



LANGUAGE LITERACY IN THE EARLY GRADES

REPORT
of the baseline study

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Skopje, December 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors would like to extend their appreciation to all associate collaborators involved in the process of carrying out this baseline study, and particularly to the students, teachers and school directors of the selected schools, who took part in giving answers to the given tests and questionnaires, realized as a part of this baseline study. Also we acknowledge the international experts Nancy Clair PhD and Richard Holdgrave-Resendez from Miske Witt and Associates Inc. who analyzed Macedonian Curricula documents and developed training modules.

Authors acknowledge their debt for the practical advises and support of the UNICEF Office, Skopje, and above all to Ms Nora Shabani, education specialist.

Report prepared by:

Gorica Mickovska, MA
Bojana Naceva, MA
Anica Aleksova, MA
Ana- Mickovska Raleva, MA
Mitko Ceslarov, MA

Consultants in developing and checking the tests:

Tanja Andonova Mitrevska
Lirie Redjepi
Zlata Ancevska

Data processing:

Beti Lameva, MA

Translated in to English:

Vladimir Mostrov

Graphics design:

Кома

Study conducted by the Macedonian Civic Education Center



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the study

The baseline study of the state prior to starting the in-service training of teachers in the project - *Literacy in the Early Grades* had an objective *to establish methodology and to collect baseline data about the state of affairs*, which would then enable subsequent monitoring of the project activities and measuring project impact on the quality of instruction and on the achievements of students.

More precisely:

1. To make a survey of teachers' understanding of learning and teaching Macedonian and Albanian language in the grade teaching cycle, related to the principles of teaching in the *Project –Literacy in the Early Grades*.
2. To make a survey of teachers' pedagogical knowledge related to understanding of the contents and the pedagogical approaches in teaching reading and writing.
3. To measure students' achievements at the end of Grade 3 on issues and tasks in the domains covered by the curriculum for *Literacy in the Early Grades*.
4. To investigate the activities for improving instruction in the teaching of Macedonian and Albanian language at school level and readiness to provide support to project activities in the schools involved in the project.
5. To estimate specific needs for training of teachers taking part in the Project.

Conducting the study

Data were collected on a sample of 15 schools, taking part in the project - *Literacy in the Early Grades* and 15 schools (with similar characteristics) that are not part of the Project. It was planned to examine school principals and representatives of the pedagogical service – 2 representatives from each school, then 10 teachers and 20 students (at the beginning of Grade 4) in the premises of the central primary school. In those schools where the number of teachers and students was smaller than that one planned in the sample, the data were collected by all of the teachers and the students. The total number of examined teachers was 295, and of students – 574. In the project schools, data were collected from the school principals and from the representatives of the pedagogical service (30 examinees). Such an approach provides credibility in comparing the state both in the project and non-project schools at the beginning and later during the implementation of the project activities. Those schools could not be considered as a representative

sample of the schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the data could not be generalized for all of Macedonian schools.

Data were collected using the following instruments developed for this study:

- ▶ Scale of attitudes on learning and teaching mother tongue;
- ▶ Test of pedagogical knowledge of teachers (related to the principles of the *Literacy in the Early Grades*);
- ▶ Questionnaire for teachers;
- ▶ Test on writing for Grade 3 students;
- ▶ Test on reading for Grade 3 students;
- ▶ Test about the state and practices related to writing and reading for Grade 3 students;
- ▶ Questionnaire for school principals and professional staff.

Data processing and analysis of all examined subjects was carried out according to established indicators, and comparisons of starting baseline data in project and in non-project schools are given also.

Basic findings of the study

The indicators, a brief description of each indicator, and the main findings related to it are given below.

It is stated that, within each indicator and for each category of examinees **there is no statistically significant difference between the examinees in the project and those in the non-project schools**. This will make it easier to make comparisons between project and non-project schools in the subsequent monitoring of the influence of project activities.

Indicator	Brief description	Findings
Understanding of learning and of teaching mother tongue	Attitudes of teachers about learning and teaching mother tongue based on the principles in the curriculum for <i>Literacy in the Early Grades</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers accept to a high degree statements describing learning and teaching reading and writing according to understanding of learning and the principles of teaching in the syllabus on <i>-Literacy in the Early Grades</i> - Teachers from project and from non-project schools do not differ in the degree of acceptance of statements on the scale of attitudes about learning and teaching reading and writing. - Teachers giving instruction in rural and urban schools do not differ considerably in the degree of acceptance of statements on the scale on attitudes about learning and teaching reading and writing, and neither between the teachers giving instruction in Macedonian and Albanian language
	Pedagogical knowledge of teachers related to the approaches promoted by the Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers from project and from non-project schools do not differ in the achievements on the test on pedagogical knowledge. - It seems that for many of the teaching methods that comply with the principles in <i>Literacy in the Early Grades</i> are new for the teachers and they do not recognize them as the most suitable ones in particular teaching situations. - Teaching methodology selected by teachers are often not specific for the teaching situation. - Teacher giving instruction in Macedonian language have higher pedagogical content knowledge than the teachers giving instruction in Albanian language. - Teachers from urban schools have higher pedagogical content knowledge than the teachers in the rural schools.

Indicator	Brief description	Findings
	Teachers expectations from their students related to the achievements in mother tongue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally speaking, the results of the study denote that there is no significant difference between the expectations of the teachers from the project and from non-project schools related to the achievements of students in the mother tongue. - The sole significant difference that is found is in the attitude about the importance of the ability for retelling by pictures, which the teachers from the non-project schools, in a considerably higher number, consider that it is a particularly important one, in comparison to the attitude of those from the project schools.
	Familiarity with mother tongue curriculum and mutual support and cooperation among teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers from project and from non-project schools are uniform in respect to their knowledge of mother tongue curriculum and about the cooperation with their colleagues and the pedagogical services.
	Satisfaction with the the teaching of the mother tongue and satisfaction of the students' achievements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School management staff, mainly, is not satisfied with the teaching of the mother tongue in their own schools, though the teaching during the past years was improved. - Generally speaking, concerning the achievements of lower grade students in their own schools, the majority of the examinees consider that they are at the level of the curriculum requirements or are the same as those in other neighbouring, similar schools.
	Support in promoting the teaching of the mother tongue, including the school equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority of school principals and representatives of the pedagogical service consider that there is good mutual cooperation between teachers (particulary between the teachers in the grade teaching cycle), and they state that teachers may rely on support in introducing innovations in the teaching of mother tongue. - The equipment of schools with specific aids for the teaching of mother tongue is average, although it refers to materials that are easy to provide. Schools are well-equipped with school-reading books and magazines for children.
	Information provided to school management staff about the project and their preparedness to give support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The management staff, prior to the beginning of the project activities in the school, was well informed about the project aims and activities, but not all of the schools have planned corresponding activities related to the project. - School principals and representatives of the pedagogical service see their role mostly as supporters in the process of professional in-service training of teachers and in providing conditions for dissemination of project activities.

Indicator	Brief description	Findings
Achievement of students	Achievement of students at the test on reading and on the test on writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no statistically significant difference in the achievement of students from project and the non-project schools, on the items in the domains of reading as well of writing. - Except for one item (chronological ordering of events) the achievements of students in reading are in correlation with the expected results prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3. - The results on the test' items which measured students' skills in writing a text upon given words and the use of orthography and the needed lexicon, are lower than the expected results prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3. - Students from urban schools have significantly higher results in reading and writing, than those from rural schools. - Students studying Macedonian language have higher achievements than those studying Albanian language.

Recommendations

Taking into consideration the findings presented above, it is expected that a coherent and quality implementation of the program *Literacy in the Early Grades*, followed by a continuing support to teachers, would raise the level of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and of students' achievements in project schools. In addition to the thoughtful and well developed training program it would be useful to undertake the following activities:

With management teams in schools

- ▶ UNICEF/BDE prior to starting the in-school training, are to organize meetings with school principals and pedagogues/psychologists, at which they would be informed about the Project, the course of activities, the responsibilities of various school teams, and the expected results. The managing and professional teams are to provide adequate support to the teachers related to the training, as well as to provide conditions for dissemination of acquired knowledge at seminars and workshops (by in-school dissemination, open classes).
- ▶ At school level the Project is to be treated as a project for raising students' language competencies at whole school and in that direction to provide support by the subject teachers of mother tongue (Macedonian and Albanian) as well as by the teachers of foreign languages in the upper grades, which would help them in raising the level of knowledge in the domains of reading and writing.
- ▶ To point out the importance of creating reading corners in classrooms which will be enriched with books made by students, and to point out, also, the importance of classroom activities, as well as joint activities at the grades level.

With creators and administrators of training

- ▶ Care is to be taken that in-school training is to be carried out through adequately balanced activities that would enable raising pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in teaching literacy to students.
- ▶ Training should discuss, promote and insist on a more differentiated approach, to pay respect to experiences of children, to use various cooperative techniques in learning and to use a wider range of different texts.
- ▶ Training should point out the specific approaches in teaching and to relate to the specific aims of learning reading and writing as a counterpart to using universal methods of teaching only.
- ▶ Part of the training is to be devoted to the application of learned principles and strategies of teaching via tasks related to the specific aims of learning reading and writing. The best examples are to be published as a manual, aimed to promote the good practice and to provide sustainability of project's results after its completion.

INTRODUCTION

There is a common practice in well-planned action projects, and especially in those of large scale , to make a baseline study prior to the project activities.

This report presents the findings of the current state prior to starting the project activities of *Literacy in the Early Grades*, which relate to the teaching of mother tongue in the first cycle of grade teaching. The Project is carried out by the Bureau for Development of Education and UNICEF Office-Skopje, and on their behalf, the research study was conducted by the Macedonian Civic Education Center.

- ▶ What are the attitudes of teachers to learning and teaching reading and writing?
- ▶ What is the level of pedagogical knowledge of teachers related to the teaching of mother tongue in the early grades prior to their training in the new teaching methodology?
- ▶ What are teachers' perceptions concerning the importance of certain contents and competences related to reading and writing and about the expectations from their students?
- ▶ How big is the need for training teachers in certain aspects of teaching reading and writing that are related to the modules in the project?
- ▶ What is the level of support given to teachers by other school teachers, managing staff and pedagogues/psychologists in improving mother tongue instruction?
- ▶ What is the level of classroom equipment with specific aids and materials needed for mother tongue instruction?

Together with it, comparisons were made of the state in both project and non-project schools.

The report is primarily aimed at managers and administrators of the Project. Therefore, in it, most attention is devoted to the outcomes of the study, which are given in part three. The first and the second part of the Report contain baseline information about the Project and about the methodology of the study. Results are given in considerable details, in order to be used in planning Project activities and in further evaluations. At the end, the most important statements and certain recommendations are given, as drawn by the authors of this study on the bases of the outcomes.

PART I – BACKGROUND

This part contains basic information about the project *Literacy in the Early Grades* and the Project activities carried out so far. A review of the research findings of factors in students' performance related to teachers, is also presented. It represented a starting-point for investigating the conditions before starting the implementation of the Project activities.

1. BACKGROUND PROJECT INFORMATION

1.1. Starting points

Due to the fact that each reform is a long-term process, it is necessary to introduce the changes carefully and gradually. First of all, an estimate should be made in order to see what effect might have each step of the reform on schools, among teachers, students and parents. In planning and conducting changes one should keep the positive pedagogical experiences, the important elements of the overall pedagogical heritage, but also to accept ideas from other countries, which would improve the quality of the system of education. Together with it, it is important to have criteria of selectivity due to the fact that the already determined models of organization of teaching have proved to be more successful than other models. In introducing changes it is necessary to find a measure for that which has already acquired positive acknowledgement by schools. One should anticipate the effects of the changes whether they would challenge misunderstanding, resistance, or at the very beginning, would bring round and motivate schools for cooperation and for accepting changes by themselves in order to change and improve the quality of educational process.

Taking into consideration the above stated issues, the Bureau for Development of Education prepared a Concept for Nine-year Primary Education and a new curriculum, approved by the Minister of Education and Science, which was introduced in the school year of 2007/08. The new curricula for particular teaching subjects in primary education were defined by the teaching plans and programs, complying with the principles for primary education, determined by the Concept (above all, the principle for general education character of primary schools, the principle of quality in education and international comparability of knowledge, the principle of

active participation of students, and the principle of the best interest for children). The teaching programmes determine the goals for a particular developmental period (Grades 1 – 3, 4 – 6, 7 – 9), the aims per grades, concrete objectives for selection of contents, expected outcomes, and examples of activities and methodology which teachers could apply in meeting the prescribed aims. At the same time, teaching programmes offer didactic directions for teachers, as well as general instructions for monitoring students' achievements.

The very fact that with the new Concept, a six-year child becomes a student, brought along changes in all important segments of the educational process. It wasn't possible just to adapt the old teaching programmes, or simply to undertake or make some other improvisation. It was necessary to set up new goals and to devise new contents adapted to the characteristics of six-year children. The thinking of six-year children is concrete, the interest for playing and all types of communication is stressed, the child is open and curious, has a command of some aspects of speech and is even coming closer to the speech of adults.

But, at the time when the teaching programmes were developed, consideration was taken related to the amount of children at the age of five who are enrolled in kindergartens (in 2006 it was less than 20%), so that, in determining the objectives and the expected outcomes, 'lower expectations' in particular teaching subjects for the first developmental period (grades 1 -3), were consciously supported in comparison with other countries of the European Union, with an idea that together with the implementation of curricula, one would immediately start its continuing evaluation, monitoring of students' achievements, as well as a continuous work with teachers concerning the methodology of teaching and the way of meeting the goals and improving the understanding about the quality of the instruction.

1.2. Analyses of Curricula

The Bureau for Development of Education, due to the above mentioned reasons, and with an interest in raising the quality of education, supports the realization of particular curricula directed, above all, to strengthening the efficiency, which takes into consideration the improvement in students' achievements and the expected outcomes in particular teaching subjects, above all, the efficiency in teaching mother tongue – Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian. To a certain extent, taking into consideration the achievement of Macedonian students in international projects such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Study), which rate among the lowest in East Europe, there was a need to make efforts to strengthen the capacities in the country to carry out high quality instruction in mother tongues in primary education (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian).

The Bureau for Education in cooperation with UNICEF Office – Skopje during 2008 began with the realization of the activities of the program – *Literacy in the Early Grades* in order to develop a curriculum that would enable students (as well as teachers) to monitor the development and to create plans for meeting particular objective, as well as plans for teaching mother tongue in Grades 1 – 3. The activities carried out during 2008, by international experts –PhD Nancy Clair and Richard Holdgrave-Resendez were focused on:

- ▶ making analysis of mother tongue curricula for Grades 1 – 3;
- ▶ making comparative analysis of curricula in other countries in order to see the corresponding contents, expectations and the organization of instruction;
- ▶ establishing broader goals (standards) in mother tongue instruction;
- ▶ developing a plan for training in the mentioned teaching subjects.

The analysis, above all, confirmed, in a way, that what was determined by the new curricula, i.e. that in comparison with curricula in other countries, our curricula (for grades 1 – 3) have generally low expectations¹

In relation to the basic structure of the curricula for mother tongue instruction (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian) a recommendation is offered for its strengthening which would turn it into a more efficient document for giving directions for instruction, learning of students and assessment. Namely, the objectives are organized in three groups (objectives related to Grades 1 – 3, objectives for the teaching process and specific objectives for each grade). The objectives related to Grades 1 – 3 include the expectations that correspond to the developmental period, but, according to experts, the current objectives lack explicit hierarchy. Some of the objectives are broadly formulated, and others are more narrowed. For example, in *the objectives for the developmental period of Grades 1 – 3*, there is a broadly formulated statement – “to develop sense of belonging to the Republic of Macedonia by studying the Macedonian literary language”, while another more concrete objective states – “to acquire and practice basic writing”. In that direction, a recommendation is given (aimed to develop a more coherent document for the curricula which would enable teachers to monitor the progress of students and to develop objectives and plans to carry out the contents and the planning for class work), to consider about: 1) developing broader objectives (standards) in reading and writing; 2) prescribing topics which would organize the components of reading and writing (contents), and 3) establishing indicators for the expected or the supposed competences (for each grade) or cycle.

The three groups of objectives, as it was already mentioned, lack organizational hierarchy in curriculum, in developing the programs into components (or topics), and the repetition of objectives within program areas makes it difficult to monitor the essential components of literacy and the statement what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. The analysis gives certain general considerations:

¹ The following examples are taken from the curriculum/program for Macedonian language which point out that the expectations are too low.

- The program points out that second grade students should learn how “to make precise graphic presentation of elements of letters”. This is an aspect of consciousness about that what is written and the concept of writing which is to be developed in Grade 1. Students should know how to write the majority of the letters by the end of Grade 1.
- The program points out that in Grade 2, students should “learn and divide words by syllables”. This is an aspect of the phonological sense and should be developed in Grade 1.
- The program points out that Grade 3’ students are to acquire sense about the prime and ordinal numbers and to distinguish one from the other”. This is an aspect about that what is written and which should be developed in Grade 1. Students are to be able to make distinction between letters and numbers in Grade 1.

- ▶ many of the objectives related to the development of writing and to the language put less stress to other components of reading and writing, including reading comprehension;
- ▶ many of the objectives for reading comprehension appear in the program domain - literature instead in the program domain - basics of reading and writing.
- ▶ there are few objectives which support phonological sense, understanding, decoding and knowledge of words, stock of words, fluency and the writing process. there are many other opportunities for students in Grade 1 to be creative in telling and writing stories. May be there is too much stress on grammar in Grades 2 and 3 which might cause stiffness in the continuing development of literacy with students.
- ▶ that in the curriculum, the component of writing is represented in the form of writing letters, words and sentences, and there are few opportunities for students to follow the process of writing (preparation for writing, draft-version and revision, editing and publishing) in order to make a portfolio of the written works.
- ▶ in grade 3 there is an introduction about reading and writing Latin script via something that seems as writing in Macedonian language with Latin script. It is not clear why students studying Latin script via the Macedonian language which is taught via the Cyrillic alphabet. Students could learn the Latin script in their English classes.

The analysis states that certain specific aims are repeated in the program domains and grades. It is supposed that the activities in learning would be more advantageous by Grade 3, however the specific objectives should upgrade one over the other and be easy to monitor.

Otherwise, the analysis did not remain only on "weak" or "strong" points of the programs, but at the same time it gives recommendations for qualifying, recomposing and pointing out particular parts (aims, contents, didactic directions, etc.) in curricula.

So, as an important issue it is pointed out that the chapter of the program named as "Didactic recommendations", "for all of the grades where mother tongue (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian) are taught, enables integrated planning of the teaching process in the following subjects – acquaintance with environment, mathematics, music and physical education". However, the curriculum does not give directions (for Grade 1), how to integrate language with contents. The development of curriculum with topic units may represent one way of integrating the contents. Furthermore, the chapter Didactic Recommendations consists of "methods, forms and teaching aids" covering "all the interactive, contemporary and modern methods ... with a focus on the method of play, method of problem solving and discovery (research method as the most adequate one for the specifics of learning by students at that age)". However, the document does not mention what are those contemporary and modern methods. The current activities in the teaching program are either plays or exercises for which, very often concrete instructions for teachers are lacking.

1.3. Training of teachers

On the basis of the considerations from the analysis, an expert team developed a program to train trainers, aiming to train teachers to implement the given recommendations related to curricula in their instruction.

The Bureau for Development of Education, in order to recruit better teachers, i.e. those who wish and are motivated to contribute to improving mother tongue instruction, on the basis of open competition, made a selection of about fifty teachers (part of who teach in Macedonian, and part in Albanian, Turkish or Serbian), and who were required:

- ▶ to attend the training structured in a total of 49 hours;
- ▶ to implement the acquired knowledge in carrying out the instruction (with support of BDE advisers) and
- ▶ to train all teachers teaching mother tongue in Grades 1 - 3 (first as trainers in their schools providing training to other teachers teaching in Grades 1, 2, and 3, as recommended by the advisers and the international team of trainers).

The main objectives of the training in literacy are:

- ▶ to deepen the understanding about the quality of mother tongue instruction by teachers;
- ▶ to implement the newly acquired knowledge in the instruction and so to become more efficient teachers;
- ▶ to improve students' achievements in mother tongue (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian);
- ▶ to raise students' results in mother tongue within the framework of the international assessments and studies.

Training sessions for teachers were organized in the course of 2009 and 2010, structured in 4 seminars, or expressed in hours, teachers attended training amounting 49 hours.

1.4. Dissemination of training and monitoring its results

After the training of teachers and of advisers from the Bureau for Development of Education, a phase of dissemination of training followed, first at in-schools from which the trained teachers come from². Teachers, under the mentorship of the advisers, are already implementing the acquired knowledge from workshops in their mother tongue classes, and in the period October-December they carried out training with all teachers teaching in Grades 1 - 4, in their own schools.

These teachers, after getting credentials for the conducted training, and after being given certificate for trainers, with support of the Bureau for Development of Education, would deliver training for all grade teachers in the country.

The implementation of the new approaches in language literacy would be monitored by the Bureau for Development of Education, from the aspect of quality of the performed instruction as well as from the aspect of the outcomes achieved by students.

