More Opportunities for Every Child

EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

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Background

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In recent years, the presence of pupils with disabilities and with different types of difficulties has been a constant, if not constantly growing, element. This has contributed to making the management of educational realities more and more complex, since pre-school age. Alongside this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider some relevant aspects especially if analysed in relation to possible applications in the educational field:

- Recent studies in Neuroscience have promoted a better understanding of the development of brain structures and have emphasised the role of early educational intervention for the cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and relational development of children. The ways in which adults care for a child, thanks to a wide range of stimuli (verbal and non-verbal communication), have a significant influence on the child development's process, not only in terms of skills, but also in the construction of a strong and well-structured personality (Conkbayir M., Early Childhood and Neuroscience: Theory, Research and Implications for Practice, Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, New York 2017; Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Applying the Science of Child Development in Child Welfare Systems, October 2016);
- The need to ensure high-quality preschool education services as a priority goal in European educational policies and welfare (ECEC). To promote the development and enhancement of these agencies, it is important to guarantee not only the achievement of quantitative parameters, but also - and mainly - of qualitative improvement. Regarding this, a very important aspect is represented by the possibility of promptly identifying signs of difficulties from the first years of a child's life;
- The sustainable development objectives identified for Europe 2030 should also be mentioned, and, specifically, point 4., dedicated to the need to "Provide quality, fair and equitable education, inclusive, and learning opportunities for all" and the target 4.2, in which the focus is detailed that is emerging here: "By 2030, make sure that all girls and boys have access to one quality early childhood development, necessary care and access to kindergarten, in order to that they are ready for primary education".

Within this theoretical framework, which highlights the educational priorities that European policies are pursuing, MOEC has been promoting a close collaboration and a strategic partnership of researchers, policy and practitioner organisations in Italy, France, Spain and Poland, in order to: **i)** research and review current early detection of child difficulties in kindergarten schools policies in each country; **ii)** share educational practices, experiences, and knowledge in early detection of child difficulties in Kindergartens schools; **iii)** design a training suite for kindergarten teachers in order to develop specific pedagogical competencies for allow them to early detect difficulties in children; **iv)** develop an educational toolkit to support observation of teachers to properly detect difficulties and the further communication to parents and specialists; **v)** create a website with Open Educational Resources developed from the project to support both the education of children with disability and difficulties and teachers daily activities internationally.

The quality control of training processes and Digital resources has been crucial to provide sustainability of the project output as we may use positive feedback from participants to enrich the content and enhance the process of the training for further dissemination. It is of prime importance to learn how to improve a given training programme by verifying whether the training needs were met and how participants reacted to the provided content.

Training activities include extended collaboration through peer knowledge sharing and peer learning. It may be achieved via active workshops, virtual collaboration spaces, open discussions, presentations, and good-practice exchange based on real-life cases.

The report will include the elaboration and implementation of quality standards to the training process provided for teachers in all four countries and the development of the WebApp. It is vital to mention that some of the trainings were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in online collaboration. Some reflections on that issue will be presented at the end of the report. Moreover, the report will involve some remarks regarding the collaboration within the teams in reference to all outputs of the project.
This part of the report will involve a brief description of the trainings conducted by each national team of MOEC comprising of the academic staff and the expert in the area of child development. The main objectives, content of each training along with its relevance to the project requirements are presented.

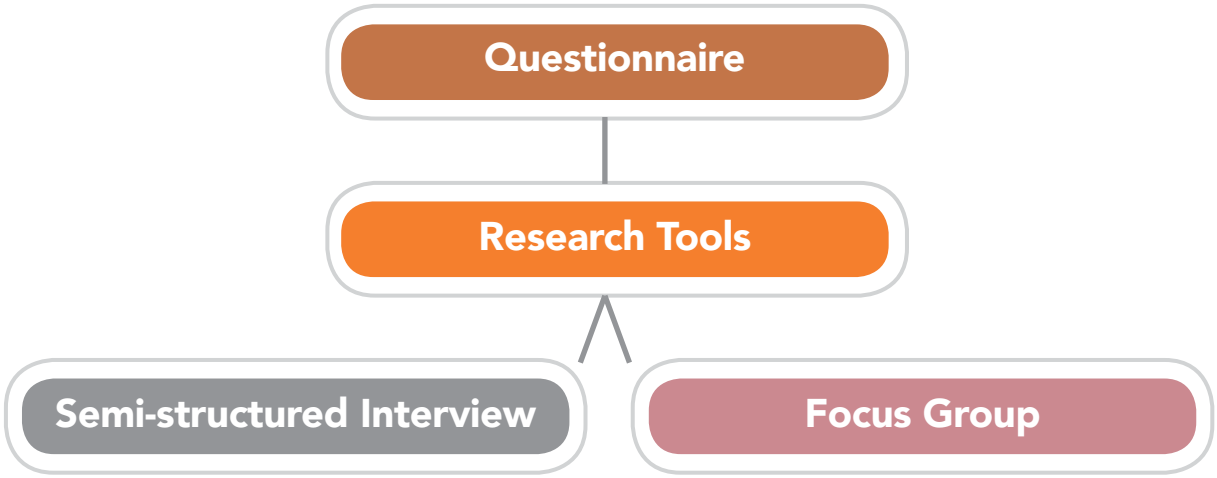
The underpinning research

2

2.1. Introduction

As part of the project, before the development of the training materials, we conducted research to capture current educational practices in early detection of child difficulties in kindergarten in Italy, France, Spain, and Poland to ensure that the development of the training programme was underpinned by research.

The underpinning research included a scoping study of the policy literature; interviews (16) and focus groups (n=12) with key policy makers and practitioners, and questionnaires to teachers and other school staff in Italy (n=68), France (n=18), Spain (n=46) and Poland (n=10).



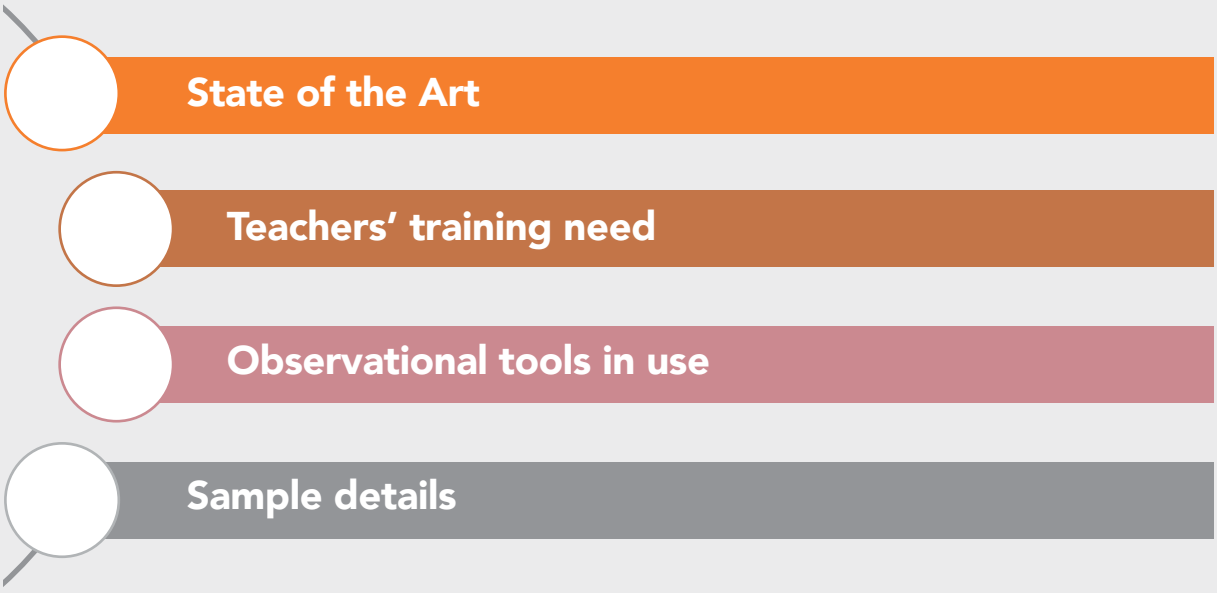
Research tools overview

The scoping study of the literature focused specifically on policy documents and literature related to the concepts and practices around early detection of child difficulties in kindergarten and inclusion by examining **i)** broader European changing conceptions of ECEC and inclusion; **ii)** specific policies in the different countries; **iii)** policy frameworks to support teacher education for observation and early detect difficulties; and **iv)** effective practice in early child education training with a focus on models of staff development to observe and support the inclusion of children with difficulties and disability in kindergarten.

