INFORMATIONAL TEXTS IN CLASSROOM: A BLENDED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHER'S[1]

ΤΑ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΑΚΑ ΚΕΙΜΕΝΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΑΞΗ: ΕΝΑ ΜΙΚΤΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΕΠΙΜΟΡΦΩΣΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΟΣΧΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ

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Περίληψη

Το παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζει τα πορίσματα των ποσοτικών και ποιοτικών δεδομένων που συγκεντρώθηκαν σε μια διετούς διάρκειας μελέτη (2012-2014), η οποία εξέτασε την επίδραση ενός ολοκληρωμένου επιμορφωτικού προγράμματος των εκπαιδευτικών της προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης για τη διδακτική και παιδαγωγική αξιοποίηση των πληροφοριακών κειμένων στην τάξη τους. Οι συμμετέχοντες ήταν 43 νηπιαγωγοί πλήρους απασχόλησης από διάφορες γεωγραφικές περιοχές του Νομού Χανίων - Κρήτης. Οι συμμετέχοντες χωρίστηκαν σε δύο μέρη για να σχηματίσουν την πειραματική ομάδα (24 υποκείμενα) και την ομάδα ελέγχου (19 άτομα). Τα δεδομένα συγκεντρώθηκαν με ερωτηματολόγιο (στην έναρξη και το τέλος της επιμορφωτικής διαδικασίας) και με ημι-δομημένη συνέντευξη (με την ολοκλήρωση της δίχρονης επιμόρφωσης). Τα αποτελέσματα επιβεβαιώνουν τις αρχικές υποθέσεις της έρευνας σχετικά με τη θετική επίδραση που μπορεί να έχει μια ολοκληρωμένη μακράς διάρκειας επιμόρφωση, η οποία βασίζεται στις αρχές της εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων, με την υλοποίηση εξ αποστάσεως και δια ζώσης συναντήσεων (μικτό μοντέλο), στην ανάπτυξη των γνώσεων και των δεξιοτήτων των εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με την διδακτική και παιδαγωγική αξιοποίηση των πληροφοριακών κειμένων στο νηπιαγωγείο.

Λέξεις κλειδιά

Πληροφοριακά κείμενα, νηπιαγωγείο, επιμόρφωση εκπαιδευτικών.

Abstract

This article presents the findings of quantitative and qualitative data gathered in a two years (2012-2014) long study that examined the effect of a comprehensive blended training course on kindergarten teachers' instructional use of informational texts. Participants were forty-three (43) full-time teachers from a variety of geographical areas of Chania – Crete Prefecture. Participants were split in two samples, to form an experimental (24 subjects) and a control (19 subjects) group. Data were collected with a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Content analysis was used to analyze the open-ended questions. The results confirm initial assumptions of the research concerning the effectiveness of blended training courses on kindergarten teachers' knowledge and instructional practices concerning the use of informational texts. Educating children on the comprehension, use and production of informational texts enables them to develop competence in communicative practices and conventions adopted globally by the contemporary world.

Key words

Informational texts, kindergarten, teacher's training.

0. Introduction

Professional development (PD) is described as "any activity that intended primarily or partly to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in present or future roles in the school districts" (Little, 1987, in Nasser & Shabti, 2010:2739). Zepke & Leache (2002) suggest that three 'humanist constructs need to be considered when designing training activities for adults (teachers): (a) Adults are self-directed and autonomous learners. (b) Experiential learning is key to adult learning, and (c) learners should be given the opportunity for critical reflection. According to Trotter (2006), the key aspects of adult learning theory that can be used to design professional development activities propose teachers' training to be: (a) ongoing, (b) job-embedded and opportunities to experiment, (c) collaborative, (d) reflective, that means teachers should have adequate time for reflection and discussion in professional development activities. Effective professional development provides teachers with input into the learning topic, an active role in the engagement of ideas, and a network of colleagues to both challenge and support their thinking. Considering teachers' needs, experiences, and contexts as central, valuing their ideas, negotiating content, accepting teachers as experts, and encouraging them to reflect on their current beliefs and behaviors are important factors to induce long-lasting changes in teacher practices. This type of professional development is not just improve teachers' knowledge but affects and classroom instruction, as well as children learning (Guskey, 2000; Fullan, 1995; Miller & Stewart, 2013). According to Atay (2007), one of the reasons

for the failure of many professional development activities is that the programs are often presented in a lecture format without active involvement from the participants.

