativity and imagination;</li><li>● He approaches the written language, explores and experiments first forms of communication through writing, also meeting digital technologies and new media.</li></ul>

Within **Primary Education** children acquire the instruments and competencies for the *functional literacy*: they increase their own oral expression expertise and learn how to read and write, gradually perfecting and enriching the lexicon and mastering their related techniques. The functional literacy is placed in the widest frame of the *social and cultural literacy* acquisition promoted by School. The social and cultural literacy is linked with languages and codes acquisition related to the Italian culture and to new media, in a plurilingual and intercultural context. The plurilingual and intercultural education carried out by School - indeed - includes mother tongue, school language, and

European languages, contributing to valorize diversities and cultural peculiarities of each one, and sustaining the educational success as well as the general social inclusion and the future democratic participation of young people.

As for the reading practice mastery in particular, within all the first cycle of education (therefore, including Primary School), it is proposed as moment of socialization and discussion on the learning contents as well as individual research and critical reflection, favoring children maturation and progress. It requires peculiar techniques and strategies taught by teachers, including: reading aloud, proper oral expression with adequate lexicon and the written texts comprehension. The reading capacity, indeed, is fundamental to search and elaborate information and widen the knowledge. As for the reading taste, it is promoted as way to develop fantasy and creativity by approaching children to different tales and stories coming from every civilization and time, that lead students towards the knowledge of the Other and the World.

*Tab. 2 – Educational goals for Literacy in Primary Education*

**Goals for the Literacy competence within the Primary Education  
(National Indications 2012)**

- Pupil can read and include texts of various types, he can identify the global sense and the most important information, using reading strategies fit for purpose;
- He uses functional skills to study: in writing texts he can identify useful information for learning a topic and he can put it in relation; he can synthesize information, depending on the oral exposure; he can acquire specific terminology;
- Child can read texts of various kinds (children's literature), both out loud and silently, and he makes personal judgement about them;
- He writes correct spelling texts, clear and consistent; reworks texts by paraphrasing, completing or transforming them;
- He understands and uses basic and high-use words in oral and written; he also understands and uses the most frequent specific terms related to the study disciplines;
- He can reflect on his own written texts (and on those made by others), identifying morphosyntactic regularities and lexicon features; he recognizes the different language choices according to the communicative situations;
- He is aware that different varieties of language and different languages (multilanguage) are used in communication.

*(For further details, see the reports on Childhood and Primary Education)*

In order to have a better understanding of the current situation of reading literacy and teacher training, a theoretical review has been carried out and the data has been collected through two channels:

- 1) A questionnaire submitted to University students of the Early Childhood and Primary Education Degree;
- 2) A set of tailored interviews to academic authorities, educational institutions and directors of educational centres, as key witnesses for reading education issues.

### **1.1. Description of the students of the Childhood and Primary Education Degree**

Before to start to analyze the data emerged by the questionnaires submitted to University students, it is necessary to make some clarification on the Italian Academic organization of the Childhood Education and Primary Education Degree. With the Law N.169 of 30 October 2008, the academic course named “*Scienze della Formazione Primaria (LM-85 bis)*” is the only study pathway officially and legally recognized at national level to become teachers both in Early Childhood and Primary Education. The Degree Course is a unique training qualifying pathway, lasting 5 years, without sub-courses expressly devoted to Childhood Education or to Primary Education. Indeed, it promotes an advanced level of theoretical-practical training in the field of psychopedagogical, methodological-didactic, technological and research disciplines, covering all aspects that characterize the teacher's professional profile of both educational levels (3-6; 6-11).

In addition to the academic courses, students are also required to attend specific workshops and internships in preschools and primary schools. The activities of the educational workshops are integral part of the students' training, constituting the bridge between the academic teachings and their internship experience. The workshops are generally focused on practical-experiential topics, related both to *subjects' teaching* (for Primary School) and to *the fields of experience* (for Preschool), as required by the National Indications. As concerns the internship, within their daily activities in schools, the students are leaded, coordinated and monitored both by a specific University Tutor and by school designated personnel, specifically appointed to this assignment.

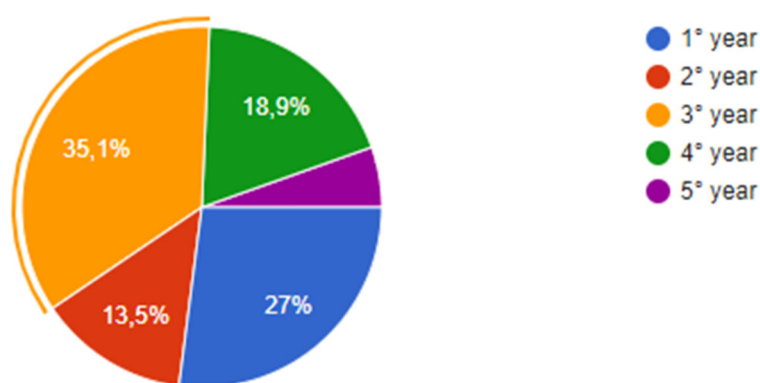
The available number of the open training positions within the Degree Course is defined by MIUR, so, the aspiring teachers has to pass a specific preliminary test for the access

to University. The legal title acquired at the end of the University course is the only recognized license to work as teacher in Childhood or Primary Education.

As for the literacy acquisition and – more in general – the reading education theme, within the academic course are treated macro-topics such as methodologies for the reading and writing learning process, lexicon enrichment, and the development of textual skills. University students indeed acquire and strengthen tailored abilities to select and propose appropriate teaching materials (texts), according to children learning peculiarities, and they acquire how to base their choices on objective criteria such as readability and comprehensibility. The academic course foresees also contents on Literary education, as it plays a relevant role within the training of the future teachers both of Preschool and Primary School. Indeed, it aims to:

- create also in University students a reading habit such as steadily individual training, also through the knowledge of children's literature;
- develop adequate competencies to interpret the literary message, also understanding its thoughts and emotions so as to transmit them to children or for specific educational purposes;
- be able to identify the texts' aesthetic qualities and values, so as to choose for children proper, engaging and fanciful pieces or works, also educating their taste of reading;
- understand narrative thinking and its structures, also knowing how to analyze and comment a text;
- know the Italian literary tradition and its forms of transmission.