The scoping study was complemented by focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires. In each of the three countries, we conducted three separate focus groups. Focus groups are a well-established method of data collection in social research studies and are considered useful in studies that require consideration of group processes. They provide a naturalistic setting, which may encourage participants to provide more detail about their ideas. This group interaction is also likely to help people to formulate ideas or to develop aspects of the topic that might not otherwise have emerged. In this context, the use of focus groups enabled us to work with a group of practitioners in each country who were involved in continuous professional development of teachers and other staff and to gather their feedback on what they considered to be important. It meant we could elicit the views of highly experienced practitioners who were in regular contact with teachers and other staff and were therefore closely in touch with their needs. The focus group discussions focused on the themes of inclusion, legislation, policy, and training.

The questionnaire examined the attitudes of teachers and other school staff to the education of autistic pupils. It was based upon a questionnaire developed originally by d'Alonzo L. (eds., 2017) and was adapted for use in all four countries. The questionnaires were divided into five sections.

The five sections of the questionnaires included: **i)** general information; **ii)** state of the art; **iii)** teachers' training needs; **iv)** observation tool in use and **v)** sample details. The questionnaires were sent electronically in Italy, France, Spain, and Poland, using the online software Google Form®.



Questionnaire research areas

We complemented the focus group and questionnaire data with semi-structured interviews.
These are used in social research to collect data relating to interpretations of and feelings about experiences. Semi structured interviews allowed us flexibility to vary the order of questions to suit circumstances. We could ask more detailed questions, and respondents had the opportunity to have questions clarified for them, with the researcher also able to ask for clarification if required. The key importance of this data collection method was to collect data from experts in the field by focusing on open questions dealing with different issues related to inclusion, training, and good practices for early detection of child difficulties in kindergarten.

In summary, our mixed method approach was one in which we collected and analysed data from several different sources, using both quantitative and qualitative data and we integrated the different data sources so that we could gain an all-rounded picture of training needs. More detailed explanation of the procedures and findings from this research can be found in the MOEC Phase One overview report.

2.2. Findings from Italy

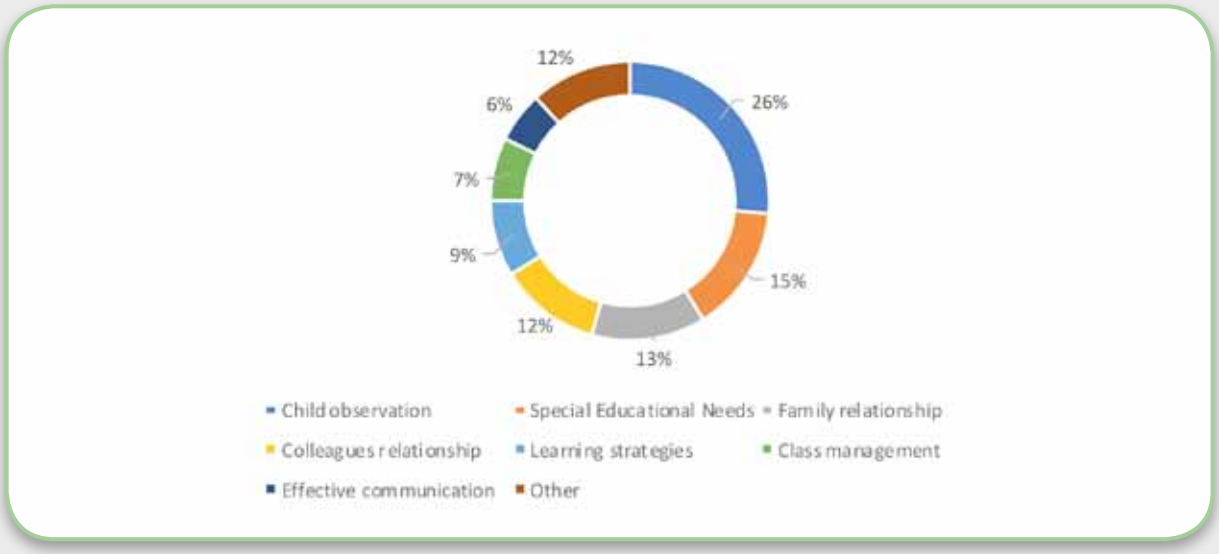
In view of the growing complexity in current society, the considerations of this essay aim at analysing a current issue of great ethical responsibility, such as the training of teachers. Its objective, therefore, is to promote in an increasingly structured way an articulated reflection on possible training practices, to meet the professionalism of teachers working in all levels of schools.

In this regard it is possible to state that the developments of different disciplines have indeed contributed to a focus on the advantages of the division of labour, but at the same time they have generated potential drifts linked to super specialization, compartmentation, and distribution of knowledge. Not only have they produced knowledge and elucidation, but they have also generated ignorance and blindness, instead of correcting such developments, our teaching system obeys them. It teaches us, from primary school, to isolate objects (from their environment), to isolate disciplines (rather than acknowledging their solidarity), to separate problems, rather than connecting and integrating.

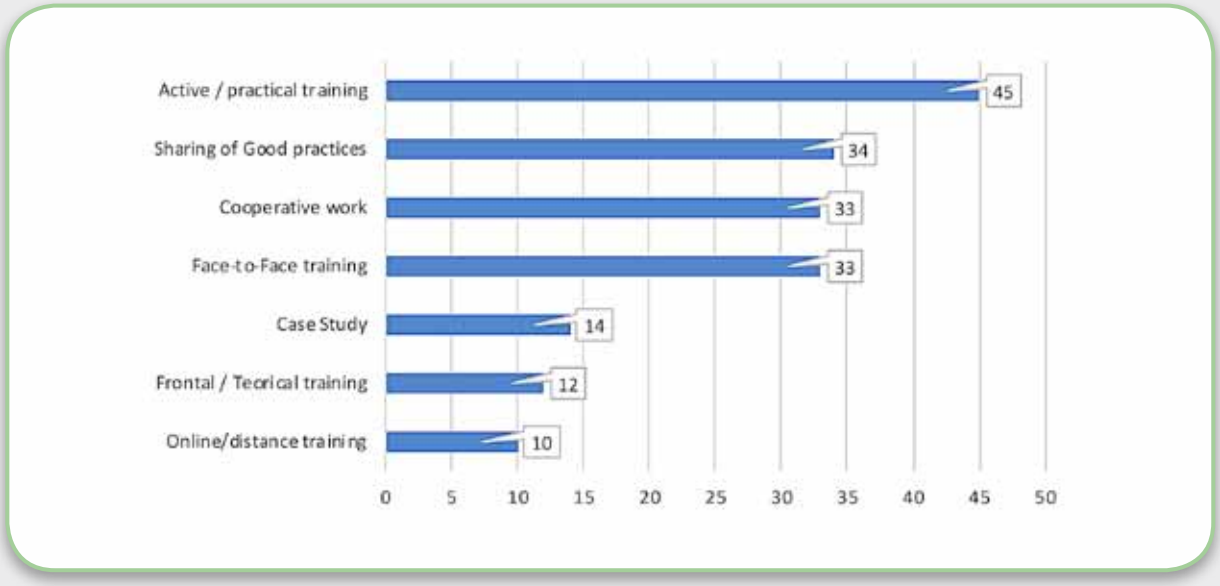
The ongoing debate on the training of teachers, particularly of special needs teachers, also prompted by the publication of recent decrees on inclusion[2], strongly underlines the need to empower the main actors who, in different ways, work in

schools, to outline the specific elements that must characterize the skills of special needs teachers.

