# EMERGENT LITERACY BELIEFS IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CONTEXTS

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**Abstract**. This study aims to understand how a group of preschool/kindergarten teachers (*N* = 340) perceives and accomplishes linguistic and literacy oriented practices. Results show that, in a set of literacy and language tasks, teachers tend to value oral driven tasks and seldom engage in activities that relate to teaching the written language. This profile of educators is a reflection of prevalent views in pre-service teacher education and of some of the most common practices in Portuguese preschool and kindergarten classes (ages 3-6) and suggests that teachers have limited scientific knowledge of emergent literacy concepts. It seems that, despite being promoted to university training in the last 20 years, pre-service education does not yet reflect the state of the art in early childhood education. In a set of in-depth interviews (*N* = 8) we found a close association between the absence of literacy practices and the absence of pre-service specific knowledge about this subject. Participants that report consistent and regular linguistic and literacy oriented practices seem to perceive pre-service education as critical for their commitment to those practices. On the other hand, older teachers and teachers with lower training levels seem to undervalue specific literacy oriented tasks. The opposite seems to happen with younger and more educated teachers. Overall, our study suggests that the contents of pre-service and in-service education induce specific practices in preschool/kindergarten contexts, but it also suggests that this impact may be limited by socialization effects of dominant professional practices.
**Key words**: emergent literacy practices, literacy instruction, teacher training, pre-service teacher education, preschool/kindergarten

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**Chinese**
[Translation Shek Kam Tse]
学前读写萌发信念和幼稚园环境

摘要：本研究旨在了解一组学前/幼稚园教师(*N* = 340)如何理解并完成以语言读写为目的的实践活动。结果显示，面对一套语言读写任务教师倾向于重视口头任务而较少进行笔头语言教学。教师们的这个教学侧面反映了葡萄牙职前教师教育中普遍的观点以及学前和幼稚园班（3-6岁）中最普遍的教学行为，同时也暗示了教师们对有关读写萌发概念的科学知识掌握有限。尽管职前教育在过去20年来已提升到大学培训的层次，但似乎仍不能反映出早期儿童教育的发展现状和水平。从一系列深入采访（N=8）中，研究者发现读写实践的缺失和职前该科目的专门知识的缺失有密切关系。研究参与者中汇报有进行持续有规律的旨在实践语言和读写能力的似乎能感觉到职前教育对他们承担相关实践的关键性，年纪较大的及接受教育培训层次较低的教师似乎对专门的以读写能力为主的任务看得较不重，而职前的、教育水平更高的教师则情况相反。总的来说，研究说明职前与在职教育内容导致学前/幼稚园环境的专门实践行为，但同时也说明这种影响会受到主导专业实践的社会化作用所限制。

关键词：读写萌发实践，读写教学，教师培训，职前教师教育，学前/幼稚园

**Dutch**
[Translation Tanja Janssen]
TITEL. Opvattingen over ontluikende geletterdheid in de voorschool en kleuterschool.
SAMENVATTING. Doel van dit onderzoek is inzicht te verkrijgen in hoe een groep leerkrachten in de voorschool/kleuteronderwijs (*N* = 340) aankijkt tegen taal- en geletterdheidspraktijken en hoe zij die uitvoeren. Resultaten laten zien dat leerkrachten geneigd zijn om vooral waarde te hechten aan mondelinge taken en zelden activiteiten ondernemen die verbonden zijn met onderwijs in schriftelijke taal. Dit leerkrachtenprofiel weerspiegelt de heersende opvattingen in de lerarenopleiding en sommige van de meestvoorkomende praktijken in Portugese voorscholen en kleuterklassen (3- tot 6-jarigen) en geeft aan dat leerkrachten beperkte kennis hebben over wetenschappelijke concepten van ontluikende geletterdheid. Ondanks het feit dat de lerarenopleiding zich tot een universitaire opleiding ontwikkeld heeft in de laatste 20 jaar, weerspiegelt de opleiding nog niet "the state of the art" in vroegschoolse educatie. In een reeks diepte-interviews (*N* = 8) vonden we een nauw verband tussen de afwezigheid van geletterdheidspraktijken en het ontbreken van specifieke kennis over het onderwerp. Deelnemers die regelmatig talige en geletterdheidspraktijken zeggen toe te passen, lijken de lerarenopleiding te zien als cruciaal voor hun inzet voor deze praktijken. Oudere leerkrachten en leerkrachten met een lager opleidingsniveau lijken daarentegen de waarde van specifieke geletterdheidstaken te onderschatten. Bij jonge en hoger opgeleide leerkrachten lijkt juist het tegengestelde het geval. Al met al duidt ons onderzoek erop dat de inhoud van de lerarenopleiding en de nascholing specifieke praktijken teweegbrengt in voorschool en kleuteronderwijs, maar dat de impact beperkt kan zijn door socialisatie-effecten van dominante beroepspraktijken.
TREFWOORDEN: ontluikende geletterdheid, taalonderwijs, lerarenopleiding, voorschool/kleuteronderwijs.

**Finnish**
[Translation Katri Sarmavuori]
TITTELI. ALKAVAN LUKUTAIDON USKOMUKSET ESIKOULUN JA PÄIVÄKODIN KONTEKS-TISSA
ABSTRAKTI. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on ymmärtää, kuinka esikoululaiset/päiväkodin lapset (N = 340) havaitsevat ja toteuttavat kielellisiä ja lukemiseen suuntautuvia käytäntöjä. Tulokset osoittavat, että lukemis- ja kielitehtävissä opettajat suosivat suullisia tehtäviä ja ryhtyvät harvoin toimintoihin, jotka ovat yhteydessä kirjoitetun kielen opettamiseen. Tämä kasvattajien profiili on peräisin opettajien koulu-tuksesta ja Portugalin esikoulun ja päiväkodin (ikä 3—6) käytännöstä ja osoittaa, että opettajilla on vähän

tieteellistä tietoa kehittyvän luku- ja kirjoitustaidon käsitteistä. Näyttää siltä, että vaikka esikoulu on tuotu viimeisten 20 vuoden aikana yliopiston koulutuksen yhteyteen, esikouluopetus ei heijasta varhaisen lapsuuden kasvatuksen tilaa. Syvähaastatteluissa (N = 8) löytyi läheinen yhteys kirjallisten käytäntöjen ja aineen erityistiedon puuttumisen kesken. Osallistujat, jotka kertoivat jatkuvasta ja säännöllisistä kielellisistä ja kirjallisista orientointitehtävistä, näyttivät suhtautuvan esikoulukasvatukseen kriittisesti. Toisaalta vanhemmat opettajat ja alemman koulutustason opettajat eivät arvostaneet lukutaitoon suuntautuvia tehtäviä. Nuoremmilla ja enemmän koulutetuilla opettajilla tilanne oli päinvastainen. Kaiken kaikkiaan tutkimuksemme osoittaa, että esikoulun perus – ja täydennyskoulutuksen sisällöt tuottavat tiettyjä käytäntöjä, mutta se voi myös tuottaa vallitsevien ammattikäytäntöjen vuoksi rajoituksia.
AVAINSANAT: kehittyvän luku- ja kirjoitustaidon käytännöt, luku- ja kirjoitustaidon opetus, opettajankoulutus, esikoulu ja päiväkoti.