The sample for the READ-COM's research in Italy is constituted by 74 students of the Degree Course of “*Scienze della Formazione Primaria*”, coming from several Italian Faculties (mainly Florence 83,8%, then Bologna 8,10%, and Padova 5,40%). As for the **gender variable**, almost the totality of the sample is represented by women (83,8%) and all the participant students are Italian. Their **distribution within the five-years course duration** shows a wider participation of the youngest students, with a prevalence of those from the III year: 27% of students of the I year; 13,5% of students of the II year; 35,10% of students of the III year; 18,9% of students of the IV year, and 5,4% of students of the V year.



Tab. 3 – Students’ distribution within the five-years course duration

As for the **students’ competencies in foreign languages**, we should underline that the Degree Course includes also specific didactic workshops for the mastery of English as foreign language, aiming to the final certification of the B2 Level of the CEFR - *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. For that reason, **English** is the most diffused known foreign language by the participant students, showing different current mastery levels: 5,4% A2 Level; 37,9% B1 Level; 37,9% B2 Level; 19% C1 Level. No students result positioned in both the apical positions: none at A1 and C2 Levels.

Concerning the proficiency levels of other foreign languages, from the data collected emerged that almost the totality of the sample doesn’t speak German (only the 2,9%, knows this language and with the lowest grade of proficiency, A1 ), and mainly low levels of French have been detected (29,80% A1 Level; 16,30% A2 Level; 8,20% B1 Level; none at B2 Level; 2,7% C1 Level; students who don’t speak French are the



43,24%). As for the further foreign languages spoken by the participant students, we find a very small percentage – substantially placed in medium-low levels (A2-B1), for Spanish (2,7%), Portuguese (2,7%) and Dutch (2,7%). Anyway, the high majority doesn't speak any further foreign languages.

Within the Degree Course, the wide majority of the students' sample declared that they received (or are still receiving) **training on:** *Reading* (97,3%); *School Libraries* (91,9%); *Oral expression* (94,6%); *Basic/Key competencies* (97,3%); *Literacy* (97,3%); *Foreign Language* (86,5%) and all of them approached and studied *Language Skills* and *Phonological awareness*. The *Bilingual Education* results to be treated by 37,9% of students, while the 59,5% didn't still start their training about.

As for the specific training contents related to CLIL - *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, we should specify that they are treated as general preliminary introduction, because this specific methodology is applied in Secondary School (and not in the focused age educational spectrum)<sup>5</sup> (anyway, the 81,10% of students declared to be trained about).

It has to be noted, that the training contents have been treated in different ways and with different depth degrees related to the pathway stage where students are.

## **1.2. Academic authorities and educational institutions and directors of educational centres**

Within the READ-COM researching activities, 10 interviews to key witnesses belonging to different educational and institutional (especially Local Educational Authority) areas, have been realized. The interviews let to collect significant qualitative information and detailed considerations concerning the reading education issues from several point of views (pedagogic, institutional, managerial, etc.). The witnesses, indeed, consisted in:

- 2 Pedagogists (specialized in: early childhood (0-6) and children and pre-adolescent distress prevention);
- 1 School Library Responsible of ICTB;

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<sup>5</sup> CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a methodological approach aimed to the integrated learning of linguistic-communicative and disciplinary skills in a foreign language. The Decrees of the President of the Republic 88 and 89 of 2010 provide for the obligation to teach, in the fifth year of high school of II degree, a non-linguistic discipline (DNL – Not Linguistic Discipline) in a foreign language according to the CLIL methodology.

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- 1 School Manager (of ICTB, Comprehensive School both including Preschool and Primary stages)
- 1 Town Councillor for Education and Social Policies, Welfare and Youth (Terranuova Bracciolini, AR);
- 1 internal Coordinator of Reading Education projects of Primary School, (from “Istituto Comprensivo Lastra a Signa”, Lastra a Signa, FI);
- 1 former Deputy Director/Didactic Coordinator of Primary School, currently teacher for literacy, Italian Literature and History (from “Istituto Comprensivo Lastra a Signa”, Lastra a Signa, FI);
- 1 Pedagogic and Administrative Managing Director for Educational Services (3-6) of the Florence Municipality (managed by Cepiss, Social Coop);
- 1 Pedagogic and Administrative Managing Director for Educational Services (0-6) of the Florence Municipality (managed by Cepiss, Social Coop);
- 1 Responsible of Reading Education projects for the 0-6 Educational Services of the Florence Municipality (managed by Cepiss, Social Coop), referent of the “Leggere Forte!” regional initiative<sup>6</sup>.

The interviews focused specific topics, such as: key factors for the reading education promotion, the strengthening opportunities of reading programs also involving families and the needed resources, services and actions. With the witnesses the idea of the “reading community” has been explored and discussed too.

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<sup>6</sup> **LEGGERE FORTE!** [www.regione.toscana.it/leggereforte](http://www.regione.toscana.it/leggereforte)

Promoted by Tuscany Region, University of Perugia, Ministry of Education through the URS (School Regional Administration Office), INDIRE (National Institute of Documentation, Innovation for Educational Research) and CEPELL (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and related Activities - Center for books and reading). It is a multi-year action from the 0-6 Services till the secondary cycle of education, structured as a real educational policy for reading education. It aims to make the reading aloud (done by teachers and educators) a structural practice within the entire Tuscan educational system to support the children and young people in achieving school success and personal awareness.