² The training in 15 project schools, which are in the sample for this study began after the conducted collection of data.

2. FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.1. Studies of some relevant factors of students' achievements related to teachers

Learning how to read and write is a complex process. Therefore, researchers look for factors which make the instruction of reading and writing more effective. In addition to the factors related to students and to the social environment they come from, and to which school can have small influence, the most often issue of research are the attitudes, knowledge and teachers' practice.

According to certain studies (Greenwald, Hedges & Laine, 1996; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ & Mekkelsen, 2004; Sanders & Horn, 1994) in Reutzel R., J. A. Dole, R. Sudweeks, P., S. Read, J. A. Smith, B. Donaldson, C. D. Jones, K. Herman (2007, p. 2), teacher is the most influential single factor who influences upon the educational development of students. According to those studies he is more influential than is the family, environment and the school they attend. According to other studies (Rowen, Correnti and Miller), some other factors, such as education of parents are more influential. They point out to a series of methodological issues upon the research of achievement and progress of students.

2.1.1. Teachers' knowledge of teaching Literacy

Concerning teachers' knowledge, the most studied are the attitudes related to reading and the teaching of reading, of their knowledge of contents they teach and the pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge.

The largest number of studies start from the theoretical framework set up by (Shulman (1986, 1987) according to Reutzel (2007). Shulman, first separated two categories of teachers' knowledge: *content knowledge* and *pedagogical knowledge*, and then added *pedagogical knowledge related to contents*.

Content knowledge

Content knowledge is the kind of knowledge of the curriculum that the teacher teaches. Some researchers Paris, Wixson & Lipson (1983), according to Reutzel (2007) call it declarative knowledge of the teaching subject. It is most often estimated via proxy measures, such as the level of education, content of courses that the teachers have studied and through knowledge tests.

Measuring the teaching subject knowledge, needed for teaching reading and writing is more complex than the measuring of content knowledge in other teaching

areas. Its because of the fact that reading and writing do not have a content core which the other teaching subjects have, and good readers and writers can hardly identify the content knowledge that makes them be good. (Reutzel (2007) p. 4).

The content knowledge in the domain of reading and writing is often defined via the standards for training or as competences of teachers in a particular domain. So, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education has defined standards for education of teachers in USA (NCATE, 2007), and they are upgraded in the domain of reading and writing by the International Reading Association (IRA, 2010). Even in cases when indicators are given, they are not easy to measure.

Some recent studies on reading (Moats & Foorman (2003), McCutchen et al. (2002) according to Reutzel et al. (2007)) show that the increased content knowledge of teachers does not influence upon higher achievements of students.

Pedagogical knowledge

The pedagogical knowledge, according to Shulman, refers to “the general behaviour of teachers in the teaching which is in correlation with the achievements of students on standardized tests “ (Shulman, 1987, p. 6), according to (Reutzel (2007) p. 7) or in some other way, say, it is the teachers’ knowledge how to perform the instruction.

There are many studies that have investigated the relationship between the pedagogical knowledge with the achievements of students. So, as the curriculum for the *Literacy in the Early Grades* does not encompass the general pedagogic knowledge, here we will not present the findings that refer to it.

Pedagogical content knowledge

The most important component of teachers’ knowledge - (Shulman’s (1986, 1987) according to (Reutzel (2007) p. 8) is the pedagogical knowledge about the teaching subject that refers to the knowledge of specific teaching methods of the subject, i.e. the knowledge how the teaching and learning of a particular subject ought to be carried out.

Teachers should possess all above mentioned kinds of knowledge in order to carry out successfully the teaching of reading and writing. What they have learned at their graduate studies is *the recommended practice*, and teachers upgrade it as a result of experiences from the real practice. That knowledge Fenstermacher (1994, according to Reutzel (2007) p. 8)) calls it “practical knowledge “. That knowledge is very individual, and often it is implicit, but to a large extent it determines the teaching practice.

Taking into consideration Shulman’s conceptual framework and the statements of the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) that a large number of research instruments are not reliable, Reutzel (2007) and collaborators developed Literacy Instruction Knowledge Scales (LIKS) for mother tongue instruction needed for the Primary Grade Reading & Writing Teacher Knowledge Project. More precisely, the purpose of the scale is to estimate the knowledge of teachers in Grades 1 – 3 for effective teaching of reading and writing based on the findings from studies.

On the basis of an extensive study of references, taxonomy of teacher's knowledge was developed covering 20 domains in reading and 20 domains in writing. The scales consist of a test with multiple choice items (content knowledge of language, teaching situations that require application of pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge about learning of children, as well as knowledge about the aims of teaching) and a Classroom teaching observation scale. The instrument had good characteristics (Reutzel and all (2007). However, when after three years they checked the predictive value they found that the " Findings indicated that LKS scores predicted only 1 to 4% of the total variance in 3rd graders' reading subscale scores in P.A., phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary & comprehension on the Stanford 10 Reading First test." (Reutzel (2010, slide 21).

Another group of researchers from the University of Michigan make an effort to develop instruments which would measure the pedagogical knowledge (Rown at all, 2001). Their starting point was Shulman's understanding of the pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge for the teaching of reading and writing. The pedagogical knowledge of teachers was examined with questions consisting of short, realistic descriptions of teaching situations and a requirement to choose one of the offered answers related the way how to deal with such a situation. One of the given answers was correct, but many were not. (Rown at all, 2001, p.5). Not only analysis of the influence of the knowledge of teachers on students' achievements was made, but also on the entire approach in to the school. Differences in the efficiency of the approaches to teaching were found (3 different programs for teaching were compared) on the basis of students' achievements in reading and writing, which were measured by standardized tests. (Rown at all, 2009).

On the basis of the review of the results, it may be concluded that measuring the pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in the teaching of language is complex, and it is difficult to develop instruments with good psychometrical characteristics. Findings about the linkedness/influence of the pedagogical knowledge on students' achievements is not univocal.

2.1.2. Attitudes and beliefs of teachers

On the basis of the reviewed references, we have come to a conclusion that there are not many studies which have successful attempts to find out a set of attitudes of teachers, as a personal relationship to reading and writing. Concerning teachers' attitudes in general, the studies have shown that they may be changed as a result of the graduate education and the in-service training. This finding is important for those introducing changes because "it is the predisposition of teachers to change that makes change possible. Without a change in attitude, it is extremely difficult to effect changes in practice. This is an important finding because Most of the research that measured attitudes demonstrated that attitudes did change as a result of the interventions, indicating that at least one of the major prerequisites for teacher change can be taught."(National Reading Panel, (2000 p. 5-14). They stated also that "There was little research on how teachers can be supported over the long term to ensure sustained implementation of new methods and student achievement " (National Reading Panel, (2000 p. 5-2)

PART II – METHODOLOGY

This part gives a brief description of the methodology used in the baseline study, i.e. information about the aims of the study, conceptual framework, indicators for the study, used instruments, sample, and collecting, processing and analysis of data.

Starting from the intention to monitor the quality of the implementation of approaches to numeracy in the Project on *Literacy in the Early Grades*, as well as of the results achieved by students, it was necessary to provide relevant information about the baseline state before starting the project activities. In order to provide such information, we selected a methodological approach based on the following principles:

1. Focus on the need for information related to evaluation of the project goals and the impact of the project activities;
2. Providing basis for longitudinal monitoring and evaluation of the performance;
3. Providing data which could be used in planning and managing subsequent project activities;
4. Providing adequate base for making subsequent judgments and decisions for achieving better results, and especially at the outcomes and impact;
5. Opportunities for replicable data in subsequent measuring, and
6. Rationality from the aspect of timeline, human resources and budget.

We used the quantitative and the qualitative approach and appropriate instruments in the study.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

We conducted the study prior to starting the training of teachers from the project schools. On the basis of the goal of the Project: *to raise the level of knowledge and skills of teachers for teaching literacy in order to improve students' achievements, the intention of this study is to provide relevant information about the baseline state which, together with the subsequent monitoring and the evaluation of the project activities, would serve as a basis in measuring the impact of the project – better quality instruction and higher achievements of students.*

The objectives of this study are: ce:

1. To provide information about the baseline state of mother tongue' teachers concerning:
 - ▶ their attitudes to teaching and learning reading comprehension and teaching and learning writing, and
 - ▶ their methods, i. pedagogical content knowledge relevant for the instruction of *Literacy in the Early Grades*.
2. To provide information about students' achievements at the end of Grade 3 on the items on reading comprehension and writing.
3. To plan the activities for improving the teaching of mother tongue at school level.
4. To assess the specific needs for training.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the research of the baseline state, on the bases of the previous surveys of factors that have considerable impact on students, we decided to examine the ongoing state of the projects schools and the difference between the project and the non-projects schools in relation to:

Teacher related factors

- ▶ Pedagogical knowledge in teaching mother tongue
- ▶ Attitudes towards learning mother tongue and to the pedagogical approaches in teaching reading and writing
- ▶ Expectations from students in the field of reading and writing
- ▶ Familiarity with curricula
- ▶ Training of teachers to use specific methods in teaching reading and writing in the early grades

Factors related to socio-economic environment

- ▶ Parental education
- ▶ Number of books at home
- ▶ Habits at home related to reading and writing
- ▶ Foreknowledge of students prior to beginning to go to school in Grade 1

Factors related to school environment

- ▶ Mutual support of the staff of the school
- ▶ The equipment of the school and of the classrooms for the teaching of mother tongue

In addition to that, the familiarity and the comitment of the managing staff towards the project - *Literacy in the Early Grades* as were examined also. More concrete:

- ▶ The satisfaction with the ongoing state in the teaching and in the achievemnts in mother tongue
- ▶ The activities to improve the teaching of mother tongue
- ▶ The support to teachers in teaching mother tongue
- ▶ Familiarity and preparedness to support the Project activities.

3. INDICATORS

We defined the indicators, given below, specially for this investigation, on the basis of the Project and they were measured in the course of conducting the study.

I 1 – Teachers’ current understanding of learning and teaching students and the compatibility with the way of teaching based on the principles of learning in the project *Literacy in the Early Grades (Understanding of learning and teaching mother tongue)*³

- ▶ Attitudes towards learning mother tongue and towards teaching based on principles of the *Literacy in the Early Grades*.
- ▶ Pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in accordance with the approach to the *Literacy in the Early Grades*.
- ▶ Teachers’ expectations concerning the achievements of their students in reading comprehension and writing.
- ▶ Familiarity with mother tongue curricula (Macedonian language, i.e. Albanian language) in the next cycles of primary education.

I 2 – Support to the teaching of mother tongue by the school management staff (Support to the changes in the teaching of mother tongue)

1. To what extent the school principals and the representatives of the professional service (pedagogues, psychologists)
 - ▶ are satisfied with the teaching of mother tongue, especially in the grade teaching cycle;
 - ▶ are satisfied with the achievements in reading comprehension and writing in the grade teaching cycle (in comparison with achievements in reading and writing in similar schools and compared to the expectations designed in the curriculum).
2. Support given to teachers in the instruction of mother tongue.
3. Equipment with specific teaching aids for the instruction of mother tongue.
4. Readiness of the school principals and the representatives of the professional services to support new approaches in the teaching of mother tongue.

I 3 - Achievements of students

Students’ achievements on a test in reading comprehension and on a test in writing, consisted of items measuring understanding of a text, vocabulary, decoding and word analysis, as well as the phonological sense, the use of orthography and the needed vocabulary.

³ The indicators are given as formulated in the Logical Framework of the investigation (supplement 1) and the shortened names that are later used in the text are given in brackets.

4. METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

In accordance with the defined indicators, the following sources and methods of collecting data were used in his survey:

▶ **Teachers' survey**

We collected data about the current pedagogical content knowledge of teachers about the teaching and learning early literacy, their understanding of reading and writing, as well as about their attitudes how reading and writing in early grades have to be taught. A test composed of vignettes (short descriptions) of teaching situations related to language literacy in early grades and a scale of attitudes on initial literacy were administered. We administered a questionnaire to collect data about the teaching practice, the knowledge of curriculum and the training of teachers in using interactive approaches in teaching students in reading and writing.

All the three instruments were technically arranged as a questionnaire for teachers, which required about 50 minutes to be answered.

▶ **Assessment of students' literacy**

We collected data about students' knowledge and skills, acquired by the end of Grade 3 in reading comprehension and writing, using specially designed tests administered at the beginning of Grade 4. Also, we collected data about the habits in the families of the tested students concerning literacy and students' literacy prior to starting grade 1.

The two tests and a short questionnaire were placed in a test-booklet. About 45 minutes were needed to answer each test. The tests were administered separately in two successive days. At the end of the second day students we also asked to give answers to the questionnaire.

▶ **Survey of school principals and representatives of the professional service (pedagogues and psychologists)**

Data about the state in the teaching of mother tongue, the support to teachers in carrying out the teaching, the equipment as well as the familiarity and the conduct of the managing staff to the project, were collected by the school principals and professional workers. Specially designed questions and scales of attitudes were put forward in an instrument – a Questionnaire for school principals and professional workers, which required about 20 minutes to be answered.

Using a specially developed protocol, we collected *data about the schools*, the size of the school and about the structure of parental education.

The majority of the collected data are qualitative, in order to enable making objective comparisons between the project schools and the non-project ones, prior to

starting with project activities, as well as for subsequent comparisons during the course of the Project.

A brief description of the content of each of the instruments is described below. More detailed information about the instruments are given in Appendix 5.

Instrument	Brief description
Questionnaire for teachers	<p>The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 4 parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The first part contained a scale of attitudes of Linkert type, which measures the acceptance of teaching and learning according to the principals of the project <i>the Language Literacy in the Early Grades</i>. It contained 44 statements and for each one of them it was required to denote the degree of agreement on a 5 degree scale. 38 statements were taken into consideration in the processing, and 8 were dropped because of their low discriminativity. ▶ The second part contained 13 vignets (taeching situations) used to examine the pedagogical and methods of teachers in teaching in the early grades. 7 of the tasks were clusters (with 3 to 8 questions), and in 8 questions the best answer was required. ▶ The third part contained a scale of attitudes related to the expectations from students concerning reading and writing at the end of Grade 3, and 5 clustar questions about the teaching of mother tongue in the school. ▶ The last 4 questions required data about the education and the experience of the examinees.
Test for students	<p>The test for students contained 6 tasks (24 requirements) which measure knowledge and abiiities in the following domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reading – 4 tasks (13 requirements) ▶ Writing - 2 tasks (11 requirements) <p>using 13 requirements with selection of one of the offered answers, 2 with short answers and 2 with open-ended tasks which required explication of opinion or attitudes of students, and an essay type task (writing a brief composition upon given words).</p> <p>The test was structured in three parts: 1. Teast in reading test, 2. Test in writing and 3. Questionnaire about the students and his/her family. The questionnaire contained 8 questions.</p>
Questionnaire for school principals and representatives of the professional service	<p>The questionnaire for the managment team in school contained 15 questions divided into 2 groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A group of 4 questions and 4 scales of attitudes, which referred to the teaching of mother tongue in the school, and ▶ A group of 7 questions related to the familiarity and preparedness to give support to teachers in project schools.
Protocol	<p>We used the protocol to collect information from each school about the number of classes and students in Grades 1 through 5 (the new), and data about parental education of Grade 4 students.</p>

Prior to developing the final version of the scale of attitudes in the teaching of language literacy it was content validated in the group of future trainers for the program. The tsts for students were checked on students in one project school which was not included in the sample. On the bases of the obtained evidence, adequate adaptations of instruments were made.

5. SAMPLE

5.1. Selection of schools

One of the research challenges was to identify two samples – one for the project schools and one for the non-project ones. The population of the project schools consisted of 33 schools, which took part in the Project upon applying to an open competition for teachers – as subsequent trainers in the Project. It shows that the project schools are not the representative of the entire population of schools in the country, nevertheless, the project, by the end, has an aim to cover all the schools in the country. We had a dilemma, to measure the starting state with a representative sample of schools, teachers and students at national level and in that way to provide highly reliable basis for comparing the effects where all the schools would be included, or to develop a sample comparative (parallel) to the starting project sample, which would provide more reliable comparing of effects from the project activities in the course of the Project and indicators for intervention during its implementation, but finally we decided to choose the second approach. So, two comparable cluster samples were selected:

1. Sample of project schools and
2. Sample of non-project schools

In developing the sample of project schools, care was taken that it should represent the population of primary schools in the country in relation to:

- ▶ geographical coverage;
- ▶ location of schools (urban – rural) and
- ▶ language of instruction (Macedonian - Albanian).

15 project schools were selected. Due to the limited number of project schools and their characteristics concerning the mentioned factors (the larger part are urban and with Macedonian language of instruction), they could provisionally be considered as a representative sample related to the entire populations.

Then, we deliberately made a selection of parallel schools, taking into consideration that they be identical concerning the geographical coverage (from same urban and rural places) and the language of instruction, and similar according to the social background of students (which was later checked by their parental education) with that of the project schools.

The sample of schools is given in the following table:

Table 1. Sample of schools according to language of instruction and the geographical coverage of settlements

Geographical coverage	Project schools			Non-project schools			Total
	Macedonian	Albanian	Mixed	Macedonian	Albanian	Mixed	
Urban	8	1	2	8	0	2	21
Rural	1	3	0	1	4	0	9
Total	9	4	2	9	4	2	30

In order to provide comparison of the changes in the course of the Project, samples were compared in relation to parental education of children in the grade teaching cycle.

Table 2. Education of mothers in project schools and in non-project schools

Education of mother	Project schools				Non-project schools			
	Macedonian		Albanian		Macedonian		Albanian	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Not-completed primary	25	3	6	2	26	4	8	4
Primary education	54	8	275	72	75	11	163	79
Secondary education	417	57	57	15	387	57	31	15
Higher and university	230	32	43	11	188	28	4	2
Total	676	100	381	100	676	100	206	100

Table 3. Education of fathers⁴ of students in project and in non-project schools

Education of father	Project schools				Non-project schools			
	Macedonian		Albanian		Macedonian		Albanian	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Not-completed primary	14	2	2	1	12	2	5	2
Primary education	57	8	246	54	74	11	148	72
Secondary education	475	66	79	21	455	67	32	16
Higher and university	173	24	54	14	132	20	21	10
Total	719	100	381	100	673	100	206	100

⁴ The total number of mothers and fathers differs due to the fact that data about those students who live with one of the parent were collected only for that parent.

There are no significant differences in parental education in the project and the non-project schools with Macedonian language of instruction, as well as in the project and non-project schools with Albanian language of instruction. Parental education in the schools with Albanian language of instruction is considerably lower than that of the parents of children in schools with Macedonian language of instruction (both in project and in non-project schools).

5.2. Selection of students

In each of the sampled schools, 20 students from Grade 4 were selected and did the test on reading with understanding, and the same 20 students did the test on writing. The students, at the beginning of Grade 4, were the population closest to the target group which is expected to demonstrate most evidently the impact of the program (by the end of Grade 3). The survey was conducted on a total of 574 students. The number of tested students is lower than the planned one, due to the fact that some schools were small and the total number of students in Grade 4 was less than 20.

5.3. Selection of teachers

In each of the schools, 10 teachers from the grade teaching cycle were selected by random sample. In cases where the total number of teachers in the school was less than 10, then the sample used to include all the teachers from the grade teaching cycle. The population of the grade teachers is the one that will undergo training and carry out instruction in the first cycle of primary education.

The survey was conducted on a total of 295 teachers from 18 municipalities. The number of teachers from project and from non-project schools was equally distributed, i.e. (49.5%) were from the project schools, while 149 (50.5%) from the non-project ones; 72.9% are from urban places, while the remaining 27.1% were from rural areas.

The majority of the examinees (83.1%) were females, 15.9% were males, while 1% did not respond to the question about their sex. This disbalance was expected taking into consideration the fact that the majority of grade teachers are females.

Concerning the type of education, the majority of them (56.9%) are graduates at the Pedagogical faculty (professor of grade teaching), 19.3% completed higher (two year) post secondary educations for grade teaching, 6.8% are graduate pedagogues, 4.7% professors of pre-school education – graduated at the Pedagogical faculty and only 2.7% professors of pre-school education with completed higher education. (9.5% did not respond to the question about their level of education.)

The majority of the examinees (31.2%) have working experience of 5-15 years, 25.1% having 16-25 years, 23.7% having 26-35 years, 11.5% having up to 5 years and 5.4% over 36 working experience as teachers.

A rather high number of examinees were, before this, included in projects on modernization of teaching. Namely, 75.3% - in the project Active Teaching, and 52.5% - in the project Step-by-Step. There are no significant differences between those taking part in these projects from project and from non-project schools.

5.4. Selection of school principals and professional workers (pedagogues and psychologists)

The sample of the school management staff from the project schools consisted of the school principal and one representative of the professional workers (pedagogue or psychologist). Processed were the data from the questionnaire for school principals and the representatives from the professional service, administered on a total of 30 examinees, i.e.:

- ▶ 14 school principals and 1 deputy school principal
- ▶ 15 representatives from the professional service.