**French**
[Translation Laurence Pasa]
TITRE. LES REPRÉSENTATIONS DE L'ENTRÉE DANS L'ÉCRIT AU PRÉSCOLAIRE ET DANS LES JARDINS D'ENFANTS
RÉSUMÉ. Cette étude tente de comprendre comment un groupe d'enseignants du préscolaire/jardin d'enfants (N = 340) perçoit et accomplit les pratiques d'éveil à l'écrit. Les résultats montrent que, parmi un ensemble de tâches langagières, les enseignants ont tendance à favoriser les activités orales et ne s'engagent que rarement dans des activités relatives à l'enseignement de la langue écrite. Ce profil d'enseignants reflète des points de vues répandus dans la formation initiale des enseignants et quelques unes des pratiques les plus courantes dans le préscolaire portugais et les classes de jardin d'enfants (3-6 ans). Il suggère en outre que les enseignants ont une connaissance scientifique limitée des notions d'entrée dans l'écrit. Il semble donc que, malgré une prise en charge universitaire depuis ces 20 dernières années, la formation initiale des enseignants ne reflète pas encore l'état des connaissances acquises dans le champ de l'éducation de la petite enfance. Dans plusieurs entretiens (N = 8), nous avons relevé une relation étroite entre l'absence de pratiques d'éveil à l'écrit et l'absence de formation initiale spécifique sur ce sujet. Les enseignants qui déclarent mettre en œuvre des pratiques d'éveil à l'écrit pertinentes et régulières semblent porter un regard critique sur la formation initiale. D'autre part, les enseignants plus âgés et ceux ayant bénéficié d'une moindre formation semblent sous-estimer les activités d'éveil à l'écrit, tandis que le contraire s'observe pour les enseignants plus jeunes et davantage formés. De façon générale, notre étude suggère que le contenu de la formation initiale et continue engendre des pratiques spécifiques dans le préscolaire/jardin d'enfants, mais elle suggère aussi que cet impact puisse être limité par des effets de socialisation en lien avec les pratiques professionnelles dominantes.
MOTS-CLÉS : pratiques d'éveil à l'écrit, enseignement de la langue écrite, formation des enseignants, formation initiale, préscolaire/jardin d'enfants

**German**
[Translation Ulrike Bohle]
TITEL. Vorstellungen über emergente Lese- und Schreibfähigkeit im Kindergarten- und Vorschulkontext
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Diese Studie untersucht, wie eine Gruppe von Vorschul-/Kindergartenlehrerinnen (N = 340) Sprach- und Schriftlichkeitsübungen wahrnimmt und durchführt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass LehrerInnen/ErzieherInnen dazu tendieren, aus einer Reihe von Schriftlichkeits- und Sprachaufgaben die mündlich durchzuführenden Aufgaben bevorzugen und selten Aufgaben, die auf die Entwicklung schriftlicher Fähigkeiten zielen, verwenden. Dieser Befund spiegelt vorherrschende Auffassungen in der berufsvorbereitenden Lehrerbildung wie auch die weit verbreitete Praxis in portugiesischen Vorschul- und Kindergartenklassen (Alter 3-6) wider und legt nahe, dass LehrerInnen über begrenztes wissenschaftliches Wissen im Bereich von Konzepten emergenter Schriftlichkeit verfügen. Obwohl die Lehrerausbildung in den letzten 20 Jahren zu einem Hochschulstudium avancierte, scheint die „pre-service education" bisher nicht den gegenwärtigen Kenntnisstand in der frühen Kindheitserziehung widerzuspiegeln. In einer Reihe von Tiefeninterviews (N=8) konnten wir eine starke Verbindung zwischen der Abwesenheit von Schriftlichkeitsübungen und der Abwesenheit von spezifischem Wissen zu diesem Thema, speziell in der Berufsvorbereitung, beobachten. Teilnehmer, die von regelmäßigen und konsistenten Sprach- und Schriftlichkeitsübungen berichten, sehen die berufsvorbereitende Ausbildung als ausschlaggebend für ihre Bindung hieran an. Demgegenüber scheinen ältere LehrerInnen sowie LehrerInnen mit einem niedrigen Ausbildungsstand spezifische Schriftlichkeitsübungen unterzubewerten. Das Gegenteil ist bei jüngeren und besser ausgebildeten

LehrerInnen der Fall. Insgesamt legt unsere Studie den Schluss nahe, dass berufsvorbereitende und berufsbegleitende Ausbildung spezifische Praktiken in Kindergärten und Vorschulen induzieren, diese Effekte werden jedoch auch durch die sozialisatorischen Effekte der dominanten beruflichen Praxen eingeschränkt.

### Greek
[Translation Panatoya Papoulia Tzelepi]

Τίτλος. Πεποιθήσεις αναδυόμενου γραμματισμού στα πλαίσια της προσχολικής αγωγής

Περίληψη. Η μελέτη αυτή επιδιώκει να κατανοήσει πώς μια ομάδα δασκάλων νηπιαγωγείου προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης (N=340) αντιλαμβάνεται και υλοποιεί γλωσσικές πρακτικές προσανατολισμένες στο γραμματισμό. Τα αποτελέσματα δείχνουν ότι σε ένα σύνολο έργων γλώσσας και γραμματισμού, οι δάσκαλοι τείνουν να αξιολογούν περισσότερο τις προφορικές και σπάνια επιδίδονται σε δραστηριότητες διδασκαλίας της γραπτής γλώσσας. Αυτό το προφίλ εκπαιδευτικών καθρεφτίζει τις υπερισχύουσες απόψεις της εκπαίδευσης των εκπαιδευτικών και κάποιες από τις πιο κοινές πρακτικές των Πορτογαλικών τάξεων της προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης (3-6 ετών) και δείχνει ότι οι δάσκαλοι έχουν περιορισμένη επιστημονική γνώση των αντιλήψεων για την ανάδυση του γραμματισμού. Φαίνεται ότι, παρά το γεγονός ότι η εκπαίδευση τους προωθήθηκε στο Πανεπιστήμιο τα τελευταία 20 χρόνια, η εκπαίδευσητων εκπαιδευτικών δεν αντανακλά τις τελευταίες εξελίξειςστην εκπαίδευση της πρώτης παιδικής ηλικίας. Σε ένα σύνολο συνεντεύξεων εις βάθος (Νο8) βρέθηκε στενή σχέση μεταξύ της απουσίας πρακτικών γραμματισμού και της απουσίας ειδικών γνώσεων για αυτό το θέμα. Όσοι ανέφεραν συνεπείς και συχνές πρακτικές γλώσσας και γραμματισμού φαίνεται ότι θεωρούν την προεπαγγελματική τους εκπαίδευση κρίσιμη για την επιλογή αυτών των πρακτικών. Αφετέρου παλαιότεροι δάσκαλοι ή αυτοί με χαμηλότερο επίπεδο εκπαίδευσης, τείνουν να υποτιμούν έργα ειδικά προσανατολισμένα στο γραμματισμό. Το αντίθετο συμβαίνει με τους νεώτερους και καλύτερα εκπαιδευμένους. Γενικά η μελέτη μας προτείνει ότι το περιεχόμενο της προεπαγγελματικής και ενδοεπαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης προκαλεί ειδικές πρακτικές στο πλαίσιο της προσχολικής αγωγής, αλλά προτείνει επίσης ότι αυτή η επίδραση μπορεί να περιορίζεται από τις επιρροές της κοινωνικοποίησης των επικρατουσών επαγγελματικών πρακτικών.