This is necessary to avoid both a logic based on "hyper specialism" and excessive medicalization against the promotion of a real inclusive approach, and a defeatist attitude of the school personnel, sometimes taking the form of alibis and rhetorical demands. Asking for the opinion of those who work in the field, at the same time allowing them to continuously rethink their personal and professional experience, becomes thus a priority to define the profile of authentic, qualified, and thoughtful special needs teachers, who fully comply to the demands of their context.



Training topic



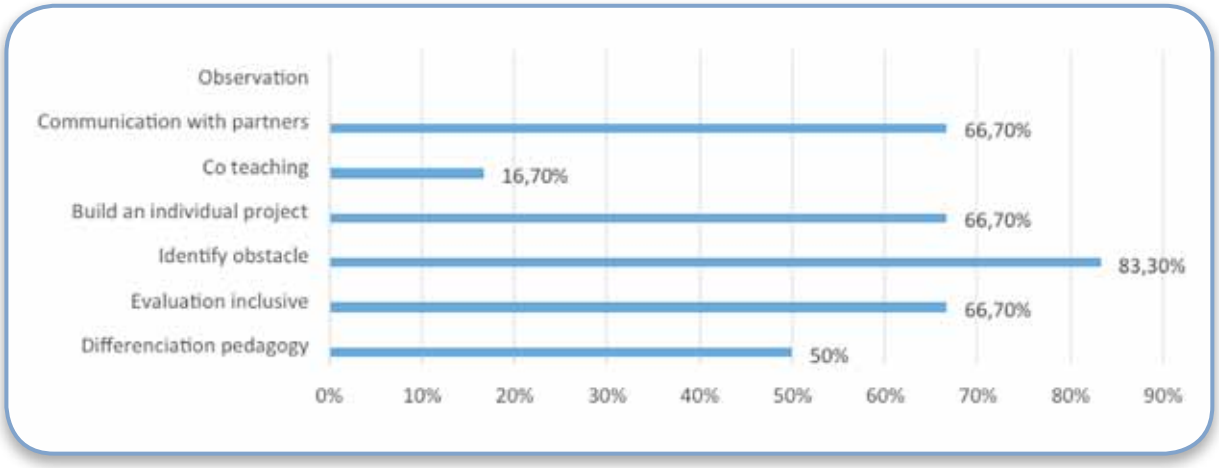
Training methodology

2.3. Findings from France

In France, the number of children in kindergarten classes can reach the figure of 28 to 32 students, which is precisely the case for the classes of our Notre Dame de la Source school. In view of this large number of students, we wanted to question our teachers on the number of students with special educational needs that they could identify in 2019/2020, and on the human frameworks on which they could or not rely in their class.

5 Focus groups were scheduled and performed from September 2019 to April 2020. The sound and video recordings were made and transcribed for each focus group. We discussed about the status of inclusive education practices in cycles 1,2 and 3 and we identified the difficulties faced by the teachers.

During the focus groups, they identify the need to provide specific answers to students with special educational needs while maintaining the collective of the class. There is a need to optimize professional gestures in the field of observation, identification and communication towards families. There are also ethical, ethical, ethical and ethical questions about the teacher's missions in communicating to parents, to the student (Avoiding stigma - Prudence in the diagnosis made or to be asked). There is a greater emphasis on primary school codes that are in line with standards. There is the need to equip students before entering college, which leads them to be more interventionist with the various partners (family, care). The gap with the standard is widening. Teachers then ask themselves the question of the definition of academic success and the meaning of the school (Being well, flourishing there). The issue of the rupture between primary school and college is anxiety-inducing for teachers, it is feared.



Training topic

2.4. Findings from Spain

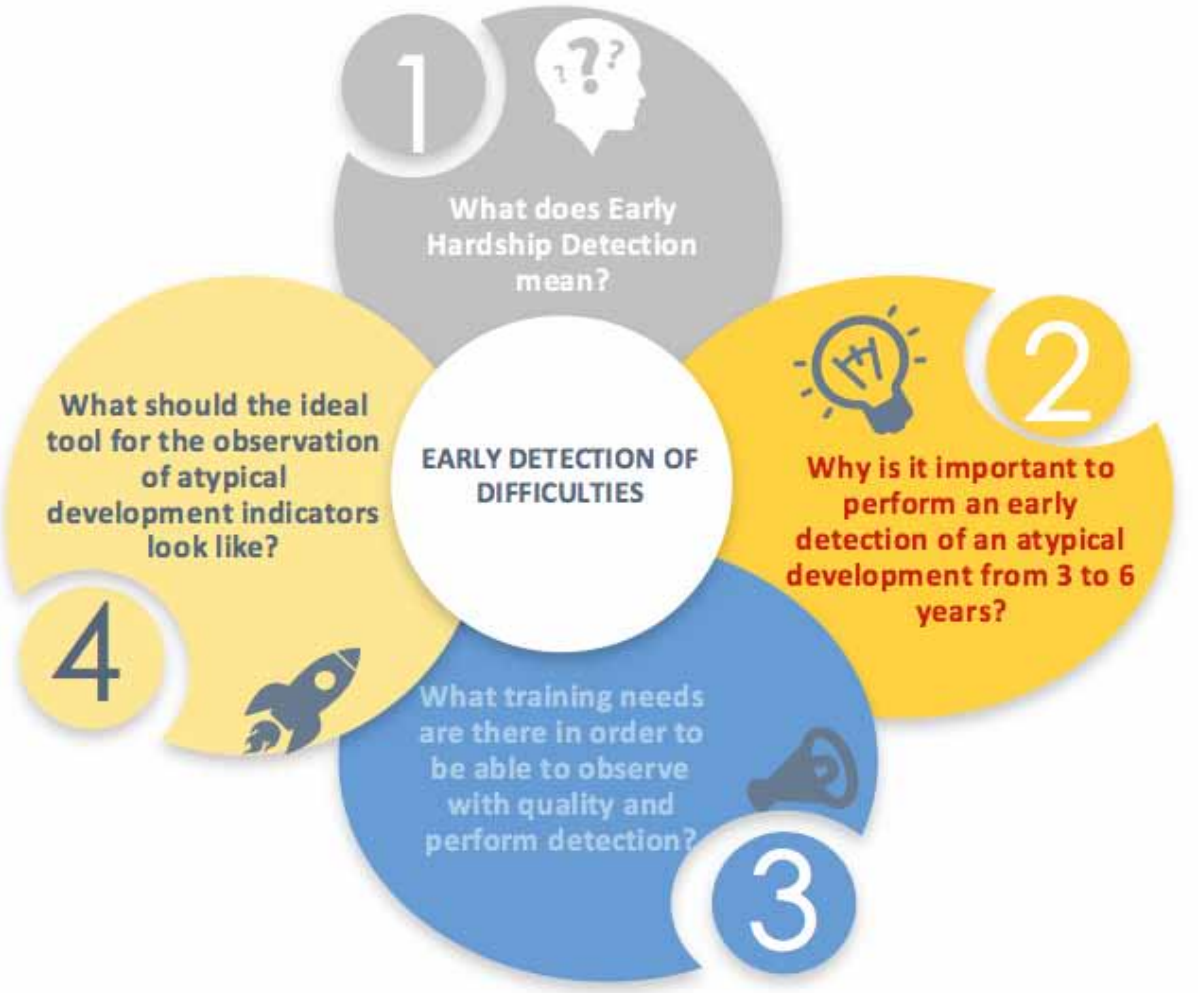
One of the first actions carried out by the different MOEC teams from each country was the revision of the State of the Art with the purpose of knowing the state of the question in each of the countries. The Spanish team carried out a search of information about schooling in Spain and its different modalities and the different options of support for students.

Besides, a bibliographic and content revision about the neurotypical development from 3 to 6 years of age was carried out, with the typical evolutive markers in the different areas of development: basic psychological processes, cognitive competences, fine and gross motor skills, communication and language, and socioemotional area.