More than 2/3 of the examinees were females. According to the age structure, the largest was the number of examinees (13) with working experience between 10 and 20 years, and 8 examinees had working experience of over 31 years. According to the type of education, 6 examinees were trained to teach in the grade teaching cycle, 6 to teach in the subject teaching cycle, 15 were university graduates of pedagogy or psychology, 1 examinee – stated – other type, and 2 examinees did not respond.

6. DATA COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

Collection of data was done by selected advisers from the Bureau for Development of Education, who were part of the advisers involved in the project - *Language Literacy in the Early Grades* and two advisers included in the project – *Thinking Mathematics in Grades 1, 2, and 3*, who had experience from the study on mathematics' literacy. They went through a one-day training⁵, at which were agreed the deadlines about the administration of the tests for students and the questionnaires for teachers, the school principal and the professional workers.

Collection of data began on October 25, and ended on November 10, 2010.

The answers to the open questions and to the tests for students were examined by trained examiners (one for Macedonian language and one for Albanian language) who have experience in marking language tests.

After the collection of data, we did the coding of the filled-in instruments and the input of data. Data were entered into Excel program, and were processed by using:

- ▶ TIA plus program, for the tests for teachers and students, which checked the psychometric characteristics of the tests and the scales of attitudes for learning and teaching reading and writing, and enabled making comparison between project and non-project schools in relation to the results of the tests and on scale of attitudes, and
- ▶ SPSS program was used to process the answers to the questionnaires and for the school managers, and in making comparisons between the answers in the questionnaires from project and non-project schools.

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in relation to the defined indicators, by using topic analysis.

⁵ Appendix 2 are the guidelines for the researchers developed for this training.

PART III - OUTCOMES

Part three presents the data obtained from the survey. They are presented according to the defined indicators. The data represent a cross-cut of the state of the relevant factors in monitoring the effects of the program in the project and the non-project schools, and they could serve well for subsequent longitudinal monitoring. They are an indicator of the starting state, but due to the limitations of the sample, they cannot be generalized for the entire population.

I 1. UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNING AND OF TEACHING

The current understanding of how pupils learn to read and write, and how teachers should teach reading and writing to students in the early grades, was examined using three instruments. A brief description of each of them, and the results obtained from the survey, are given below.

1.1. Attitudes of teachers to learning and teaching reading and writing based on the instructive framework for language literacy

METHOD OF MEASURING

Attitudes of teachers were measured by a Linkert's scale containing a total of 36 statements:

- ▶ 15 statements related to understanding how children learn to read and write
- ▶ 28 statements describing approaches to teaching learning and writing

Statements were formulated to express acceptance attitude related to the principles in instructional framework in the project Literacy in Early Grades or opposite to some of these principles. Each principle is presented with 3-4 statements.

Examinees were asked to denote the degree of agreement with each statement at the 5 point scale (from 1 – I don't agree at all, up to 5 – I fully agree).

Results are presented by mean of the degree of acceptance by all the teachers, and separately by the teachers in the project and non-project schools. Special comments are given to statements which to a higher or lower degree are accepted in relation to the other statements.

- ▶ Generally speaking, the examined teachers were inclined to accept statements that describe acquisition of skills for reading and writing in accordance with the understanding of learning in the language Literacy in the Early Grades and the practice adjusted to the principles of learning mother tongue. The Mean (M) for the entire sample is 126 which is considerably above the theoretical M = 108, which might be interpreted as an indefinite attitude. Certain inclination to the positive part is expected due to the fact that the pedagogical knowledge of teachers, and particularly that acquired during the complementary training⁶ enables them to recognise which approaches are professionally more acceptable, as well as the tendency of teachers to be shown in a positive light.⁷
- ▶ Teachers from project and non-project schools do not differ in the degree of accepting the statements in the scale of attitudes on learning and teaching reading and writing. The average degree of accepting approaches adjusted to the principles in the two groups (M=126) is above the theoretical average value of the scale.
- ▶ Teachers teaching in urban and rural schools do not differ considerably in the degree of accepting the statements in the scale of attitudes for learning and teaching reading and writing, neither do the teachers teaching in Macedonian or in Albanian language.
- ▶ Due to the fact that the number of statements related to learning of reading and writing was small – a total of 8 they did not represent the scale which reliably measures the attitude related to the fact how children learn reading and writing, nor were made any processings related to how children learn reading and writing, but the instrument was treated as one scale.

The average degree of accepting at the majority of statements (22) is at or above the theoretical average (3.00 on a scale from 1-5). With 14 statements, the average degree of accepting is between 2 and 3, and neither of them was accepted with smaller average value of 2. The descriptions of the statements that were at an average less accepted are given below.

The most characteristic statements, that are not in accordance with the approaches based on the principles for the program – *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*, with which both the teachers from the project and from non-project schools agreed, refer to:

- ▶ the opinion that the extent of the program/curriculum does not allow using a differentiated approach⁸;
- ▶ the limitation to the selection of texts in learning reading;

6 More than ¾ of the teachers responded that they had been trained in some of the projects promoting similar approaches as those in *Language Literacy in the Early Grades* and *Linking Mathematics*, (see page 29 in this Report)

7 Almost all the surveys (for. ex. TIMSS, PIRLS, The National Assessment) confirm the expressed inclination of teachers in the country to give socially preferable answers.

8 A brief description of the content of the statement is given here. The exact formulations are not given for the reason that they might be used later in the scale of the Project.

- ▶ the opportunity for using group work in learning reading and writing, and the preparedness to respect the experience with the learning and writing with which children begin to go to school.

The smaller degree of accepting these statements points to the tendency toward a more traditional approach in teaching reading and writing.

Teachers from project and non-project schools agree to a large degree with the statements describing their style of teaching as an instruction in which:

- ▶ life experiences of children and simulations of living situations are used;
- ▶ reading and writing is learned via all of the teaching subjects;
- ▶ insist to adjust the work to the individual needs of students;
- ▶ mistakes made by students are analyzed and feedback information is given, and
- ▶ there is self-assessment and peer assessment.

Such approaches are in accordance with the program – *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The fact that there are no statistically significant differences found between the teachers from the project schools and those from the non-project schools concerning the understanding how children learn to read and write, and how teachers teach them, will enable easier monitoring of eventual changes during the Project.
- ▶ The high degree of agreement with the statements describing teaching adjusted to the principles promoted by the program – *Language Literacy in the Early Grades* narrows the possibility to identify changes in the attitudes of teachers as a result of the trainings in the program.
- ▶ The results point out that there is understanding about the importance of using the experiences from children and about creating stimulating situations in learning reading and writing; reading and writing ought to be studied not only through the teaching of mother tongue but also through the other teaching subjects and that the formative assessment in teaching is also important. But, they also point out to the already known weaknesses in the teaching practice, such teaching which is to a too large extent dictated by the programs, and the uneasiness in adapting the programs towards students' learning, the limited stock of texts that are used in teaching reading and writing. That evidence might be used to pay larger attention during the implementation of the Project.

1.2. Methodical and pedagogical knowledge of teachers

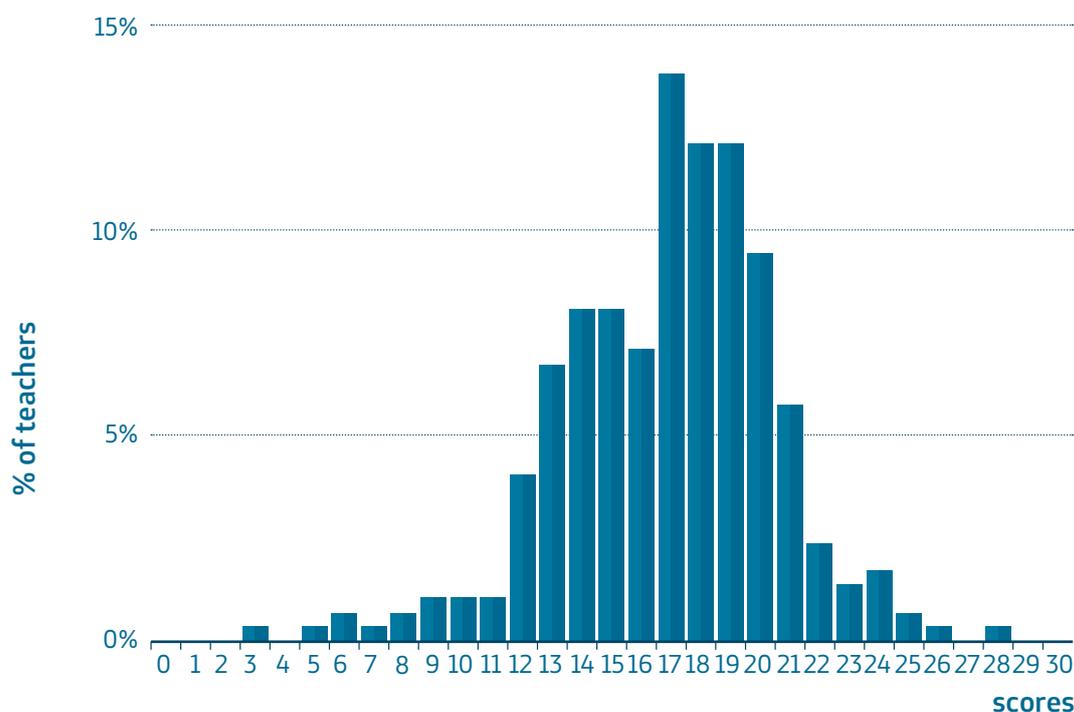
METHOD OF MEASURING

Methods and pedagogical knowledge of teachers were measured by a Test for Teachers which consisted of 13 teaching situations (vignettes). The vignettes describe situations related to teaching of reading and writing in which the teacher could behave adequately to the approach promoted in the program *Language Literacy in the Early Grades* or inadequately (traditionally).

For 7 situations, the teacher is asked to estimate which of the offered teaching procedures are methodically adequate (for each of them, alternatives are given: yes, no, I am not sure), and for 6, the teacher is asked to select the most adequate one out of the offered methods reactions.

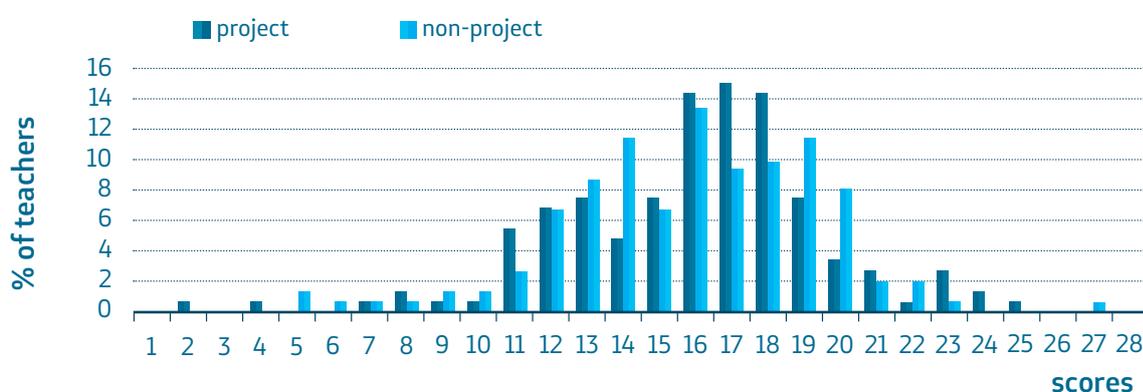
1.2.1. General achievements of teachers in the test on methodical and pedagogical knowledge

The maximum number of scores at the test on methods and pedagogical knowledge was 36. The average result of **all teachers** at the test was a score of 16,9, i.e. the average percent of correct answers was 46,94%. The lowest achieved result on the test is a score of 3, and the highest is a score of 28 бода, achieved by one student only. The largest percent of the examined teachers (38,3%) have a score of 17-19 бода, which is a result around the Mean of the test (18). The achievements on the test have normal distribution, with answers very much concentrated in the middle, and the highest scores of 29 – 36, were not achieved.



Graph 1. Results of all the teachers on the test in methods and pedagogical knowledge

- ▶ The average result on the test, by the **teachers in the project schools** is 16.96, i.e. the average percent of correct answers is 47,1%. The lowest achieved score is 3, and the highest score is 26, by one teacher only. The largest is the percent of teachers (about 15%) that have a result of 17, 18 or 19 scores.
- ▶ The average result of the teachers **from the project schools** is 16,84, i. e , the average percent of corrected answers is 46,77%. The lowest number of achieved scores is 6, and the highest score is 28, achieved by one teacher only. The largest is the percent of teachers (10% -11%) who have 15, 18, 18, 19 or 20 scores.
- ▶ The average achievements of teachers from project and from non-project schools do not differ. There are certain differences in the distribution of the achieved scores. The are presented in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Scores of teachers from project and from non-project schools in the test on methods and pedagogical knowledge

- ▶ The average achievements of teachers in urban schools (17,7 scores) are higher than those of the teachers in rural schools (14,8 scores). Also, the average achievements of teachers teaching in Macedonian language (17,76 scores) are higher than the achievements of teachers reaching in Albanian language (15,21 scores).

1.2.2. Answers to particular teaching situations

The results on the test in methods and pedagogical knowledge of teachers from project and from non-project schools, for each teaching situation in the test, are presented in the following graphs.

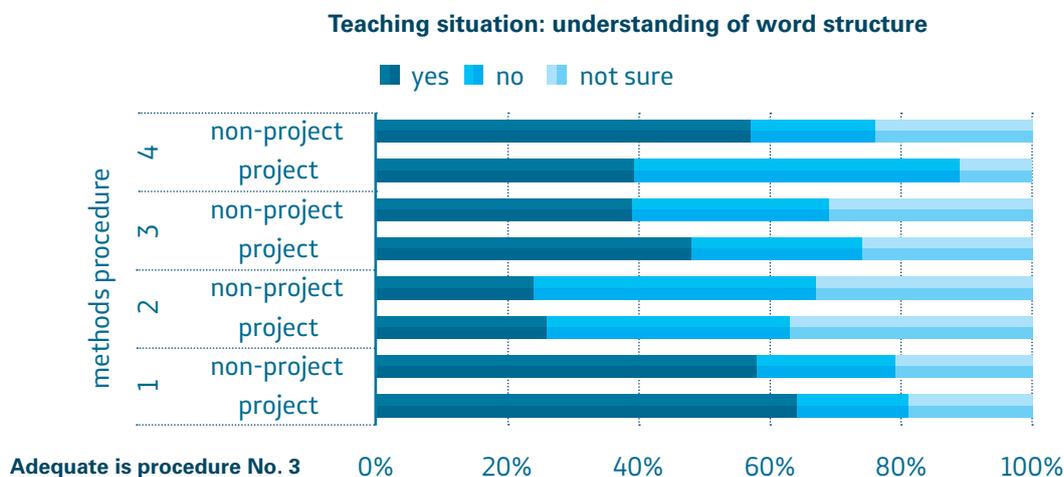
Table 4 gives the descriptions of the requirements in the tasks and the relationship with the principles promoted with the program – *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*. The number of the requirement in the table corresponds to the number of the requirement in Graphs 3 -7.

Table 4. Relationship of the requirements of the Test on pedagogical knowledge with the principles

Teaching situation	Tasks	Description of the requirement	Principle
1	1 - 4	Choice of approach in teaching understanding words via breaking down words - 4 approaches are offered, approach 3 is adequate	Focus on developing language structures
2	5 - 8	Choice of procedures for developing critical thinking - 4 approaches are offered, approach 4 is adequate	Inducing students to express opinion
3	9 - 12	Choice of procedure improving writing - 4 approaches are offered, approach 4 is adequate	Using various teaching strategies
4	13 - 18	Estimate of the potentials of a teaching approach in reading - 6 approaches are offered, approaches 1, 2, 3 and 5 are adequate	Using various teaching strategies
5	19 - 23	Estimate of the adequacy of various questions about the age of children - 5 approaches are offered, all approaches are adequate	Providing various teaching activities
6	24 - 27	Choice of procedures to overcome difficulties in reading - 4 approaches are offered, approaches 2 and 3 are adequate	Using various teaching strategies
7	28 - 30	Estimate of adequacy of a teaching strategy for a particular age - 3 approaches are offered, all are adequate	Using various teaching strategies
8	31	Choice of the most adequate reaction to a situation – not planned situation related to students' interests	Upgrading students' current knowledge
9	32	Choice of the most adequate feed-back information	Formative assessment
10	33	Choice of the most adequate feed-back information	Formative assessment
11	34	Choice of the best strategy for understanding	Asking students to explain strategies in reading
12	35	Choice of the best strategy for improving writing	Using various teaching strategies
13	36	Choice of the best strategy for improving writing	Using various teaching strategies

Teaching situation 1 – Understanding words' structure

There is no significant difference in the choice of the most adequate methods strategy for understanding the words' structure between teachers from project and from non-project schools.



Graph 3. Teachers' answers about the choice of adequate procedure for understanding the words' structure

Below, as an illustration, is given the task and the percentage of teachers that selected each of the possible options. The correct answers are marked with darkened numbers. The sum of the percents is less than 100, because of the unanswered items, which is not included in the table.

Task

The teacher together with her students were engaged in reading a topic in Social Studies on economy. In the text they were faced with the word **export (carry out)**. Some of the children did not know the meaning of that word. The teacher tried to help them by breaking down the word into its elements that have certain meaning.

Which one of the following examples is used in this approach when facing the word export (carry out)?

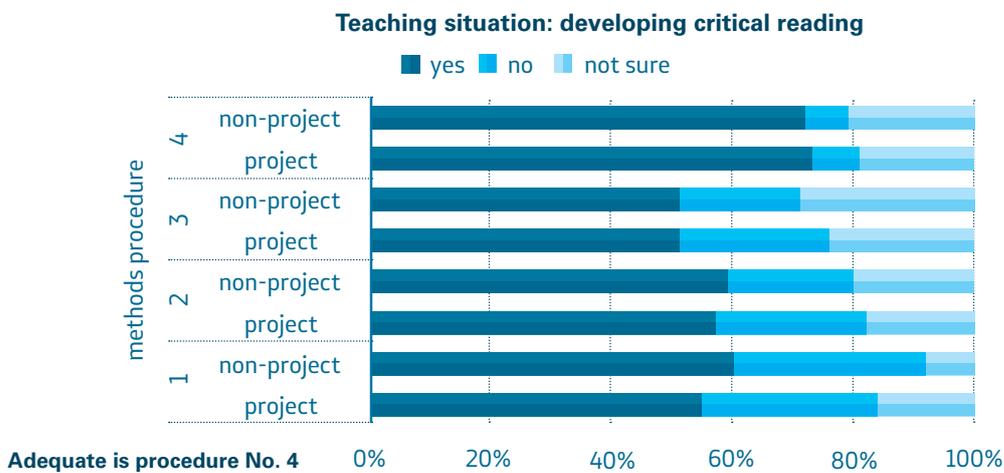
Encircle adequate to Your opinion for EACH ONE of the statements

	Yes	No	Not sure
A) Students look for in a dictionary of unknown words and try to find what the word export means.	61	19	15
B) Students do a crossword containing the word export and other words included in the text.....	25	40	26
C) Students develop a small map with family of words that have the word port (carry, drive) in the stem such as <i>import, driving, driver</i>	43	28	21
D) Students compose their own sentences in which they use the word export	64	14	15

Only 43% of teachers selected the strategy that enables to understand the word via breaking it down to elements that have meaning, and which is required by the task. The responses A and C, which were most often selected, help in understanding the words, but not via their breaking down into parts that have meaning. The responses point out that the majority of teachers have neither read well the task nor are familiar with the strategy that is adequate to the example.

Teaching situation 2 – Development of critical reading

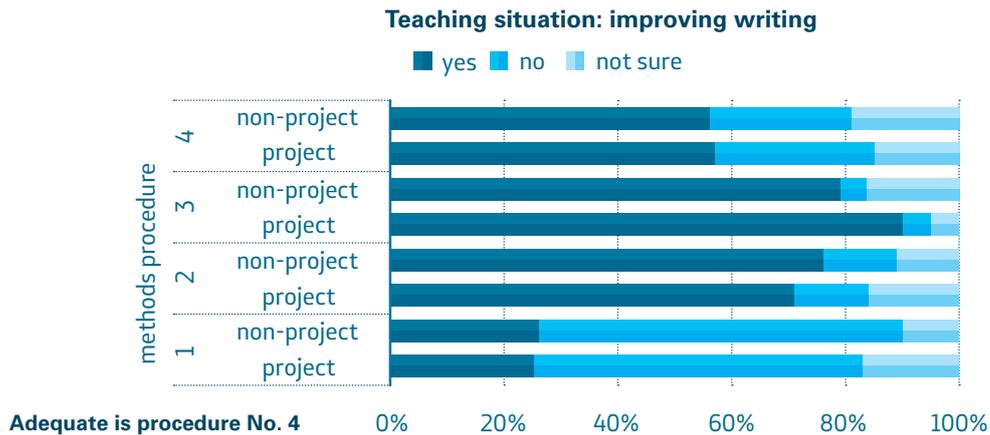
Adequate methods procedure was selected by 3/4 of teachers. However, more than half of teachers consider as adequate other procedures, as well, which in fact are not adequate. There is no significant difference in the selection of the most adequate strategy for the development of critical reading between teachers from the project and from the non-project schools.