### Italian
[Translation Manuela Delfino, Francesco Caviglia]

TITOLO. Concezioni sulla literacy emergente in contesti di pre-scuola e scuola materna

SOMMARIO. Questo contributo si pone l'obiettivo di capire come un piccolo gruppo di docenti della scuola dell'infanzia (N=340) percepisca e persegua pratiche orientate alla linguistica e alla literacy. I risultati mostrano che, in un gruppo di esercizi di literacy e lingua, i docenti tendono a apprezzare compiti legati alla dimensione orale e si impegnano raramente in attività connesse all'insegnamento della lingua scritta. Questo profilo di comportamento degli insegnanti riflette i punti di vista prevalenti nella formazione pre-servizio e in alcune delle pratiche più comuni nella didattica prescolare e di scuola materna (età 3-6) in Portogallo, e suggerisce che gli insegnanti hanno una conoscenza scientifica limitata dei concetti di 'literacy emergente'. Sembra che la formazione pre-servizio degli insegnanti, nonostante sia stata promossa a insegnamento universitario negli ultimi 20 anni, non rifletta ancora lo stato dell'arte per quanto riguarda l'educazione nella prima infanzia. In un gruppo di interviste approfondite (N=8) abbiamo ritrovato una stretta relazione tra l'assenza di pratiche di literacy e l'assenza di conoscenza specifica sull'argomento nella formazione pre-servizio. I partecipanti che riferiscono di praticare in modo coerente e regolare pratiche di linguistica e di literacy sembrano percepire che la loro formazione pre-servizio sia critica rispetto al loro impegno in tali pratiche. D'altro canto, insegnanti più anziani e insegnanti con un livello inferiore di formazione sembrano non cogliere il valore di pratiche specificamente orientate alla literacy. L'opposto sembra accadere con insegnanti più giovani e con una maggiore formazione. Nel complesso, il nostro studio suggerisce che i contesti della formazione pre-servizio e in servizio favoriscono determinate pratiche in contesti di scuola materna e pre-scuola, ma suggerisce anche che tale influenza possa essere limitata dagli effetti di socializzazione delle pratiche professionali dominanti.

**Polish**
[Translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]

TITUŁ. Przekonania na temat wczesnej umiejętności czytania i pisania w kontekście przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym

STRESZCZENIE. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zrozumienie, w jaki sposób grupy nauczycieli przedszkolnych i wczesnoszkolnych (N =340) postrzegają i realizują ćwiczenia językowe kształcące umiejętność czytania i pisania. Wyniki dowodzą, że w zestawie zadań poświęconych rozwijaniu języka oraz czytania i pisania nauczyciele mają tendencję do wyższego cenienia ćwiczeń ustnych i rzadko wykazują zainteresowanie działaniami, które odnoszą się do języka pisanego. Ten profil nauczycieli stanowi odzwierciedlenie szeroko rozpowszechnionych przekonań na temat kształcenia nauczycieli nauczania początkowego i ćwiczeń najczęściej stosowanych w portugalskich klasach przedszkolnych i wczesnoszkolnych (dzieci w wieku 3-6 lat) i sugeruje, że nauczyciele mają ograniczoną wiedzę naukową na temat wczesnej nauki czytania i pisania. Przedszkolna edukacja nie odbija nowoczesnych sposobów kształcenia, mimo że jest ściśle związana z kształceniem uniwersyteckim od 20 lat. Część wywiadów (N = 8) potwierdza bliski związek między brakiem ćwiczeń w pisaniu i czytaniu a niewystępowaniem tej specyficznej wiedzy w kształceniu zawodowym. Uczestnicy, którzy deklarowali konsekwentne i regularne ćwiczenia z zakresu kształcenia językowego i umiejętności czytania i pisania, otrzymali odpowiednie wykształcenie i było ono bardzo ważne dla ich nauczycielskiej praktyki. Z drugiej strony nauczyciele starsi i słabiej wykształceni nie doceniali – w przeciwieństwie do nauczycieli młodszych i lepiej wykształconych – roli specyficznych zadań zorientowanych na rozwijanie umiejętności czytania i pisania. Ogólnie nasze badania sugerują, że jakość wykształcenia podstawowego i uzupełniającego ma wpływ na specyficzne działania w przedszkolu i klasach początkowych, ale sugeruje także, że ten wpływ może być ograniczany poprzez dominujące zachowania zawodowe.

SLOWA-KLUCZE: ćwiczenia w początkowej nauce czytania i pisania; nauczanie czytania i pisania; kształcenie nauczycieli; wstępne kształcenie nauczycieli; przedszkole

**Portuguese**
[Translation Sara Leite]

TITULO. Crenças sobre literacia emergente em contextos de jardim-de-infância e ensino pré-escolar

RESUMO. Este estudo procura compreender de que forma um grupo de educadores do ensino pré-escolar (N = 340) concebe e leva a cabo práticas orientadas para a literacia e para o conhecimento da língua. Os resultados revelam que, num conjunto de tarefas linguísticas e de literacia, os educadores tendem a valorizar tarefas orais e raramente põem em prática actividades orientadas para o ensino da língua escrita. Este perfil de educadores reflecte uma visão dominante na formação inicial e algumas das práticas mais comuns nas salas de jardim-de-infância e ensino pré-escolar (idades 3-6), e sugere que os educadores têm um conhecimento limitado dos conceitos emergentes no que respeita à literacia. Parece que, apesar de ter sido promovida a formação universitária nos últimos 20 anos, a preparação dos educadores de infância ainda não reflecte os mais recentes desenvolvimentos na educação pré-escolar. Num conjunto de entrevistas aprofundadas (N = 8), descobrimos uma ligação estreita entre a ausência de práticas de literacia e a ausência de orientações específicas neste sentido durante a formação inicial. Os participantes que evidenciaram práticas linguísticas e de literacia consistentes e regulares parecem encarar a sua formação como tendo sido crucial para o seu envolvimento nessas práticas. Por outro lado, os educadores mais velhos, bem como aqueles com níveis de formação mais baixos, parecem subvalorizar as tarefas especificamente orientadas para a literacia. O contrário acontece com os educadores mais novos, ou com formação avançada. De uma maneira geral, o nosso estudo sugere que os conteúdos da formação incial e da formação contínua conduzem a práticas específicas nos contextos de educação pré-escolar, mas também sugere que este impacto pode ser limitado pelos efeitos de socialização das práticas profissionais dominantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: práticas de literacia emergentes, instrução em literacia, formação de professores, formação inicial, ensino pré-escolar, jardim-de-infância.