Finally, a revision of disorders in the neurodevelopment and other possible causes of functional diversity was carried out, making its most significative atypical markers explicit. This way, firstly, the atypical indicators of the Global Developmental Delay, the communication disorders, ADHD, the specific disorders in learning and ASD were reviewed. Next, the most significative atypical markers in people with functional auditive, visual and motor diversity were dealt with, finishing with high capacities.

An important part of the MOEC project was the Focus Group, since it was from this that other future activities were carried out. Taking into consideration the suggestions to the questions put forward at the KOM, the teachers at the collaborating school which directly participated in the project or who, for their role in the school, could intervene with the affected children were gathered. For over an hour (virtually due to the pandemic), they were asked the questions shown below.

After each of these, there are the most significative conclusions reached after the analysis of the recording of the session:



What the early detection of difficulties means: The early detection of difficulties entails a process of direct and continuous observation which the teaching staff carries out during their teaching work; To do so, it is necessary to have a tool that allows to take common measurements; This tool has to be based on neurotypical evolutive patterns which enable one to detect the differences; It has to be done before the change of educative stage; Adaptation of the educative action to the characteristics of the children; The teachers also warned about some possible problems which can take place when talking about early detection: the immaturity of the child in the Stage of Pre-school education, the aggravation of the personal situation of some students due to not detecting their situation in time and the need of having effective tools.

Why it is important to do an early detection and, specially, before starting Primary education schooling: At the age of 3, teachers point out this is too early an age, so they believe one has to be prudent; The ages of 4 and 5 seem to them to be key ages to do the detection of possible problems, being it a stage in which

intervention can have a positive effect; Between the ages of 5 and 6 is a very sensitive age due to the proximity to the start of the Primary Education Stage and, in the case the difficulties are not detected, this can carry problems in adaptation.

What training needs the teachers must be able to carry out an early detection of the possible difficulties in their students: Knowledge of the neurotypical parameters for each age; Identification of atypical markers for each age; Training for the intervention depending on the difficulties detected; Registration tools aimed for the families which allow them to complement the observations in the classroom.

How the tool designed in the MOEC project for the detection of atypical developmental markers should be: It should be applicable to all students; It should include typical and atypical markers; Practical and simple format; It should allow the inclusion of additional information; Digitalised.

2.5. Findings from Poland

In the light of the research results it can be assumed that teachers expressed a need to employ an observational tool which is less formal than a wide range of already applied screening tools related to child's development. The review of the existing assessment and diagnostic measures proves that kindergarten teachers may adopt standardised and validated tools which refer to the stable norm of a given behavioural outcome.

However, the participants clearly reported that they would like to use more of their own personal judgment in terms of child's behaviour based on observation. This form of a screening tool includes a very crucial aspect of the whole process of assessment – that is personal reflection of the teacher who is in a direct contact with the child and may conduct observation in a long-term perspective. According to the participants, such an observational tool would benefit from being structured based on checklist with a concise and clear indication of the behavioural indicators in every area of child's development (social, emotional, linguistic, motoric skills). The most frequent special educational needs that the participants encountered relate to behavioural difficulties which may be rooted in affective disfunctions. Such observational tool could also support/facilitate clear communication with parents which is a crucial aspect in the general assessment of child's development.

Another key finding pertains to the fact that the formal diagnosis of child's development is carried out from the age of three (this is regulated by given pro-

visions). Kindergarten teachers clearly indicated that their work would be more effective in terms of child's' development stimulation if they could conduct the assessment of the child since the birth. This could also ensure smooth process of early detection of any child's upbringing difficulties.

Considering the aspect of special educational needs, the participants reported a need to raise their competences through specialised trainings in relation to building up the child's emotional integrity including stimulating social and emotional growth of a child. Bearing in mind that there is a wide range of specialised screening tools available, it may be assumed that teachers need a holistic approach and integrated tools to the child's development. To address this need, it would be beneficial to obtain general overview from the experts in the area of social, emotional, cognitive and speech development. Therefore, they reported training of speech therapy and English language as tool of communication with children with disorders.

In Poland, cultural diversity is not the major issue faced by the educational institutions. The participants of our study did not report any challenges related to culturally diversified classroom. Instead, diversity of the classroom primarily pertains to special educational needs or addressing difficult/demanding behaviour of children in a peer group. Therefore, it may be assessment that any intervention should be based on interactive/dynamic activities with a special focus placed on the elements of change, tolerance, communication, and deep understanding. Observational tool should also assess (more in an informal way) the competence of adaptability/flexibility and cooperation among children.

2.6. Discussion and emerging dimensions in training and school observation needs

From what has been previously mentioned, it seems evident that teachers consider training as the foundation of a positive path towards the early detection of difficulties in children in kindergartens and, as such, they believe training should be promoted and created to meet the true educational needs of teachers and their network.

In an attempt to summarize the different stimuli from this research, it might be important to highlight some emerging dimensions which are a useful starting point for a reflection on a possible renewal of the training activities addressed to teachers working in kindergartens:

1. The role of the teacher is shifting "from a merely executive role to professional role"[3]; therefore, *teachers need continuous training* in order to be able to respond effectively to the increasingly diverse needs of their pupils.

2. The analysis of needs cannot clearly be a phase unrelated to the whole process and sole responsibility of the research institutions in charge of its implementation. An ecologically grounded analysis of needs cannot in any way disregard the *involvement of trainees* and a shared mode in which teachers take on the role of co-readers of their own educational needs. Within this context, characterized by positive interdependence, the research institution shares its expertise on the methodology (design of a survey plan, development and validation of specific survey tools, elaboration of analysis systems and interpretation of collected data), while schools give appropriate indications pertaining to the needs of the context in which the training must take place. Methodological precision and ecological soundness, in terms of context sensitivity, are two necessary elements along the path of knowledge of educational requirements.

3. It seems fairly established that a training model providing for an aseptic articulation of meetings, based on the alternation of theoretical inputs and application activities, has now come to an end. Such models, even though often stimulating and skilfully coordinated, are not able to work on the real needs of teachers and convey an idea of technicality, often far from the expectations of individuals and organizations. The current orientation, often desired by the very participants in focus groups, has been the creation of a modular training system based on the interests and knowledge levels of participants, relying on the *learning by doing* principle, flexible in its strategies and, above all, significant at a systemic level, i.e. able to give pedagogically sustainable and realistically transferable indications on methods within the individual school realities, in order to detect the difficulties of students at an early stage.

4. It is now of utmost importance the need, expressed by participants in focus groups, to *monitor the influence and the impact of teachers' training on the processes of children observation.* It is interesting to note how the awareness of the gap between what is learned in training and what is put into practice in a real context reveals possible issues in the training processes: on the one hand, being too distant from reality; on the other hand, being unable to become authentic promoters of a change. A unifying force should be established between the training classroom and the school classroom, in order to give birth to a mutual enrichment between theory and practice, research and field action, acquired skills and new educational needs.

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Monitoring and quality control of the training process

3

Having completed the underlying research, the next step was to use what had been learnt from this research to apply it to the development of the training programme.

The first step was a detailed exchange of perspectives, needs and opinion of the MOEC results from Phase One (state of the art – O1). Such critical exchange was fundamental to understanding how to develop the materials to each national school systems, selecting the right content and adding relevant context-related information that it's specific for country's needs.

The cooperation within each national team along with the coordinator monitoring the project takes place through direct meetings (team meetings) and indirect communication (e-mail, Skype). During the meetings, individual stages of project implementation are discussed, possible threats are identified, and countermeasures are indicated.

Progress have been monitored by deliverable outcomes and milestones as described in the project activities. The MOEC team is setting up a transnational expert advisory group of experienced policy makers, practitioners, and parents, with representatives from each country. This group meet through a conference call during each phase. Each partner has a local expert advisory group that will monitor the quality of the work of that partner by reviewing materials associated with each stage.

Notices of dates for project face to face meetings have been given at the start of the project; notices about online meetings have been given at least one month in advance, with an agenda circulated a week in advance, and with minutes being circulated after meetings. The project has an overall Drive (Google) for the whole project and individual drives for each country. This shared drive has been used for project management (e.g., setting dates in the calendar; informing team members of significant issues; posting discussion documents) and will also enable consistent and timely quality control (by monitoring that partners are on track, e.g., in the design, implementation and analysis of the questionnaire). The project manager monitors the Drive on a regular basis and each country has designated person responsible for the drive in that country.