In any case, teachers in rural and geographically dispersed areas, have difficulty in accessing professional development opportunities. Researchers agree that distance learning or blended training programs, such as engaging in educative online venues, offer a viable and useful way to provide access to education for those who live in remote places, (Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005). Furthermore, distance learning creates the need for a suitable media that will support effectively the delivery of training content.

Regarding informational texts, we are surrounded by these texts whose primary purpose is to convey information about the natural or social world (Moss, 2003; Saul & Dieckman, 2005). "Informational text contains ideas, facts, and principles related to the physical, biological, or social world" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001: 399). Informational text relates to any publication of text with a purpose of relating facts, ideas, and principals. These texts have some typical textual, organizational and visual (pictures and graphics) characteristics (Bluestein, 2010; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010), as well as specific structure (description, sequence, compare/contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect) (Akhondi, Malayeri & Samad, 2011; Moss, 2004; Simonsen, 2004). Additionally, some cognitive strategies (prediction, questioning, visualization, connection, drawing conclusions) are particularly useful for the understanding of information texts (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). Cognitive strategies can be applied before, during and after the reading of texts. These strategies included in the most popular instructional techniques applied to teach them (Kletzien & Dreher, 2004), such as: "KWL" (I know / I want to learn/ I learned) and "reciprocal teaching» (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). A useful also teaching technique for the comprehension of informational texts is the "asking the author" technique. This technique is a questions protocol that can help the reader to better understand a text, especially in case that it has less coherent structure (McKeown, Beck & Worthy, 1993). It has been suggested that by putting emphasis only on fiction texts in the early education years, children may acquire little experience in reading informational texts, but success in schooling, the workplace, and society depends on our ability to comprehend this material (Caswell & Duke, 1998). So, its necessary for teachers to have the appropriate knowledge and skills to employ the appropriate teaching approaches for integrating successfully these texts in their classes (Duke, 2000; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010; Kletzien & Dreher, 2004; Ness, 2011; Saul & Dieckman, 2005).

2. Methodology

This research project basically aimed at developing a distance, with blended aspects, training course as well as at evaluating the perceived effectiveness of this course as an effective intervention for teachers' professional development in integrating informational texts in early school years (children aged 4-6;6 years old). More precisely, using

face-to-face tutorials along with the appropriate Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) and distance learning procedures, such as web conferences, online lectures, synchronous and asynchronous on line communication, allocating educational resources, the researchers sought to train and bring together teachers from various rural, remote and/or disadvantaged and urban areas. The aim, therefore, of the research project was twofold: (a) To respond to the need for ongoing professional development of preschool teachers from diverse geographical areas through a blended training course (distance and face-to-face) with a special focus on instructional approach of informational texts; and, b) to evaluate the course in terms of its impact on teachers' affective status, knowledge and instructional practices concerning informational texts.

The research questions, based on the above literature, that guided current study were:

- What kind of knowledge (characteristics and structures of texts and cognitive strategies needed for their understanding) and attitudes (the quantity of texts and the frequency of its usage in classrooms) do teachers have regarding the nature, the comprehension and the usage of informational texts? (In the beginning and at the end of the training course).
- What are the obstacles that teachers potentially experience in integrating informational texts in their classroom? (In the beginning and at the end of the training course).
- Does this training course enhance teacher' knowledge and attitudes regarding the nature and instructional use of informational texts and what are the particular elements of the course that contribute to its potential effectiveness? (At the end of the training course).

Research has shown that participant's opinions about a training program can be used to assess the degree to which it is effective in promoting their professional development and are important for designing and improving future relevant programs (Nasser & Shabti, 2010).

2.1. Participants

Forty-three (43) full-time preschool teachers were randomly selected from a variety of geographical areas and qualifications. Participants were evenly split in two samples, to form an experimental (24 subjects) and a control (19 subjects) group. The two groups were equivalent in terms of student population and teachers demographic factors (Teaching experience, Geographical areas, Level of qualifications). All members of the experimental group participated consistently in all training procedures.