**Spanish**
[Translation Ingrid Marquez]

TÍTULO. Creencias emergentes sobre la destreza en lecto-escritura a nivel preescolar y de kindergarten

RESUMEN. Este estudio pretende esclarecer cómo un grupo de maestros de preescolar/kindergarten (N = 340) percibe y cumple con las prácticas orientadas a la destreza lingüística y a la habilidad en lecto-escritura. Los resultados demuestran que, para un conjunto de actividades de habilidad en lecto-escritura

y de lenguaje, los maestros suelen valorar las que se enfocan en la habilidad oral, pocas veces fomentando las que se relacionan con el idioma escrito. Este perfil de educadores refleja las perspectivas prevalecientes en la educación normal preparativa, igual que algunas de las prácticas más comunes en los salones preescolares y de kindergarten en Portugal (edades 3-6), sugiriendo que los maestros manejan conocimientos científicos limitados en cuanto a conceptos de la habilidad en la lecto-escritura emergente. Parece que a pesar de que se ha promovido el entrenamiento universitario durante los últimos veinte años, la educación normal preparativa todavía no cumple con los requisitos educativos en niños muy jóvenes. En un conjunto de entrevistas detalladas ($N = 8$), encontramos que existe una relación estrecha entre la ausencia de las prácticas adecuadas de habilidad en lecto-escritura y el escaso conocimiento del tema impartido en la carrera normal. Los participantes que reportan prácticas lingüísticas constantes parecen percibir la educación normal como crítica para asegurar que dichas prácticas que hagan. Por otro lado, los maestros de mayor edad y los que tienen niveles menores de preparación parecen subvaluar las actividades que se orientan específicamente a la habilidad en lecto-escritura. Lo opuesto parece ocurrir con los maestros más jóvenes y mejor preparados. En general, nuestro estudio sugiere que los contenidos vistos en la educación normal y la que se imparte durante el servicio llevan a prácticas específicas en la enseñanza preescolar y de kindergarten, pero también que su impacto puede resultar disminuido por los efectos de la socialización y las prácticas dominantes en esta profesión.

PALABRAS CLAVE: prácticas de habilidad en lecto-escritura emergente, instrucción en la habilidad en lecto-escritura, educación normal pre-servicio, preescolar/kindergarten.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing practices are infrequent in Portuguese preschool/kindergarten classes, with the possible exception of *João de Deus* schools where children are regularly taught how to read by the age of 5. There may be several reasons for this. On one hand, preschool/kindergarten teachers, mainly the older ones, may be reluctant to engage in reading and writing practices because for many years they have been taught in their pre-service training that written materials should be avoided in classrooms since reading and writing were considered primary grade tasks. As a result, some (or most) preschool/kindergarten teachers perceive reading and writing related practices as an anticipation of what should be covered beginning in first grade and reject them. On the other hand, as a result of their pre-service training and of dominant preschool/kindergarten practices they may feel uncomfortable with what they perceive as direct teaching of behaviours. In fact, in Portugal direct teaching is quite unpopular in most teachers' education schools and universities (Lopes, 2005).

It is also possible that some (or most) teachers' practices are mainly influenced by broad developmental psychology concepts, and by "developmental appropriate practices" that do not seem to fit well with the teaching of specific skills (Fernandes, 2005). Also, most teachers' pre-service education programs overemphasize socialization as the main goal of preschool/kindergarten education and this may not be in agreement with compulsory schooling and/or interfere with natural child development.

Also, language activities are poorly defined and operationalized in Portuguese preschool/kindergarten programs. Indeed, there are no preschool/kindergarten programs for public schools. There is only one official document, published by the Ministry of Education, (Silva, 1997) that sets general curriculum guidelines for some content areas, but no specific programs have been developed from those guidelines. This explains the wide variety of practices and may also explain why

most preschool/kindergarten practices lack specificity. While Portuguese primary school teachers are aware of the contents they must teach, some (or most) pre-school/kindergarten teachers do not agree on whether there should be a set content to be taught at the preschool level and they may even reject the idea that their role is to "teach" (Fernandes, 2005).

The formerly accepted concept of *reading readiness* seems to fit the "wait and see" perspective (Foorman, Francis, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1997). According to this view, children will learn to read when they are ready. However, as Foorman et al. (1997) and McGuiness (2005) indicate, development in itself is not enough since the written code is a cultural product and learning to read implies knowing the code which must be intentionally taught. When a child faces problems in code learning, to "wait" for maturation usually means that he or she will progressively fall behind as time goes by.

There are no studies in Portugal about whether preschool/kindergarten teachers are familiar with the former concept of *reading readiness* or if this concept has an influence on their language related activities (Fernandes, 2004). A close look at university programs for preschool/kindergarten teachers does not answer this question. In some programs, language seems to be addressed as "linguistics" while in other programs it is indirectly addressed in children's literature courses. Therefore there is no basis to assert that Portuguese preschool/kindergarten teachers' language related activities are influenced by the concept of reading readiness. It seems that practices may be more directly influenced by traditional preschool activities and by the curriculum document published by the Ministry of Education, which sets some general guidelines for broad areas like, "oral language and print", "math", and "music". There are no specific guidelines in the document for oral language development and most of the section on "oral language and print" is dedicated to print knowledge and reading aloud to children.

Even if the concept of reading readiness is not widely known by pre-school/kindergarten teachers, the idea of a clear separation of preschool/kindergarten from primary school, of a *before* and *after* first grade and of the potential damage of teaching reading/writing related contents in preschool/kindergarten, seems fairly common (Viana & Teixeira, 2002).

Worldwide, the concept of reading readiness is not in use any more. It has been replaced by the newer concept of emergent literacy. This concept carries with it the notion of a developmental process associated with literacy acquisition and also the idea that during the preschool/kindergarten years there are several forms of literacy behaviours. Therefore, literacy may be intentionally stimulated well before first grade (Gunn, Simmons & Kameenui, 1998; Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

Although emergent literacy has been conceptualized in a number ways, it is commonly presented as a combination of print awareness (e.g., understanding print direction, knowing what print is for, distinguishing numbers or pictures from letters, knowing the function of blank spaces, knowing the structure of a book, etc.), phonological awareness (e.g., awareness of sounds in words, ability to manipulate word sound, to segment words, etc.), oral language skills (vocabulary knowledge) and letter knowledge (either recognizing printed letters or knowing how to write them).

Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) present a model that considers what they call *inside-out* (print awareness, phonological awareness and emergent writing) and *outside-in* dimensions of emergent literacy (receptive and expressive vocabulary, semantic knowledge, world knowledge). The former directly relates to print and reading; the latter refers to features that facilitate reading and/or are stimulated by reading but are only indirectly related to it. Indeed, the latter has a greater impact on (later) reading comprehension than on decoding skills (Adams, 1990, Adams, Treiman, & Pressley, 1998; Cunningham, 1993; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Vellutino & Scanlon, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

Currently, much of the research on preschool/kindergarten programs and curriculum in the language area is structured around the concept of emergent literacy (Connor, Morrison, & Slominski, 2006; Dickinson, & Sprague, 2001; Gambrell, Morrow, Pressley, & Guthrie, 2006; Roskos & Neuman, 2001). However, this may be true only for countries where preschool/kindergarten research has a longer tradition. It is far from clear that this happens in Portugal (Fernandes, 2006). The rare works on the subject suggest that emergent literacy is scarcely familiar to preschool/kindergarten teachers and that there is a significant opposition to activities that are perceived as anticipating letter knowledge or school related contents (Viana & Teixeira, 2002).