## 2. KEYS TO PROMOTE READING COMPETITION IN EDUCATIONAL CENTRES.

Through the interviews to key witnesses we gained a general overview on several key aspects and main educational programs for reading education promotion, both within Childhood and Primary Education. A special focus was placed in highlighting the initiatives or practices already in use (or to be improved) also to involve families and the whole “educative community”, so as to encourage the creation/development of fruitful reading habits (and “communities”), even outside the school environment. Within the interviews have been also explored specific management issues connected to reading education (and literacy acquisition) such as the time spent (or that could be spent) in daily school activities for its proper promotion and the pedagogical coordination between Childhood and Primary Education stages.

Concerning **the key factors that contribute to promote the reading education in school**, within the interviews emerged the *relevance for the school libraries to be properly equipped and to make adequate bibliography choices*, so as to put at children disposal appropriate and exciting books and reading materials for their age. It also emerged the necessity to *promote a freer approach to this activity, within daily school life* (not only as study practice, but also as pleasing moment, that stimulates children to become passionate). Several interviewees, indeed, especially those coming from the School area, highlighted the dichotomy between educating to read and teaching to read, that strongly affects the teachers’ approach to this activity. Especially in the Primary Education, the reading tends to be assimilated mainly to its performative meaning of being literate/competent in literacy, slightly moving its concept of gradual educational process to the background. According to the detected feedback, it is fundamental try to combine in daily school activities both the dimensions, finding the right time to pursue a holistic approach to the reading, including all the developmental and growing inputs coming from this practice (if properly proposed and oriented by teachers) and the literacy acquisition. The reading education should become a school subject *tout-court*, to be experienced by children as a pleasant and precious activity, really and concretely aimed to strengthen and support their knowledge and integral development.

According to many of the interviewees, it is fundamental also that *the school/educational contexts are carefully and pedagogically organized, taking in account both physical-spatial, and emotional and relational dimensions linked to the reading*. Many interviewees underlined how it is important to provide adequate spaces, environments and corners that offer and show the books to children. These spaces should *be immediately recognizable, open and freely accessible, even within the classroom*. Therefore, children should not find the books only in their school library, but also in their daily educational space: designing a dedicated reading open area/space within the classroom, indeed, can favor the child to spontaneously choose a book to read, making this activity not only "something proposed by the adult/teacher". To create interest in reading, actions and practices are necessary that support this experience through a guided experimentation, to be done by an *approach that intrigues and introduces children to books and reading materials as "objects" containing a lot of information useful for their growing process* (experiences, stories, signs, images, colors, consistency).

Strictly linked to these aspects, we found interesting considerations on the teacher's role and on the time to read, really available at the school (in particular at the Primary School). As concern the role of teachers (other than to teach how to read and write, for sure), they should act as "**reading promoters**", approaching children to literacy, novels, tales and texts also to discover their beauty.

On the other hand, for the reading aloud expressly aimed to 3-6 children, especially by the pedagogists, came also several *practical advices* to carry out this activity to make it really engaging and educationally constructive. While the teacher reads, she/he should have a calm and warm voice's tone, maintain each time the eye contact with each child of the group and provide them the right time to express themselves, if they wish to do it. It is not to forget that *reading has also affective and emotional components*, that should be valorized by teachers. *Recasting strategies should be proposed within the reading aloud, so as to let the children to reformulate sentences or words - especially if they contain words of uncommon use that are precious to support the lexical development - and to facilitate their understanding and assimilation*. Teachers should also request for feedback to stimulate reflection, imagination, connections with children "other" experiences, making the reading one all-embracing.

For all these reasons, the educational staff is required a vast and updated knowledge of children's literature so that reading can be really and effectively promoted within the educational activities in both preschools and primary schools.

**As for the reading time**, many interviews agreed on the fact that *it should be increased* within the school hours (maybe, also making the most of the extra-curricular activities, especially when the reading practice is focused on its recreational and creativity purposes, and it is aimed to promote the reading taste among children).

Additionally, among the key factors highlighted by the witnesses for reading promotion, it emerged that it would be necessary for schools *to share more their own projects for reading education with the local library networks* as well as to *host initiatives with the authors or aimed to introduce/approach children to books and reading in general, preferably involving also their families and the local community* (such as exhibitions, ludic competitions on reading themes, small markets organized for children and families). Another key aspect emerged consists in *fostering the teachers' steadily training/professional updating on effective reading promotion strategies and techniques that encourage the reading processes*.

We should note that several aspects, such as - for example - the provision, management, and setting up of adequate spaces and the effective pedagogical coordination on reading education issues (especially for the educational continuity between Preschool and Primary School) as well as the importance of the steadily teachers' professional updating, very often and transversely occur in the key witnesses' answers.

**To strengthen the educational programs favoring the acquisition of reading habits by students even outside the school context**, all the witnesses agreed on the relevance to *provide and organize specific extra-curricular/extra-school initiatives and/or workshops focused on reading education and promotion*, targeted to pursue exactly the families' involvement. These initiatives should be start by schools with the aim to trigger/strengthen the parents' reading habits so as to make them aware of the reading experience's potential. Within the family environment, the reading should become something usual to be shared between parents and babies, to stimulate the mutual dialogue and exchange and so to favor children's growth. As for the peculiar pedagogists' contribution, they underline that thinking about educational paths and activities also involving families implies, first of all, keeping in mind – especially by educators, teachers, coordinators and pedagogists themselves - that *each family is a*

*world apart.* Each family is made up of subjects with their own characteristics, preferences, life stories, gaps or negligence. Therefore, planning and carrying out specific initiatives with families means first of all knowing them gradually, in their singularity, with care and with an open and non-judgmental attitude. The relationship between School and Families is a process, not a pre-established fact, equal for everyone: it has to be built and cared over time, respecting single needs, peculiarities and differences so as to produce really positive and long-lasting results.