2.2. Data collection

To fully understand how current project affects teachers' professional development we used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview (delivered at the end of the

project). The questionnaire was delivered in the beginning (pre-test) and at the end of the project (post-test). The purpose of pre-test was to inform the intervention and provide a baseline for assessing teachers' gains. Questions were designed to elicit information regarding the research questions surrounding teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding the nature and instructional use of informational texts, the obstacles they encounter by integrating these texts in their classroom, and their opinions about the effectiveness of the training course and its particular elements.

The questionnaire included close and open-ended questions and comprised four main sections as follows:

Section 1 to inquire about the teachers' demographic and background profile.

Section 2 to inquire about the teachers' knowledge (characteristics and structures of texts and cognitive strategies needed for their understanding) regarding the nature and the comprehension of informational texts (open-ended questions). We supposed that open-ended questions would provide a good base for assessing both amount and accuracy of knowledge of teachers examined in this study.

Section 3 to explore teachers' attitudes for informational texts. In this section two close questions asked participants to respond using a numerical Likert type scale about the quantity of informational texts in classrooms (from missing to excellent representation) and the frequency per week (from never to every day) with which teachers use them.

Section 4 to inquire about the obstacles teachers encounter by integrating these texts in their classrooms (open-ended) and whether these obstacles remained at the end of the project (second delivery of the questionnaire) (close question yes/no). The questionnaire was first pilot-tested on six teachers to check item clarity and then the final questionnaire was distributed to the subjects of the study.

Additionally, the questionnaire for experimental group, that was delivered at the end of the course, included two more sections.

Section 5 (open-ended question) to inquire about the potentially modifications in teaching approach of information texts that teachers have done as a result of their participation in the project.

Section 6 (open-ended question) to explore teachers' opinions about the effectiveness of the training program in overcoming previous obstacles and its particular elements that had a positive impact on their relevant knowledge and classroom behaviors.

The interviews were conducted at the end of the course and aimed to reveal teachers' thoughts and emotions about the project so as to increase the validity of the relevant

findings based on the questionnaire. The essential question of the interview was: "please, reflect on the project and write down your thoughts and emotions about: (1) The project itself and, (b) the project in relation to you and your class".

2.3. Overview of the project design

A training scenario had been elaborated and implemented for two school years, after its initial and formative negotiation between the researchers and the experimental group. The negotiation, according the principles of Adults Education, was intended to enable the program to respond as effectively as possible, to teacher's professional, educational, social and personal needs. This led to some minor modifications in the implementation of the project in relation to the original proposal.

In the training scenario, based on teaching principles of Adults Education, included instructional approaches which were mainly holistic and inductive, such as enriched lectures, modeling the new methods and techniques and allowing the trainees to participate in workshop activities as if they were students. The teachers also had given many and varied, planned and not, opportunities to collaborate with peers, reflect on their learning experiences and think critically, take active participation in their learning and implement in their classrooms what they learn. For people from remote areas a distance learning approach had been organized through a MOODLE online platform. On this platform educational material, as well as selected texts and art crafts, produced by teachers or/and students, were uploaded throughout the project.

Although we intended to use LAMS and Big Blue Button, as the online platforms, for distant communication and interaction, we finally opted to MOODLE and OPENMEETINGS. In this platform educational MOODLE is designed to structure courses and offers more user control over the order in which resources and tools are used. Due to the fact that the teachers that were involved in the course were not very apt at using information and communication technologies (ICTs), MOODLE seems to be more appropriate. Additionally, we used OPENMEETINGS as the web-conference platform, as it could be integrated easily in the MOODLE platform.

3. Data analysis

Data aimed to respond to the present research questions have been gathered through the close and open-ended questions of the questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the project (experimental-control groups), as well as through the question of the group interview at the end of the project (experimental group). Responses to open-ended questions (2^{nd}, 4^{th}, 5^{th} and 6^{th} sections) of the questionnaire for the pre and post measurements were examined, hand coding analyzed, classified and coded into categories according to the following procedure. In the begging we conducted a first exploratory reading of this material (preliminary analysis). We found, based on the

principles of completeness and suitability, that all responses associated with the objectives of current study and were distinguished for their homogeneity. Then, we reviewed again the purposes of the study and prepared to begin the formal analysis. The analysis focused on each open-ended question, and categories within each respond of the 2nd, 4rd, 5th and 6th sections of questionnaire were created. Based on these categories we constituted the six (6) levels of our coding system for these data. Afterwards, at each coding level were developed categories and using "the word" as unit of analysis, as well as "the phrase" for 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th level), the content of teachers' answers were coded. For coding the data we took into account the literature that has guided current study about informational texts and their instructional approach, as well as Guskey's (2000) model about the evaluation of a professional development activity (for the 6th level of coding system). The final six (6) levels of our coding system are the following:

(1) Teachers' knowledge about the characteristics of informational texts (2nd section of questionnaire).
Textual, Organizational, Visual (pictures and graphics) characteristics.