The present study has two main objectives: (a) to find out whether participants (340 preschool teachers) carry out activities related to emergent literacy skills and, (b) to determine the nature of these activities and their frequency; which (emergent literacy) skills teachers think children should exhibit by the end of preschool and how and where the teachers acquired skills in this area (pre-service training, in-service training, workplace, colleagues, etc.)

## METHODS

### 2.1. Participants

The study had two phases. In the first phase, participants were preschool/kindergarten teachers with varying levels of teacher education training who received their education degrees in schools with different educational philosophies.

*Table 1. Teachers' profile:*
*Level of teacher education and number of years as a teacher*

| Teacher education level | N | % | Number of Years as a Teacher | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | SD |
| Bachelor´s 4U | 25 | 7,4 | 10 | 32 | 18,96 | 4,48 |
| Complementary Program 3C + 1U | 167 | 49,1 | 10 | 30 | 19,16 | 3,44 |
| Certification Diploma – 3C | 148 | 43,5 | 0 | 14 | 6,89 | 4,09 |
| Total | 340 | 100,0 | 0 | 32 | 13,51 | 6,96 |

All participants were female, which means that in Portugal, like in other countries, this profession continues to be a female dominant profession. In our sample, a 3 year Certification degree represents the lowest level of teacher education while a university degree – a 4 year Bachelor's – represents the highest. Not surprisingly, teachers with a university degree are significantly younger, since university degrees for preschool teachers first appeared in Portugal in the mid 1990s. 72% of the participants took their initial university degrees in private schools while 28% did so in public schools. These schools are spread out from the north to the south of the country. However only 3% of participants came from schools situated in the eastern part of the country (the poorest and most inhabited region in Portugal).

In the second phase of the study, 8 teachers participated in a structured interview. No selection criteria were possible other than personal availability to participate in the interviews. All the interviewed teachers completed a three year Certification Diploma program for their initial professional training at least 15 years ago and all obtained further training (a one year complementary program) to get a university degree. Thus, all the interviewed teachers had a Bachelor's degree in preschool teaching (ages 0-6) awarded by a university. Hereafter we will refer to the three different types of education degrees as follows: **3C** refers to a three year Certification Diploma, **3C + 1U** refers to a Certification Diploma plus one year of complementary studies at a university, and **4U** to a four year Bachelor's degree program completed at a University.

*Table 2 - Profile of interviewed teachers*

| Subjects | School where Certification Diploma was obtained | Years Working as a Certified Teacher | Schools where Complementary Program was awarded | Years Working after Complementary Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | ESM | 22 | ISET | 1 |
| S2 | EF | 18 | ESEJP | 2 |
| S3 | EPF | 18 | ESEJP | 0 |
| S4 | EMPB | 17 | ESEJP | 1 |
| S5 | EPF | 20 | ESESM | 1 |
| S6 | EPF | 19 | ESEPF | 4 |
| S7 | EJD | 20 | ESEJD | 3 |
| S8 | EMU | 15 | ESEL | 3 |

ESM – Escola Santa Mafalda; EF – Escola de Famalicão; EMPB – Escola Magistério Primário de Braga; EPF – Escola Paula Frassinetti; EJD – Escola João de Deus; EMU – Escola Maria Ulrich; ISET-Instituto Superior de Educação e Trabalho; ESEJP- Escola Superior de Educação Jean Piaget; ESESM-Escola Superior de Educação de Santa Maria; ESEPF- Escola Superior de Educação Paula Frassinetti; ESEJD – Escola Superior de Educação de João de Deus; ESEL- Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa.

*2.2. Instruments and Procedures*

Data were collected by means of (1) a questionnaire that was distributed in schools by the researchers and (2) a structured interview to a group of selected teachers.

*2.2.1. Questionnaire*

We developed a 22-item questionnaire entitled *Emergent Literacy Practices in the Preschool Context* that asked teachers about their emergent literacy knowledge and practices. The rate of return of the questionnaires was about 70%. The questionnaire addressed a number of print awareness related activities (including phonological skills, print knowledge, and emergent reading and writing tasks) and oral language related activities. Two main factors, PAA (print awareness activities) and OLA (oral language activities), were extracted by a factor analysis of the 22 items, explaining 61% of the variance.

*2.2.2. Interview*

The structured interviews had three main purposes: (a) to have a deeper knowledge of how teachers carry out (if at all) emergent literacy related activities; (b) to ascertain what teachers think children should know (in the area of emergent literacy) when they leave preschool; and (3) to have information about where teachers learned (if at all) about emergent literacy related practices. In order to answer these questions, three main questions guided our inquiry:

Q1: How do you carry out activities related to … [explicitly refer vocabulary and language knowledge, phonological awareness, reading to children, writing, print knowledge and letter knowledge]. Four categories were defined for this question: Phonological Awareness (PA), Print Knowledge (PK), Emergent Reading/Writing (ERW) and Oral Language Knowledge (OLK). Subcategories for each of these categories were considered when there were specific variations of categories' related activities. See Appendix A for a sample of the classification system for this question.

Q2: What knowledge do you think children should have about phonological awareness, print, emergent reading/writing or oral language when they leave preschool? Previous categories - Phonological Awareness, Print Knowledge, Emergent Reading/Writing, and Oral Language Knowledge - were used for the classification system. References outside these domains were classified as *Other Objectives* (OO). Explicit refusals for these domains as preschools objectives were classified as N followed by the code of the category (e.g. NPA means that the teacher is of the opinion that children do not need specific knowledge in this domain). See Appendix B for a sample of the classification system for this question.

 Q3: How and where did you learn to do that? Two main categories were considered: Knowledge from Experience (KE) and Knowledge from Teacher Education Training (KTET). KTET has four subcategories: Knowledge from Specialized Literature (KSL), Knowledge from Beginning Teacher Education (KBTE), Knowledge from Complimentary Teacher Education (KCTE), and Knowledge from the Professional Teacher Education System (KPTES). See Appendix C for a sample of the classification system for this question.

 Categories for the classification system were created according to the following criteria: (a) each time the domain was identified in the corresponding context unit (i.e. answer to the question; e. g. KTET if the subject said "…*I learned this in my beginning Teacher Education Program*…") the category was marked; (b) each time the individual explicitly referred not being aware of the domain or not having classroom activities in that domain, the category would be marked preceded by N (e.g. NPA if the subject said "…*in my classroom we do not use print at all*…"); (c) each time the individual referred to a domain strange to the context unit an *Error* (*Error Category*) would be marked; (d) omissions were not coded.
    The 8 interviews were analyzed by 5 trained observers to establish a reliability coefficient. Inter-rater agreement for the overall categories was 93.69% and for most of the categories it was above 80%. Error ER/W was the only category with a very low inter-observer agreement (see Table 6).

