



preschool professionals. This may be a contribution to the early identification of reading difficulties and, consequently, to fighting school failure. RaLEPE® is an innovative and relevant tool for inclusive practices and it allows to respond to the diversity of children's needs, according to family-centered practices and universal design

**Keywords:** Early Literacy; Language; Preschool.

## **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF PRE-SCHOOL MENTOR TEACHERS: TOWARD CHANGING ROLES AND TRANSFORMING MENTORING PRACTICES**

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The aim of the research is to explore professional growth of mentor teachers in transforming mentoring practices in pre-school institutions in the context of changing mentor roles. The research question is: How professional growth experiences are produced in transforming mentoring practices in response to the ongoing changes and challenges in the profession and pre-service teacher practicum? The theoretical framework includes transformative learning theory, viewing the mentor teacher's professional growth as transformative learning through engagement in mentoring as a social process whereby the learner gives new meanings to their experience or transforms it, and the theory of reflective practice, emphasizing reflection on action in analysing the mentor activity. The research methods are based on the phenomenological research strategy. The research sample was selected on the basis of homogenous cases - the participants were mentor teachers from different pre-school institutions in Lithuania. Data collection methods included written responses from mentor teachers (n=26), focus groups with mentor teachers (=26), and interviews with pre-school institution managers (n=6). The content analysis was employed as a method of data processing and interpretation. The research findings show that the context of challenges arising from the changing nature of both educational environment and student teachers' needs stimulate mentor teachers to engage in learning to transform their mentoring and educational practices. Professional growth experiences are produced in the shift from primarily sharing professional expertise and acting as role models to building harmonious relationships with student teachers helping to construct their professional identity, and support their professional integration. The relevance of the present study to the conference theme lies in the research focus on teacher professional growth through transforming mentoring practices determined by glocal changes in pre-service teacher education and contemporary challenges of the pre-school teaching career in Lithuania.

**Keywords:** Teacher Professional Growth, Mentoring Practices, Glocal Context.

## **REIMAGINING A POSITIVE DIRECTION FOR EDUCATION THROUGH DIGITAL LEARNING: REALITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC CRISIS VOICED BY TEACHERS**

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Throughout History, technologies have been transforming human lives in their different areas. Education, in general, and specifically teacher education are no exceptions. However, with the digital technologies, these transformations can be ever more challenging, or perceived as such. Therefore, the drive to develop digital skills, competences and solutions have resulted, for instance, in the creation of frameworks and strategies, both at national and international levels, to guide, namely, the teachers. These orientations were already in place before the COVID-19 arose, but this pandemic crisis was a critical moment to test them. Indeed, at the eve of the worldwide lockdown, the Action Plan for Portugal's Digital Transition was launched. Many processes of digitalisation were then accelerated,



urged by the overnight shift to emergency remote teaching and learning required at that time. But how were those distance and online scenarios experienced by teachers? Our aim is to identify realities that surfaced as voiced by teachers, within broader research in the scope of the RAPIDE Erasmus+ Project. For that purpose, we adopt the case study methodology, focusing on an exploratory qualitative design. Data was collected by means of a web-based survey made available after a synchronous short-teacher training action about European perspectives on digital learning. Content analysis was chosen to interpret the reflections of the teachers (N=18) we interviewed with regard to their realities raised during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings evidence that the problems described by teachers were felt across the different school levels, in diverse geographic contexts, stemming from the following difficulties: organisational/management; pedagogical/didactical; role of the teacher; social/emotional; technical issues. Of these the social/emotional difficulties were prevalent, and confirm that the teacher practice is ultimately directed towards the students – to their active participation, motivation, attention; in a word, to their meaningful learning, particularly “in Times of Global and Glocal Transformations”.

**Keywords:** Digital Learning, Reimagining Education, COVID-19, Emergency Remote Teaching, Teacher Practice.

## RE-LAUNCHING INITIAL SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION IN ITALY: THE ROLE OF TEACHING LEARNING CENTERS

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In recent years, important political, social, and pedagogical debates have focused on the initial training policies of secondary teachers in Italy. Unfortunately, Italy has lacked a coherent system of initial and continuing education for secondary teachers for years, resulting in a significant training gap among teachers. However, Italy’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP), part of the EU’s Next Generation programme, aims for a comprehensive reform of initial secondary teacher education. The plan calls for the establishment of a national advanced training academy for school leaders and teachers, the creation of three teaching learning centres at the macro-regional level, and the establishment of new teaching and learning centres at universities. The main goal of this reform proposal, with the approval in Italy of Law No. 79/2022, is to establish a system of initial teacher education for secondary school teachers with strong collaboration between universities and schools. This system will have a continuous dialogue between theory and practice and a strong interdisciplinarity between pedagogical-didactic perspectives. The ultimate goal is to provide young college students with clear pathways to initial teacher education. Providing well-trained teachers who can deal with the complexity and challenges of contemporary society is a crucial issue for improving teaching processes and student learning outcomes. The paper provides an overview of pedagogical perspectives and approaches in view of the implementation of this reform, along with an initial survey of Teaching and Learning Centres (TLCs - interdisciplinary and interdepartmental university centres that in Italy will be in charge of promoting and implementing the reform of initial teacher education) active in Italian and European universities, with the aim of trying to outline an innovative and effective pedagogical model, identifying common lines and differences.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Teaching and Learning Centres (TLCs), Education Reform.