Graph 4. Teachers’ answers about the selection of adequate procedure for development of critical reading

Teaching situation 3 – Improving writing

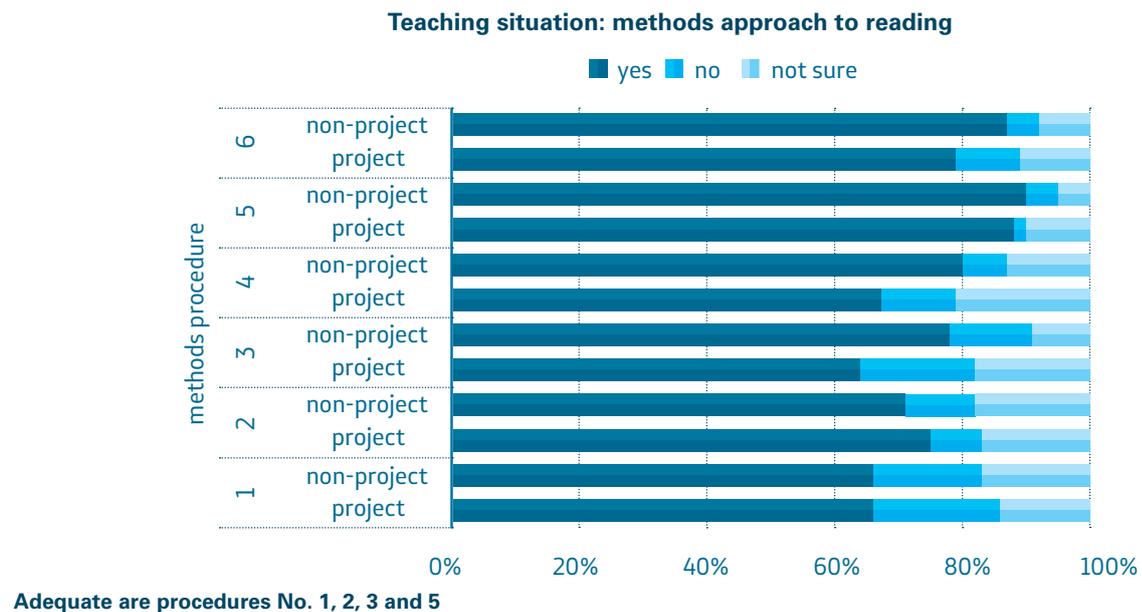
Most often, the adequate procedure for improving writing, is not selected, although it is considered as an adequate one. More selected were other methods procedures which in fact are more general – and are not specifically linked to the described teaching situation. There is no significant difference in the selection of the most adequate methods strategy for improving writing, between the teachers from the project and the non-project schools.



Graph 5. Teachers' answers about the selection of adequate procedure for improving writing

Teaching situation 4 - Methodical approach to reading

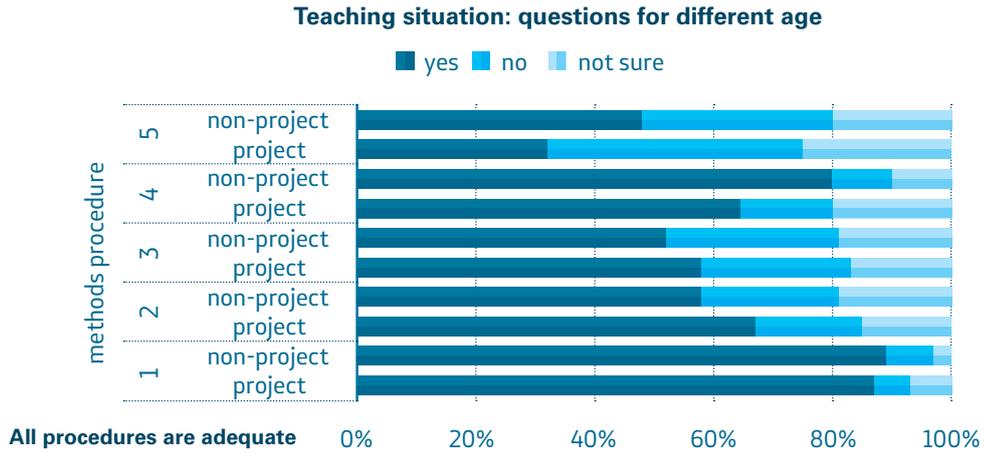
In a situation when an estimate was to be made about the contribution of the presented methods procedure, teachers, both from project and non-project schools, show a tendency to estimate the potentials of a concrete procedure or, said in other words, can not associate it with the specific objectives of reading.



Graph 6. Teachers' answers to a procedure for teaching reading

Teaching situation 5 - Questions for different age

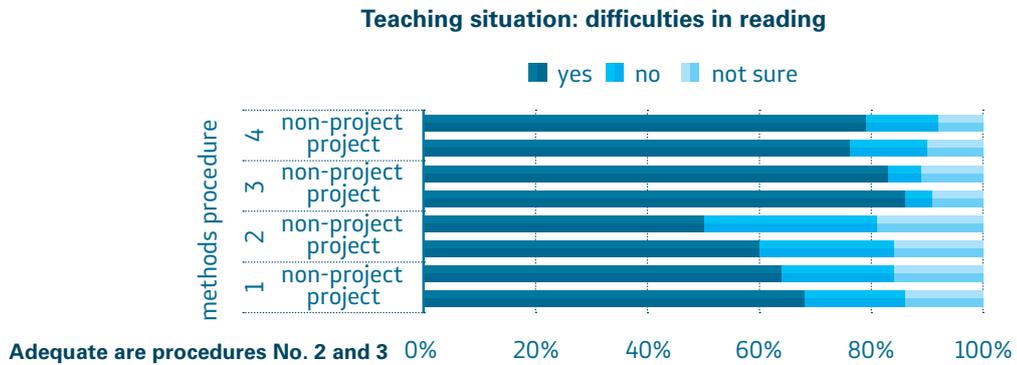
The teaching situation requires to estimate the adequacy of the questions with different complexity for Grade 1 students. The first, second and third questions refer to drawing facts, and the remaining for making conclusions and predictions. It can be seen from the answers that there is a tendency of teachers to consider the questions about making conclusions and predictions as inadequate for Grade 1 children.



Graph 7. Teachers' answers about the adequacy of the questions for a particular age of students

Teaching situation 6 – Difficulties in reading

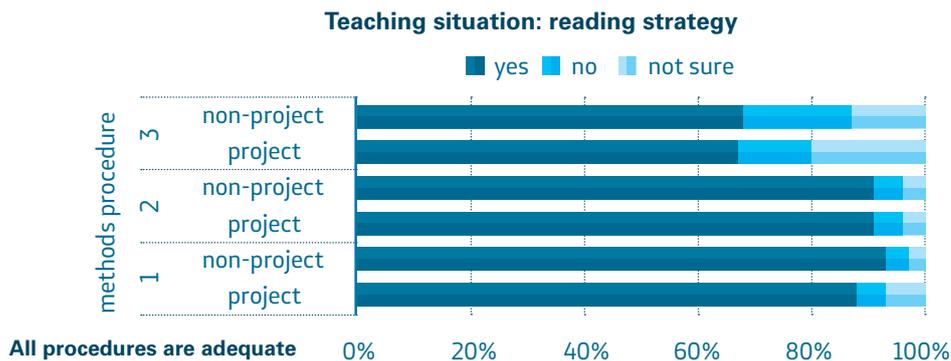
The teaching situation required to select adequate methods procedures for overcoming a specific situation with difficulties in reading. The procedure that is least selected is in fact the most adequate one for a specific situation. Others are more traditional, where the procedures 1 and 4 are not adequate for the described situation. There are no differences between the teachers from the project and the non-project schools in the answers to this task.



Graph 8. Teachers' answers to the selection of procedure for teaching reading

Teaching strategy 7 – Strategy for reading

Teachers from project and non-project schools had no dilemmas about the adequacy of the procedure – the teacher reads aloud for Grade 1 and 2 students, but about a third of them are not sure or consider that it is not adequate for Grade 3. Such answers are a result of the current practice. According to the approaches in the *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*, this strategy is adequate for all the three grades, and even for the upper ones.



Graph 9. Teachers' answers about the adequacy of the methods procedure for teaching reading at different age

Below is given the task, as was presented in the Questionnaire for teachers, together with the percentage of teachers' answers⁹.

Task

At a meeting of the grade teachers' staff in a school a discussion is going on about improving the teaching of reading. There are different opinions about it, in which grades it is adequate that the teacher reads aloud the text to the children. What is your opinion about this?

Encircle ONE of the answers adequately to Your opinion

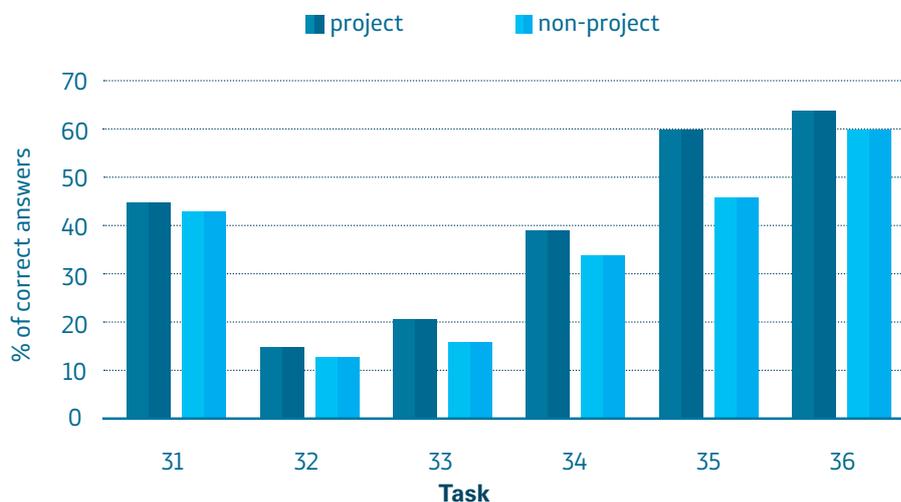
	Yes	No	Not sure
A) Is adequate for Grade 1	91	5	2
B) Is adequate for Grade 2	91	5	2
C) Is adequate for Grade 3	68	16	12

In the teachers' answers to the first 7 teaching situations, in which each of the offered procedures requires to estimate whether it is adequate to the requirement (yes or no) or to denote that they are not sure, (which in the processing was considered as a not correct answer – not knowing whether certain procedure is methodically adequate to the situation), one could notice a tendency that all of the offered procedures are considered as not adequate. Of course, all methods procedures were selected from the teaching practice, but it was expected that teachers would point to them as adequate only those that are specific for the requirement. This shows that a large number of teachers in their teaching do not select methods procedures adequate to concrete situations in the teaching, but use a particular similar stock of methods procedures in almost every situation. Depending on the teaching situation and the offered methods procedures between 5% and 33% did not select the answer "I am not sure", which is in favour to the previously stated assumption.

⁹ The remaining percent up to 100% relates to the teachers that did not give an answer to the question.

Teaching situations 8 - 13

The next Graph shows the given answers to 8 teaching situations which required to select the most adequate one of the offered methods procedures. In Table 4, the description of the teaching situations is given.



Graph 10. Teachers' answers for selection of most adequate methods procedures

Task 31, referred to a situation which required to make use of children's interests. Less than half of the teachers from the project and non-project schools considered that it was adequate to change the planning and to make use of the situation.

Very small number of teachers were able to select the most adequate feed-back information (task 32) or a strategy that requires improving the correctness of reading via giving direction to the consideration whether the read text had any sense (task 33).

The teaching situation that required the most adequate procedure for learning of making comparison (task 34) appeared to be a complex one for the teachers and less than half of them selected the adequate strategy.

Tasks 35 and 36 referred to teaching situations that required adequate procedures for improving the phonemic awareness and reading speed to which here with us more attention is paid and probably because of it, they were somehow easier for the teachers.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ Teachers from project and non-project schools do not differ in the achievements on the test in methods and pedagogical knowledge. It would enable simple measuring of the changes under the influence of the training in the Project.
- ▶ It seems that many of the teaching procedures, that are appropriate to the principles of the *Labguage Literacy in the Early Grades*, are new for the teachers and they do not recognize them as the most adequate ones in particular teaching situations.
- ▶ Methods procedure selected by teachers, are not often specific for the teaching situation. This issue is to be addressed during the training.

1.3. Expectations from children related to reading and writing

The third part of the questionnaire covered topics related to teachers' attitudes and experiences referring to the teaching of mother tongue (Macedonian and Albanian). The idea is to see whether the teachers from project and non-project schools differ considerably on particular opinions, experiences and practice, in order to estimate the eventual progress of the first ones after administering the project.

METHOD OF MEASURING

Attitudes and experiences of the teachers about the teaching of mother tongue were measured by an instrument consisting of a scale of attitudes, concerning the expectations from the students related to reading and writing at the end of Grade 3, and 5 cluster questions about the teaching of mother tongue in the school.

Namely, the importance of acquiring particular knowledge and skills by students, the types of materials which are used in the teaching, the familiarity with curricula for mother tongue instruction in upper grades, the perception of the degree of rigidity/flexibility of curricula) were measured also.

Furthermore, it contained issues related to the degree of cooperation and giving support together with colleagues and the professional service in carrying out the teaching as well as in making estimate of the need for training about particular aspects of teaching mother tongue.

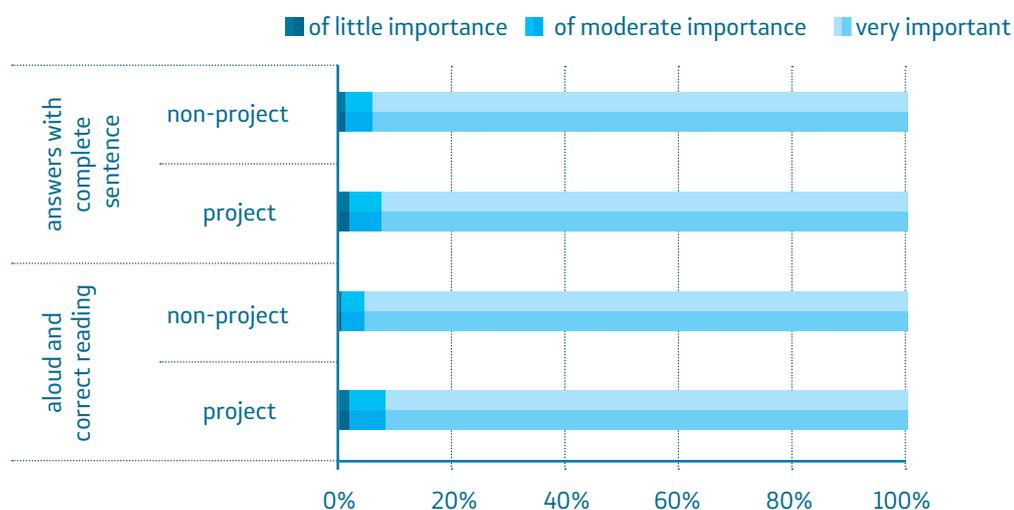
At the end teachers were asked about the teaching aids that they have in the classrooms, and are used in the teaching of mother tongue.

In the analysis given below, the teachers from project and non-project schools were compared on each question, and the stated differences are statistically significant at a level of 0.05.

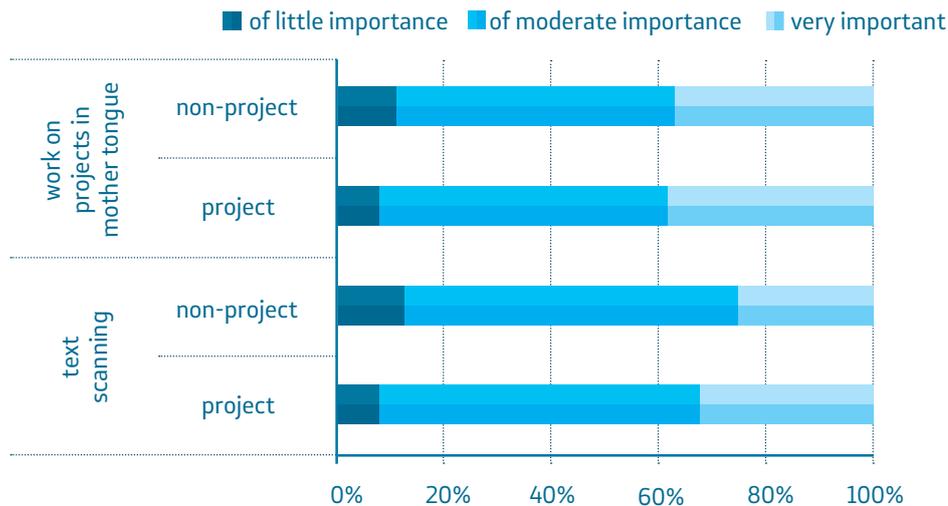
1.3.1. Knowledge and skills that are to be acquired by students in Grade 3

The instruction to a large extent was lead by an implicit teaching program implemented by the teacher, i.e. how he/she understands the teaching aims and what importance he/she places on them. The opinion of the teachers about the importance of concrete knowledgde and skills that the students ought to acquire by Grade 3, was estimated with a set of 25 questions.

Results show that there are no significant differences between the teachers for project and non-project schools, except to one issue. As a whole, the majority of teachers consider that for Grade students, the most important thing is to learn to read aloud with respect to punctuation marks, to compose sentences that have meaning, to understaned what the listened parts, to use punctuationmarks correctly, and to give answers with complete sentences. On the other hand, a smaller number of teachers consider that: using words with different meaning, finding out and using different and similar words, giving answers to questions the response of which is not done explicitly in the text, the skill to look up the text rapidly, the correct writing of an informative text and working in projects in the domain of mother tonge. The only significant difference is in the attitude about the ability of storytelling by pictures which the teachers from the non-project schools, in a considerably larger number, find it at be of particular imporance, compared to those from the project schools.



Graph 11. Knowledge/skills which the majority of teachers consider as the most importance ones



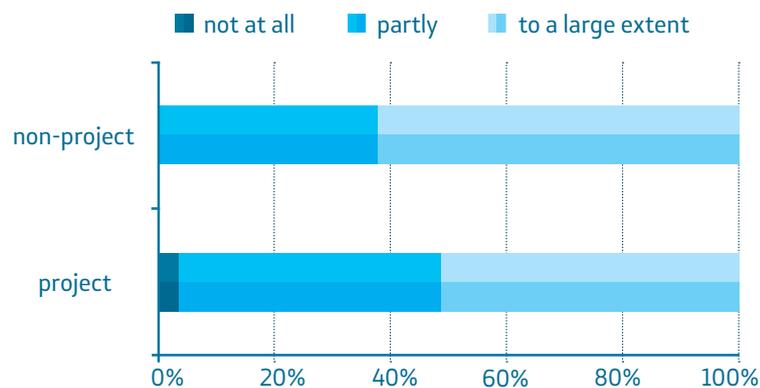
Graph 12. Knowledge/skills which the majority of teachers consider as the least important one

1.3.2. Attitudes about the curricula for mother tongue

While the majority of teachers are familiar (partly or to a large extent) with mother tongue curricula for Grades 4 – 8, half of them are not familiar with the curricula for Grades 6 - 9.

About half of the teachers agree partly with the statement that the students in their class achieve more than that prescribed by curricula. There are no differences between the teachers from project and from non-project schools concerning this issue.

However, it might be noted that there is a difference in relation to the attitude – how much the curriculum for mother tongue gives them freedom for selection of approaches that are considered as the most adequate ones. Namely, a larger part (about 60%) of teachers from the non-project schools to a great extent agree with this attitude in comparison with almost 40% of the teachers from the project schools (Graph 13). This difference in opinion is particularly important to be taken into consideration because in bringing innovations to the methods of teaching, it is of exclusive importance whether teachers consider that curricula enable them the needed methods' freedom.



Graph 13. Teacher's attitude concerning the freedom that the curriculum allows to select adequate approach

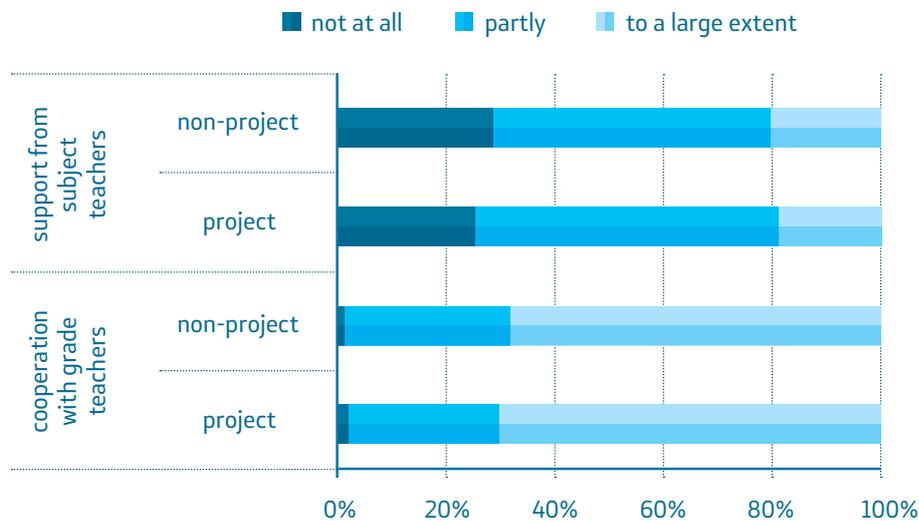
The teachers who were included in the projects `Active Teaching` and `Step-by-Step`, to a considerably larger number, consider that the curriculum enables methods' and pedagogical freedom. Probably they have had more experience in the application of various approaches in the teaching and skills for adaptation of the curriculum. The same stands for those teachers who have longer working experience (over 15 years).