*Table 6 - Inter-rater agreement for classification categories*

| Categories | Na | Nd | Agreement % | Categories | Na | Nd | Agreement % | Categories | Na | Nd | Agreement % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PK | 27 | 1 | 93 | NPK | 10 | 1 | 91 | ErroPK | 4 | 1 | 80,00 |
| PA | 11 | 2 | 83 | N PA | 5 | 0 | 92 | Erro PA | 0 | 0 | - |
| OLK | 17 | 1 | 91 | N OLK | 2 | 0 | 90 | Erro OLK | 0 | 0 | - |
| ER/W | 9 | 2 | 89 | N ER/W | 8 | 2 | 87 | Erro ER/W | 1 | 2 | 33,33 |
| G PK | 4 | 0 | 95 | N O PK | 11 | 0 | 100 | | | | |
| GPA | 1 | 0 | 80 | N GPA | 0 | 0 | - | | | | |
| GOLK | 11 | 0 | 90 | N GOLK | 2 | 0 | 100 | | | | |
| G ER/W | 3 | 0 | 100 | N GER/W | 9 | 0 | 96 | | | | |
| OG | 12 | 0 | 100 | | | | | | | | |
| KTE | 15 | 1 | 96 | N KTE | 8 | 0 | 92 | | | | |
| KE | 6 | 0 | 97 | N ke | 0 | 0 | - | | | | |

Global agreement rate for all categories: 93,69%
*Note*: Na – number of agreements; Nd – number of disagreements; PK – Print Knowledge; NPK – Non Print Knowledge; ErrorPK – Error Print Knowledge; PA – Phonological Awareness; NPA – Non Phonological Awareness; ErrorPA – Error Phonological Awareness; OLK – Oral Language Knowledge; NonOLK – Non Oral Language Knowledge; ErrorOLK – Error Oral Language Knowledge; ER/W – Emergent Reading/Writing; NER/W – Non Emergent Reading/Writing; Error ER/W – Error Emergent Reading/Writing; GPK - Goal - Print Knowledge; NOPK – Non Goal - Print Knowledge; GPA – Goal - Phonological Awareness ; NGPA – Non Goal - Phonological Awareness; GOLK – Goal - Oral Language Knowledge; NGOLK – Non Goal Oral Language Knowledge; GER/W – Goal Emergent Reading/Writing; NGLK – Non Goal Emergent Reading/Writing; OG - Other Goals; KTE – Knowledge from Teacher Education; NKTE – Knowledge from other sources than Teacher Education; KE – Knowledge from experience; NKE – Knowledge not originated from experience**.**

## 4. RESULTS

Results from the Questionnaire of Activities show that items from the Oral Language Activities subscale have a significantly higher median than Print Awareness Activities (Median OLA = 2.20; Median PAA = 1.63) ($t(350) = 15.95$, $p < .000$) and lower variance. We are not sure if this means that participants engage more in Oral Language Activities than in Print Awareness Activities or if they just have problems identifying these activities. It may be so since when we pre-tested the questionnaire through a process of "talked reflection" with preschool teachers, almost all of them referred to print related activities as "strange" and unusual in preschools.

Participants were divided into three groups according to their level of teacher education, to search for differences in reported activities (through the questionnaire): the first group included individuals with a Certification Diploma ($n = 24$), the second group included individuals with a **3C + 1U** University degree ($n = 156$) and the third group was formed by individuals with a **4U** University degree ($n = 138$). Individuals from the first group were predominantly older (with more than 10 years of professional experience) and individuals from the third group were the youngest.

Nonparametric Median Test results show that groups significantly differ in both factors ($\chi^2$ (3, $N = 318$) = 26, 92, $p < .000$ for Oral language activities) ($\chi_2$ (3, $N = 318$) = 11.67, $p < .003$ for Print Related Activities). Descriptive statistics show (see Table 3) that for teachers with a Certification Diploma (lowest qualification/older people) Oral Language Activities (OLA) are much more familiar practices than Print Related Activities (PRA).

*Table 3- Median test for Teacher Education Level X Oral Language Activities & Print Related Activities*

|  |  | Teacher Education Level | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Certification Diploma 3C | Bachelor + Complementary Program 3C + 1U | Bachelor 4U |
| OLA | > Median | 21 | 50 | 60 |
|  | <= Median | 3 | 106 | 78 |
| PRA | > Median | 5 | 86 | 60 |
|  | <= Median | 19 | 70 | 78 |

*Note: OLA – Oral Language Activities; PAA – Print Related Activities*

On the contrary, teachers with a university degree are quite stable about Oral Language Activities and Print Related Activities and teachers with a **3C + 1U** degree are right in the middle of the other two groups. We may think of some influence of the

kind of teacher education in these results since when teachers obtained their Certification Diploma, print related activities were unpopular and even considered undesirable. However, we must be careful in drawing these conclusions because socialization contexts may have a strong influence on classroom practices and it is difficult to separate effects.

We also tested the hypothesis that teachers differ in Oral Language Activities and/or Print Related Activities according to the specific school of education where they took their degrees. To test this hypothesis, we chose participants from the 3 most representative institutions in preschool teacher education in Portugal: Escola Superior de Educação João de Deus ($n = 37$), Escola Superior de Educação Jean Piaget ($n = 47$) and Escola Superior de Educação Paula Frassinetti ($n = 34$) (see Table 4). Against our expectation the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no differences ($\chi^2$ (2, $N = 113$) = 3.80, $p = ns$, for Oral Language Activities) ($\chi^2$ (2, $N=113$) = .51, $p = ns$, for Print related activities).

*Table 4 - Kruskall-Wallis test for Teacher Education School X Oral Language Activities-Print Related Activities*

|  | Teacher Education School | N | Mean Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| OLA | Escola Superior de Educação João de Deus | 31 | 59,60 |
|  | Escola Superior de Educação Jean Piaget | 34 | 63,96 |
|  | Escola Superior de Educação Paula Frassinetti | 48 | 50,40 |
|  | Total | 113 |  |
| PRA | Escola Superior de Educação João de Deus | 31 | 59,06 |
|  | Escola Superior de Educação Jean Piaget | 34 | 58,71 |
|  | Escola Superior de Educação Paula Frassinetti | 48 | 54,46 |
|  | Total | 113 |  |

*Note: OLA – Oral Language Activities; PRA – Print Related Activities*

But when we tested the level of teacher education for these specific schools (we only tested a **3C + 1U** against a **4U** degree because none of our participants from these schools held a Certification Diploma) differences emerged (see Table 5). This suggests that, for our participants, the level of education may have a stronger effect than the school where they received their education. This is somehow surprising, especially for Escola Superior de Educação João de Deus which has a traditionally strong emphasis on print activities and where children are taught reading and writing at the age of 5. Nowadays the other schools of teacher education are now emphasiz-

ing emergent literacy skills in a similar way to what João de Deus schools have been doing for many years. This may explain why we found no differences between the literacy practices of teachers from different teacher training schools.