From a *policy* point of view, *this type of initiatives should be encouraged and sustained by public institutions and foresee the synergic collaboration with local libraries, reading associations and stakeholder of the editorial area.* A positive and effective families' involvement in these activities requires a very big effort, and only the tight coordination of all these components can ensure their effectiveness. In general, all the institutional and educational witnesses wish to improve, strengthen and widen their mutual synergies for reading education purposes to offer even better opportunities, activities and materials both to children and families. Schools and public institutions - for example - could promote the use of local libraries not only as places to borrow books but also to have advice and updates on editorial news. This way, the local libraries could become also places favoring the creation of readers' communities, other than congregation and socialization around the reading.

As already mentioned above, **the schools can favor the reading communities encouraging the participation of students, teachers and families to initiatives for the promotion of the reading education** mainly through the *improvement/creation of synergic collaborations with the local community*, including institutional and cultural actors as well as the third sector (e.g readers' associations, reading and writing circles, etc.). All these actors should cooperate and share the possible evolving plans for reading education, taking into account that *they cannot be disjunct from the real political choice to invest resources in culture and educational process.* The School can encourage the creation of a reading community if there are targeted investments for this purpose. Additional financial resources indeed can contribute to sustain schools' tailored projects in this area, facilitate the involvement of external experts, support the teachers' training, etc.

From the sociological point of view, if we look at the idea of the "reading community" - but this is valid for all kind of communities - we should not to forget that it is not the result of the simple compresence of aggregated people in a context, but is the result of a

more articulated and complex process, including the sharing of knowledge, actions, convictions and purposes. The *reading community* should be carefully built, taking into account all its pedagogical, relational, emotional and affective dimensions so as it expresses its real educational potential. Teachers, families and children should take actively part - according to their own single roles, competencies and responsibilities - to this process so as to achieve a real "educating community" focused on the value of reading.

Among the **proposals that can be made through training and cultural extension activities both during school hours and in those dedicated to complementary and extracurricular activities** the most recurring ones were represented by: reading promotion projects organized in tandem by local schools and libraries, reading competitions, reading circles opened also to families, active promotion of national reading education projects, such as "Nati per Leggere"<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, meetings with experts (publishers, authors, cartoonists, etc. ) for teachers, families and pupils; animated and expressive readings activities for families organized by the school and the pupils themselves within extra-school hours; the setting up/creation inside the school of places for reading (not only libraries but comfortable spaces where sit and read, sharing this activities with peers); the allocation of specific financial bonus for families and children expressly devoted to the reading to be used exclusively to buy books; the creation of books by students in multiple forms and of various contents and also of installations and artistic performances concerning reading.

**Concerning the resources, services and actions to promote reading that can be organized from the school library for families**, we confirm what we already said above: the activities should take into account each familiar background, their own needs (including working needs) and features. The actions should be preferably proposed not in working time or days, and they should be organized in a comfortable, inclusive and welcoming environment, where families can freely participate (or observe) to the initiative. Among the mentioned services by the witnesses we find – for example - book market exhibitions with a literary competition with a different theme every year and

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<sup>7</sup> **Nati per Leggere**: <http://www.natiperleggere.it/>

Started in 1999, the "Nati per leggere" project aims to promote reading aptitude in the child population, offering children aged between 6 months and 6 years (therefore, not only before the acquisition of real reading skills, but also before language development) fruitful occasions of listening to readings performed aloud by parents or teachers within strong affective or emotional relationships with the child. The main goal of the activities held within "Nati per Leggere" is to encourage children to perceive the book as medium (instrument), and crossroads of intense affective and existential experiences

specific welcoming corners at the school entrance, where families and children can read different selected materials.

All the witnesses presented several **good practices to encourage reading**, among the most representative ones we can mention:

- *The "Bibliobus" experience* done in Terranuova Bracciolini, consisting in a traveling library that stopped not only in the hamlets far from the city center, but also in the several aggregation local centers to bring and share the books within the local community;

- *Visits to public city libraries (including toy libraries), to printers or publishing houses*, to show also how a book "is born and grows" (both for preschool and primary school children, according to their related educational levels);

- *Media-Education pioneer activities for Preschool Children*, promoted by the Florence Municipality<sup>8</sup>. These activities combine the use of some ICTs tools with the reading (e.g. *"I-Theatre"*, a technological storyteller to support the thought processes and collective construction of storytelling in Preschool; the *"Image education, media education and digital citizenship" project*, organized in collaboration with the University of Florence (SCIFOPSI) and addressed to the Pedagogical Coordinators for 0-6. Specific paths to be implemented in Preschool have been designed for the use of multimedia and digital texts for children. These paths aim to bring out from the texts the emotional and playful aspects as well as the problematic ones (to train children on reflection, problem posing and problem solving), and the creative ones (storyboard, realization of simple cartoons, etc.);

- *Silent reading workshops*: the classroom is adequately equipped with cushions and mattresses, to maximize the pleasure and the involvement in reading (both for preschool and primary school children, with the necessary educational and logistical differences);

- *The "Presta Libro" (lend book) initiative*, for preschool children: in a defined day of a week, the children choose a book from the selection proposed by the teacher according to the treated themes in classroom, and they can bring it at home to read it with their parents and brothers;

- *The "reading notebook"*, for primary school children, to work on keeping track of the books read and the thoughts and emotions aroused by reading;

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<sup>8</sup> <https://educazione.comune.fi.it/pagina/0-6-anni/media-education>



- *The "book reviews"* (for primary school children): under the teacher's guidance, the children write the review of the books they read among those proposed within the normal school activities. The reviews are available for all the classmates, and children are encouraged to read one book rather than another, basing their choice on the advice, suggestions, and impressions of their friends and companions;
- *Creative reading activities such as the "book-talk"*, where children tell to their classmates the books they read, representing the story through artifacts invented by them and made according to their own sensitivity and imagination (for primary school children);
- *The "Book speed dating"*, where children tell fast to a classmate the book he read, trying to make him passionate to the story in few minutes, highlighting its most attractive aspects, using the method of the "American speed date" (for primary school children);
- *The introduction in the school library's catalogs of graphic novels and other genres* that usually are not included by the school literature.