1.3.3. Cooperation and support concerning the teaching of mother tongue

There are no significant differences noted between the teachers from project and non-project schools concerning the attitudes about the cooperation and the support by the colleagues and the professional service in the school.

Majority of them state that they cooperate with the colleagues from the grade teaching cycle concerning planning and carrying out the instruction (about 70% to a large extent, and almost 30% partly), though they seldom practice the exchange visits on classes and discussion about them. The cooperation with teachers from the subject teaching cycle is also seldom. (Graph 14).

About half of them stated that they have great support by the school principal and the professional service in introducing innovations in the teaching of mother tongue.



Graph 14. The level of cooperation of teachers with colleagues from grade teaching and subject teaching cycles

1.3.4. Frequency of using various texts in teaching related to reading with understanding

As expected, the majority of the teachers, use the texts from the official sources for learning mother tongue (over 60% several times a week, and over 30% several times a month), as a basic tool for acquiring skills for reading with understanding.

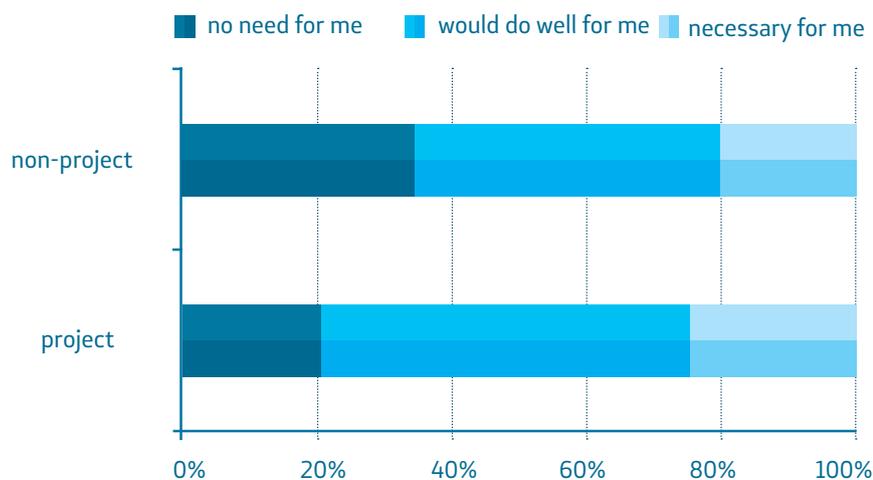
The other sources of texts (chapters/parts of books, original literary texts, texts from textbooks for other teaching subjects) are used rather rarely or are not used at all.

There are no significant differences between the teachers from the project schools and those from the non-project schools concerning the frequency of using the above mentioned texts.

1.3.5. The necessity for training about various aspects of teaching

In relation to the nine aspects of teaching mother tongue, which are noted as potential areas for training (for ex. the differentiated approach, the monitoring of students' progress, the selection of texts, etc.), the majority of teachers (about 60% both from the project and from non-project schools) gave answers that such training would be good for them, while only about 20% consider that training is necessary.

The only significant difference between the teachers from the project and from the non-project schools is noted in the attitude about the need for training about monitoring the progress of students. Namely, the majority of teachers from the non-project schools consider that they do not need training in this area (Graph 15).



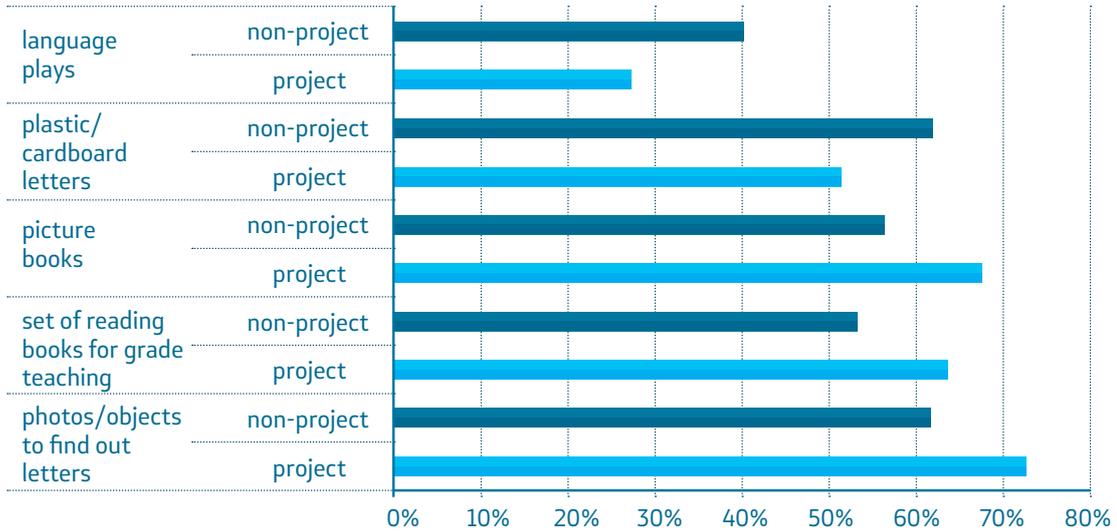
Graph 15. *The estimate of the need for monitoring the progress of students in mother tongue*

1.3.6. Teaching aids in classrooms

In contrast to the previously elaborated attitudes according to which the teachers from project and non-project schools are relatively on an even level, several differences are noted related to the teaching aids that they have in the classrooms and which could be used in the teaching of mother tongue. While the majority of teachers from the project schools stated that they possess photographs/objects for developing letters and words, small cardboards with words/sentences, a set of reading books for the grade teaching cycle, picture books and magazines for

children; the majority of the teachers from the non-project schools have a set of plastic/cardboard letters and language plays for reading and writing. (Graph 16)

Consequently, the teachers from the project schools have a mild advantage if one takes into consideration the fact that in the classroom they have a lot more teaching aids that can be used in the teaching of mother tongue.



Graph 16. Differences between the teachers from project and from non-project schools in relation to possessing particular teaching aids in the classroom

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The teachers from the project and from the non-project schools are on an even level concerning the expectations in the teaching of mother tongue, as well as in the estimates about the curriculum, their familiarity with it and about the cooperation with colleagues and the professional service.
- ▶ About 80% of the teachers consider that training about various aspects of teaching mother tongue would be good for them;
- ▶ There are no significant differences between the teachers from the project and non-project schools concerning the frequency of using texts in the teaching, they both use mostly the texts from the official textbooks.
- ▶ The teachers from the project schools have in their schools more teaching aids which can be used in the teaching of mother tongue in comparison with the teachers from the non-project schools.

I 2. SUPPORT FOR CHANGES IN LEARNING MOTHER TONGUE

The support for changes in learning mother tongue is considered as an important factor in innovating the teaching which is promoted at the trainings for *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*. It is expected that the teachers will have support by the management staff in the school, the pedagogue-psychologist service, and other teachers in the schools. Also, it is considered that the specific equipment of the school contributes to increasing the quality of the teaching mother tongue.

METHOD OF MEASURING

The support to changes was examined with a questionnaire for school directors and professional workers from the project schools. They both gave replies to 15 questions (out of which 4 were scales of attitudes) related to:

- ▶ the satisfaction with teaching mother tongue;
- ▶ the opinion about the achievements in mother tongue in the grade teaching cycle;
- ▶ the performance of the teaching mother tongue;
- ▶ the activities for promoting the teaching of mother tongue;
- ▶ the cooperation and the support to teachers;
- ▶ the level of equipment of the school for the teaching of mother tongue in the grade teaching cycle;
- ▶ the provided information and the plans for support of the activities for *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*.

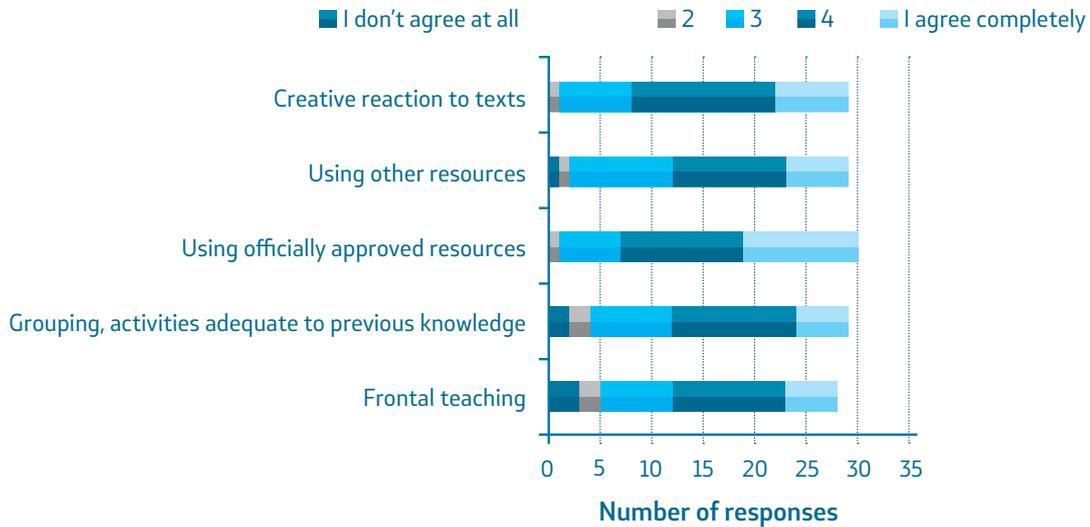
2.1. Satisfaction with the teaching of mother tongue

School directors and professional workers in the project schools were asked about the degree of satisfaction with the teaching of mother tongue. Four fifths of the examinees implicitly stated "*dissatisfaction*", i.e.:

- ▶ Almost 2/3 (18) of the examinees, agree to a large degree, and 6 examinees completely, that in the teaching of mother tongue in their school there is a need for modernization, though almost 2/3 of the examinees stated that in the last years the teaching has improved a lot;
- ▶ Except for one examinee, all others agree that students have higher achievements in mother tongue.

Concerning the method used to carry out the teaching of mother tongue in the grade teaching cycle, about 2/3 of the examinees agree to a large degree, or agree completely, that teachers most oftenly use the frontal method, group their students and assign activities and tasks adequate to the previous knowledge of students, using most oftenly official resources for learning (textbooks, worksheets,

reading books), and to a less extent they use other resources for teaching reading and writing; and students take part in creative activities related to the teaching of mother tongue (Graph 17).



Graph 17. Opinion of the management team about the method of carrying out the teaching of mother tongue

About the resources for knowledge which are used in the teaching, the majority of teachers stated that the texts from the official resources for learning mother tongue are the basic tool for acquiring ability for reading with understanding. Both the teachers, their school principals and representatives from the professional service, point out that the other resources of texts (chapters/ parts of books, original literary texts, texts from textbooks in other teaching subjects) are used very seldom or are not used at all.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that management staff in the project schools, in general, is not satisfied with teaching of mother tongue in their schools. Although teaching was improved, during the past few years in order to raise students achievement additional improvement is needed.

2.2. Opinion about the achievements in mother tongue

We got an opinion about the achievement of students in Grades 1 – 3, from the replies to three questions, i. e., compared with the achievements of students in similar neighbouring schools and compared with the objectives for writing, and the objectives for reading with understanding, which are prescribed by the curriculum.

- ▶ Concerning *the achievements compared with other similar schools* 10 examinees stated that they have no information about the other schools, 9 stated

that they are higher, and only 1 examinee stated that they are lower than the achievements in other schools. Here, it is characteristic, that those examinees who stated that the achievements of the students in his/her school are the same as those in other schools – are school principals, and those examinees who stated that they have no information about other schools – are professional workers.

- ▶ More than 2/3 of the examinees (23 examinees on the question related to reading and 22 examinees on the question related to writing) agree that in comparison with the aims for the corresponding grades, the achievements of students are at the level of the curriculum requirements. But, 4 examinees (all are school pedagogues), concerning the issue of reading with understanding, as well as 8 examinees (out of which 6 are pedagogues) concerning the issue on writing, both agree that the achievements of students are lower than the curriculum requirements.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ Generally speaking, referring to the achievements of students in their schools, the majority of the examinees/school managers, consider that they are the level of the curriculum requirements or are the same as those in other neighbouring, similar schools, which is alike the opinion of the opinion of the teachers (parts 1.3.2, of this report).
- ▶ In the domain of writing, compared to that of reading comprehension, the response – those students have achievements lower than the curriculum requirements is more often.

2.3. Cooperation between teachers and support given by the management staff for improving the teaching of mother tongue

Concerning the issue on the mutual cooperation and support between the teachers in the school, as well as about the support given by the management team, from the replies to the questionnaire for school principals and for the professional service, we got the following information.:

- ▶ *More than 2/3* of the examinees stated that the teachers can count to a large degree on the support by the school in introducing innovations, that they cooperate with the school principal and with the professional service, and that they cooperate with the teachers from the grade teaching cycle concerning the planning and carrying out of mother tongue instruction. 22 examinees stated that, to a large extent, it was made possible for the teachers to attend trainings, specific for the teaching of mother tongue (out of the school premises), 25 stated that there are no, or there are partially, organized internal (in-school) trainings for the teaching of mother tongue.
- ▶ *About 2/3* of the examinees stated that: there is a partial practice of sharing own practice between grade teachers and having discussion about the per-

formed teaching classes, as well as in the cooperation between the subject teachers teaching mother tongue and the grade teachers concerning the planning and carrying out the teaching.

- ▶ According to 29 examinees, the grade teachers ask for help and support by the mother tongue subject teachers concerning certain professional aspects (according to 16 – partially, and according to 13 – to a large extent).

School directors and the representatives of the professional service were asked about the way in which they personally provide support to teachers in carrying out the teaching of mother tongue. 24 examinees gave responses to these questions.

- ▶ The responses that are not met *with schools principals and with professional service*, refer to organizing and giving support to the work of the teachers' staff councils, the planning and the preparation for the teaching, class visits and providing feedback information.
- ▶ *School principals* stated also the issue of provision equipment and of teaching aids, provision of reading books, provisions to attend seminars and workshops, while *the professional workers* stated the issue of organizing quizzes and competitions, internal workshops for support to teachers, as well as providing help in the preparation and the execution of open classes.

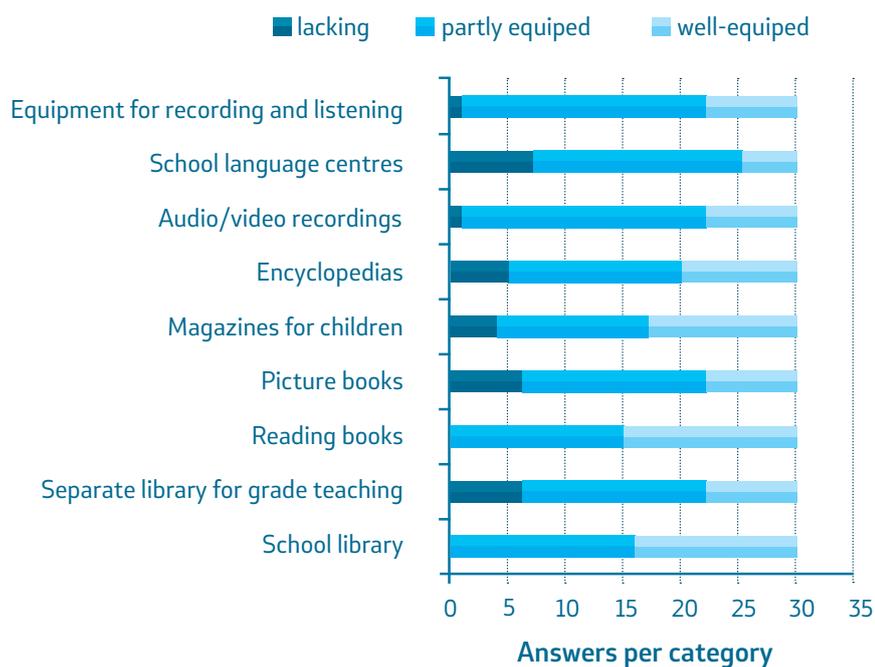
CONCLUSION

- ▶ The in-so-far practiced approaches in improving the teaching – were the support to the professional development of teachers via complementary trainings and mutual cooperation. The majority of school principals and representatives of the professional service consider that there is good cooperation among the teachers and that they may count on support from school in introducing innovations in the teaching of mother tongue, which is a good base for introducing the project activities.
- ▶ Although, they consider that there is a great cooperation between the grade teachers, they practice very little mutual visits to classes and discussions about them.
- ▶ The cooperation of the grade teachers with subject teachers of mother tongue is partial, and is necessary, especially when taking into consideration the data of insufficient familiarity with the curricula for mother tongue for Grades 6 – 9 (part 1,2,3 of this report).

2.4. Equipment of schools for the teaching of mother tongue

According to the responses of the school principals and the representatives of the professional service, their schools, generally, are equipped partially with teaching aids and materials for the teaching of mother tongue. All the schools in the sample have their school library, and 6 of the examinees responded that in it there is a special part for the students from the grade teaching cycle, which is well equipped.

What the schools have most are the sets of reading books for grade teaching and magazines for children, but there are less picture books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, audio and video recordings, and equipment for recording and listening.



Graph 18. *Equipment of schools with teaching aids*

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The equipment of schools with specific aids for the teaching of mother tongue is on average, although it concerns to materials that are easy to provide. The schools are well-equipped with reading books and magazines for children.
- ▶ The audio and video recordings, as well as the equipment for recording and listening/watching can be used in applying contemporary approaches in the teaching of language literacy – and particularly in reading with understanding. According to the managing staff (more than 2/3 of the examinees), stated that the schools are partially equipped with such an equipment, which the teachers can use in their teaching.

2.5. Preparedness of the management staff to give support to the activities of the project and to the application of new approaches in the teaching of mother tongue

For the success of each innovation that is introduced at the school level, it is necessary from the very beginning that all the involved in it and the managing staff, be well informed about the aims and the strategies and the share the same vision. The preparedness of the managing staff for new approaches in the teaching of mother tongue, and especially for the *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*, was examined via the provided information and the preparedness to give support to the activities of the project, as well as the opinions and experiences from other projects.

- ▶ Concerning the issue, how much the involvement in the Project was an individual decision of particular teachers, who were trained for trainers, and how much it is part of the school policy for improving the teaching of mother tongue, the state is different in various schools. Half of the examinees (15) stated that the teachers involved in the Project were included on the basis of agreement with the school managing staff, according to 11 this decision was made on self-initiative basis by the teachers, and 4 examinees stated that they had no information.
- ▶ Allmost 2/3 of the examinees stated that they are well informed about the aims and the activities of the project, three examinees – were not at all informed, and the others got information from teachers involved in the project. Half of the examinees stated that they got the information from the Bureau for Development of Education.
- ▶ Due to the fact that the schools were informed about their involving in the project prior to this examination, we expected that in all schools the activities would be planned at a school level and that all the examinees would be informed about the planned activities. However, out of a total of 30 examinees, 20 (out of which 8 – school principals, and 12 – representatives of the professional service) responded that they have planned the activities. The others responded that they have not planned them. The most often stated planned activities are: providing conditions for dissemination of training at school level and monitoring the training. In one of the questionnaires it was responded that regular short tests are administered in the school, which will be used to monitor the progress of students.
- ▶ The examinees were asked how personally they see their role in the realization of the project. The responses to this question are represented graphically.



Graph 19. *The role of the school principal and the professional service incarrying out the Project*

The school psychologists and pedagogues see their own role in the Projects mostly as giving support to carrying out the project activities, monitoring the work and the motivation of teachers, while the school principals put more stress on the logistics support and the management role in the Project. The majority of *school principals* (12 out of a total 15) see their role in providing conditions and means for the realization of the trainings and the support to the teachers-trainers in planing the trainings, while the representatives of the *professional service* (12 out of a total 15) in the participation at the trainings for the teachers.

- ▶ In addition to taking part in the project *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*, the schools are involved in other projects as well. Almost all of the examinees responded that he school is invoved in the Primary Education Project, and part of them stated trainings through the Modernization Project. One of the examinees noted that the school is involved in the “UNICEF Project on Mathematics”.
- ▶ The examinees, estimate that their experience in the projects is generally positive: 24 of the examines state that the projects helped them veru much to improve the teaching, and the other 8, state that “the experience is mainly positive, but does not have geat influence upon the teaching”.
- ▶ The opportunity to give their own comment or complementary opinion, was used by three of the examinees. Two of the examinees recommend to in-

roduce calligraphy in teaching writing, and one examinee pointed out that speaking should be more explicitly stressed in the curriculum (this refers to good knowledge of the curriculum for mother tongue).