*Table 5 - Kruskall-Wallis test for Teacher Education Level X*
*Oral Language Activities & Print Related Activities*

|     | Teacher Education Level | N | Mean Rank |
|-----|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| OLA | Certification Diploma + Complementary Program 3C+ 1U | 53 | 44,75 |
|     | Bachelor – 4 U | 60 | 67,82 |
|     | Total | 113 | |
| PRA | Certification Diploma + Complementary Program 3C+ 1U | 53 | 48,11 |
|     | Bachelor – 4 U | 60 | 64,85 |
|     | Total | 113 | |

*Note: OLA – Oral Language Activities; PAA – Print Related Activities*

To specify the kind of activities, goals and (formal or informal) teacher education, we conducted structured interviews with 8 teachers. From those interviews, we underscore the following:

- All participants identify language knowledge as a goal of pre-school/kindergarten education. However, they formulate it in broad terms (e.g. "I think the child must know how to express his feelings and must understand others..."). Only one participant described exactly what this language knowledge should encompass ("They must correctly describe a picture in a book...").
- Only two participants explicitly assumed not developing any activity in the language knowledge domain while only 3 out of 8 made any specific reference to oral language activities within this domain (e.g. "I do not think of it much..." We don't develop much of those activities in classroom..."). This does not necessarily mean that they do not practice other language or print related activities. They just do not mention it.
- Print activities are associated with activity planning, language experience, print records, daily routine management, developing of materials and eventually name printing (e.g. "We use daily records..."; "I use to write (just in front of them) what each of them will do next..."; "We have a lot of print records in the classroom, e.g., a record for classroom tasks; ""We have print cards with their names and photos..."; "I usually read aloud the day of the week...Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...")
- Reading aloud is used in several ways and with several goals: as a way to stimulate oral stories, to look at pictures, and to develop vocabulary ("I use reading a lot. I read to them... and I show them what I'm reading"; "I read a lot about

animals...about dinosaurs"; "I read to them as a way of developing their vocabulary...they learn a lot of words from books."; "I read and then we talk about the story..."). However, almost half of the teachers assume they don't read much in the classroom (e.g. "I usually tell stories. I don't like reading... real reading...."; "For me the book is just a support for pictures and stories. I know the stories quite well. I don't need the book much..."; "Sometimes I read but there's a lot of difficult words in books and children don't understand them. I do not appreciate that..."

- Letter knowledge teaching was refuted by 5 teachers since they do not see it as a preschool/kindergarten goal (e.g. "Letter knowledge? No, I don't use that kind of things..."; "No, no. I'm even against it...if they learn letters and numbers they lose other things...". Only one teacher sets it as a personal goal ("In my activities I explore letters and the reading of some words...").

- Emergent literacy reading/writing activities are refused or considered odd by 3 teachers ("I refuse to teach them how to write their names..."; "I think it is not important for them to know how to write their names..."; "That is not a priority for me..."; "I think they cannot do those things...besides that is "teaching" and preschool is not for teaching"). The other teachers have rough formulations of activities in this domain (e.g. "Children try to write their names..."; "They already read words as whole units! Why not teach them what the component parts of words are"?).

- The planning of Phonological Awareness activities is only intentionally used by one of the teachers ("I think it is important for them to know syllables"). These include manipulating rhymes, syllables, and phonemes in a systematic way. However, other teachers say that they may explore awareness of words, rhymes and some orthographic regularities in words ("I have CDs with animal sounds and they love it..."; "I usually play with rhymes...and with initial sounds of words. I try to get them to guess if a word begins with the same sound of another word...").

- When asked about what children should know about language at the end of preschool/kindergarten (ages 5-6), 3 teachers referred to domains unrelated to language development, like "personal autonomy" or "motor skills" ("They must be autonomous with their things...They must have rules and know how to relate with others"; "It is important for them to know how to draw...").

- When asked about where they had learned about the language and/or print related activities they engage in, 6 teachers mentioned *experience* as their main source of knowledge ("It is experience that teaches us..."; "Time as a preschool teacher is a great life school..."; "I think most of these things are natural in preschool teachers...I learned a lot with time and experience"). Three out of eight said that beginning teacher education also had an influence on their practices (e.g. "I think I learned a few things in beginning teacher education...However I think that things are what they are just because they must be like this...") but only one out of eight clearly stated that beginning teacher education and a one year complementary university training was important ("I learned a lot in beginning teacher education. Some years later I took a program to have a licen-

sure, and I also learned other important things...I had a course on language...we talked about the reading process and about preschool activities that could develop reading... ”) .

- Finally, most teachers are critical of the existing system of in-service professional development for teachers. They perceive it as "non-existent" or, at best, not useful in learning how to teach language, print related concepts and relevant educational topics (e.g. "I never had an in-service course on language..."; "In-service teacher education? There is nothing about emergent literacy or something like that..."; "Most teacher educators have no experience, they have never been with a child, they don't know what woks or what doesn't work...".

## DISCUSSION

Results from our study motivate some reflections on how and why preschool/kindergarten Portuguese teachers carry out language and print related activities in preschool/kindergarten and about whether they recognize activities and goals related to the concept of *Emergent Literacy*.

First, it is clear that teachers both recognize and implement much more oral language activities than reading and writing emergent literacy activities. Sénéchal, Le-Fevre, Smith-Chant, and Colton (2001) stress that this is understandable since oral language activities can be explored in the context of rather informal contexts of interpersonal relationships while letter knowledge, mapping sound to words and reading or printing must have a high structure and intentionality (Sénéchal et al., 2001; Whitehurst, 2001).

Beatty (1995) and Schickedanz (1994) believe that the primacy of socio-emotional development is in line with a strong tradition in preschool/kindergarten teacher education that concurrently deemphasizes letter recognition, writing or word sound manipulation, despite their significance for learning to read (Adams, 1990; Ehri, 1997; Gunn, Simmons & Kameenui, 1998). We believe that teachers tend to embrace models that follow a developmental and child-centred philosophy. According to these models, children learn according to their personal interests and goals. The teacher's role should be one of making materials available for exploration, managing group relations and using problem solving strategies to resolve conflicts (Whitehurst, 2001).

In one of the few studies conducted in Portugal about the relevance of preschool/kindergarten for (future) learning to read, Guimarães and Youngman (1995) found that although 78% of preschool/kindergarten teachers perceive emergent literacy as very important, 66% state that emergent literacy skills should only be taught to children who already have some reading or writing knowledge. When asked to rank knowledge and skills according to their importance for learning to read and write, participants in the study ranked code related skills and knowledge in the last positions (Letter Knowledge 15º/15; Phonological Awareness 14º/15; Print Knowledge 13º/15; Curiosity for Writing and Spelling 12º/15). On the other hand, Oral Language (1º/15), Correct Speech (2º/15) and Specific Motor Skills get the first positions in the rank.