The promoters of the MOEC project ensured throughout the course of the project to support the various partners in the project. Regular support via TEAMS-type digital tools was offered. It has thus enabled us to regularly take stock of the progress of the project at the level of our territories (universities and schools). A regular update on the different stages of the project (Intellectual outputs/Activities: State of art – Development and delivery of educational and training materials – Design, development, and implementation of observation tools for early detection of children's difficulties – Feedback on tools from stakeholders and teachers – Reports – Valuation).

The international meetings gave rise to times of coordination and local steering, answering questions of an administrative but also scientific nature (methodology/results). The coordination, the follow-up for the administrative part ensured by a person experienced in the follow-up of Erasmus projects was a very important support. The project methodology was thus discussed and formalized during these international meetings. For example, from the first meeting, we worked together on a model questionnaire (definition of inclusion, training needs) to be sent to all the teachers involved in our respective schools in the research program and MOEC training.

The transnational meetings organized in Madrid for Spain (November 2019) remotely for France (May 2020 - considering the Covid context), in Lublin for Poland (November 2021) and in Milan for Italy (June 2022), made it possible to define the criteria for observing students and thus to jointly develop the observation grid allowing to identify the learning difficulties of pupils in nursery school in our different countries. The writing of the various reports also made it possible to ensure unity on an international scale. The supports, the themes, of the training offered in the different territories for students have been shared on the website of the MOEC research project.

Monitoring and quality control of the training process, an essential step to evaluate it, since it allows trainers and trainees to collect information about the training in terms of effectiveness and satisfaction, and to identify critical points – if any. The main purpose of quality control is to allow revisions along the way and to improve methodology and content.

We will now analyse the monitoring and quality control we used in each country.

3.1. Italy

The training of teachers today requires a high level of quality and professionalism and is a major issue for all those who are called upon to design and deliver training courses. We have to consider that today more than ever, at a time when there has been no lack of distance learning proposals, the issue of teacher training/upgrading should be considered a priority for the development of the entire education system. Training can be defined as that process through which 'the subjective potential reaches maturity or one learns what is necessary to play a particular role, as a result of interaction with the environment, participation in the social and cultural heritage and the mediation and support of specially appointed figures and institutions'[4].Training adults does not simply mean educating them, giving them the possibility of having the professional tools to be able to carry out their work, but offering them the opportunity, the chance to revisit their personal experience, enhancing and interpreting it in order to generate change.

It is, therefore, necessary to leave room for experimentation and proposals of an innovative nature, where everyone feels involved and directly implicated in achieving the training success or failure of the actions promoted. Being able to reread one's own experiences, both personal and work-related, being able to recognise one's own competences and skills and being able to identify one's own criticalities thus become the main objectives that any training process should enable one to achieve.

This is particularly true in professions such as education, where daily routines, the repetitiveness of gestures, actions and procedures, and respect for the cyclical nature of time risk turning into real obstacles, which undermine the search for the deeper meanings at the basis of every profession. In this sense, it is recognised that training, understood as an opportunity for confrontation, the reinterpretation of experiences, the sharing of good practices, and active listening, plays the primary role of a driver of change, given that the latter is the purpose of any training process.

One aspect, too often underestimated, relates to the detection of training needs on which to graft the design of an ad hoc course that can really contribute to meeting the professional needs of the professional. Thus, the risk arises whereby there is a multiplication of training proposals, also delivered in different modalities (in-presence, online, blended, MOOC, etc.), and yet there is a substantial difficulty, on the part of possible users, in identifying the most suitable and adequate proposal for their professional profile.

This could translate into a possible dissatisfaction not only with the contents of a specific course, perceived as not fully congruent with one's own professional needs, but more in general also with the validity of the training itself, wrongly interpreted as a proposal far removed from the real needs of everyday life.

On the contrary, it is essential that each professional can enhance his or her role, through ad hoc, customised training that consolidates everyone's skills, through a process of continuous education that is not an end in itself but open to a broader training project. In promoting training proposals, it would therefore be desirable to avoid courses designed more to meet unproblematic, decontextualised needs than to respond to the real demands of the various operators. The multifaceted structure of the social context highlights the need to deal, in an increasingly decisive manner, with the long-life training of operators and the acquisition by them not only of skills and knowledge but also of competences that are specific to the field of reference. The reference to the importance of soft skills that are decisive for acquiring the trust not only of the direct subject of the educational intervention – e.g, the child – but also of those who indirectly are decisive for the success of an educational project – e.g., the families.

In details, the training of professionals who carry out their educational intervention in childcare services deserves specific attention because of the great responsibility exercised towards an age group, that of 0-6 years, which is particularly sensitive in terms of learning and psychophysical development.

It is according to this logic that the training course for teachers of the schools involved in the MOEC project was conceived and designed. Specifically, this pathway started from an initial phase of collecting the actual needs experienced by the professional, especially in relation to the management of complex situations, such as the presence in the classroom of a child with special needs. Through the administration of an articulated questionnaire, the needs expressed by the teachers of the schools involved in the project were analysed. The 97% of participants believe it's important to promote a timely early detection of difficulties in kindergartens. his data is of utmost importance for the purpose of this research, since it indicates how the central theme of the project is strongly felt by the participating teachers, confirming the need to implement specific skills to support a good educational intuition through scientifically grounded working tools. To improve observation and detection abilities, the research team deemed it appropriate to investigate which educational issues teachers would like to be trained in. The requests that emerged are various and diversified, the following being

the most outstanding: child observation; Special Educational Needs; Family relationship; Colleagues relationship; Learning strategies; Class management, Effective communication. Other training requests concern behavioral disorders (oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder), the management of a difficult class and the relationship with pupils in difficulty, aggressiveness and hyperactivity in children, disability, and developmental disorders. Also, through the questionnaire, teachers were asked to indicate the training methodology they considered most suitable. In this sense, too, it is believed that sharing the structure of the course with the adult professional may represent a further point in favor and in support of the quality and effectiveness of the course itself.

Many participants highlighted the need to keep the motivational aspect in the foreground, as it is considered the essential element to support specialization paths for teachers and their desire to detect difficulties in children at an early stage. At the time this research was conducted, in-service training was not mandatory. Taking this premise into account, it is essential for each training course to be presented to teachers in an effective, engaging and challenging way, in order to motivate them to attend the course even though, and precisely because, it is not compulsory.

Photo by Aaron Burden, Unsplash

3.2. France

On July 5, 2019, the two teachers (researcher and trainer) met the entire educational and teaching team of the NDLS school. The objective for us was to properly present the didactic and political axes of the MOEC project. A research project that is part of the sustainable development goals, in terms of inclusive education, defined by Europe by 2030: The need to provide quality education, fair and equitable, inclusive, and offering learning opportunities for all. […] Ensuring high quality pre-school education services as a priority objective of European educational policies and social protection. […] Promote the development and improvement of institutions, guarantee qualitative improvement by having the possibility of quickly identifying the signs of difficulties from the first years of a child's life.

The general objective of the MOEC project is presented and explained "to question early intervention for the prevention of learning difficulties in children in nursery school" as well as the methods of conducting the project: Thinking and collaborating together (teachers, teacher-researcher, teacher-trainer, school head) in the MOEC project – Combining practice, theoretical insights, training – Discussing representations of inclusive school, kindergarten – Sharing on practices, on the tracking tool learning difficulties set up as part of the project, on the training times offered throughout the program. Putting teaching colleagues into perspective with the presentation of the program calendar from 2019 to 2022, the presentation of the various partners associated with the program, the methodology (Focus Group-type practice analysis groups implemented throughout the duration of the program – Milestones: international meetings).

On the methodological level, each Focus group was recorded and transcribed to keep track of the teachers' account of their practice, on the use of the observation tool. These sound recordings and sometimes videos allowed the two members of the UCO (Teacher-researcher and teacher-trainer) to be able to return to these professional materials and enter a reflective approach guided by these different stories.