(2) Teachers Knowledge about the structures of informational texts (2nd section of questionnaire).
Description, sequence, compare/contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect.

(3) Teachers Knowledge about the cognitive strategies needed for the comprehension of informational texts (2nd section of questionnaire).
Prediction, questioning, visualization, connection, drawing conclusions.

(4) Obstacles teachers experience in integrating informational texts in their classrooms (4nd section of questionnaire). Referred to: children, texts, teachers themselves.

(5) Modifications of the instructional approach of teachers concerning the integration of information texts as a result of their participation in the project (5nd section of questionnaire). Positive attitudes to information texts, teaching practices, choices of texts, learning goals.

(6) Elements of the project that had a positive impact on teachers' knowledge and classroom behaviors (6nd section of questionnaire).

Participants learning (knowledge about informational texts and pedagogical skills and techniques for their teaching). Provision for participants implementation new knowledge and skills. Educational techniques (cooperation with colleagues, active educational techniques). Distance learning procedures (moodle platform web lectures asynchronous and synchronous on line communication). Students learning.

As we referred above, throughout the procedure of data analyses, we were working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and deciding what we would tell others (Bogdan

& Biklen, 1998). Answers to interview questions used for crosschecking and confirmation of the findings of the questionnaire.

4. Results - Discussion

The core question this research addressed is whether the proposed training project could have any impact on teachers' professional development in order they to acquire the necessary knowledge and attitudes that would help them to overcome the obstacles they face in integrating these texts in their classes. To explore the answer to above research main question, quantitative data of the questionnaire results were analyzed through computation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and means using statistical analysis software (SPSS 19). Then the independent sample *t* test was employed to examine whether the groups differed on the above variables, both pre-test and post-test in order to determine if there was any significant gains for experiment group. A 95% confidence level was used in the t test analyses. The differences between pre-test and post-test could be attributed to the present intervention and show a potential positive impact on the professional development of teachers so that they have managed to overcome the difficulties initially reported that face in integrating informational texts in their class.

4.1. Teachers knowledge about informational texts

(Characteristics-structures and cognitive strategies needed for informational texts comprehension)

The statistical analysis (by implementation of independent sample *t* test), revealed that there were not statistically significant differences among the two independent groups, experimental and control, regarding their knowledge about the textual (M=0,98 t=-0,570, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,572), organizational (M=1,02 t=0,642, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,524) and visual (M=1,14 t=-0,930, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,358 characteristics before the training project.

However, the statistically significant differences [textual (M^2=2,19 t=13,48, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000), organizational (M=2,19 t=10,37, df=27,35, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000) and visual (M=2,28 t=10,84, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000)] noted among the two groups after the implementation of the project, indicate its positive impact on the increasing of teachers' knowledge concerning informational texts characteristics.

Concerning teachers' knowledge about informational texts' structures have dramatically changed between pre and post-test measurements. Examining teachers' knowledge for all structures we found that the mean for pre-test was M=1,26 and for post-test M=3,63. The observed differences found to be statistically significant (pair t test t=8,230 df=42 sig (2-tailed)=0,000). Based on these results, we can accept the notion that teachers' knowledge about informational texts structures have changed at the end of the project.

Further analysis revealed that means (1 grade for each referred structure) for experimental group are M=1,79 (pre-test) and M=4,79 (post-test) and for control group M=0,58 (pre-test) and M=2,16 (post-test) respectively. We can see that knowledge of all teachers increased at the end of the program, but the changes observed in the experimental group are of higher degree. However, differences among the two groups found to be statistically significant from the beginning of the project (independent sample *t* test for pre test t=3,54, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,001 and for post-test measurement t=4,94, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,001).