As concern **the training plans that responds to the needs of the educational community for the development of communicative competence, the promotion of reading and creativity of students**, it is very interesting to note that witnesses – especially coming from the school area – reported no specific plan, therefore they should be designed *ex-novo*. Even if the National Indications of 2012 for the national curriculum of Preschool and Primary School include very strong recommendations on the reading education theme, there is no systematized official training programs on it. The professional updating as well as the research of innovative initiatives and of educational activities to be proposed to children with this focus *is substantially entrusted to the single teacher's attitude and responsibility*. Anyway, both the school and institutional witnesses reported a *growing awareness in the last years around the reading education*, and it led to a very positive and significant ferment of the training activities in this area. Nevertheless, these activities should be improved and systematized aiming to a greater coordination between the various educational agencies (schools, training centers, universities, etc.) for a more complete and comprehensive training plan corresponding to the real and concrete teachers' needs on these issues.

**Teachers' training and professional updating represent a very relevant aspect to effectively promote the reading and creativity of children:** it essential that teachers is

able to recognize the quality of the proposed texts and their adequacy for the children's age and educational level in terms of: used materials, authors, publishing houses, quality of illustrations and images, type of narrated stories, possible implicit 'distorting' messages, etc. Therefore, it is fundamental to provide teachers with a proper training, both initial and ongoing, concerning all these aspects. Only a well-informed and well-trained teacher - with special regard to children's literature - can offer an effective, punctual, and *consistent holistic reading education* based on children's needs, taking care of all their developmental dimensions: psychological, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, narrative and logical.

**As for the adequacy of the technical, documentary and pedagogical assets for the reading**, in general the schools are equipped with a “standard” supply, even if some interviewees wish for additional tailored specific resources to make the reading more incentivized and encouraged (not only economic and financial resources, but also human, such as reading professionals, librarians, curators, etc.).

Today's school has to tackle growing complexities due to the possible linguistic communication difficulties, especially with children (and families) from fragile socio-economic contexts or with a migrant background, for that reason almost the majority of the witnesses consider that **the current supporting measures to this purpose should be increased and improved**. As already explained talking about teachers' training and the adequacy of the school technical, documentary and pedagogical assets, more adequate measures to reinforce and support the competence in linguistic communication require for additional resources, both financial and human. As for the human resources, in particular, for some of the interviewees an expert in reading education processes is needed by the school. This professional should flank teachers (especially those teaching Italian Literature, literacy and History, normally designated also to the reading education activities) and the school librarians in their related tasks for reading promotion. He should have tailored competences, expressly focused on reading education practices: a sort of “*reading school counsellor*”. In addition to these considerations, all the witnesses, especially the pedagogists and those from the school area, underline and insist on the value of the steadily teachers' professional upgrading and training, also related to these peculiar contents that, nevertheless, still represent “niche topics” or reserved only to those who are involved in literacy and literature

Finally, **concerning the educational continuity between the Early Childhood and Primary Education stages**, we should take in account that Italian preschool and primary school are already quite connected since they both pertain to the Ministry of Education. Therefore, as concerns the reading and writing promotion there are already numerous pedagogical and structural connections between the two educational levels.

If we look at the reading as a tool that contributes to the educational continuity - not only between educational stages, but also between school and families - providing shared reading moments for children and adults together can represent an effective and valuable resource.

Moreover, all the witnesses agree in considering the relevance of applying a ludic approach to the reading within the preschool, from the continuity perspective this method should be later gradually enriched, systematized and institutionalized at the primary school, but without losing its aspects of pleasantness. Starting from these common premises – for example - *pre-primary and primary schools of the same territory could initiate an "educational dialogue"- facilitated and managed by their related pedagogical coordinators - choosing common themes to work on readings that support children in their transition to the next step in education.* A further consideration on educational continuity emerged by almost all the interviewees regards the *promotion of peer reading initiatives, creating continuity projects where older children (Primary) can read aloud to younger children.*

### 3. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

In this section we're going to explore the competences of the Degree in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education by analyzing the students' answers on the *Teacher Training* topic. The abilities acquired (or currently in acquiring) by the University students thanks to the Degree Course have been detected, examining the competences concern both teaching methodologies - especially focused on the *reading learning* - and the educational strategies for families' involvement in this peculiar process. To have the most complete overview on the main features and contents of the teacher training, the specific activities done during the internship periods have been analyzed too. The internship is carried out by the students both in preschool and primary school, and it was analyzed by highlighting their single autonomy degrees in performing specific actions (if they attend to specific educational commitments by themselves or with the support of the practice tutor). Since, as we explained above, the Italian system doesn't foresee sub-courses expressly devoted to Childhood Education or to Primary Education within the Degree's qualifying course, to submit the research questions to the University students, we united the two questionnaires initially divided per educational stages. The unique questionnaire has been converted in a Google Form application, to make its circulation more effective and its fulfillment quicker. The online questionnaire has been shared not only at local and regional level but also at trans-regional level. Despite this, the whole sample stopped at 74 students.