While considering the expectations set by the calendar, we relied on these stories to define, from one focus to another, our research objectives, our training projects, our exchanges. We wanted to support throughout the project a posture of analysis of the practices on the side of the professionals by respecting the calendar fixed by the program and the requirements of the latter on the methodological level (respect of the different Outputs).

All ethical rules have been presented and respected throughout the MOEC program. No overhanging words, we built and moved forward with the teachers. The families of the students at the school have also been involved in the project. The students observed in the classes allowed the teachers to evolve in their practices and to give feedback to the families. Communication with families was very important throughout the duration of the program. Regular communication on the school site, the production of a film, the publication of articles, have thus enabled families to be associated with the program.

The 1st step consisted in carrying out a detailed and analytical review of the reference texts on inclusive schools in France to properly set the context of the program. The development of a common questionnaire for all the teachers of the different teachers involved in the MOEC program. The teachers of the NDLS school were invited to complete it through an online questionnaire in 2019. This questionnaire thus enabled us to share a definition of inclusion, to break down representations of inclusive schools, to make trace training needs (themes/needs/training methods).

Training times were thus offered throughout the program by teacher-researchers and trainers with the teaching team of the NDLS school. These training times were all organized on the school site in the presence of all the teachers, the headteacher, the specialist teacher. A report was systematically carried out by the teachers on the content of the training offered. These assessments have thus guided discussions and adjust possible (identifying new training needs and responding to them) throughout the duration of the program. The training materials were systematically transmitted to the teachers, thus allowing them to come back to them in a staggered way in time, to be able to develop a common culture. These training times allowed teachers to question their practice, to develop their representation, to include the use of the observation grid for identifying learning difficulties in a broader reflection on the concept of inclusive school by discussing with their primary school colleagues (to think about continuities and discontinuities in terms of assessment).

The observation grids worked on at the scale of the project were translated into French by the manager on the UCO side and submitted for amendments, proofreading, and appropriation by the teachers of the NDLS nursery school. Awareness then emerged: conceptions of the pupil, of the school, which differ according to the country. Questions about the categories proposed in the tool were able to emerge and give rise to clarification work by the teachers on the UCO side. One of the major objectives consisted in making the items proposed in the common

grid correspond as much as possible to the French national education programs. These round trips, these adjustments, have made it possible to identify certain points never observed before in the context of the evaluation of learning (motor skills) of kindergarten pupils.

Fruitful exchanges around the grid also made it possible to identify the role of the resource persons present alongside the teachers in the nursery class. A grid that takes the child (mobility/communication/interpersonal relations and emotions/learning and learning methods). A focus group at the start of the MOEC program brought together these players from the teaching team. A methodological point that turned out to be very important to ensure the proper implementation of the observation grid at the end of the second year of the program. A focus group scheduled approximately every 2 months with the teaching team of the nursery school made it possible to accompany the entry on the application of the observation data, to bring back to the carriers any technical difficulties, to bring responses as soon as possible, to discuss the observations made, the difficulties encountered in terms of evaluation.

The choice was made as a team to merge the grid for 3-4-year-olds with that for 5-6-year-olds in order to respect the texts, the assessment practices in French nursery schools (approach by cycle, by skills). Some items have been reclassified in the categories to stick more closely to existing tools (French nursery school programs – 2015). Corrections have been made following the linguistic translation, so that the words used speak more to the learning objectives. The observation tool made it possible to categorize and refine the areas of assessment in French kindergartens.

A first evaluation experience subject to discussion with all the colleagues of the nursery school. A great opportunity to measure the interest of the observation grid built in relation to existing evaluation tools in a collaborative and formative approach.

The collaborative MOEC research and training program has made it possible to associate all the different actors throughout the different stages. It was a question of starting from the field, from practices in terms of inclusive evaluation, to co-construct a tool for observing the learning difficulties of pupils in nursery school. All the communications presented within the framework of the international meetings have all been shared with the entire team involved in the MOEC program.

A film was produced with the help of two professionals to present the project and the Notre Dame de la Source school to all the partners as part of the conference organized remotely by the UCO. A tool put online on the school and UCO website to promote the MOEC program. Many communications in national and international conferences allow to share the results of this MOEC program. A collective work entitled "Towards an inclusive nursery school - European perspectives for an educational alliance" (scheduled for the 1st semester of 2023) will make it possible to promote strategic partnership, close collaboration between research teachers, trainers, schoolteachers' kindergartens. A book for teachers that will leave room for testimonials from teachers involved in the program.

3.3. Spain

With the purpose of assuring a homogeneous level of previous knowledge among all the participants in the project, both from the University professors as well as from the teachers from the collaborating centre, during the months of October and November 2020, two formative actions were carried out.

The first course, taught by Prof. José Antonio Fernández Bravo, was about *the development of thought in children from 3 to 6 years of age*. 37 teachers attended this workshop, which was carried out in on-line format due to the impossibility of doing so in-person because of the social distancing regulations enforced because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The aim of this training activity was to foster the reflection among those attending on everyday situations which can lead to discrepancies between what the teacher wishes their student to learn and how they want them to learn it, and the way in which the learner – independently from their age – can interpret it, leading them to provide answers considered as wrong by their teachers. A second objective was to present those attending with the order in which, from the viewpoint of thought, one learns: comprehend, state, memorise and apply.

The second course was, at the same time, divided in 4 2-hour-long workshops and was taught by Dr. Marta Fernández Sánchez. It was about *the evolutive development of children from 3 to 6 years of age and risk markers of disturbances in neurodevelopment.* In the first three workshops, the evolutive characteristics of children from 3 to 4, 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 years of age respectively were dealt with, together with the most significative risk markers for each age range. These ages were specifically chosen because these were the ones to which, in future

stages, the specific actions of the tools designed in the MOEC project were to be directed. The fourth and last workshop covered, in a monographic way, risk markers and an overview was provided of the diagnostic and observational tools which are currently frequently used in Spain. Also due to the need to keep social distancing, these four workshops were carried out virtually through the platform Teams. In total, 31 teachers signed up and an average of 25 attended synchronously, doing the rest this asynchronously.

3.4. Poland

Prof. Edyta Gruszczyk-Kolczyńska as a field expert run a specialized training aiming at the diagnose and support the children's mathematical abilities, with a particular focus on diagnosis. Dr Barbara Borowska's training had an objective to discuss developmental changes related to speech of preschool children. Another important aim related to getting familiarized with innovative methods and forms of working with children for speech education, especially with the *glottodidactic* method. Dr habil Ewa Domagała-Zysk conducted workshops which introduced teachers into the issues connected with 1. Assessment of social and emotional competences of kindergarten children, 2. Principles and methods of functional assessment of children's needs and strengths; 3. Assessment of special educational needs of kindergarten children and 4. Application of the universal design model into everyday education in diverse groups. Dr Klaudia Martynowska conducted trainings focusing on development of skills of teachers in emotional management directed towards children in kindergartens. Primarily, the trainings concentrated on providing knowledge to participants related to emotional development of children at the age ranged from 2 to 6.

The evaluation procedure was implemented in all stages of the training. These are the steps which were monitored and assessed accordingly:

1. Training needs assessment

Teachers had provided information to trainers on the gaps they had depicted in terms of their professional skills required in their job when it comes to observing and diagnosing children. Such information was confidential, and teachers reported openly what they thought and experienced in their professional daily activities. A relevant questionnaire (survey) was designed. In such way, some training needs emerged which were then discussed again with the teachers to confirm whether needs were assessed properly. This

helped to assess opportunities to build trust, engage, and advance equity through training. Additionally, trainers took a chance to identify and describe learners, recognise possible barriers and facilitators for training delivery. This process ended with developing learning objectives for the participants.

2. Designing content which is accurate and relevant

This stage related to developing content that meets the needs of the teachers based on the needs analysis. Each trainer is a specialist in their own field yet the design of the training allowed open discussions related to the real-life cases derived from teachers' experience. Trainers aimed at designing trainings that were interactive and engaging – it provided an opportunity for teachers to share and learn from each other's experiences and learn from others' experiences. The training content was made available to teachers via online platform – it ensured an open access to all the materials which in turn had an impact on quality assurance. Moreover, trainers developed easy and user-friendly materials which were fully comprehensive to end-users. Training contents were also shared and discussed within the Polish team of trainers.