Examining teachers' knowledge about all cognitive strategies that the majority of specialists of the field recognize that should be cultivated in this age, we found that the mean at pre-test was M=2,58 for experimental group and M=2,00 for control respectively Differences between two groups were not statistically significant (t=1,456, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=1,153). In contrast, the differences found in the measurements (M=4,88 for experimental and M=2,11 for control group) after the intervention proved to be statistically significant (t=9,571, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000). These results indicate a positive impact of the intervention on teachers' knowledge concerning the cognitive strategies needed for informational texts comprehension.

4.2. Teachers attitudes towards informational texts as it was revealed from their frequency of use and the quantity of these texts in their classrooms

The statistical analysis (by implementation of independent sample *t* test) revealed that there were not statistically significant differences among the experimental and control group regarding teachers' frequency of usage fictional (M=3,74 t=0,048, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,962), expository (M=2,12 t=0,556, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,581), narrative (M=2,21 t=1,815, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,077), mixed (M=1,26 t=-0,902, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,372) before intervention in their classrooms per week. However, the statistically significant differences [expository M=2,95 t=5,538, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000), narrative (M=2,51 t=2,393, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,021), mixed (M=2,28 t=-4,309, df=41, sig. (2-tailed)=0,000], noted among the two groups after the implementation of the project, indicate its impact on the frequency with which teachers use all kinds (expository, narrative, mixed) of informational texts per week. Teachers responds to interview are characteristics for their attitudes before intervention: *"I did not know enough about information texts. It was assumed that they are in teachers' library and she uses them whenever needed...."*.

Regarding the quantity of informational texts in classroom, Tables 7 and Table 8 show the amount of all types of books teachers self reported that were in their classrooms before and after the intervention. Although there is an increase in the amount of all kinds of texts in pre-school classes, the differences that observed were not found to be statistically significant.

4.3. Obstacles teachers face in incorporating informational texts in their class

The majority of the teachers (experimental and control groups) stated before the intervention that they had some difficulties in integrating information texts in their classrooms. These problems, mentioned in the questionnaire by teachers, are related to: (a) Difficulty that children have to focus their attention on these texts, because they are boring for kids (34% of teachers). (b) Difficulty that children have to comprehend them (69,8% of teachers). (c) Difficulties teachers have to approach them instructionally (67,4% of teachers) because of the lack of necessary teaching skills. The total of teachers answered that a professional development program could help them to overcome these difficulties. After the intervention all teachers (100%) of the experimental group stated that their participation in the program had helped them to overcome the problems they encounter before the intervention in integrating informational texts in their classes. Unlike the experimental, the control group continued to face the same problems that have showed the initial measurements.

4.4. Changes made by teachers in their teaching approach of informational texts as a result of their participation in the project

(a) All teachers of experimental group (F24, 100%) declared through the questionnaire that their participation in the project helped them to change their attitudes to informational texts, the learning goals they set and their teaching practices. These can be confirmed from the answers to the interview:

> *"The project opened to me a large window from which I saw the world of information texts. Along with me and the children of my class saw many out of this window. Things that children viewed from this window will be very valuable to them in their future. For me, this window will be open forever".*
>
> *"The project gave me confidence and vitality and all this imparted to children in my class. Their eyes shine every time they see an information text".*
>
> *"We experimented with informational texts with children in our class. At first it was difficult, but I think most children responded positively to this challenge. Regarding the project, it has put a small stone in our cognitive horizons. These learning experiences have easily come to teaching practices".*
>
> *"Endless informational books have been entered our daily educational routine and well organized teaching practices, such as* reciprocal teaching and asking the author *are implemented".*

"Children have began to understand more deeply the content of informational and fictional texts with the support of the appropriate cognitive strategies used before, during and after reading. So do I".

"I have introduced explicit teaching of comprehension strategies along with independent practice".

"I have increased attention to the unique textual features of informational text".

(b) Changes were observed and in choosing of informational texts. The majority of experimental group (F22, 91,7%) stated that they have changed the criteria they use to choose informational books in their classes. The main factors that they declared that they take into account after intervention are: content accuracy, information current, organization, style and illustration and graphics.