CONCLUSION

- ▶ For half of the project schools, the involvement in the project *Language Literacy in the Early Grades* was agreed by the managing staff, while the other half stated that it was on individual teacher/s' initiative. The managing staff, prior to the beginning of the project activities in the school was well informed about the aims and the activities of the project but, not in all of the schools were planned activities in relation to the project.
- ▶ Their own role most often they see as supporters in the professional in-service training of teachers and in providing conditions for carrying out the project activities.
- ▶ The schools generally have experience with other projects, as well. The majorities of the examinees stated that they are taking part in the Primary Education Project (PEP), and have positive experience with projects, i.e. that the projects helped them a lot to improve their work.

I 3. ACHIEVEMENTS OF STUDENTS

Within the framework of the investigation of the state prior to beginning of the trainings in the project *Literacy in the Early Grades*, in order to measure the influence of the Project upon the quality of the teaching and on students' achievements, we measured also the achievements of students at the end of Grade 3, on issues and tasks of the domains covered by the program for *Literacy in the early Grades*. Within the framework of this indicator, also, we did the measuring prior to the beginning of the training for teachers in the project schools, starting from the point, that in the next measuring, the change in the teaching resulted from the methods and pedagogical approaches promoted by the Project, would influence the change of the achievements of the students in the project schools.

METHOD OF MEASURING

We based the estimate about the achievements of students on the achieved results in doing test tasks which measure ability in reading with understanding, the ability in writing a text upon given words, as well as in the use of orthography and the needed lexis.

The test for students consisted of 6 tasks (24 items) which measure knowledge and abilities in the following domains:

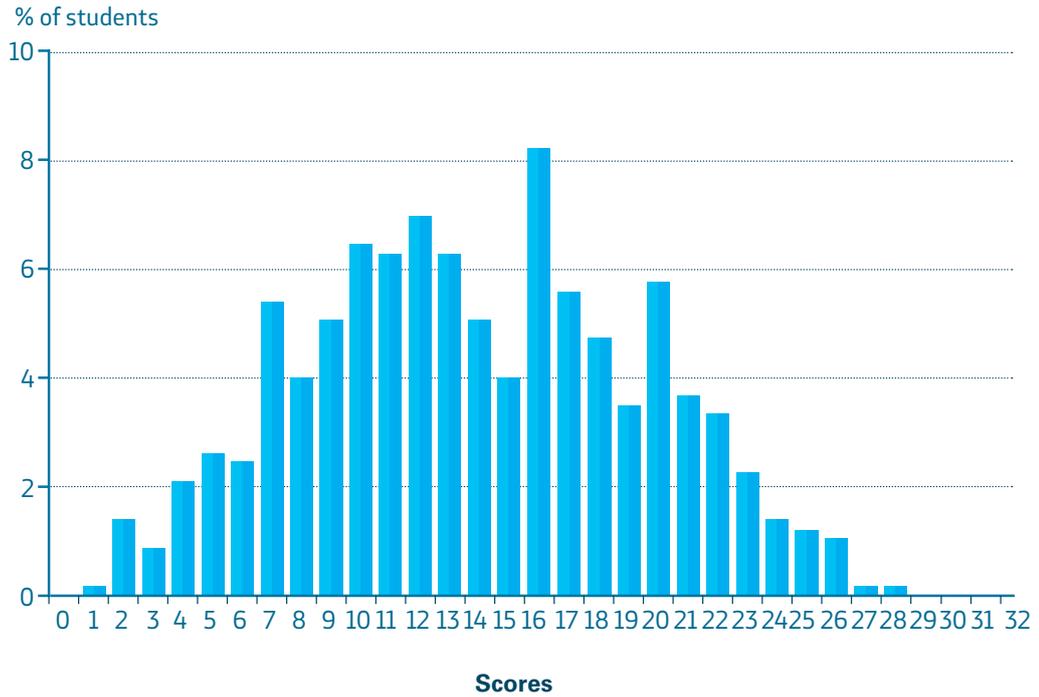
- ▶ *Reading- 4 tasks (13 items)*
- ▶ *Writing- 2 tasks (11 items)*

In measuring the achievements of students for the first domain – reading, we selected a long literary text with 8 items related to the content of the text, a short text with 3 items and two short literary text with 4 items, out of which one refers to comparison between the characters from the two texts. In measuring the achievements of students in the domain – writing we developed a task of open type (writing a composition upon given words, and one task of closed type, which referred to improving the content of selected parts of a given letter.

The limitation from the aspect of the small number of tasks in each of the stated domains in the text, do not allow generalization of conclusions about the domains. Therefore, the conclusions refer to the knowledge and the abilities which were explicitly measured with the tasks of the text.

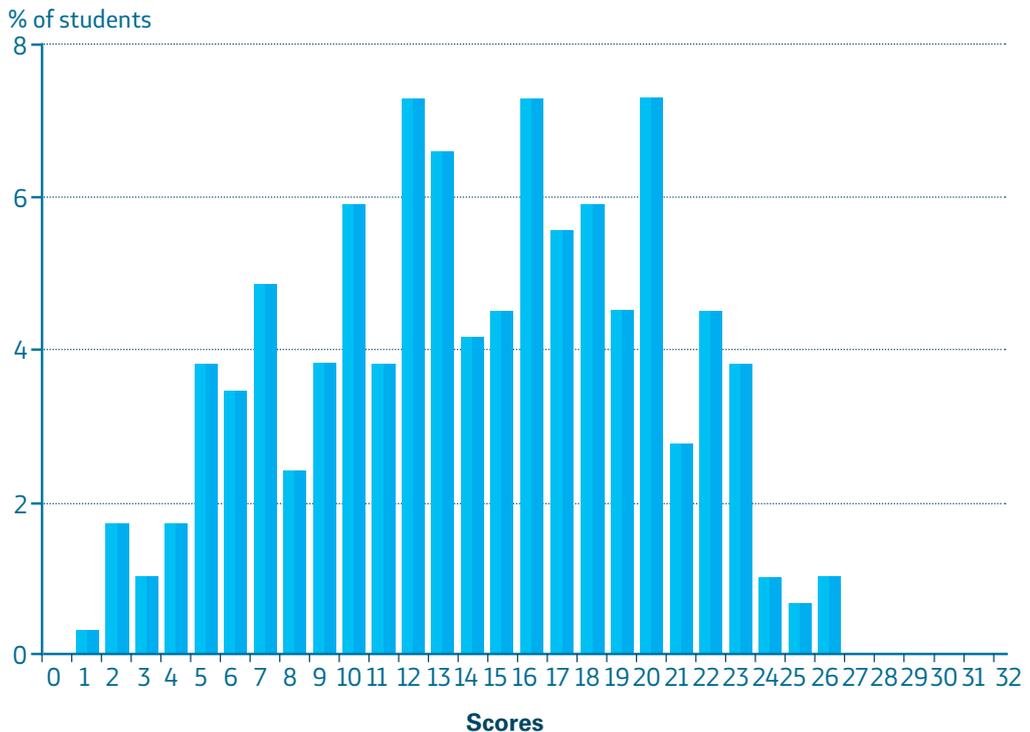
3.1 Achievements of students on the test in reading comprehension and writing

The average result on the test in reading comprehension and writing by **all students** is 13,80 (the maximum possible is 32), i.e. the average percentage of doing the test correctly is 43,14%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 28, by one student only, and the largest is the percentage of students (8,19%) who have a score of 16. All tested students did correctly at least one item. The achievements of students have a normal distribution which is more inclined to the left side.



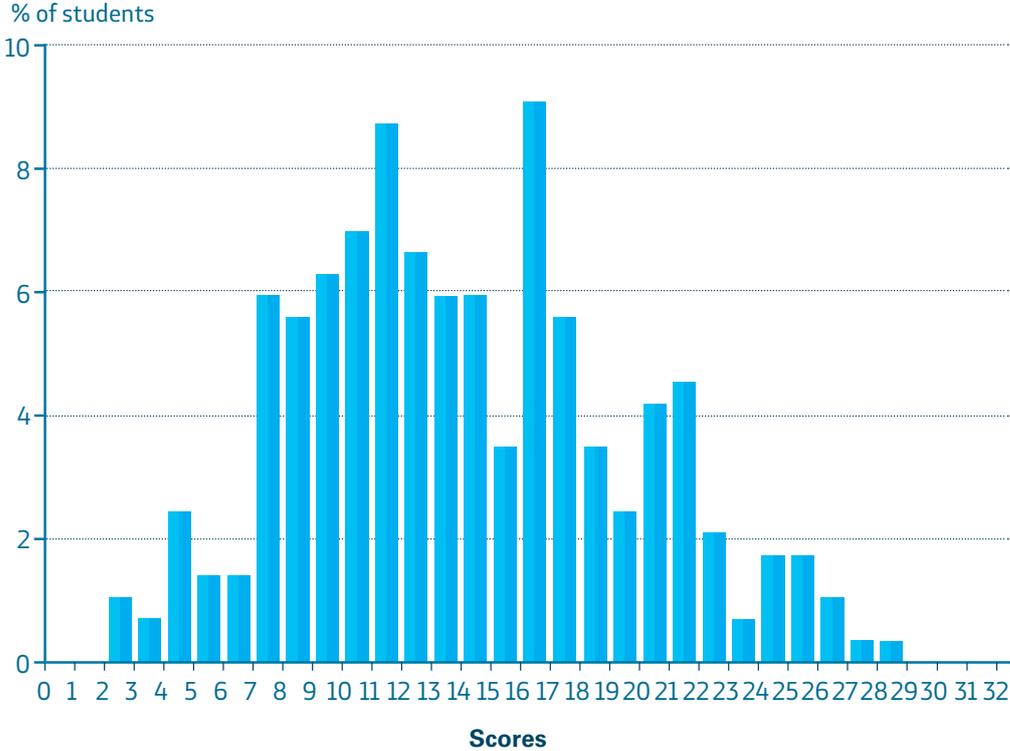
Graph 20. Results of all students on the test in reading comprehension and writing

The average result on the test of **the students from the project schools** is 14,06, i.e. the average percentage of doing the test correctly is 43,93%. The highest achieved result is a score of 26, achieved by 3 students (1,04%), and the largest is the percentage of students (7,29%) who have a score of 12, 16 or 20. All tested students in the project school (288) did correctly at least one item. The achievements of the students have a polimodal distribution which is inclined to the left side.



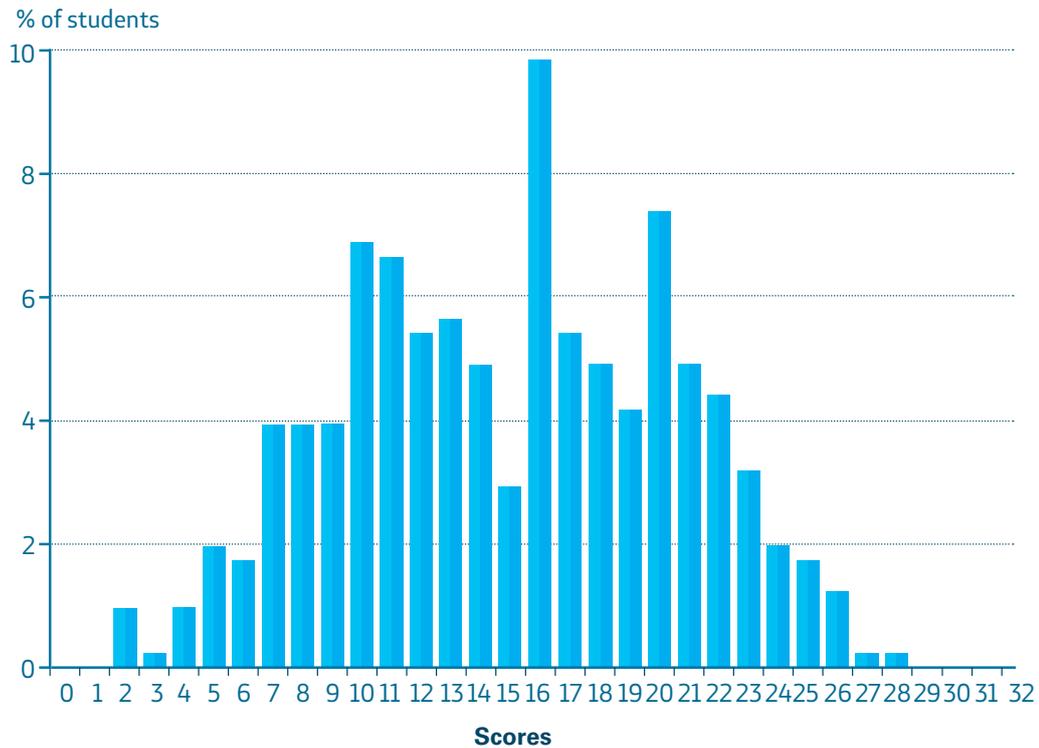
Graph 21. Results of the students from the project schools on the test in reading and writing

The average result on the test of **the students from the non-project schools** is 13.55, i.e. the average percentage of doing the test correctly is 42.34%. The highest achieved result is a score of 26, achieved by 1 student. The largest is the percentage of students (9,09%) who have a score of 16. All tested students in the non-project schools (286) did correctly at least two items. The achievements of the students have a bimodal distribution which is inclined to the left side.



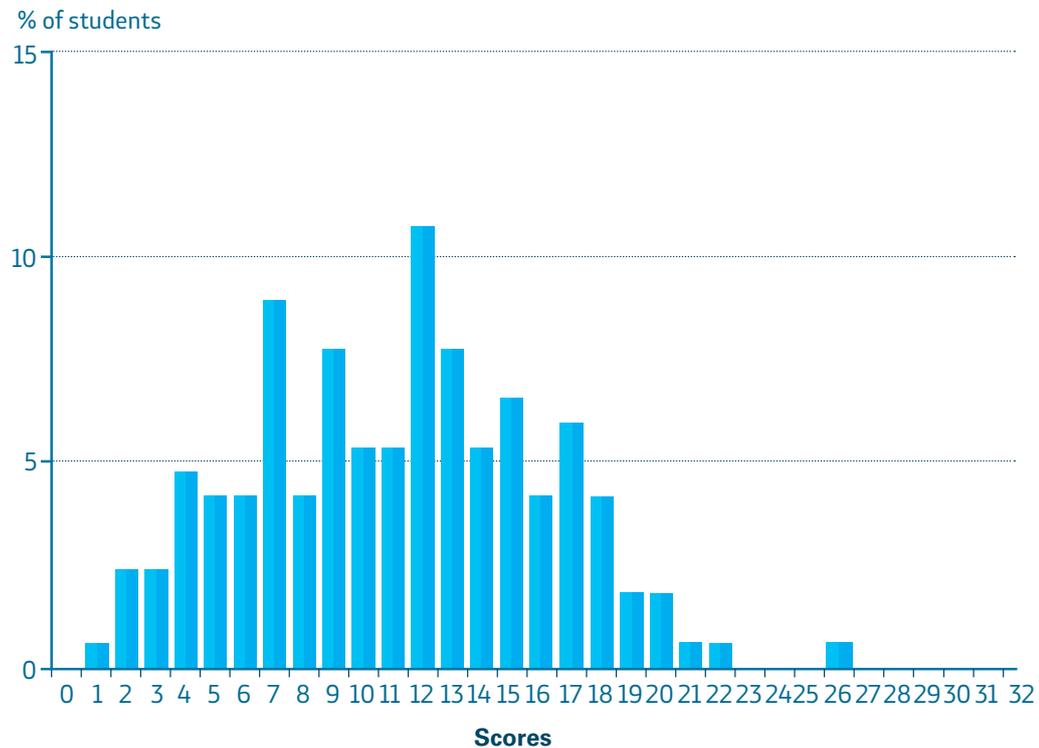
Graph 22. Results of all students from the non-project schools on the test in reading and writing

The average result on the test **from students who attend urban schools** is 14,92 (maximum possible is 32), i.e. the average percentage of doing the text correctly is 46,62%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 28 by one student only, and the largest is the percentage of students (9,85%) who have a score of 16. Out of a total of 406 tested students, all did correctly at least two items of the test tasks. The achievements of the students have a polimodal distribution which is inclined to the left side.



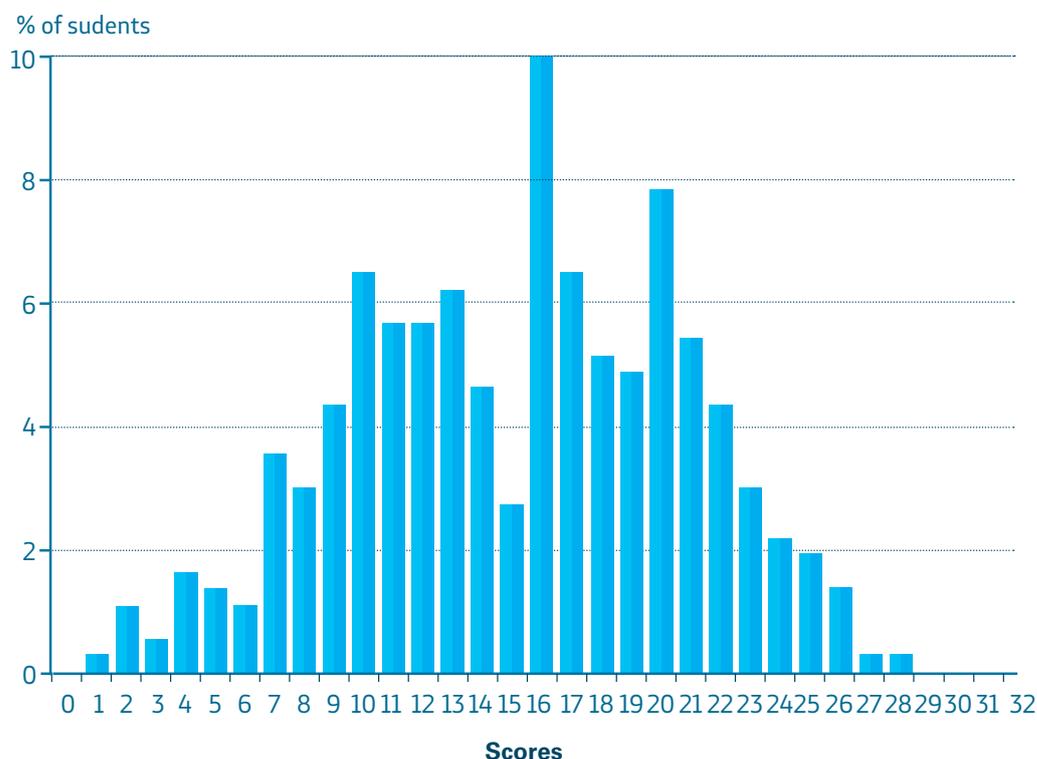
Graph 23. Results of the students who attend urban schools on the test in reading and writing

The average result on the test **from students who attend rural schools** is 11.11 (maximum possible is 32), i.e. the average percentage of doing the text correctly is 34.73%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 28 by one student only, and the largest is the percentage of students (10.71%) who have a score of 12. Out of a total of 168 tested students, all did correctly at least one item. The achievements of the students have a bimodal distribution which is inclined to the left side.



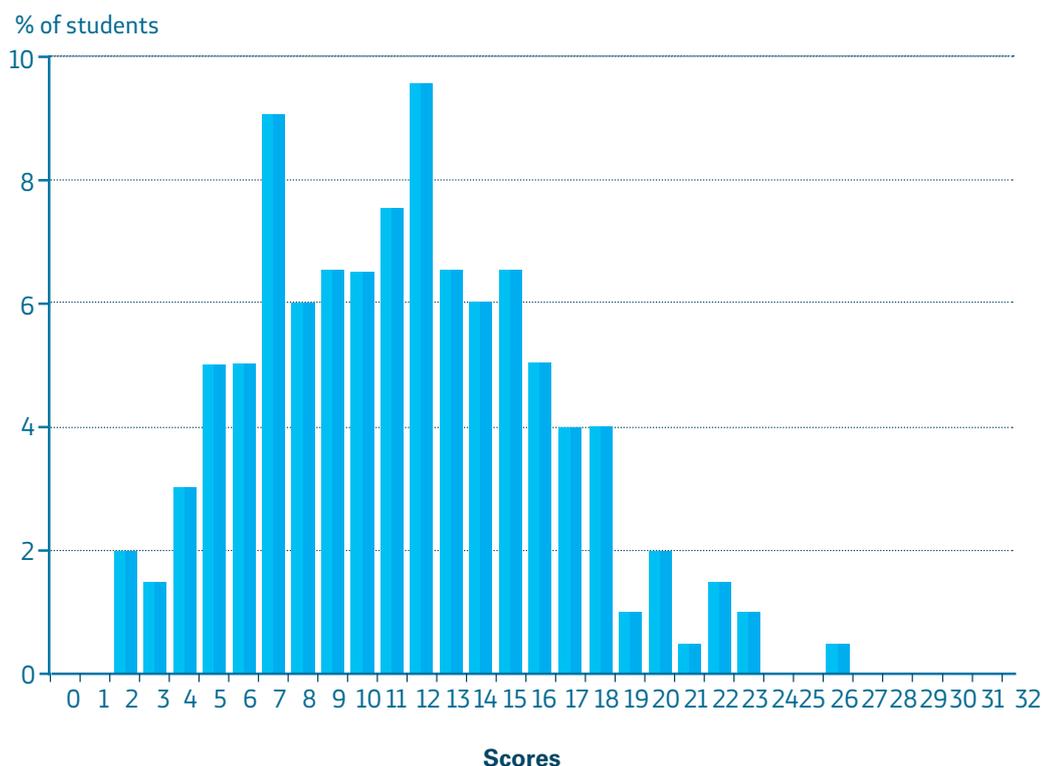
Graph 24. Results of the students who attend rural schools on the test in reading and writing

The average result on the test **from students who attend the instruction in Macedonian language** is 15.14 (maximum possible is 32), i.e. the average percentage of doing the text correctly is 47.31%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 28 by one student only. The largest is the percentage of students (9,87%) who have a score of 16. All tested students (374) all did correctly at least one item. The achievements of the students have a polimodal distribution which is inclined to the left side.