Tab. 4 – Childhood and Primary Education Degree: analysis of competences

COMPETENCES OF THE DEGREE OF "SCIENZE DELLA FORMAZIONE PRIMARIA"	YES	NO	INITIATED
01. I know the curricular areas of primary education, the interdisciplinary relationship between them, the evaluation criteria and the body of didactic knowledge around the respective teaching and learning procedures.	54.1%	2.7%	43.2%
01. I know the objectives, curricular contents and evaluation criteria of Early Childhood Education.	54.1%	0	45.9%
02. I am able to design, plan and evaluate teaching and learning processes, both individually and in collaboration with other teachers and professionals of the centre.	21.6%	21.6%	56.8%
03. I understand the basic principles of language and communication sciences.	75.7%	0	24.3%
03. I know and am capable of exercising the functions of tutor and counsellor in relation to family education in the period 0-6 years.	29.7%	21.6%	48.6%
04. I understand that the daily dynamics in Early Childhood Education is changing according to each student, group and situation, as well as knowing how to be flexible in the exercise of the teaching function.	70.3%	2.7%	27%
04. I am able to acquire literary training and know children's literature.	78.4%	0	21.6%

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	YES	NO	INITIATED
05. I know the evolutionary phases of language learning in early childhood, I know how to identify possible dysfunctions and intervene for their correct evolution.	48.6%	0	51.4%
05. I am aware of the importance of the school library as a resource centre for reading, information and lifelong learning.	100%	0	0
06. I am able to deal effectively with language learning situations in multicultural and multilingual contexts.	32.4%	13.5%	54.1%
06. I know and I am able to apply information and communication technologies in the classroom.	51.4%	10.8%	37.8%
07. I would know how to use techniques and resources so that students express themselves orally and in writing.	78.4%	0	21.6%
08. I am able to encourage reading and critical commentary of texts from the various scientific and cultural domains contained in the school curriculum.	21.6%	5.4%	73%
08. I know and am able to apply didactically in the classroom information and communication technologies (ICTs) to develop reading competence.	32.4%	16.2%	51.4%
09. I master the language and literacy curriculum of child education stage, as well as the theories about the acquisition and development of the corresponding learning.	35.1%	0	64.9%
09. I know the organization of primary and primary schools and the diversity of actions that comprise their operation.	70.3%	0	29.7%
10. I understand the transition from oral to writing, and I know the different registers and uses of the language.	64.9%	0	35.1%
10. I know the school curriculum of languages and literature.	62.2%	0	37.8%
11. I know and master oral and written expression techniques	59.5%	0	40.5%
12. I know the learning process of reading and writing, as well as its teaching.	51.4%	0	48.6%
12. I am able to encourage reading and encourage students to express themselves through written language.	37.8%	8.1%	54.1%
13. I know and would know how to use resources for reading animation.	83.8%	0	16.20%
13. I know the difficulties in learning the official languages of students of other languages.	89.2%	0	10.8%
14. I am able to have my students express themselves orally and in writing in a foreign language.	27%	21.6%	51.4%
14. I am able to acquire literary training to learn about children's literature and its teaching.	73%	0	27%
15. I would like to encourage reading in students, and encourage them to express themselves through written language.	94.6%	0	5.4%
15. I know the current proposals and developments based on learning skills.	45.9%	2.7%	51.4%
16. I am able to collaborate with the different sectors of the educational community and the social environment.	18.9%	16.2%	64.9%
16. I am able to identify and plan the resolution of educational situations that affect students with different abilities and different learning rhythms.	10.8%	21.6%	67.6%
17. I have a critical and autonomous attitude about knowledge, values and public and private social institutions.	48.6%	18.9%	32.4%
17. I know the processes of interaction and communication in the classroom, which help to address and solve discipline problems.	37.8%	0	62.2%
18. I understand the role, possibilities and limits of education in today's society and the fundamental competences that affect the Infant and Primary Education centres, as well as their professionals.	64.9%	5.4%	29.7%
18. I know and am able to exercise the functions of tutor and counsellor in relation to family education in the period 6-12.	21.6%	29.7%	48.6%

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19. I know the difficulties that students who do not have as their mother tongue or do not know can have to learn our official language.	81.1%	0	18.9%
20. I am able to critically analyse and incorporate social issues that affect family and school education (social impact of audio-visual and technological language, discrimination and social inclusion, sustainable development ...)	37.8%	5.4%	56.8%
20. I am able to relate education to the environment, as well as cooperate with families and the community.	35.1%	5.4%	59.5%

According to the features of the students' sample we can appreciate that the wide majority of the competences related to the items proposed by the questionnaire results "*initiated*". As mentioned in describing the sample, indeed, a lot of the participant students are attending the initial years of the Degree's course and, for that reason, their perceived mastery level on the several listed competences result to be still not completely acquired (especially the social mediation and pedagogical management skills required to collaborate with the different sectors of the educational community and the social environment and to identify and plan the resolution of educational situations that affect students with different abilities and different learning rhythms). We should also add that the single considerations are made by students as self-assessment and so they could present a subjective character. Anyway, despite the various stages of the academic pathway where the students are, the wide majority of them declare to understand the basic principles of language and communication sciences (75.7%), and is able to acquire literary training and know children's literature (78.4%). Students also showed to be aware of the contextual dimension, as they understand that the daily dynamics in Early Childhood Education is changing according to each student, group and situation, as well as knowing how to be flexible in the exercise of the teaching function (70.3%) and they understand the role, possibilities and limits of education in today's society and the fundamental competences that affect the Infant and Primary Education centres, as well as their professionals (64.9%).

Concerning in particular the **reading education issues** all of the participant students are aware of the importance of the school library as a resource for reading, information and lifelong learning and result to be very curious respect of how to use resources for reading animation (83.8%). As for the ICTs applying to develop the children's reading competences, the students showed a quite significant path of knowledge, even if just "initiated" (51.4%). Concerning the specific competences for the language teaching and learning process, the wide majority of the sample is aware of the difficulties in learning the official languages of students of other languages (89.2%), but - at the same time - it wish to encourage them to learn to read and to express themselves through written language (94.6%).