4.5. Evaluation of the project

In terms of evaluation of the training course, taking into account the Guskey's (2000) model about the evaluation of a professional development activity, the study found, according to the questionnaire results and the interview responses, that teachers had positive opinions towards the course in general. Teachers declared through the questionnaire that the elements of the project that mostly contributed to their professional development regarding the integration of informational texts in their classes are the following:

(a) *Participants learning,* include knowledge about unique textual, organizational and visual characteristics (n=23, 95,8% of teachers of experimental group included this element in their response to the relevant open-ended question) and structures (n=24 100% of teachers) of informational texts and pedagogical skills and techniques (n 24 100% of teachers) for their teaching.

"Very interesting, innovative, demanding and helpful program about things, issues and knowledge that I failed to manage well before" (interview answer to the question about thoughts and emotions on the project".

(b) *The provision for participants implementation of new knowledge and skills* include the educational chances that teachers had to implement their new knowledge and skills (100% of teachers).

(c) *Adults learning educational techniques* as cooperation with colleagues (n=15 62,5% of teachers) and active educational techniques (83,5% of teachers).

(d) *Distance learning procedures* as usage of MOODLE platform for web lectures, asynchronous and synchronous on line communication (66,7% of teachers). Participants from rural areas evaluated more significantly (X^2 =6,99, df=1, Exact Sign

(2-sided)=0,013 p<.05) distance learning procedures than those from urban areas. This finding was expected because that part of participants were more beneficiaries from distance learning procedures than the others who had the opportunity to attend the face to face meetings.

(e) *Organizational support* such as available recourses, openness to experimentation and alleviation of fears, facilities and comfort physical conditions for the meetings.

"At first I was afraid, I did not know where we would go, I thought that it was difficult for kindergarten, but eventually I saw that IT helped me and the children to learn new things".

"I started with a lot of anxiety and stress. In subsequent meetings I enjoyed the knowledge and the company of colleagues".

(f) *Students learning* (100% % of teachers). Qualitative information, included in the edited material, reveals students learning and confirms teachers' answers.

However, a concern has been expressed that must be taken into account *"The project has offered to children learning benefits. But I worry if it has deprived them lazing relaxing activities"*.

5. Conclusion

The comprehensive professional development plan concerning the integration of informational texts, can increase teachers knowledge and encourage them to participate in collegial interactive models to improve student learning. Both the comprehensive professional development plan along with teacher collaboration can keep teachers abreast of the emerging trends in education and provide ways to assist students in becoming successful in comprehending and producing informational texts. Effective professional development on informational texts can increase educators' knowledge and usage of informational texts in the primary classroom. When essential professional development is provided, educators are not only able to increase and develop their classroom practices but they are also able to enhance opportunities for students to use successfully informational texts. A characteristic answer of a teacher was: "*Now informational texts have changed position!! From the teachers' shelf entered the lending library and the heart of every little reader...*"

As the results of present study indicated, our project has had some success in supporting professional development of teachers, although in the beginning they experienced emotions of agony and anxiety and helped them:

(a) To acquire needed knowledge and skills that allowed them to integrate informational texts in their curriculum,, although it was difficult and innovative for them.

(b) To create models of high quality integrated curriculum concerning informational texts expanding them to families through the lending libraries.

(c) To use instructional practice that lead to the improvement of students' achievement in comprehension and production of informational texts.

(d) To disseminate effective instructional practices to other pre-schools in local and national level.

The training scenario with the accompanying educational material, as well as the conditions for active interaction among teachers themselves and with the researchers, that we created, appeared to have a positive effect on teachers' knowledge and responsive teaching behaviors. Teachers confirm this by saying: "*I started with a lot of agony and anxiety about what would I do in that project. The first meeting was stressful. But during the following meetings I enjoyed the knowledge I got about informational texts, as well as the company of my colleagues*".

However, effective professional development requires time for initial training and extensive in-class implementation. This process should be a never-ending cycle not a one-time event. In particular, implementation of a supportive instructional framework doesn't not occur after one year. It took several years of professional development on a sustained topic, with follow-up coaching and team planning, to realize increasing success. What leads the way is teachers' interest and ability to take the work forward. Many of them show to be willing to continue to design, implement and document the instruction of informational texts in their classroom using educational techniques and ideas learned in this project. Researchers on the other hand, will continue to support teachers regarding informational texts.

Σημειώσεις

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2. Min/max=0/3

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