3. Training delivery

Some of the trainings were conducted face-to-face, while others due to the outburst of COVID-19 pandemic had to be run online. On-site work shops were carefully monitored and assessed by participants via feedback form. The trainers in a flexible manner adapted to group dynamics to ensure the highest quality of the training. Trainers held some meetings to share their concerns, make some suggestions with regards to the group dynamics.

4. Assessment of the training

A feedback form was designed and implemented to ensure the training development and evaluate effectiveness. Teachers provided a written form of their feedback which comprised answers to some questions related to their personal reflections on the training (issues such as relevance of the training content; techniques and methods used; skills and competences of the trainer; general satisfaction etc.). It must be mentioned that feedback was submitted immediately after each training session (anonymously). Afterwards, trainers were asked to give written feedback on the information collected from teachers (training strengths and weaknesses) and the core team had access to these reports. Feedback was evaluated, corrections were

made, and materials were supplemented with teachers' suggestions and preferences. Each trainer presented feedback results to other team members which facilitated verification of designed content and methodology.

In general, based on teachers' feedback it may be concluded that they valued discussion on real-life cases supported by theoretical explanations. The participants were satisfied with the form of trainings which stimulated open communication. In a consequence, they could share their experience and reflect on their behaviour in a professional and sometimes personal context. Altogether, the teachers agreed that the main objectives of the trainings were met they acquired knowledge and skills which they would apply in their work with children.

When it comes to the use of WebApp of MOEC observation tool designed to depict difficulties of children at an early stage of education, teachers have reported remarks to the Polish teams which contributed to the enhancement of tool's effectiveness. By conducting observations of children on daily basis teachers are in a perfect position to monitor the quality of the designed MOEC tool. It is of prime importance to mention that any comments of strengths and weaknesses of the tool are reported on an immediate basis (via email or an online meeting) to the core team. It allows a quick and relevant changes of the tool content to be made in each cultural context. In such a way, high quality standards are met primarily because the end-users are engaged in tailoring the tool to their professional needs.

Monitoring and quality control of the observation tool and the MOEC WebApp

4

4.1. Review and development of the observation tool

The early detection of critical conditions in the development of children and young people does not mean making clinical diagnoses or fossilizing assessments, but rather creating the indispensable conditions for designing effective educational activities and devising scientifically based intervention strategies.

This awareness, supported by the most recent discoveries on the functioning of the human brain, suggested in 2017 to the Managers of the Italian Federation of Kindergartens (FISM) in Parma to entrust the Centre for the Study of Disability and Marginality (CeDisMa) of the Università Cattolica of Milan with an action-research with the aim of studying, constructing and validating an observation and analysis tool, aimed at educators and teachers, useful for intercepting the difficulties and problems found in children aged 0-6 years.

The Observation Tool developed by the MOEC team was based on this research conducted in 2017 by the UCSC team, described in a book presenting the outcomes of this important and innovative work, which stands as a valuable resource for anyone working in the field of education.

The first step was a detailed and analytical review of the CeDisMa observation tool developed in 2017. Such critical review was fundamental to understanding how to adapt the materials to the French, Spanish and Polish school systems, selecting the right content, deleting inappropriate topics, and adding relevant context-related information that was lacking in the original version.

Editing the contents of the observation tools and aligning it with findings from

the research in Phase One, partner teams started to understand how to organize the tool, in terms of design, content, digital app and use in schools with teachers.

Translations were then carried out over a period with feedback from the expert reference groups in each country. The expert reference groups consisted of a mixture of teachers, stake holders and professionals, such as doctors, psychologists, and therapists, in each country. These groups met regularly with the project team, and played an active role in advising the team, giving feedback on materials, and contributing to transnational meetings and dissemination activities.

The tools carefully focused on the needs of local professionals and their relevant observation needs, as identified in Phase One of the project. All four teams, included the Italian one, introduced major changes to the original Italian materials. This included changes in content as well as structure and usability (digital version instead of paper version).

After finishing the translation, these were reviewed by all the members of the MOEC main teams. In addition, each of the teams in Spain, France and Poland worked with Italian based referees who had in-depth knowledge of both the CeDisMa materials and the ECEC educational system and culture. Other changes in the observation tools in all countries included the addition of country-specific items that are important for local teachers.

The work of the teams was collaborative: members of the teams worked together to discuss, suggest and implement changes.


QUADERNO DELLE OSSERVAZIONI 3 ANNI (Piccoli)

Data di osservazione	17/06/2022
Nome e cognome dello studente	Molteni Paola
Età in anni e mesi	5 anni e 9 mesi
Genere	Femmina
Corso accademico	Cedisma
Anno scolastico	2021/2022

4.2 Quality assurance process of the WebApp

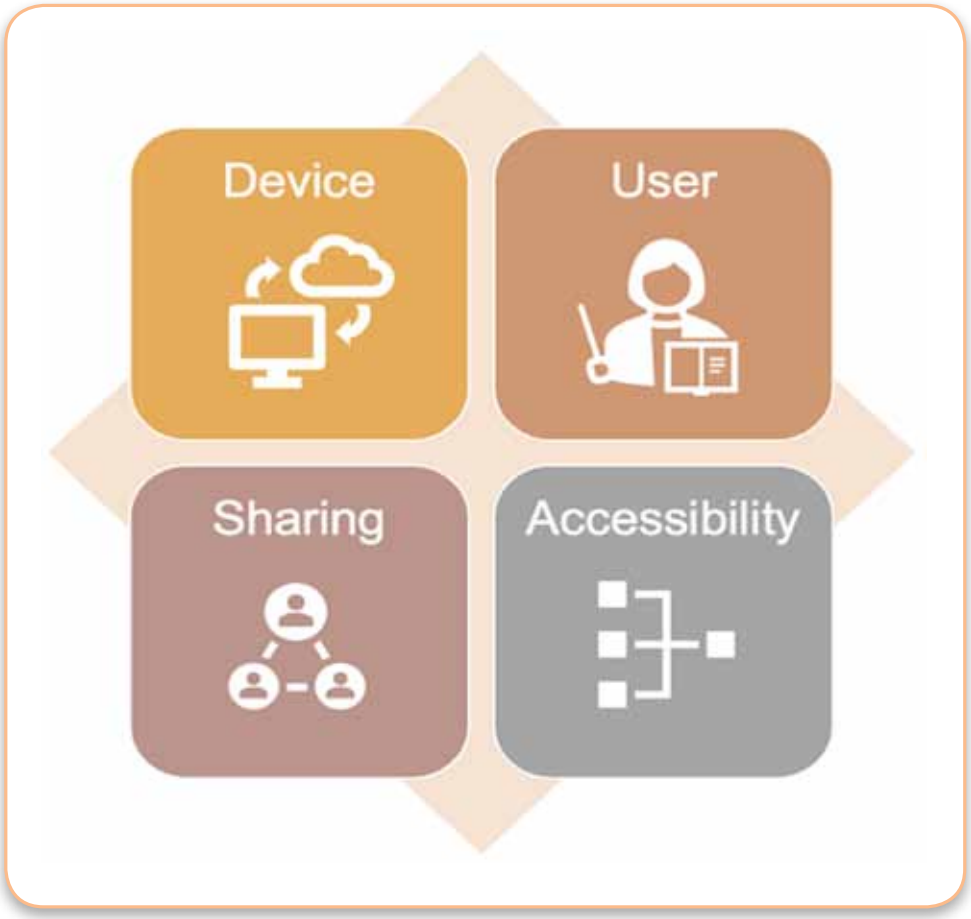
Before the MOEC App release to all the participant teachers, the ICT team implement quality assurance (QA) good practices. QA for digital web products is a form of quality control, delivering the best possible outcome for the end-user of the web app. The MOEC team were looking for anything that may impact the effectiveness of the app or negatively impact the experience that people have with the application.