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*Tab. 5 –Internship within Preschool*

ACTIVITIES WITH THE CHILD EDUCATION LEARNERS DURING THE PRACTICES	MY PRACTICE TUTOR	ME	NONE
01. Relationships between written language and oral language are established.	70.3%	29.7%	0
02. Animation dynamics are established to the reading (change of characters, changes of endings, creation of stories with images ...).	73%	27%	0
03. The classroom is organized according to the needs of students with different learning corners and workshops.	81.1%	16.2%	2.7%
04. Reading activities are carried out in large groups.	78.4%	18.9%	2.7%
05. Reading activities are carried out in small groups.	37.8%	62.2%	
06. Reading activities are carried out individually.	13.5%	81.1%	5.4%
07. My students learn to read by following the textbook of an editorial.	51.4%	29.7%	18.9%
08. The reading activities start from a project, teaching unit and / or centre of interest.	78.4%	16.2%	5.4%
09. The classroom programming is modified according to the needs of the students throughout the course.	86.5%	10.8%	2.7%
10. Groups are organized taking into account that they have students with different reading levels.	81.1%	16.2%	2.7%
11. There is a stipulated time in class for learning to read (assembly, corners).	81.1%	13.5%	5.4%
12. There is a quiet place in the classroom dedicated to individual reading (classroom library).	54.1%	43.2%	2.7%
13. In class, various <b>ICT resources</b> are used to carry out interactive reading activities (internet, digital whiteboard, book material or created ...).	75.7%	10.8%	13.5%
14. Information is provided to families to encourage reading learning at home (workshops, quarterly meetings, tutoring, parent school ...).	89.2%	8.1%	2.7%
15. Families do with their child at home suggested literacy activities in the classroom.	73%	21.6%	5.4%
16. Coordinates with other teachers to schedule and / or carry out activities with our students about reading.	83.8%	16.2%	0
17. In my classroom other agents of the educational centre or other professionals participate in actions that favor the reading learning of my students.	94.6%	5.4%	0
18. An initial evaluation is carried out at the beginning of the school year.	97.3%	2.7%	0
19. Different moments in the classroom are analysed during the course to evaluate the reading learning of my students.	83.8%	13.5%	2.7%
20. Concrete moments are used during the course to evaluate my students with a reading test.	67.6%	21.6%	10.8%

Within the general frame of the activities carried out during the practice period in preschools, it emerged a substantially low level of autonomy shown by the apprentices, probably due to the specific features of the students' sample. All the managerial, programmatic aspects as well as those related to the pedagogical coordination and to the assessment are mainly cared by the Practice Tutor. For example, the 86.5% of the students declared that it is the Practice Tutor himself, who modifies the classroom programming

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according to the children's needs throughout the course, organizes reading activities taking into account the pupils' different reading levels (81.1%) or makes the initial evaluation at the beginning of the school year (97,3%). Concerning the specific educational activities for the reading promotion, the apprentices mainly cared those carried out in small groups (62.2%) and individually (81.1%), while those for large groups are more often led by the Practice Tutor (78.4%). Among the most important pedagogical managing tasks inside the school (or the classroom) in this area, in the wide majority of cases is still the Practice Tutor who coordinates with other teachers to schedule and/or carry out activities with children about reading (83.8%) and/or invites other professionals to participate in actions favoring the children's reading learning (94.6%). As for the specific applying of the ICT resources for interactive reading activities (internet, digital whiteboard, book material, etc.), even if it is not wide diffused within the Childhood Education stage, the students declared that they attended to them (10.8%) or they have just initiated (13.5%).

*Tab. 6 –Internship within Primary School*

ACTIVITIES WITH THE PRIMARY EDUCATION LEARNERS DURING PRACTICE	MY PRACTICE TUTOR	ME	NONE
01. My students are asked questions while reading texts to ensure their understanding.	43.2%	56.8%	0
02. The participation of families in the organization of reading activities (cultural week, representation of works ...) is encouraged.	86.5%	13.5%	0
03. Activities are proposed for my students to summarize and synthesize knowledge after reading (topics, main ideas, protagonists, events, inferences )	54.1%	49.5%	0
04. Reading activities are carried out in large groups.	73%	27%	0
05. Reading activities are carried out in small groups.	35.1%	62.2%	2.7%
06. Reading activities are carried out individually.	5.4%	83.8%	10.8%
07. Readings are made in pairs.	24.3%	62.2%	13.5%
08. My students use a textbook in the language area.	64.9%	32.4%	2.7%
09. The reading activities start from a joint project with the rest of the curricular areas.	94.6%	5.4%	0
10. The classroom programming is modified according to the needs of my students throughout the course.	83.8%	16.2%	0
11. Groups are organized taking into account that they have students with different reading levels.	83.8%	16.2%	0
12. My students do activities focused on reading speed aloud and in silence.	45.9%	54.1%	0
13. My students do activities focused on reading speed in silence.	51.4%	48.6%	0
14. My students are asked before, during and / or after reading a text.	29.7%	70.3%	0
15. ICTs are used to favour the development of linguistic competence.	56.8%	27%	16.2%