Graph 25. Results of the students who attend the instruction in Macedonian language on the test in reading and writing

The average result on the test **from students who attend the instruction in Albanian language** is 11.31 (maximum possible is 32), i.e. the average percentage of doing the text correctly is 35.34%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 28 by one student only., and the largest is the percentage of students (9,50%) who have a score of 12. Out of a total of 200 tested students all did correctly at least two items of the test. The achievements of the students have a bimodal distribution which is inclined more to the left side.



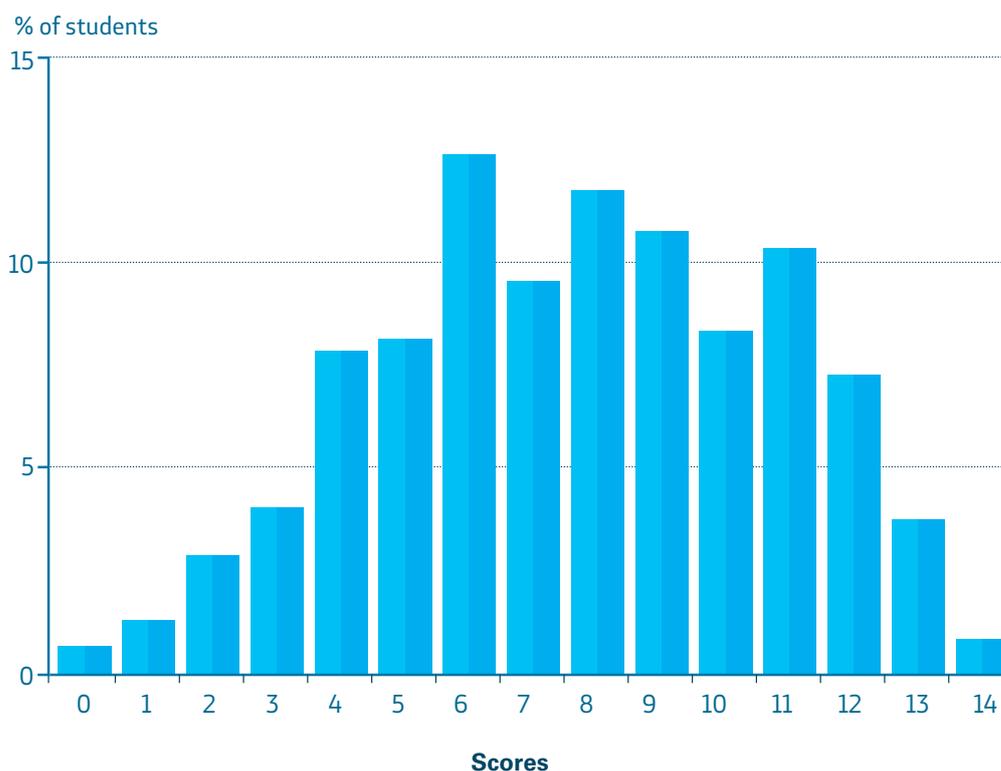
Graph 26. Results of the students who attend the instruction in Albanian language on the test in reading and writing

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The results on the test are lower than the expected ones prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3.
- ▶ Students both from the project and non-project schools do not differ in the achievements on the test in reading comprehension and writing. This would enable making easier comparisons of the results in the subsequent measuring.
- ▶ Students attending urban schools have achieved higher result than those attending rural schools.
- ▶ Students who attend the instruction in Macedonian language achieved higher results than the students who attend the instruction in Albanian language.

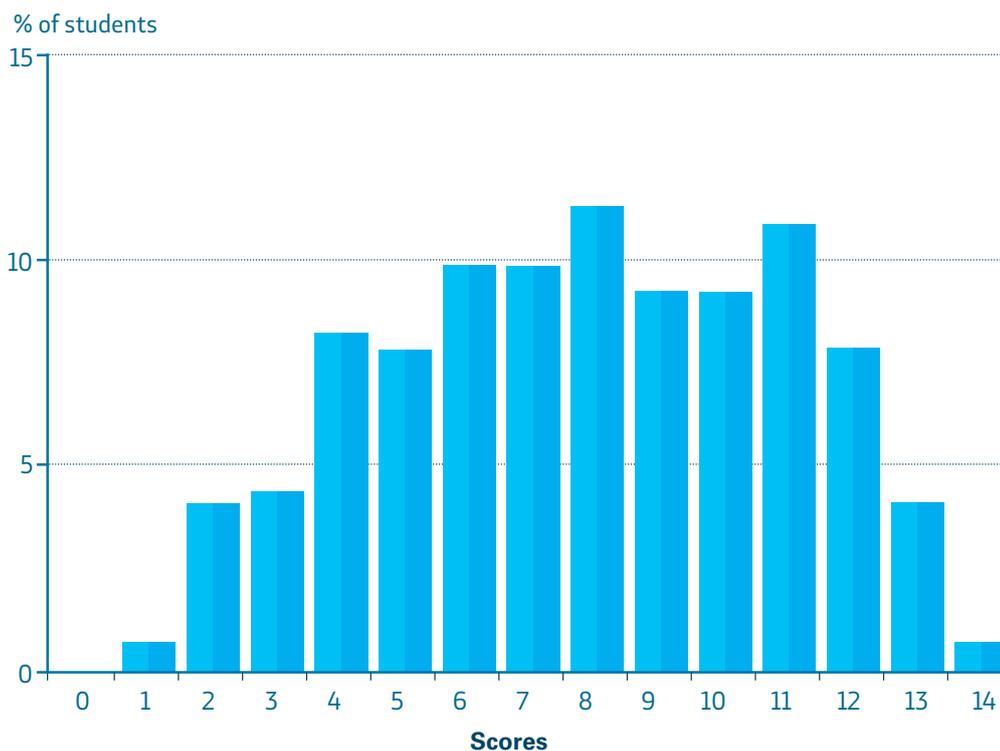
3.1.1 Achievements of students in Reading

The average result on the tasks in reading comprehension **from all students** is 7.70 (maximum possible is 14) i.e. the average percentage of doing the items correctly is 55.01%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 14 by four students, and the largest is the percentage of students (12.72%) who have a score of 6. Out of all tested students (574), 0.52%, did not do any of the given tasks. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the right side.



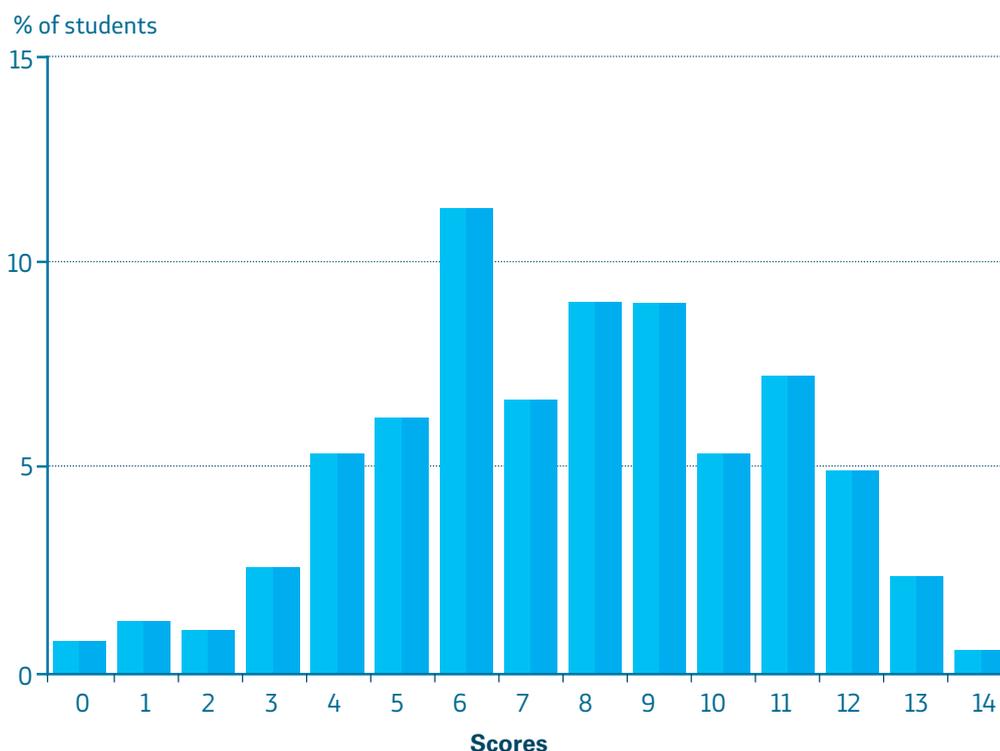
Graph 27: Results of all students in reading comprehension

The average result on the tasks in reading comprehension **from students in the project schools** is 7.78 i.e. the average percentage of doing the test correctly is 56.81%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 14 by two students, and the largest is the percentage of students (11.46%) who have a score of 8. All tested students in the project schools (288) did correctly at least one item. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the right side.



Graph 28: Results of students from project schools in reading comprehension

The average result on the test **from students in the non-project schools** is 7.82, i.e. the average achieved percentage is 54.42%. The maximum achieved result is 14, by two students, and the largest is the percentage of students (15.38%) who have a score of 6. Out of a total of 286 tested students in the non-project schools, only 1.05% did not do any of the test tasks in reading. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the right side.



Graph 29: Results of students from non-project schools in reading comprehension

From the analysis of the achievements of students on the reading items, it is noted that students, both in project and in non-projects schools, have lowest achievements (only 38% i.e. 37% correct responses), when they are asked to arrange chronologically the events in the text, and when asked to draw direct conclusion or to describe the relationships between two characters (23% or 28% correct responses). About 50 % of students can not find out the idea (the main idea) in a particular part of the text, although the idea is explicitly included in the given part, as well as to predict what might happen in the story, on the basis of the known elements in the story.

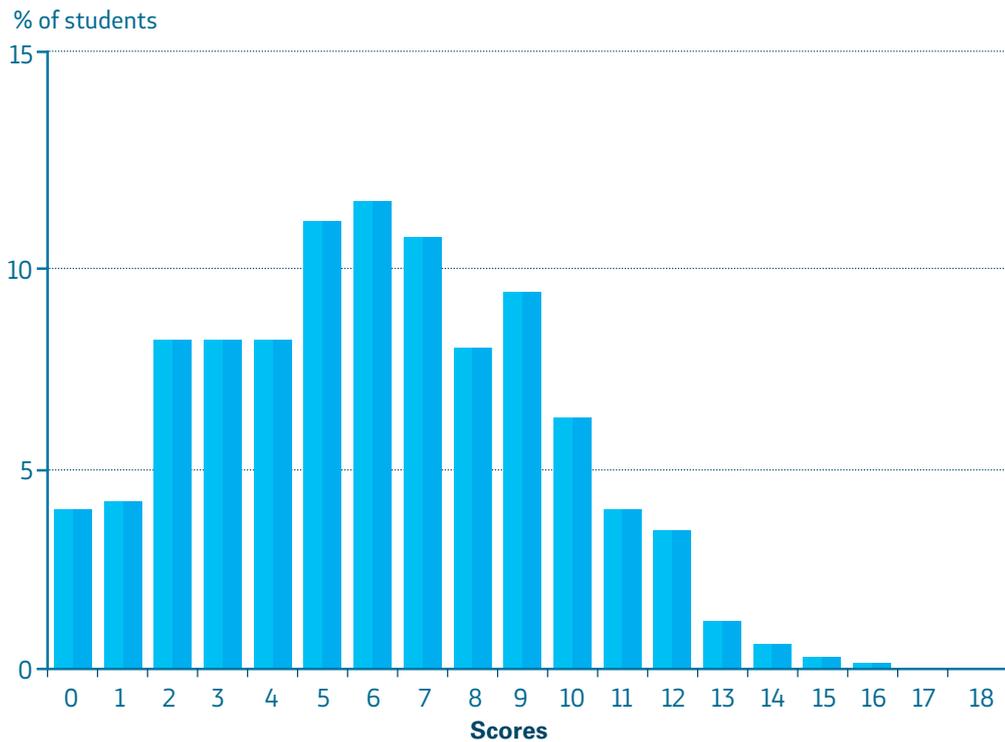
Students have the highest achievements in several items which require identification of information from the text (about 2/3 of students did correctly such items).

CONCLUSION

- ▶ There is no statistically significant difference in the achievements of students, on the tasks in the domain of reading comprehension. It would make easier to make comparisons of the results in the subsequent measuring.
- ▶ The results from one part of the tasks on the test, which measured the ability of students to arrange chronologically the events in the text and to draw a direct conclusion, are lower than the expected results prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3. The results on the other tasks are almost in accordance with the expected results prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3.
- ▶ The students from the urban schools had significant higher results in reading compared with the students from rural schools.
- ▶ The students with Macedonian language of instruction had higher achievements compared with the students with Albanian language of instructions.

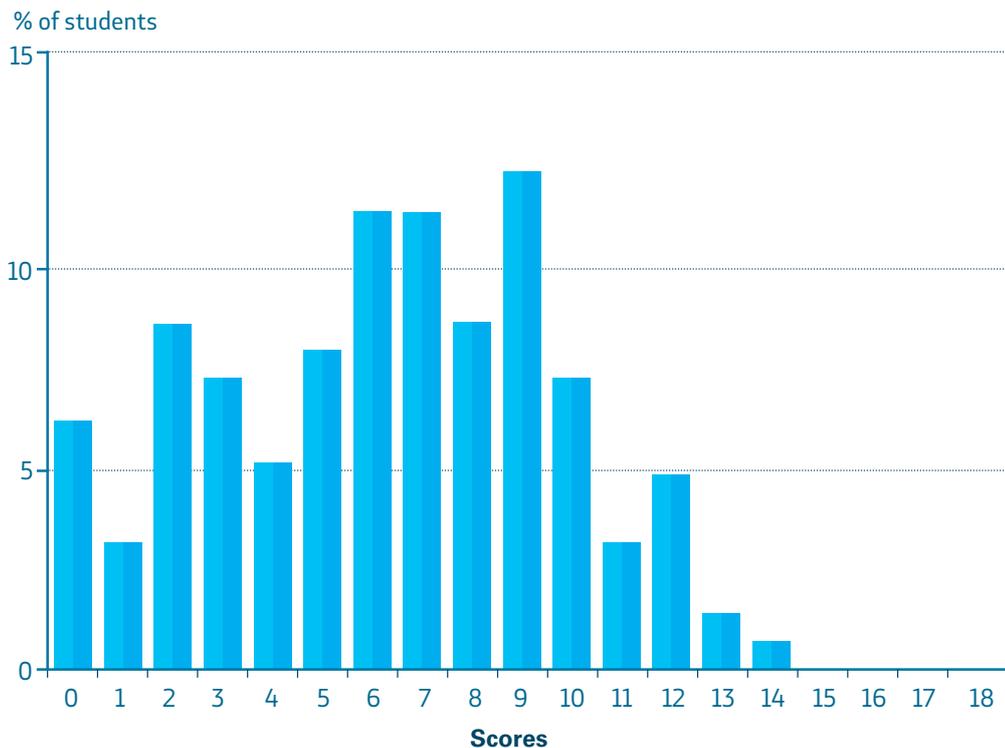
3.1.2 Achievements of students in Writing

The average result on the test **from all students** is 8.10 (the maximum possible is 18), i.e. the average achievement is 33.90%. The maximum achieved result on the test is 16, by one student, and the largest is the percentage of students (11.67%) who have a score of 6. Out of a total of 574 tested students, 4.01% did not get any score. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the left side.



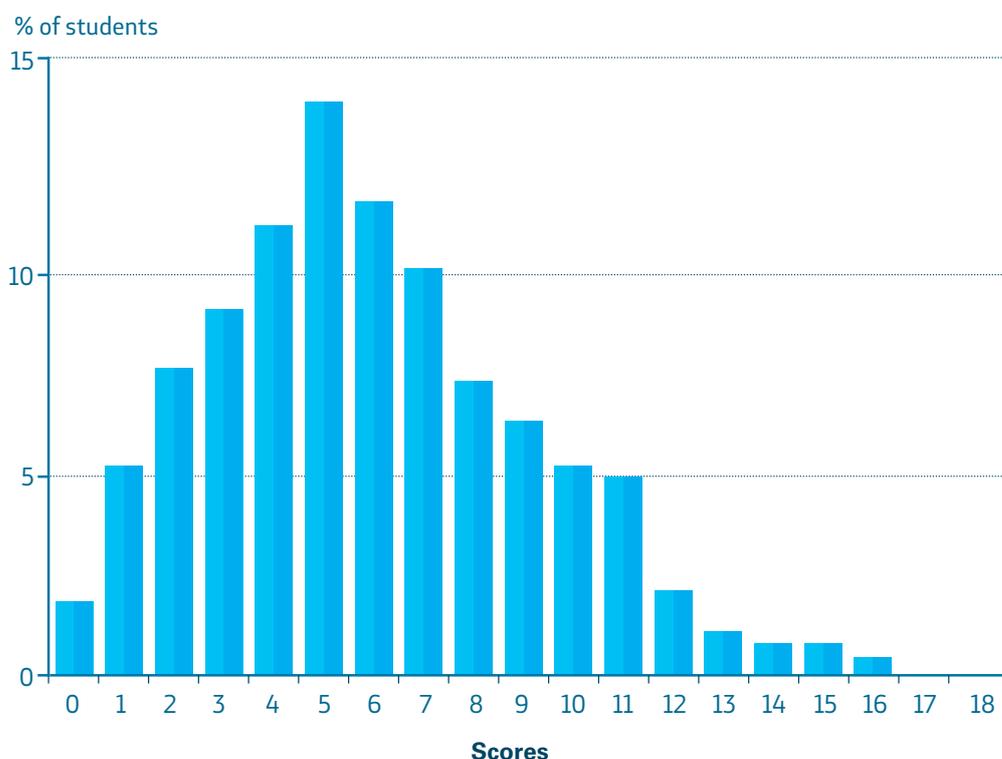
Graph 30: Results of all students in writing

The average result on the test in writing from students in the project schools is 6.27, i.e. the average percentage is 34.86. The maximum achieved score is 14, by two students, and the largest is the percentage of students (12.50%) who have a score of 9. Out of a total of 286 tested students in the non-project schools, 6.25% did not do any of the test tasks. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the right side.



Graph 31: Results of students from project schools in writing

The average result in writing **from students in the non-project schools** is 5.93, i.e. the average percentage of doing the text correctly is 32.94%. The maximum achieved result is 16, by one student only, and the largest is the percentage of students (14.34%) who have a score of 5. Out of a total of 286 tested students in the non-project schools, 1.75% did not do correctly any of the tasks in writing. The achievements of the students have a distribution which is more inclined to the right side.



Graph 32: Results of students from non-project schools in writing

From the achievements of students on the tasks in writing, it can be noted that about 50% of students, both in project and in non-projects schools, can recognize a good sentence structure, adequate use of a word in the sentence and adequate composition of a text (in this case a letter), when the are asked to select one answer and together with it to improve the structure of particular sentences, the lexicon and the composition of a letter (expressing the aim of the letter)

Students have achieved much lower results on the task in writing of an open type, i.e. in writing a composition upon given words, both from project and non-project schools. For making more objective assessment of the written compositions, we developed criteria for assessment. The quality of each work is estimated according to each of the criteria. In the following table, the percentage of students from the project and non-project schools, is given, according to the level that they have achieved.

Table 5. Achievements of students from the project and from non-project schools in the domain of writing (task: writing a composition upon given words)

Criteria	Level of achievements					
	0		1		2	
	Project %	Non-project %	Project %	Non-project %	Project %	Non-project %
Composition	%	Non-project	44	49	1	1
Clarity of the composition	%	Project	64	61	4	5
Use of given words in the composition	%	Non-Project	50	62	20	15
Punctuation	%	Project	53	52	2	2
Orthography	%	Non-project	67	52	1	2
Sentence construction	%	52	52	45	5	3
Originality	70	74	26	23	4	3

From the table, it can be noticed that a very small number of students can achieve the highest requirement for the most part of of the criteria, except in cases when the question is about the use of words in the composition where the achievements are a bit higher. About 50% of students have achieved the first level in almost the largest number of criteria, except for the criterion on originality.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ There is no statistically significant difference in the achievements of students both from project and non-project school on the tasks in the domain of writing. It would make it easier to make comparison of the results in the subsequent measuring.
- ▶ The results on the tasks in the test which measured the ability of students in writing a test upon given words, as well as the use of orthography and the needed lexicon, are lower than the expected results prescribed by the curriculum for Grade 3.
- ▶ The students from the urban schools had significant higher results in reading compared with the students from rural schools.
- ▶ The students with Macedonian language of instruction had higher achievements compared with the students with Albanian language of instructions.