The ICT team developed the following strategies to implement the QA process:

1. **Start QA Early:** In some cases, the perception around QA is that happens late in the development process, testing before a deployment or release. However, it's in your best interest for your development team to understand that the goal is to test early and test often. This is the best way to keep your product on track, ensure it meets your business requirements and avoid performance issues.
2. **Functionality Testing:** The process to make sure MOEC app works was fundamental for quality. The ICT checked all of the different components of MOEC web app, including links, forms, and workflows to ensure that everything is working the way it needs to. Every element of the app matters, as they all come together to create an experience for the teacher final user.
3. **Performance Testing:** Core and ICT teams wanted to be confident that everything in MOEC web app works is a good first step. However, many times some adjustments were needed because teachers and researchers found crashes under different kinds of conditions. Understanding and addressing that at this stage, also in the future, will make MOEC app more stable going forward and assure sustainability of the project.
4. **Ensuring Browser Compatibility:** in the design idea, teachers should have access the MOEC application from several different browsers and devices. To provide the best possible user experience, it was important to ensure that the application was responsive on all common browsers. Thanks to this stage, teachers didn't have any problems with access or experience technical issues.
5. **Usability Testing:** the MOEC application can only do well if teachers can use it without getting lost. We try to answer the following questions to week the quality assurance safe: Does the app meet quality requirements for the teachers? Are the features we put into the web app to help teachers obser-

ving and working as we intend? Is there anything that may have gotten lost in translation that we should address? These were important questions to ask before releasing the web app to a wider group of schools.

6. **Making Quality assurance a teamwork:** The purpose of our QA was simple: to improve overall webapp and observation quality. It was very important that everyone, including ICT, researchers and teachers, were on the same page about QA and why it's so critical. The Italian core team work hardly to make everyone aware of the testing effort and bring MOEC team, teachers, headmasters and researchers together on this initiative. This team effort involves the ICT and design counterparts as well. It is known that the best results will come from a collaborative approach and QA's understanding of the requirements for the end user. Keeping an open line of communication with the development team will help the MOEC team to ensure a successful development cycle for the sustainability of the project.

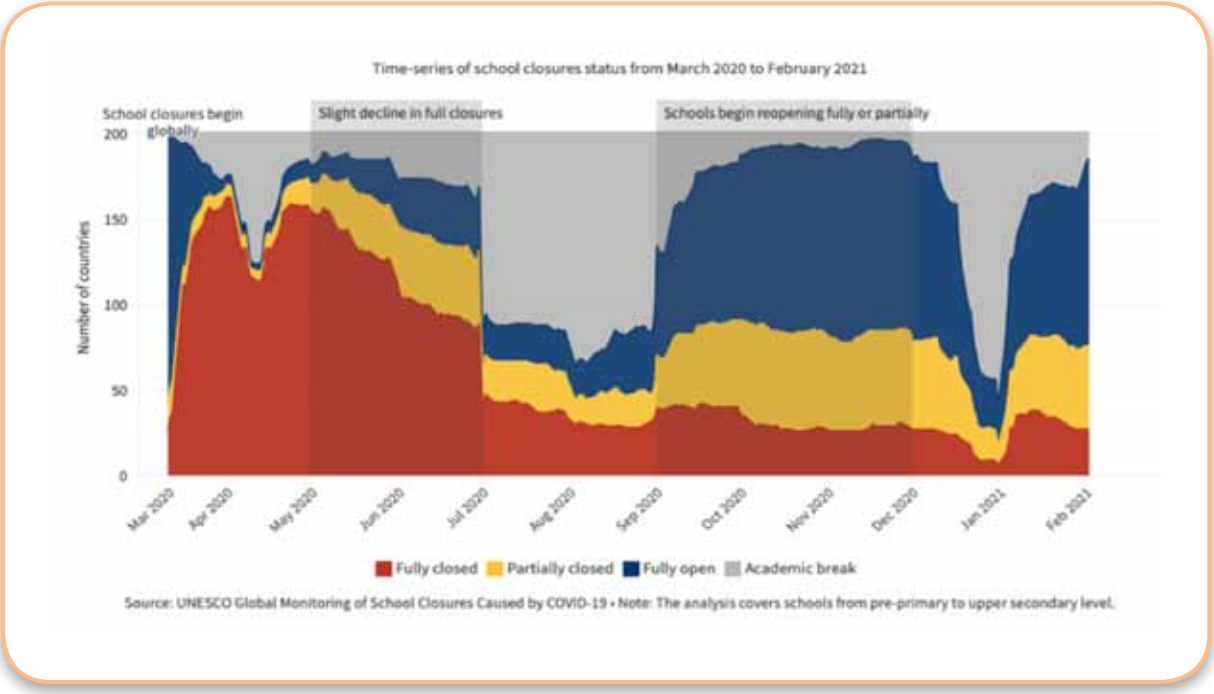

Device
User
Sharing
Accessibility


ART

Quality assurance processes during the COVID-19 pandemic 5

The health situation, Covid 19, has led the teams to support teachers remotely. Different focus groups dedicated specifically to the question of continuity and pedagogical differentiation at the time of confinement made it possible to highlight the professional gestures developed by teachers during this very special period. The MOEC team was thus able to consider the health context, its effects to question the evaluation tools (the observation grid), the practices implemented in the context of the evaluation of learning difficulties in nursery school at the time of where teaching has switched to distance mode twice. Regardless of the health context, the team managed to stay in tune with the training program.

Because of the massive infection of the population by the coronavirus, in Italy, Spain, France and Poland the Government decreed the suspension of the classes at all educational levels, starting from February/March (different date in each country). This measure was later complemented by the residential isolation of the entire population, with a gradual (not massive) exit that has not yet been planned or made known to the population.



In the period between March 11, 2020 and February 2, 2021, schools have been fully closed for an average of 95 instruction days globally, which represents approximately half the time intended for classroom instruction[5].

The virulence of the pandemic in each participating country has meant that after a first period of "state of alarm", two others came in succession. This left team members unable to foresee the consequences in the medium term. In addition to this situation, it was joined by the contagion of a serious member of the team.

Before the confinement, the teacher training that is part of the Project was also designed and partially delivered. At this time, and given the situation of the teachers in each country (absence of classrooms, overloaded with on-line training of their students -many of them without experience in these methodologies and making many efforts to serve their students-, including those from Early Childhood Education, and without knowing when it is possible to return to the classroom), we believe that it is not viable to carry out any of the activities that were planned to be done during the months of March and April before the end of the school year.

In this way, the coronavirus crisis has prevented all teams from carrying out the activities in the planned time, but we are very confident that we will be able to complete the outputs very soon. At the present time, we don´t know how the population will return to normal, and specifically about educational centres. It is foreseeable that the academic activity will not resume until after the month of August or if it is done before only for very specific activities (exams, for example, in the higher courses) or on a voluntary basis.

Pursuant to the Implementation Provisions of the Rector of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) of 11 March 2020 on preventing the spread of SARS-Cov-2 virus among the communities of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, the cooperation of the Polish project team (team leader) with the leader, project partners took place only in an online form via Skype, e-mail and by phone. The project team manager communicated (delegating, monitoring tasks) with the project team, partner kindergarten and administrative and financial services also remotely. All teacher trainings in April were held on-line. Training materials and teaching tools were provided via online platform. The implemented form of remote work did not impose a threat to the timely completion of project tasks. Team members held numerous meetings which were easier to schedule as commuting to the university or a partner kindergarten was eliminated. Academic staff developed their technological skills which ensured smooth communication via different online platforms/applications.

Footnotes

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[2] See D. Lgs. n. 66/2017 Norme per la promozione scolastica degli alunni con disabilità.

[3] Altet M., Charlier E., Paquay L. & Perrenoud P., *Formare gli insegnanti professionisti. Quali strategie? Quali competenze?*, Armando, Roma, 2006, p.17.

[4] Nanni C., voce "Formazione" in *Enciclopedia pedagogica*, La Scuola, Brescia, 1999, p.5043.

[5] UNICEF, COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption, UNICEF Report, March 2021.

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