**REPORT OF READING COMPETENCE AND TEACHER TRAINING. MAY 2020**

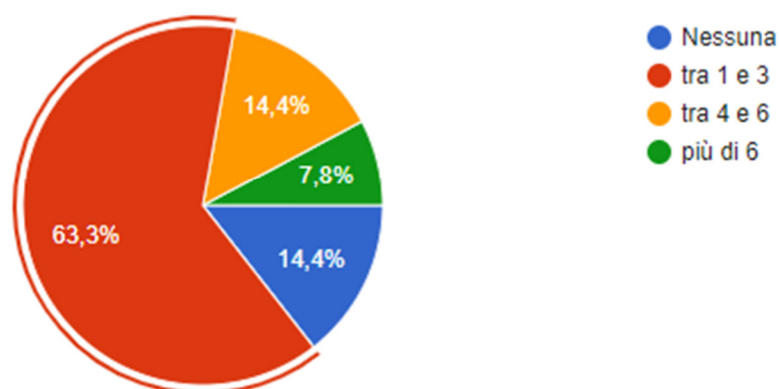
16. Activities are carried out for students to compare texts by format or gender.	75.7%	21.6%	2.7%
17. It is carried out in the sponsoring centre where my students tell stories or stories to students from lower grades.	70.3%	16.2%	13.5%
18. Concrete moments are used during the course to evaluate my students with a reading test.	67.6%	32.4%	0
19. It is proposed to my students directed readings to favour the development of social skills that help to face and resolve conflicts in the classroom.	54.1%	45.9%	0
20. Different analysis techniques of a read text are used (concept maps, dramatizations, murals, portfolios, opinion, debates ...).	62.2%	37.8%	0

Even in the practice activities done by the apprentices within the Primary Education, some of the general trends already detected for the Preschool are confirmed. The students' level of autonomy stops at the managerial, programmatic aspects as well as those related to the pedagogical coordination, lessons' organization and learning outcomes' evaluation and to the relationships with the families, that are mainly cared by the Practice Tutor. Despite this, within the reading activities, the apprentices seem to show a more extended range of actions to be performed: they realize reading activities in small groups (62.2%), individually (83.8%) and in pairs (62.2%), they appreciate the children's comprehension level making questions before, during and/or after reading a text (70.3%) and almost the half of the participant students declared to have proposed to pupils readings aimed to favor the development of social skills that help to face and resolve conflicts in the classroom (45.9%). With special regard to the ICTs used to support the linguistic competence, they are mainly cared by the Practice Tutor (56.8%), but a significant percentage of the students declared that they applied them too (27%) or to have just initiated (16.2%).

#### 4. PERMANENT TRAINING OF TEACHERS

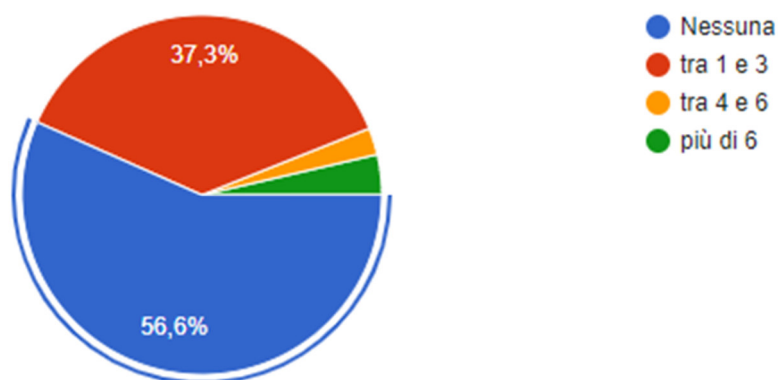
As for the permanent training actions attended both by already working preschool and primary school teachers, we report here again the data already shown and explained in the research reports specifically focused on the reading practices in Childhood and in Primary Education. The whole teachers' sample has been reached within two Tuscany provinces, that of Florence, including Florence Municipality and its metropolitan area, and that of Arezzo, with Terranuova Bracciolini Municipality and Valdarno area.

The **permanent teachers' training** has been explored considering the number of actions on linguistic competence in which they participated in the last 5 years. Considering a sample of **180 teachers of Childhood Education** (See, "Report of reading practices in Child Education in Italy"), the majority attended between 1 and 3 (63,3%) training actions, the 14,4% took part between 4 and 6 actions and 7,8% more than 6 actions. The teachers who didn't attend any training are 14,4%.



Tab.7 – Preschool Teachers' Training in the last 5 years on linguistic competence

On the other side, within a sample of **166 Primary Education teachers** (See, “Report of reading practices in Primary Education in Italy”), those who attended between 1 and 3 training actions are the 37,3%, the 2,4% took part between 4 and 6 actions and 6,6% more than 6 actions. The teachers who didn’t attend any training are 56,6%.



Tab.8– Primary School Teachers’ Training in the last 5 years on linguistic competence

If we compare the achieved data on permanent training between Preschool and Primary School teachers, we can observe that attending to professional refresh courses – especially focused on linguistic competencies - is more diffused among the first ones than the seconds. Probably it could be due to the fact that the training contents for Primary School teachers are mainly designed on the emerging needs progressively detected and/or expressed by teaching staff. To date, the training needs linked to linguistic skills maybe result less urgent for this category of teachers than those - for example - for *disciplinary*, *planning/organizational*, and *relational competencies*. Concerning in particular the latter ones, indeed, it has to be considered that relational skills play a key role for the teaching professions, not only in the school environment (with children, colleagues and school staff), but also to build and maintain positive and constructive relationships with children families and for the synergic collaboration with all the other educational institutions, within an integrated training system.

Among the most diffused training needs of Primary School teachers, should be mentioned also those related to the *didactic competencies*, that are based on pedagogical, methodological-didactic, psychological, sociological, and anthropological knowledge. These include also the useful upgrading on specific teaching methodologies

for educational technologies applying (e.g audiovisual, multimedia ICTs, etc.), that in the today School acquire more and more relevance.

The didactic competences involve the mastery of the evaluation procedures, especially in their formative meaning (evaluate to educate). For example, in In the Valdarno area, the schools refreshments courses are organized for common thematic area, as there is an association (RISVA) that unites the various educational institutions residing in this area, Teachers followed many refresher courses on emotional education, conflict resolution and the use of ITCs, in fact not many attended courses on linguistic skills.