3.2. Preparedness of students for reading and the activities at home related to reading prior to beginning to attend school

Many studies have proved that exposing children even in the early childhood to activities which are related to reading is a key factor in creating reading habits and high achievements in reading comprehension.¹⁰

Just for that reason in this study, the students were asked about the experiences in their families related to the activities in reading in the pre-school period, as well as about the reading habits of their families.

METHOD OF MEASURING

We collected data about the state and the habits in the families of the tested students, concerning language literacy, using a short questionnaire, to which the students responded at the end of the second day of testing.

We collected data that refer to 6 questions:

- ▶ Attending pre-school institutions;
- ▶ Preknowledge for reading;
- ▶ Activities at home related to reading in the pre-school period;
- ▶ Number of books in the family;
- ▶ Membership in the library; and
- ▶ Discussions about books read in the family.

The data from this short questionnaire will be presented with an aim to perceive the family context of tested students related to reading.

Table 6: Attending pre-school institutions*

	Percentage of students that attended pre-school institutions	
	yes	no
project		33,3%
non-project	57,3%	40,9%

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because part of the students did not respond to this question

From the data presented in Table 6, it can be seen that about more than half of the tested students, both from project and no-project schools, attended pre-school institutions.

10 I.V.S. Mullis , M.O. Martin, A.M.Kenedy, P. Foy, PIRLS 2006 International Report. Chesnut Hill, MA: Boston College, str. 106

Table 7: Preknowledge for reading*

Pre-knowledge	Percentage of students according to the pre-knowledge prior to beginning to attend school		
	I knew the letters of the alphabet	I read and wrote words	I read sentences
project	49,7%	31,3%	8,7%
non-project	44,4%	36,0%	11,9%

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because out of the students did not respond to this question

Concerning the pre-knowledge that the students had prior to beginning to attend school, and are related to reading, it can be seen in Table 7, that almost half of the students knew the letters prior to beginning to attend school, and the others that responded that they knew how to read and write words and sentences. Of no significance, is larger the percentage of students from the non-project schools who were able to read and to write words and sentences prior to beginning to attend schools.

Table 8: Activities at home related to reading in the pre-school period*

Activities	Percentage of students that did various activities at home related to reading at the pre-school age																	
	Reading books			Storytelling			Singing songs			Plays with toys about the alphabet			Plays with words			Writing letters and words		
	n	s	o	n	s	o	n	s	o	n	s	o	n	s	o	n	s	o
Project	12,5	34,4	28,1	9,7	35,4	30,2	23,3	29,2	22,2	21,5	25,3	26,7	15,3	32,3	26,4	9,0	22,2	46,9
Non-project	9,1	37,1	36,7	9,8	34,6	39,2	28,3	32,5	19,9	24,5	30,4	26,4	14,0	38,5	29,7	7,0	26,6	21,9

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because part of the students did not respond to this question

N-never; S-sometimes; O-often

From the data presented in table 8, it can be seen that about 60 % of the students from the project and from the non-project schools, even at their early childhood were sometimes or often exposed to activities that induce the skills for reading and writing. Concerning the frequency of exposure of students in such activities, the students from the project schools more often together with their parents used to write letters or words, in contrast to the students from the non-project schools, who were exposed to parents' reading books for them or to storytelling by them.

Table 9: Books in the family*

Number of books	Percentage of students possessing books in the family				
	0-10	11-25	26-100	101-200	More than 200
project	14,9	31,9	20,1	14,2	9,4
non-project	16,4	32,2	28,0	11,9	4,5

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because part of the students did not respond to this question

Due to the fact, that the reading habits begin to be acquired even at an earlier age, students were asked about the number of books at home, about using the services of the library, as well as, about the habit to read books or discuss about a read book with older members of the family.

One third of students from both sub-populations, live with families who have from 11- 25 books in their family libraries, and about 26 % of students from the project schools, and about 16% students from the non-project schools have about or more than 200 books at home.

Table 10: Membership in the library*

	Percent of students and members of their families who borrow books from a library	
	yes	no
project	69,4%	23,3%
non-project	71,3%	26,2%

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because part of the students did not respond to this question

Concerning the issue of borrowing books from libraries, the affirmative indicator is that the percentage of students or members of the family who borrow books from libraries is about 70 % both in the project and in the non-project books.

Table 11: Discussing the read books in the family*

How often they read or discuss	Percentage of students that discuss about a read book with a member of their family		
	never	once or twice a week	every day
project	16,0%	41,7%	33,0%
non-project	18,9%	42,0%	33,2%

*The total percentage of students is not 100 % because part of the students did not respond to this question

Generally speaking, parents and older members of the family, often spend some of their time during the week, to listen to their children how they read or discuss with them about what they have read. About 40 % of students, once or twice a week, read books to the members of their families or discuss about that which was read, and about 33% of students do that every day.

PART IV – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This part presents the conclusions and the recommendations that could be given on the basis of the findings in the baseline study. They should be used by the implementers of the Project in planning the activities for implementation and in the evaluation of the project activities.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The sample of the project schools and that one of the non-project schools do not differ in relation to the relevant characteristics. It enables that they could be easily used in monitoring and evaluation of the effects from project activities.
2. Instruments used to measure particular indicators have satisfactory characteristics, so they could be used in the subsequent measuring. On the scale of teachers' attitudes, there are some lower measured characteristics about learning and teaching reading and writing.
3. There are no statistically significant differences in the key indicators between the teachers from the project schools and those from the non-project schools. It enables easy monitoring of the effects on teachers' attitudes, as well as on methods and pedagogical knowledge of teachers.
4. There are no statistically significant differences in students' achievements from project and from non-project schools. It enables easy monitoring of the effects of project activities on students' achievements.
5. Teachers have generally attitudes to learning and teaching reading and writing in accordance with the principles in *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*. It is probably due to their knowledge about the characteristics of quality teaching and learning, which they got taking part in the projects: `Active Teaching` and `Step-by-Step`, that promote active methods in teaching.
6. Teachers, responses also show that they accept, to a considerable extent, the approach in which instruction is strictly dictated by the curriculum, as well as by the approved and the prescribed resources for learning.

7. Methodological and Pedagogical knowledge of teachers which would be in accordance with the approach in promoted in the project *Language Literacy in the Early Grades*, are limited.
8. Teachers are divided in the opinion that the curriculum gives them freedom and flexibility for selection of approaches in carrying out the teaching.
9. Teachers are not sufficiently familiar with the language's curricula for the subsequent cycles in primary education, an especially with the last one (Grades 6 to 9).
10. Teachers consider that they cooperate well with their colleagues and have a sense that they could count on support in schools in introducing innovations. According to the statements of school principals and pedagogues / psychologists, grade teachers, in general, cooperate well, but the cooperation with subject teachers is not sufficient.
11. The managing staff in project schools is willing to support the project activities, though 1/3 of them, at the time of collecting data for this survey had not planned concrete activities'.
12. The managing staff, in general, consider that the achievements in mother tongue in the grade teaching cycle are within the scope of the curriculum requirements (the goals and the expected results prescribed by the curriculum), but almost all of them consider that the achievements could be improved primarily via in-service training of teachers.
13. The equipment of classrooms with teaching aids, and particularly with language corners, is not satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The in-school training is to be carried out through adequately balanced activities that would enable raising teachers' pedagogical and methods knowledge and skills for teaching literacy to students in Grades 1 - 3.
2. Training should discuss, promote and insist on active approach to teaching.
3. In the course of training, it is necessary to provide access to adequate manipulative aids –so that teachers could experience the need and the usefulness of their application.
4. Support and frequent cooperation with colleagues are to be provided to grade teachers (grades one through three) and particularly with mother tongue teachers from upper grades, getting familiar with the curricular for Macedonian language in the upper grades, mutual exchange of class visits and discussion about them, as well as sharing and frequent use of various resources of texts.
5. Representatives from UNICEF/BDE, are to organize regular meetings with the school management staff and the teachers taking part in the project, at which they would be informed about the dissemination, the course of activities and the expected outcomes. The openness for cooperation of the managing staff should be used in providing adequate support to teachers in applying the new-acquired knowledge.
6. To motivate schools and teachers for providing the needed teaching aids (related to the concepts of the Project) for each classroom. A large part of the needed materials could be made by the teachers in the school itself.
7. The BDE and the teachers – trainers, ought to monitor the development of attitudes for particular aspects in teaching which teachers do not estimate as important ones, but represent an important part of the goals of the project (as for example, the importance of the ability for retelling according pictures or for finding out and using various similar words).

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SUPPLEMENT

SUPPLEMENT 1:

GUIDE-LINES



GUIDE-LINES FOR THE RESEARCHER

PROJECT: LANGUAGE LITERACY IN THE EARLY GRADES

Related to the needs about *Perceiving the state of affairs prior to the beginning of the Project*, the researcher in each school is expected to conduct the following activities

1. To collect data about the school, the teachers and the students.
2. To conduct the testing on a sample of Grade 4 students.
3. To assign the Questionnaire for teachers.
4. To assign the Questionnaire for the school principal and the school professional workers (pedagogue, psychologist).
5. To write a report about the conducted activities.
6. To submit all the materials to the MCEC.

Furthermore, each of the stated activities is explained in details.

Skopje, October 2010



МАКЕДОНСКИ
ЦЕНТАР ЗА
ГРАЃАНСКО
ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ

Испитувањето го спроведува
Македонскиот центар за граѓанско образование

ARRANGEMENT OF THE RESEARCH

Inform the school two days prior to your visit to the school and explain to them the aim of your visit related to the needs on: *perceiving the state of affairs prior to the beginning of trainings in the UNICEF Project on "Language Literacy in the Early Grades "*.

- ▶ Explain to them that the data will be used by UNICEF in planning the activities related to the Project.
- ▶ Explain to them what activities you are expected to conduct (testing, assigning questionnaires) in the days of your visit.
- ▶ Explain to them how to make the sample of students for the testing (see Part 2: Testing Students).
- ▶ Explain to them how to make the sample of teachers (see Part 3: How to give answers to the questionnaire).
- ▶ Explain to them that the selected teachers from the Grade teaching phase are to be present on the scheduled time in order to fill in the Questionnaire for teachers.
- ▶ Explain to them that the school principal and one of the professional workers are to **be present** at least in one of the days during your visit in order to fill in the Questionnaire for the school principals and professional workers.
- ▶ Arrange the time schedule for each of the activities.
- ▶ You could send previously the list of data to be filled in by the school (provided the school has access to internet).

1. COLECTING DATA ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- ▶ The data about the school are to be entered in the form: **Data about the school** (Supplement 3.1.).
- ▶ You may collect the data during your visit, send them the form prior to your visit, so the school is to fill in it by itself and only in exceptional cases it could send it back to you after your visit

2. TESTING OF GRADE 4 STUDENTS (THE NEW MODEL)

- ▶ It is necessary to test 20 Grade 4 students.
- ▶ **Method of selection:** The total number of Grade 4 students studying in the building of the Central primary school is divided by 20 (the decimal number is rounded out to a whole number). The obtained number is the **N-step of selection**. Then a common list of all Grade 4 classes is made. Beginning with the number 2, every N-student is selected until you select 20 students (in case you come to the end you go on around from the beginning). For ex. there are 90 students. $90:20=4,5$. You round out to number 5. Beginning from number 2 every 5-th student is selected: 2,7,12,17,22.. until you select 20 students.

- In case the school has two languages of instruction, 10 students are selected for each language of instruction, in the same way as described above.
 - The selection of students is done one day prior to testing. The school is expected to develop a list of students' names, the class label and their number in the school register.
- ▶ **Testing students**
- The selected students are to do a test in reading and a test in writing. They are to be assigned to them in two consecutive days. The tests are placed in one test-book which consists of two parts.
- ▶ **Venue of testing:**
- **The selected students are placed in one classroom.**
 - In case the school has two languages of instruction, students with instruction in Macedonian Language and in Albanian Language, are tested separately (with 10 students in each of the two groups).
- ▶ **Time of testing:** The most appropriate is to administer the testing during the second class-hour.
- ▶ **Instruction for testing:**
- You explain to the students that they will be doing a test in mother tongue and that it is not to get a mark, but to see how children from different schools have learnt to read and write. You tell them that they are expected to do one test today and the other one on the next day. You explain to them that today they are going to do the test in reading that is found in the first part of the test-booklet.
 - You read the names of the students from the list, write the name of the student on the test, and then tell him/her where to sit down.
 - Explain to them how to respond and to note the answers (Supplement 3.2.). You ought to be sure that they have understood what you have said. Then, you may begin with the testing. During the testing, you could give them explanations only about the manner of giving responses (recording of answers). Concerning the items that are at the end of the test in writing, you may explain to that what is required by the item and help them to understand it better.
- ▶ **Duration of testing:**
- The two days' testing takes 50 minutes each day.
 - To those students that have completed doing the part of test for the corresponding day, you suggest to check their responses.
 - In case when in the course of 50 minutes time, more than half of the students have not come to the end of the test, you extend the time length for another 5-10 minutes (until you see that the majority of the students have come to the end). It is applied to both parts of the test.

- On the first day, those students that have completed doing the first part of the test are not supposed to go on doing the second part, and on the second day they are not supposed to go back to the part that they had been doing the previous day.
 - In the report about the testing, you note if you have extended the time length for testing.
- ▶ **Handing out, collecting and returning of the tests:**
- On the first day, after you have checked that all students from the list of selected students are seated down, you hand out to each student the test-booklet on which you had written down his/her name and surname. Students are doing only the first part of the test. When the testing time expires, you collect the tests from each student.
 - On the second day, you read the name of the student, that you had written down on the test, and hand out the test to the student. When all of the students are seated down you tell them to open the test-booklet at the second part – WRITING. After the completion of the testing you collect all the tests. In case when a student is absent on the second day, you record next to his/her name that he/she was absent.
 - You are expected to return back all the tests you have received, no matter where they are done or not.

3. THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

- ▶ The Questionnaire for teachers is to be filled in by 10 selected teachers from the grade teaching phase working in the Central primary school.
- ▶ **Method of selection:** The total number of classes in the grade teaching phase that provide instruction in the building of the Central primary school is divided by 10 (the decimal number is rounded up to a whole number). The obtained number is the **N-step of selection**.
- ▶ Then a common list of all classes is made in following way: I1 (a); I2 (b)... II1 (a); II2 (b)... III1 (a); III2 (b)... IV1 (a); IV2 (b)... Thus ordered they are denoted by numbers 1, 2, 3..
- ▶ Beginning from number 2 every N-th class is selected, until you select 10 classes (in case you come to the end of the list prior to selecting 10 classes, you go on around from the beginning). For ex, there 27 classes in the grade teaching phase. $27:10=2,7$. You round out the number 3. Beginning from number 2 you select every 3-rd class: 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 3. Teachers that provide instruction in the selected classes are selected to fill in the questionnaire. In case a class with all day instruction is selected then you select that teacher who is providing instruction in mother tongue.
 - In case the school has two languages of instruction, 5 teachers are selected for each language of instruction, in the same way as described above.
- ▶ **Venue:** Assemble all the selected teachers at one place (teachers' meeting room, classroom) where they would not be bothered.

- ▶ **Time schedule:** It is best to arrange that the filling in the questionnaires is to be done after finishing the classes.
- ▶ **Instructions:** Explain to the teachers the aim of providing responses to the *questionnaire on perceiving the state of affairs prior to the beginning of trainings in the UNICEF Project*. Explain to them that the responses are anonymous. Ask them to work independently, because we are interested in their individual responses. Secure that they work independently.
- ▶ **Time-frame:** About 50 minutes are needed to fill in the questionnaire. In case that more time is needed, wait until all teachers have completed filling in the questionnaire.
- ▶ **Returning back the questionnaires:** You are expected to return back all of the questionnaires that you have received, no matter whether they are filled in or not.

4. THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL WORKER

- ▶ The school principal and one professional worker (pedagogue or psychologist) are expected to provide responses to the Questionnaire for school principals and professional workers.
- ▶ **Time-schedule:** Arrange with the school principal and with the professional worker the suitable time for them to provide responses to the questionnaire. It is best to set it up in one of the two days while you are conducting the testing or assigning the filling in the questionnaires to teachers.
- ▶ **Instructions:** Explain to them the aim of collecting data from them on: perceiving the state of affairs prior to the beginning of trainings in the UNICEF Project. Ask them to provide responses to all of the questions. Leave the questionnaire to them in order to give responses to it by themselves.
- ▶ **Time-frame:** They will need 20 minutes to give responses to the questionnaire.
- ▶ **Collecting the questionnaires:** You are to collect back the questionnaires by the end of your stay at the school.

5. THE REPORT

- ▶ You are expected to note down all of the conducted activities related to the research.
 1. Previous preparations and agreements.
 2. Conducting the testing.
 3. Assigning filling in the questionnaires.
 4. School data.
 5. Estimate of the researcher about the successfulness and the limitations related to the collected data, and so on.

PROJECT: LANGUAGE LITERACY IN THE EARLY GRADES

SUPPLEMENT 1.1

DATA ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Primary school _____ Location _____

1. Number of classes and students in the grade-teaching phase:

	classes	students
In Macedonian Language of instruction		
In Albanian Language of instruction		
Total		

2. Education of parents of Grade 4 students

In Macedonian Language of instruction		
Education	mother	father
Not completed primary education		
Primary school		
Secondary school		
Higher and university education		

In Albanian Language of instruction		
Education	mother	father
Not completed primary education		
Primary school		
Secondary school		
Higher and university education		

SUPPLEMENT 1.2

INSTRUCTIONS TO DO THE TESTS

Tell the student the following information:

On the first day of the testing

Today and tomorrow you will be doing a test in mother tongue. It is not to get a mark. We want to see how much the children have learned to read and write.

The test contains two parts. Today you are to do the test on reading. You should read the texts carefully and give responses to the questions after each of the texts.

For each of the questions several responses are offered, and you are to choose the one you think that is correct. Encircle the letter preceding that response.

To some questions you are to write the response on the lines. In case it is not clear to you how to provide responses, raise your hand and I will explain it to you again.

You have time of one class hour to do the first part of the test. Close to the end I will remind you that you should finish completing it.

Now you may begin and work until you see the sign STOP. It will end the testing for today.

On the second day of the testing

Today you are going to do the test on writing. You have two tasks. Concerning the first task, after you have carefully read it, you are to provide responses as you did yesterday, by encircling the correct response. The second task is to write a written composition. At the end you are to provide responses to questions about you and your family.

In case there is something that is not clear to you, raise your hand and ask me. Today also, you have time of one class hour to do the test. Close to the end I will remind you.

Now find that part of the test which we had completed yesterday. Turn up the page. You see now the test on writing. Has everybody found it?

Now you may begin doing the test.

SUPPLEMENT 2.

Diagram of criteria and indicators for assessing a written essay – retelling upon given words

	0	1	2
Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No composition, no relationships between the parts, only 1–2 sentences are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak composition, there are 2 out of the 3 parts of the essay, small relationships between the parts (for ex. introductory part is longer than the main part). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well developed essay (introductory, main, final part), relationships between the parts, there is good distribution of words.
Clarity of the essay *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 50% of sentences are clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50–90% of sentences are clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90–100% of sentences are clear.
The use of given words in the essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no use or only 1 -2 of the given words are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one word from each category (characters, events, location) is used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the given words are used, though only one of the following given words (football, elastic band, folk and place –playground/park) is used in the categories of events and location.
Punctuation **	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 50% of punctuation marks are used correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctuation is 50–90% correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctuation is 90– 100% correct.
Orthography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 50% of the words are written correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthography of the words is 50–90% correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthography of the words is 90–100% correct.
Sentence construction ***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 50% of the sentences are grammatically correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50–90% of the sentences are grammatically correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90–100% of the sentences are grammatically correct.
Originality ****	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 2 indicators are present in the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2–4 indicators are present in the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4–5 indicators are present in the essay.

*Clarity – the thought is fully completed.

** Dot, colon, comma in counting, exclamation mark and question mark.

*** Grammatical structure of the sentence is good (correct use of verb forms, agreement between subject and predicate, agreement between the subject and its complements according to grammatical categories).

**** Use of adjectives, comparisons, direct addressing of characters, relating events to particular place and time, personal impression of events.

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

373.3:811'271.16(047.31)

ALEKSOVA, Anica

Language literacy in the early grades : report from the baseline study / [authors Anica Aleksova, Gorica Mickovska, Mitko Cheshlarov]. - Скопје : Канцеларија на УНИЦЕФ, 2014. - 88 стр. : табели ; 21 см

Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија: стр. 76-78. - Содржи и:
Prilozi

ISBN 978-9989-116-70-4

1. Mickovska, Gorica [автор] 2. Cheshlarov, Mitko [автор]
а) Основно образовани - Јазична писменост - Извештаи

COBISS.MK-ID 97523978