Although there are no theoretical or empirical reasons to consider Oral Language activities and Print Related Activities to be incompatible, the significant difference found in our results between Oral Language Activities and Print Related Activities carried out by our participants may suggest the contrary. This seem to be more in line with the tradition of the "reading wars" (Chall, 1983a, 1983b, 1992) with advocates of whole language in one side and advocates of phonics in the other. Interestingly, for some (e.g., Hohmann & Weikart, 1997) the concept of "emergent literacy" itself is the natural product of the approximation of whole language and phonics; for others (e.g., Kauffman & Lopes, 2007) it is no more than a cosmetic for the failure of whole language.

When we consider the educational level of the participants, significant differences emerge on Oral Language and Print Related activities. Teachers with the lowest level of teacher training – a Certification Diploma - are usually older and engaged less in PRA than teachers with a Certification Diploma + Complementary Course and even less than teachers with a University degree (usually the youngest teachers). However, this is not necessarily the only variable that can explain these differences. The moment of beginning teacher education may be as important as the level of education. When teachers with a Certificate got their University degrees it was rather unusual to hear about "emergent literacy." In Portugal, at least, the concept itself was not well established before the early nineties.

Although the number of interviewed teachers is very small ($n = 8$) results of interviews seem consistent with results on the questionnaire ($n = 340$), namely the greater familiarity with Oral Language as a whole than with Print Related Activities. Interviewed teachers also indicate that in-service teacher education does not have a significant effect in their practices. And, most of all, they stress the relevance of "experience" which is presented as more important than teacher education. The belief in the superiority of experience over education is common in less skilled professionals but it is also present in more skilled professions like preschool/kindergarten teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996; Kennedy, 1997; Raths, 2001; Spodek, 1988). This socialization effect may help explain the most unexpected result of our study: the lack of differences in OLA and PRA according to the school where teachers got their educational credentials. Why did we fail to find significant differences between schools of education? Why aren't they reflected in daily practices?

We envision two possible hypotheses. On one hand, it may be that differences between schools diminish since most teacher education schools now teach students (future teachers) emergent literacy and related concepts. But if this were the case, our teachers should engage more in Print Related Activities, at least at a level near that of Oral Language Activities. The other hypothesis, that seems more plausible to us, is that the hypothetical effects of beginning teacher education are minimized by socialization effects that result from practices and professional representations often conflicting with science and research findings (Kauffman & Lopes, 2007). Pajares (1993), for example, considers that preschool/kindergarten teachers' beliefs represent a *"status quo"* of early childhood practices, more than a "state-of-the-art".

In sum, results show that emergent literacy related activities are not part of most of our participants' daily routines. Interviewed teachers do not even perceive them as particularly necessary or important. At best, teachers carry out oral language re-

lated activities in an unstructured or unsystematic way. Further research is needed to understand if this has to do with teacher education. It may be the case that language and literacy still do not receive as much attention as other domains in university courses or that there are difficulties in filling the gap between theory and practice, or both. At any rate, our findings suggest that we cannot easily separate the effect of socialization from that of teacher training.

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APPENDICES: CLASSIFICATION  SCHEMES FOR INTERVIEW ANSWERS

APPENDIX A: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR THE CATEGORY EMER-
GENT READING/WRITING

| Category | Name. Description. Sample | SubCategory | Description. Sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| ER/W | *Emergent Reading/Writing* | ER/W(1) | Emergent Reading/Writing type 1 |
| Description of emergent reading/writing oriented activities<br>Non-specific description of activity<br>*"We read…", "we write…"* | | Description of activities such as recognition of common word, logotypes<br>"We read words they already know… "*… product labels, etc."* | |
| | | ER/W (2) | Emergent Reading/Writing type 2 |
| | | Phonological decoding activities. Phonological knowledge and word knowledge are used for reading and/or writing.<br>*"From the words they know we try to read words"; "They know some letters. Therefore, they can write some words"* | |
| N ER/W | Non Emergent Reading/Writing | N ER/W (1)<br>N ER/W (2) | Non Emergent Reading/Writing [subcategory] |
| Explicitly refuses Emergent Reading/Writing activities considered in the category | | Explicitly refuses Emergent Reading/Writing activities considered in the category | |
| ErrorER/W | Error Emergent Reading / Writing | | |
| Under the name of the activity of emergent reading/writing, describes an activity of another area of linguistic knowledge. | | | |

## APPENDIX B: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR THE CATEGORIES OF OB-JECTIVES AND LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE OR SKILLS

| Cat. | Name. Description. *Sample* |
| --- | --- |
| OPA | Goal - Phonological Awareness<br>Lists or describes levels of knowledge or skills related to phonological awareness<br>*"They must understand the sounds of words", "They must realise there are identical sounds", "They must be able to say that the word xxxx, has the sound x".* |
| O PK | Goal - Print Knowledge<br>Lists or describes levels of knowledge or skills involved in print knowledge, including letters' knowledge.<br>*"They must be able to describe the parts of a book ","They must know what one has to do in order to read ","they must know that words are made of letters ","they must recognise some letters "* |
| O ER/W | Goal - Emergent Reading/Writing<br>Lists or describes levels of knowledge or skills involved in emergent reading/writing<br>*"Makes use of letter name knowledge for writing ", "Makes use of invented spellings to communicate and record events".* |
| O OLK | Goal - Oral Language Knowledge<br>Lists or describes levels of knowledge or skills related to oral language knowledge<br>*"They must be able to speak correctly", "They must understand new vocabulary", "They must understand teacher read alouds"* |
| O O | Goal - "Others"<br>Lists or describes levels of knowledge or skills related to domains of development other than language.<br>*"They must be autonomous," "They must have motor skills", "They must develop mathematical reasoning"* |
| NOPA<br>NOPK<br>NOER/W<br>NOOLK | Non Goal - [category]<br><br>Refuses objectives or levels of knowledge and skill under the category |

APPENDIX C: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR THE CATEGORY OF
KNOWLEDGE SOURCE

| Cat. | Name. Description. *Sample* | SubCat | Description. *Sample* |
|---|---|---|---|
| KTE | Knowledge from Teacher Education | KSL | Knowledge from Scientific Readings |
| Says that knowledge mostly come from teacher education or from sources related to teacher education | | Refers scientific readings as source of knowledge. *"I read in a book... "I learned how to do it by reading about it..." "I've seen an example in a journal... in an article..."* | |
| | | KBTE | Knowledge from Beginning Teacher Education |
| | | Says learning occurred in beginning teacher education. *"I learned when I took my degree as a preschool teacher..." "In my beginning training, I learned to do..."* | |
| | | KCTE | Knowledge from Complimentary Teacher Education |
| | | Refers complementary education programs as source of knowledge *"I learned in a complementary program " "I learned when I got back to University"* | |
| | | KPTES | Knowledge from other kind of Teacher Education |
| | | Refers different courses as knowledge source . *"I took a course…"; "It was in a conference..."* | |
| KE | Knowledge from Experience Identifies personal experience as the single source of knowledge. *"I guess I always did it like this..." "We learn from experience…"* | | Knowledge from Experience |
| NKTE NKE | Non Origin [category] | NKSL NKBTE NKCTE NKPTES | Non origin [subcategory] |